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Contents

Skills and Competencies in Higher Education and Beyond

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The editorial focuses on the employability skills and the ways they are reflected in the research field of higher education. The topics related to competencies, abilities, attributes and skills are crucially important as they substantially determine the chances of successful employability for university graduates. The multiple approaches and frameworks covering various kinds of qualifications have been emerging since the 1980s, starting from the 21st century skills to the recent key skills required within education for sustainable development. The UN, European Union, OECD, and other international institutions regularly put forward comprehensive frameworks to address the pressing needs of the transforming economy and society for professionals and specialists ready to face the new challenges. The editorial gives a glimpse of the trends JLE is willingly ready to bring out for our readers in the coming years.

Keywords: higher education; skill; competency; 21st century skills; education for sustainability; soft skills; employability skills; labour market; employers' requirements

The modern labour market is being transformed by the changes undergone by the information society and digital economy. Employability requirements have changed to address the new realities and challenges. Information has become a production factor, comprehensively influencing the world. The life cycle of knowledge is considerably shortened. The knowledge acquired within a course of studies at a higher education institution is obsolete by the time graduates get their diplomas.

Automation is widely believed to globally find its way to the workplace by the 2020s. Some of the hard skills and professional competencies are getting insufficient. A host of brand-new and well-revised skills prompted by advances in technology are beginning to loom (see Table 1). In some areas, mismatches of skills as discrepancies between employees' skills and labour market needs have showed up.

It is obvious that by now a new type of workplace has arrived, i.e. a digital workplace. Today, it is of importance what and how the work is done, but it is optional where and when it is done. 'Global competition, the Internet, and the widespread use of technology suggest that the economy of the 21st century will create new challenges for the workforce' (van Laar et al., 2019).

21st Century Skills

Smart technologies and sophisticated knowledge urge people of the 21st century to develop previously unimportant or emerging skills. The latter as national, regional, and global programmes first came into being in the 20th century to evolve into the 21st century. The first most elaborated and influential framework appeared in the 1980s in the USA as the 21st Century Skills that cover skills themselves, abilities, and learning dispositions.

The US economy faced dramatic structural changes and new shifts that impede economic growth and economic

development. The political response resulted in a special commission, i.e. the National Commission on Excellence in Education, set up to work out a better understanding of the structural change in the economy and its implications for labour. A comprehensive framework of education for the future became the most essential outcome.

The report titled 'A Nation at Risk'[1] was published to overhaul the US System of Education as a lot of flaws in the system needed rectifying. The statistics proved the dilapidating state of education: about 23 m Americans over 18 years old had insufficient reading and writing skills[2].

The vital findings of the landmark report addressed the basics of the primary, secondary and post-secondary education (the most essential subjects covering English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Computer Science), other important parts of the curriculum (Foreign Languages, Arts and Humanities, etc.), Skills & Abilities (communicative and interpersonal skills, cognitive skills, digital skills, etc.), and Learning and Educational Technologies. The new understanding of the future of education brought reforms and change. Skills have become the cornerstone in the new system.

Skills in the OECD

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development has been at the leading edge in studying skills and education at large. It participates in promoting national skills strategies, makes reports and analyses, follows world indicators of skills for employment, sets up frameworks and supports research. Annually, the OECD publishes from 300 to 500 books in addition to reports, statistics, and working papers.

The organisation regularly turns to the skills analyses[3]. In the OECD 'Skills for a Digital World' (2016), there are various groups of skills that are needed, including technical and professional skills, ICT generic skills, soft skills such as leadership, communication and teamwork skills[4]. New skills are a must in the increasingly digital world. 'Government must help ensure that an increasingly digital world yields better quality jobs and that both employers and workers have the means to take advantage of the new job opportunities that open up'[5]. The document enumerates priority changes in skill policies to promote growth: (1) to ensure that basic ICT skills are acquired in within the initial education; (2) education must better anticipate skill needs and guide students towards better learning outcomes; (3) skills needed for the digital economy should be used by employers as well as employees; (4) employers and employees ought to be ready and motivated to get re-skilled and up-skilled any time as skill demands tend to change.

EU Initiatives Relating to Skills and Competencies

In 1991, the European Language Portfolio was designed to support the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) within the Language Learning for European Citizenship project. The latter aimed to mediate learning, teaching and assessing European languages to all learners and teachers. At the same time, the uniform EU system of validation of language aptitude was set up.

The European Language Portfolio offers its own framework of levels of aptitude (A1-A2-B1-B2-C1-C2) and culture- and language-related skills, including at the moment 544 skills that are still not exhaustive. Language learning implies four basic capabilities (also called skills), i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The foundation of any language aptitude is described as communication skills, consisting of sub-competencies of grammatical skills, sociolinguistic skills, discourse skills, and strategic skills. The practical outcome of the European Language Portfolio covers all kind of certificates for learners of languages issued within the EU with the stated levels of language aptitude.

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[1] *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative For Educational Reform. An Open Letter to the American People. A Report to the Nation and the Secretary of Education*. (1983). Institute of Education Sciences (ERIC). Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED226006

[2] *The Excellence Movement in Education and Lessons from History*. (1985). Institute of Education Sciences (ERIC). Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED289236.

[3] OECD (2016). *Skills for a Digital World: 2016 Ministerial Meeting on the Digital Economy Background Report*, OECD Digital Economy Papers, No. 250, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5jlwz83z3wnw-en.
OECD (2016). *Getting Skills Right: Anticipating and Responding to Changing Skill Needs*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264252073-en
OECD (2015). *OECD Skills Outlook 2015: Youth, Skills and Employability*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264234178-en.

[4] Ibid.

[5] OECD (2016). *Skills for a Digital World: 2016 Ministerial Meeting on the Digital Economy Background Report*, OECD Digital Economy Papers, No. 250, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5jlwz83z3wnw-en.

The European Union adopted several directives to launch new educational technologies which encourage new teaching and learning techniques in developing soft skills. To unify all competencies and skills across all EU countries, a new document, called 'Europass of Skills' was introduced in 2004 by the European Parliament and the Council. It is issued in 26 languages of the EU and enables EU citizens to freely migrate within the Single European Market. All skills and competencies are defined and listed as an EU general framework. The EU labour market, thus, had got more 'single' in the sense of uniform employers' requirements (qualifications and skills) towards new hires. The Europass documents skills to find a job or training in the EU countries or validate skills.

Another important document turned up in 2006. It was 'The key Competences for Lifelong Learning – A European Framework' (an annex to a Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council)[6]. The Reference Framework sets out eight key competences: 1) communication in the mother tongue; 2) communication in foreign languages; 3) mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology; 4) digital competence; 5) learning to learn; 6) social and civic competences; 7) sense of initiative and entrepreneurship; 8) cultural awareness and expression[7].

Key Competencies under the Education for Sustainable Development Concept

The concept of sustainable development came to the fore in the late 1980-s within the United Nations (UN). It emerged as a response to climate change, disaster risks, environmental degradation, resources depletion, destruction of habitats. Previously, the mankind had already made attempts at non-systematical measures and policies to improve the environmental interaction and protection. At all stages, it was education that became the hub of all social change in the approaches and attitudes towards the nature. 'Sustainability's increased prominence in higher education is demonstrated by the growing number of academic programs …' (Wick, Withycombe & Redman, 2011).

Wals (2012) put forward a historic timeline, describing the relationship between people and the planet reflected in education. The periods as responses to human interactions with nature correspond to advances in technologies and the industrial revolution at the outset. Starting from 2015, the latest period is, thus, described as 'Environmental and Sustainability Education' (intentional communities, local food movements, shared economies, etc.). It followed the previous 'Sustainability Education' with citizen engagement, participation in sustainable development, and better understanding of the interconnections of the world (Wals, 2012). At present, universities are beginning to serve as the hubs of sustainability awareness.

The education for sustainable development aims to transform the mindset of the society towards sharing the responsibility for the future of the planet. To efficiently achieve the goal, it is vital to turn to transgressive, or transformative learning and develop a host of skills and competencies, enabling people to solve environmentally important problems and lead an environmentally aware way of life. 'Through education, students gain insight into an environmental problem, its consequences and the types of actions required to address it' (Wals & Benevot, 2017).

'The educational literature on competencies, in general, and competencies in sustainability, in particular, entails a great deal of terminological ambiguity' (Wick, Withycombe & Redman, 2011). Most researchers overlap in defining key competencies for sustainability as 'critically important for sustainability efforts, distinguishing them from those of other professions and academic programs' (Wick, Withycombe & Redman, 2011). Based on the comprehensive analysis of the literature, Wick et al. (2011) outlined the following key competencies essential in education for sustainable development: synthesized sustainability research and problem-solving, systems-thinking competence, anticipatory competence, normative competence, strategic competence, and interpersonal competence.

Employability Skills: Hard Skills vs Soft Skills

Employers' requirements reflect the actual demand for labour in the economy. They cover the essential qualifications, experiences, hard and soft skills, attributes and traits of potential employees. 'Employability subsumes a host of person-centered constructs needed to deal effectively with the career-related changes occurring in today's economy' (Fugate, Kinicki & Ashforth, 2004), with soft skills coming to the front line.

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[6] The key Competences for Lifelong Learning – A European Framework. Retrieved from http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2006/l_394/l_39420061230en00100018.pdf

[7] Ibid., p.3.

In the various national and international contexts, the concept of soft skills reflects the social demand in the exact circumstances. The requirements determine the taxonomy used in every context. Whereas hard skills are more or less defined and clear-cut for various occupations, soft skills still exist mainly as 'laundry lists', with much uncertainty and overlapping in definitions and taxonomy.

In our previous research on soft skills, articles, grey literature (reports by governmental institutions and international organisations), and official frameworks were thoroughly considered to find out that there are three major clusters of skills and attributes of soft skills that are included in most classifications. They cover (1) **social and communicative skills** (communicative skills, interpersonal skills, teamwork and leadership, social intellect, responsibility, ethics of communication); (2) **cognitive skills** (critical thinking, problem-solving skills, innovative thinking, intellectual load management skills, skills of learning, information skills, time management skills); (3) **personal attributes and emotional intellect** (emotional intellect, integrity, optimism and positive thinking, flexibility, creativity, motivation, empathy) (Raitskaya & Tihkonova, 2018). Soft skills are developed in learning and substantially hinged on modes of learning (Nikitina & Furuoka, 2012).

Suleman in her literature review (2016) concludes that researchers and policy makers … remain uncertain about graduate skills that match workplace requirements and foster employability. She adds that 'the employers' perceptions play a key role in the definition of the required skills for graduates. Thus, universities and higher education at large will have to go a long and uneasy way to meet the employability standards.

Table 1
Skills Frameworks: Scope and Appliance

Skills Frameworks & Concepts	Period or Year of Concept Introduction	Scope and Commentary
21st Century Skills	1981 (US)	Launched by the US Department of Education, spread to Canada, the UK, New Zealand, then to other OECD countries The report 'A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform' (1983) stated • *A Need for a Learning Society;* • *Five New Basics (English, maths, science, computer science, social studies);* • *Other Important Subjects;* • *Skills and Abilities (mainly learning skills, digital skills, and career & life skills)*
Life Skills	1999 (WHO), 2012 (UNICEF)	abilities to meet life demands and challenges, also known as psychosocial competency
Skills for a Digital World	2016 (OECD)	ICT generic skills, ICT specialist skills, ICT complementary skills, and foundation skills§
European Language Portfolio	1989-2011 (EU)	developed by the Language Policy Programme of the Council of Europe and linked to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The documents provide information on language curricula, assessment instruments, the skills acquired by L2 learners and the levels of the language proficiency in the EU languages
Europass of Skills	2004 (EU)	soft skills for digital and innovative activities
Key Competences for Lifelong Learning	2006 (EU)	Adopted as an annex to a Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council
Education for Sustainable Development Skills	2015 (UN)	skills to solve environmentally important problems and lead an environmentally aware way of life
Soft Skills	early 2000s	a combination of skills and personal attributes necessary for efficient performance in most job
Employability Skills	early 2000s	personal and professional skills, experiences and attributes enabling people to get a job. Sets may vary depending on the economy segment

The studies of skills, skills frameworks, and employability are on the rise in education and other social sciences as the themes address the challenges emerging in the society and economy at large. The more research, the better understanding of the intrinsic processes we will possess. JLE sees the above topics as relevant and essential in respect to the JLE scope and mission.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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Teacher Beliefs about Students' Use of Cohesion in Writing: What Does the Textual Evidence Reveal?

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Despite an extensive research base in the domain of analyses for academic writing, a study of how pedagogic perceptions are revealed in students' actual writing performance is relatively an under-researched area. This study aimed at finding out the relationships between teachers' beliefs and textual evidence in regard to students' use of cohesion in academic writing. Structured questionnaire and open-ended interviews were used to gauge teachers' perceptions about the subject. Cohesion analysis of the samples of students' academic essays was performed and collated with the teachers' perceptions. The results revealed statistically significant correlations between pedagogic perceptions as well as between textual manifestations of cohesion use in the sample texts. Both agreement and disagreement were observed between what teachers believed about students' ability to use cohesion as a text-forming resource and the textual analysis of cohesion. The study proposes a review of pedagogic practices with focus on academic writing literacy as well as a further research initiative with a larger sample to conduct a micro-level analysis of cohesion to be collated with both teachers' and students' beliefs.

Keywords: academic writing; cohesion analysis; mixed-methods; teacher perceptions; text analysis

Introduction

Analyses of students' writing is a common teacher-task across academia, and serves as a basis for making decisions in regard to planning, delivery, and assessment of the writing products (Pery-Woodley, 1991). It is, therefore, crucial that the analyses are premised on a sound framework duly supported by appropriate analytical instruments. Developing an analytical framework is, however, challenged by the intricacies in defining a workable construct for writing (Weigle, 2002). The contemporary notion of academic writing as being situated in the cognitive, socio-cultural, and linguistic paraphernalia (Hyland, 2006) was probably first echoed by White (1985) who proposed analyses of academic writing for either being a textual entity or for explaining the cognitive processes involved in the production or for the contextual and functional properties that make the text a communicative act. This partially explains why writing is considered a difficult skill since the complexity inherent in developing a workable construct poses serious challenges in creating a scientifically reliable analytical framework. Analyses of writing become even more formidable when the construct is put to multidimensional investigation. For instance, a purely linguistic analysis of a text alongside the cognitive processes that helped create it or the contextual factors that led to the composition of a certain text-type could be a hard task for the investigator. Researchers have employed mixed methods and triangulation techniques to overcome the issues of textual analyses based on multiple paradigms. Surveys, interviews, panel discussions, think-aloud protocols, content analysis, and discourse analysis to name a few are being used selectively in a single study to arrive at empirically reliable and valid findings. A huge stock of research with foci on text analysis triangulated by pedagogic and learning experiences in the form of surveys, interviews, think-aloud protocols, etc. on a variety of textual features is available. However, a study of how teachers' beliefs about students' use of a specific discourse feature, for example cohesion, collate with the textual evidence seems to be a relatively under-researched area. Such an investigation can have viable implications for academic writing pedagogy, learning, course design, assessment, and analysis.

"The collection and analysis of language data", which is also the focus of present study, "is a highly specialized

applied linguistic task, and several sub-disciplines - for example, language testing/assessment, discourse analysis, conversation analysis, and corpus linguistics have been developed to help to conduct the processing of such data" (Dorneyi, 2007 p.19). Such data collection and data analysis complexity can be effectively handled through the use of a mixed-methods approach. As stated earlier, a mixed-approach can be used to enhance the strengths and control the weaknesses of the research methods employed in a single study. This approach in all its forms eliminates researcher bias and limitations associated with certain data collection techniques (Maxwell, 2005). Dorneyi (2007) illustrates this point by suggesting that context-specificity and unrepresentative sampling in qualitative research can be made bias free if the selection of the qualitative participants is based on the results of an initial representative survey. Similarly, in language analysis, for instance, researchers may want to investigate a typical language feature such as the use of cohesive devices in academic essays for its inherent characteristics as well as incidence and frequency. They can use a large sample of language data and then describe or interpret complex matters by simply using numbers to express meaning, and words to express numbers. Since mixed methods have the potential of adding "rigour, breadth, and depth" to the investigation (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998 p.4), one can expect research findings that are more reliable and valid as they would have been in either quantitative or qualitative research alone. Not only this, data collection and analysis from multiple resources - triangulation - can also increase the generalizability or external validity of a study. This assumes that results obtained from multiple data collection and data analysis tools are likely to be welcomed by audiences with divergent research perspectives.

Multiple sources of data collection are commonly used in large-scale studies (Cheng, et.al., 2007); however, a combination of two to three research instruments such as the surveys, interviews, content analysis, etc. could be suitable for a small-scale research. Interviews and questionnaires are the two most frequently used sources of collecting qualitative data (Dörnyei, 2007). Interviews are arranged to "appraise someone's condition" Arikunto (2013 p.198) by gathering information in regard to his/her perceptions, etc. about the variable under investigation. Block, (2000) in Alshenqeeti, (2014 p.42) argues that the interviews in linguistic research aim "to take research participants 'at their word' …[that is] to offer a presentation of the data plus content analysis, but no problematization of the data themselves or the respective roles of interviewers and interviewees".

Similarly, questionnaires are a very convenient and time-saving form of data collection from a larger sample (Brown, 2001; Jordan, 1997). According to Brown (2001) and Gillham (2000) face-to-face, group, and online administration of the questionnaires can yield a higher response rate than through other methods of collection such as self-administered where questionnaires are posted to the respondents. One major weakness of questionnaires is that the participants can misinterpret both the open statements and structured/semi-structured items. In addition, low turnout of participant response is another threat. Questionnaires are also vulnerable to incomplete responses or misinterpretation of the items (Gillham, 2000).

Analyses of students' writing in academic contexts have been done from multiple perspectives such as the Contrastive Rhetoric (e.g. Conner, 1996; Kaplan, 1966); Systemic Functional Linguistics (e.g. Halliday, 1996; Halliday & Hasan, 1976; Halliday & Mathiessen, 2004; Martin, 1992; Eggins, 2004); Genre studies (e.g. Paltridge, 2014; Swales, 1990); English for Academic Purposes (e.g. Hyland, 2006), etc. For an analysis of cohesion, Halliday and Hasan's (1976) analyses are generally regarded as the starting point for any discussion on the subject. Hasan (1984) proposes the use of cohesion analysis to observe the system of cohesive ties that function within the text. These ties are lexico-grammatical resources, which create textual unity and texture by associating elements within the text to each other.

Halliday and Hasan' s (1976) framework, which this study proposes to use for cohesion analysis, identifies Grammatical Cohesion based on Reference, Substitution, Ellipsis, Conjunctions, and Lexical Cohesion based on Reiteration and Collocation as the main cohesion categories with further sub-categorization of each to count 18 cohesive devices in total. "Reference", according to Halliday and Hasan (1976, p.31), is an item that "instead of being interpreted semantically makes reference to something else for interpretation", and is classed as personal, demonstrative, and comparative. A reference device can be endophoric, with referent being situated inside the text, or exophoric, which is present in the context of situation. For a reference device to be cohesive, it must be endophoric, regardless of whether it is cataphoric (referring forward) or anaphoric (referring backward). Substitution is realized in a word or phrase at the 'lexicogrammatical level' Halliday and Hasan (1976, p.89) and "the substitute item has the same structural function as that for which it substitutes" (ibid). There are three types of Substitution: nominal, verbal, and clausal, which are realized through the use of "one, ones, same",

"do", and "so, not" respectively. Ellipsis, on the other hand, is "substitution by zero" (Halliday & Hasan, 1976 p.89).Bloor and Bloor (2013, p.99), consider Ellipsis" omission of words, groups, or clauses", that occurs in the same grammatical settings as substitution, and likewise can be "*nominal, verbal*, and *clausal*". A Conjunction is a word or phrase that connects clauses or elements of the text and has the potential to create meaningful relationship between them. Halliday and Hassan (1976) categorized Conjunctions as *additive, adversative, causal*, and *temporal,* but later Halliday and Matthiessen (2004 p.535) changed their taxonomy to bring these types under the broader category of a "logico-semantic system of the English clause": elaboration, extension, and enhancement.

Lexical cohesion refers to the "cohesive effect of the use of lexical items in discourse where the choice of an item relates to the choices that have gone before" Bloor and Bloor (2013 p. 101). In other words, Lexical cohesion is about the use of content words and sequencing of events to create consistent links between the text and context (Eggins: 2004). Halliday and Hasan's (1976) original classification of Lexical cohesion was based on Reiteration and Collocation. Reiteration included Repetition, Synonym, Superordinates, and General Nouns. Table 1 illustrates Halliday and Hasan's (1976) cohesion categories and sub-categories with examples:

Table 1
Halliday and Hassan's (1976) cohesion categories

Grammatical Cohesion	Type of Tie	Examples
Reference	Personal	If the buyer wants to know the condition of the property, he has to have another survey carried out on his own. p.47
	Demonstrative	We went to the opera last night. That was our first outing for months. p.60
	Comparative	Most people have the same breakfast every day. p.80
Substitution	Nominal	These biscuits are stale. Get some fresh ones. p.92
	Verbal	Does she sing? Yes, she does. p.127
	Clausal	Everyone seems to think he's guilty. If so, no doubt he'll offer to resign. p.134
Ellipsis	Nominal	The milk couldn't be used. All was sour. p.155
	Verbal	She intends to come. - She won't. p.190
	Clausal	The car is running very well. - Yes, I had it serviced recently. p. 209
Conjunction	Additive	And in all this time he met no one.
	Adversative	Yet he was hardly aware of being tired.
	Causal	So by night time the valley was far below him.
	Temporal	Then, as dusk fell, he sat down to rest. p.238-239
Lexical Cohesion	Type of Tie	Examples
Reiteration	Repetition	I turned to the ascent of the peak. The ascent is perfectly easy.
	Synonym	I turned to the ascent of the peak. The climb is perfectly easy.
	Superordinate	I turned to the ascent of the peak. The task is perfectly easy.
	General Noun	I turned to the ascent of the peak. The thing is perfectly easy. p.279
Collocation	Collocation	Why does this little boy wriggle all the time? Girls don't wriggle. p.285

Cohesion from the perspective of a text analysis system has the potential to explain how and why a text is written in a specific way, and why and how a text is interpreted in a certain way. In fact, text interpretation depends on coherence, which is a "*mental phenomenon* rather than a property of the spoken or written text, or of the social situation» (Gernsbacher & Givón, 1995 p.1). Text comprehension from this perspective is a negotiation between the writer's cognition and the text on the one hand, and between the text and the reader's mental representation of the writer's product, on the other. This brings in the role of cohesion as a variable of writing quality and text comprehension, which has been supported (e.g. Liu & Braine, 2005) and refuted (e.g. McNamara, et al., 2010) by various research studies. Studies that consider cohesion to be a determinant of writing quality are based on the premise that cohesion through its co-referential and co-classificatory devices establishes semantic associations between and across clauses, which in turn facilitate a reader's comprehension of the text. Previous research has shown that both local (links between sentences) and global cohesion (links between paragraphs) features account for text quality and coherence (Crossley, et al., 2019 p.173). Modern studies on cohesion especially from

the Natural Language Processing (NLP) perspective, however, refute this belief. McNamara et al. (2010), for instance, claim that this is true only of low-proficiency readers. High-proficiency readers with advanced-level inference skills for deciphering the implicit meaning do not depend on text-internal clues such as the cohesive devices. For expert readers, cohesion may produce a "reverse cohesion effect" and is, therefore, not crucial to text interpretation (Crossley &McNamara, 2011 p.174). All things being equal, the role of cohesion in creating text coherence establishes its status as an essential lexico-grammatical resource for creating texture in the text, which is, in fact, a requisite for a text to be defined as such (Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

Using perceptions to investigate different aspects of language use has been the focus of various studies in applied linguistics research. Harlow and Muyskens (1994) surveyed French and Spanish teachers' perceptions about the use of literature in language teaching. The respondents put literature in the11th position for its usefulness in language teaching. In a study with a similar focus, Yang (2001 p.459) employed questionnaires and interviews to study literature-oriented language teaching classes. The researcher was able to elicit from the participants that engagement with discussing a novel was 'more "substantial" than simply answering grammar questions'. Erdosy (2004) in Ruegg and Sugiyama (2013) applied think-aloud protocols to compare the assessment performance of four raters on a TOEFL exam. Similarly, MacIntyre (2007) in Ruegg and Sugiyama (2013 p.3)conducted think-aloud protocols to find out if the grading scale that was based on an analytic framework proved reliable in assessing writing. The respondents had to speak out about their beliefs about text structure including introduction, body, and conclusion; cohesion and coherence through transitions; and the number of paragraphs in an essay. The results revealed that the respondents (the raters) believed that the grading scale under investigation had the common features they adhered to when "rating writing for organization".

Ahmad (2010) used survey and semi-structured interviews to gauge Egyptian student-teachers problems with cohesion and coherence while composing academic essays. The participants felt that learning to write academically was more challenging than developing other language skills. Vavla and Gokaj's (2013) research in Albania was about learners' beliefs in regard to self-assessment. They reported that assessment was predominantly teacher-led with students having no involvement of any sort. A study by Cheng et al (2015) gathered Chinese students' beliefs about the relationship between assessment tasks and assessment context. The findings revealed that strategic learning and student counseling predicted a positive correlation between the learning-based classroom assessment context, while this association was statistically negative between the performance-based classroom and assessment setting. Agcam and Babanoglu (2016) studied students' perceptions of language assessment practices in Turkey, the types of examinations, types of testing items, and language skills being assessed. Studies by Mellati and Khademi (2018) and Sultana (2019) used semi-structured interviews to gauge the assessment literacy level of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Iran and Bangladesh respectively, and concluded that the teachers' literacy greatly impacts students' writing development and teachers' pedagogic skills. However, there seems to be a dearth of research in the domain of cohesion analysis, which empirically collates pedagogic perceptions with the textual evidence.

Aims and significance of the study

The primary aim of this study was to determine the extent to which teachers' perceptions about the use of cohesion in academic writing, as obtained through the structured questionnaires and open-ended interviews, collate with textual manifestations. The study is expected to present an opportunity for a replica study to those interested in collating perceptual data with textual evidence not only in regard to cohesion use, but also from other text-formation sources. The study is also likely to provide some useful insights into the issues relating to writing pedagogy literacy and learners' use of text-forming resources.

Materials and Methods

Research design

The research design for this study was based on the notion of homogenous sampling - a type of purposive sampling, because its units share the same characteristics or traits. A homogeneous sample is often chosen when the research question is specific to the characteristics of the particular group of interest, which is subsequently examined in detail (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The first step in this regard was to design a survey and a

set of open-ended questions for the interview. The survey included eight structured items created on the Likert Scale to elicit teachers' beliefs about students' use of cohesion in writing. There were also two open-ended questions to be used for the interview. Next, EFL teachers in the Arab EFL context were asked to complete the survey via online tool SurveyMonkey. Email and social media sites such as the Facebook and LinkedIn were used to reach out to the participants. For interviews (n=30), colleagues and acquaintance at Yanbu English Language Institute (YELI), University of Jeddah, and King Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia were polled. However, before the administration of the survey and the interviews, the participants were given a consent form to participate in the study and were assured anonymity and confidentiality. They were free to opt out of the study at any point without any prior notice. The next step was to collect writing samples to triangulate the data obtained from the survey and the interviews, and to ascertain the extent to which these pedagogic beliefs collated with the actual writing performance of the students. The author decided to collect examination scripts, which were assumed to reveal students' actual writing proficiency. For the collection of the sample texts, formal permission was obtained from the coordinator of the undergraduate programme at YELI. As such, academic essays (n=30) from the midterm and final examinations were collected for this study. Halliday and Hasan's (1976) framework was chosen for a cohesion analysis of the sample texts. The author decided to use Statistical Procedures for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to analyze the data for both the descriptive and inferential statistics. The data collection and analysis procedures are presented below.

Participants

The participants included teachers in the Arab EFL context who were randomly chosen to complete a survey and attend an open-ended interview, and the Saudi undergraduate students of academic writing who produced the sample texts that were analyzed for cohesion properties to be triangulated with the teachers' beliefs. The author decided to reach out to the wider EFL teaching community for the collection of teacher perceptions through a structured online questionnaire so that responses beyond the Saudi context could be studied. The English language teaching community in Saudi Arabia was composed of the Native English speakers, non-Arab Arabic speakers, and non-native English speakers with qualifications ranging from bachelor's degrees to a PhD. A good number also had CELTA or similar other teaching qualifications. Similarly, they had varying lengths of English language teaching experience. As for the teacher interviews, for the sake of convenient access, 16 teachers from the ELCY, 12 from the English Language Institute, University of Jeddah (my current workplace), and two from the English Language Institute, King Abdul Aziz University, Jeddah were interviewed. Only teachers who had or were teaching academic writing were targeted. This was also compatible with the norms of purposive/homogeneous sampling since the subjects were assumed to be knowledgeable about the topic and shared common features in regard to their professional practice.

The students who wrote the sample essays in an examination setting were all male monolingual students aged 21 to 23 from Saudi Arabia who shared the same culture despite differences in social class or family background. Before starting this undergraduate academic writing course, all had completed two semesters of English language training in the Foundation Year Programme, which trained them in the four language skills. In addition, they had also completed compulsory modules on "Report Writing" and "Communication Skills" at the Associate Diploma level, which lead to their enrolment in the undergraduate programme. After passing the Foundation and the Associate Degree courses over two years, these students, subject to merit qualification with 60% minimum for English course scores at the Associate Degree level, were enrolled in the undergraduate programme in different subject specialisations, such as Mechanical Technology, Electrical Technology, Chemical Technology, etc. They completed one semester of Academic Writing I module ENG 301 before they were offered Academic Writing II ENG 302. The texts for the present research were collected from midterm or final examination scripts of students of ENG 302. The choice of a purposive or homogeneous sample referred to in the previous section seemed appropriate because these students had gone through the same English language training for more than two and a half years at one institute, were from the same lingual and cultural background, were of basically the same age group, and shared the same academic interests, i.e. to graduate successfully in their respective discipline.

Instruments

The subsections below detail the research instruments that were used in the study.

Survey questionnaire. The survey design was developed keeping in view the analytical framework (Halliday & Hasan, 1976) and pedagogic context to build in greater reliability and validity. As such, eight items were created and coded (Table T-1) to elicit teachers' beliefs about the use of cohesion in academic writing. Survey question 1 (SQ1) and 2 (SQ2) gathered information about the respondents' beliefs about the use of Personal and Demonstrative/Comparative Reference respectively. SQ3 and SQ4 aimed at collecting data about Substitution and Ellipsis while SQ5 and SQ6 measured teachers' opinions about students' use of the Conjunctives. However, the terms "Coordinators" and "Subordinators" were used for the Conjunctives because they were taught as such. Halliday and Hasan (1976) segregate Lexical cohesion as being based on Reiteration and Collocation, and SQ7 was created to collect information about reiteration and SQ8 about Collocation. EFL teachers (n=112) in the Arab context completed the survey on "SurveyMonkey".

Interviews. Interviews as a research instrument are considered a valid and reliable form of obtaining information about a respondent's perceptions (Johnson & Turner, 2003). Two open-ended questions were designed for the teachers' interviews (n=30).
1. Do you think Arab EFL students use cohesive devices effectively to create appropriate academic texts? If yes, what strengths and weaknesses have you found in students' use of cohesive devices?
2. What would you suggest to help students make effective use of cohesive devices in academic writing?

Interview question 1 was designed to elicit teachers' beliefs about students' use of cohesive devices in academic writing in regard to their strengths and weaknesses. Interview question 2 was created to measure pedagogic experiences in respect to academic writing and cohesive devices. The interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, colour-coded, and then put to analysis. Recurring themes were grouped and measured for their frequency and percentage to see the prominent trends. Following this procedure, answers to the two interview questions were found and the results were collated with the cohesion analysis of the sample texts.

Cohesion analysis. Cohesion analysis was modeled on Halliday and Hasan's (1976) framework, and premised on measures of accuracy, misuse, and overuse of cohesive devices (CDs). I applied sentence unit (SU) analysis as Halliday and Hasan (1976) employed in the original study. Instances of appropriate, inappropriate (ambiguous), and overused CDs in each SU was marked and coded as belonging to any of the five main cohesion types i.e. Reference, Substitution, Ellipsis, Conjunction, and Lexical cohesion. In addition, cohesive items per SU and the text, as well as the presupposed item, which helped to establish the cohesive link, were also marked and coded. This data was segregated to identify the appropriate, inappropriate, and overused cohesive devices and explain their behaviour in the sample texts. For the purposes of analysis, appropriate cohesive ties were those that manifested clarity of meaning through a co-referential relationship with the presupposed item. Cox et al's (1991) measure was used to analyze inappropriate use, which is for cohesion items with an ambiguous meaning, that are implicit, or are too distant to relate co-referentially with the presupposing item. Based on Gilquin, et al's (2007, p. 322) criteria, items that are used more than three times and could otherwise be substituted by another linguistic entity were considered overused cohesive devices.

Results

Descriptive statistics on SPSS was run to obtain sum, mean, standard deviation, median, and interquartile range scores, and non-parametric correlation analysis for the survey and the cohesion analysis of the sample texts. Similarly, percentage scores were also obtained to further explain the teachers' perceptions as elicited in the interviews and behaviour of cohesive devices in the sample texts. The subsections below present results for the survey questionnaire, interviews, and cohesion analysis of the sample texts.

Survey questionnaire (SQ)

SQ8*"Students can use Collocations appropriately"* ($M = 3.60$; $SD = .741$; $Mdn = 4.00$; $IQR = 1$) revealed the highest level of agreement (64%), while SQ1 "*Students can use Personal Reference appropriately.*" had the highest proportion of disagreement (48%) ($M = 2.77$; $SD = .831$; $Mdn = 3.00$; $IQR = 1$). Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics for each of the statements of the survey.

Table 2
Descriptive analysis of the survey

| | Survey items | Code | Teachers' Perceptions (N = 112) | | |
		M	SD	Mdn	IQR
1	Students can use Personal Reference appropriately.	SQ1	2.77	.831	3.00	1
2	Students can use Demonstrative and Comparative Reference appropriately.	SQ2	3.10	.934	3.00	2
3	Students can use Substitution appropriately.	SQ3	3.58	.882	4.00	1
4	Students can use Ellipsis (omission of a word, phrase, or clause) appropriately	SQ4	3.50	.971	4.00	1
5	Students can use Coordinators appropriately.	SQ5	3.31	.794	3.00	1
6	Students can use Subordinators appropriately	SQ6	3.47	.751	4.00	1
7	Students can use Reiteration (Repetition, Synonyms, Superordinates, General Words) appropriately.	SQ7	3.27	.852	3.00	1
8	Students can use Collocations appropriately.	SQ8	3.60	.741	4.00	1

Correlation analysis of the survey items

Spearman rho (r_s) for the teachers' survey revealed that only SQ5 and SQ6, $r_s = .679$, $p < .01$ had a strong positive correlation. Other significant positive associations found ranged from weak to moderate, such as between SQ2 and SQ7, $r_s = .195$, $p < .05$, between SQ1 and SQ3, $r_s = .260$, $p < .01$, between SQ1 and SQ5, $r_s = .448$, $p < .01$, and between SQ8 and SQ7, $r_s = .515$, $p < .01$. The results revealed that there were weak, moderate, and strong chances of a perception score increasing, with an increase in the score of the correlating item on the questionnaire.

Results for interview question 1 (IQ1)

For interview question 1, three variables were identified and therefore, three types of responses were collected. The first type was designed to ascertain the extent to which the teachers thought Arab EFL students were proficient or deficient in the use of cohesive devices in academic essays as well as their strengths and weaknesses in regard to the use of cohesive devices. Table 3 shows that 56.66% of the 30 respondents thought that the Arab EFL students were unable to make effective use of cohesive devices in their academic texts. However, 43.33% of the teachers believed that some students could use cohesive devices in their writing.

Table 3
Teachers' response to students' ability to use CDs

CD Ability of Use	% (N=30)
Deficient	56.66
Conditional Use	43.33

Table 4 reveals that teachers could identify only four strengths with 13 responses as opposed to nine areas of weakness receiving 72 responses. The highest score (53.84%) was found for "Cohesive devices". "Cognition" with the score of 23.07% and "Arab culture" with the score of 15.38% were identified as strengths contributing to the use of cohesive devices in academic writing. The lowest in strength category was "Lexical range", which achieved only 7.69%.

Table 4
Teachers' response to students' strengths in the use of CDs

CD Strength area	% (N=13)
Grammatical Accuracy	0
Lexical Range	7.69
Cohesive Devices	53.84
Arabic Culture	15.38
Cognition	23.07

The scores for weaknesses in the use of cohesive devices as illustrated in Table 5, on the other hand, were more varied and scattered. Four responses scored 10% or higher while the remaining five responses fell below this scale. The highest percentage was 25% for "Cohesion" followed by "Language proficiency", "Functional use", and "Grammatical accuracy" at 18.05%, 12.5%, 11.11% respectively. Only 8.33% of the teachers' responses mentioned "Paragraph organization". Quite interestingly, "Lexical range", "Curriculum matters", and "Arab culture" were all at 6.94%. The lowest response was 5.55% for "Cognition".

Table 5
Teachers' response to reasons for students' weaknesses in the use of CDs

CD Weakness area	% (N=72)
Grammatical Accuracy	11.11
Lexical Range	6.94
Paragraph Organization	8.33
Cohesive Devices	25
Curriculum Matters	6.94
Functional Use	12.5
Arabic Culture	6.94
Cognition	5.55
Language Proficiency	18.05

Results for interview question 2

Interview question 2was generated to measure teachers' beliefs about the role of pedagogy in helping students to make effective use of cohesive devices in academic writing. A total of 75 responses was received from 30 respondents. Table 6 reveals that except for "Lexical base" (4.16%), all other responses were quite prominent. The highest score (21.33%) was seen for "Reading" and "Syllabus design" followed by "Teaching" at 20.83%. Similarly, 19.44% of the responses mentioned "Practice" and 15.27% said "Contextual factors".

Table 6
Teacher beliefs about pedagogic effects

CDs	% (N=75)
Reading	21.33
Practice	19.44
Teaching	20.83
Lexical Base	4.16
Syllabus Design	21.33
Contextual Factors	15.27

Cohesion analysis

Cohesion analysis (*M = 381. 20; SD = 84.076; Mdn = 375.50; IQR = 166*) revealed (Table 7) that the number of words per texts (WPT) was not very consistent across the collected data and there was considerable variations among the number of words used by individual student writers in their essays. A total of 628 Sentence Units (SU) (*M= 20.93; SD = 3.999; Mdn = 21.00; IQR = 21.00*) were obtained in the 30 texts of the corpus. The results demonstrated that since there was not high variation in the number of SUs per text (SUPT), there was the possibility that some students wrote a larger proportion of simple sentences as compared to those who used compound or complex sentence structures. In addition, 1954 Cohesive Devices (CDs) were identified (*M= 65.13; SD = 17.202; Mdn = 64.50;IQR = 28*) in these student texts. The results indicated that the students used CDs per text (CDPT) with considerable degrees of variance in their essays.

Table 7
Descriptive statistics for the corpus

	WPT	**SUPT**	**CDPT**
Mean	381.20	20.93	65.13
Median	375.50	21.00	64.50
Std. Deviation	84.076	3.999	17.202
IQR	166	6	28

Table 8 shows the category distribution of CDs in the corpus. According to the results, the students felt most comfortable when using Lexical cohesion, which was found to be 49.38% (n=965) of the overall use of CDs (n= 1954) in the sample texts. The next category on the list was Reference, which students used in 712 instances in their writing i.e. 36.43% of the overall category use. Conjunctions (n= 247) were found in 12.64%,while Substitution and Ellipsis were only employed on 10 and 20 occasions in the texts, coming in at 1.02% and .50% respectively.

Table 8
Category distribution of CDs in students' academic writing

CDs	**N**	**%**
Reference	712	36.43%
Substitution	10	.50%
Ellipsis	20	1.02%
Conjunction	247	12.64%
Lexical Conjunction	965	49.38%

Non-parametric test for correlation among corpus variables

Kendall's Tau_b test revealed weak to moderate positive correlations between the three variables of the corpus. Based on the results, WPT showed a weak positive correlation with SUPT $r_t= .386, p < 0.01$, and a moderate positive correlation with CDPT $r_t=.585, p < 0.01$. SUPT was weakly and positively correlated with CDPT $r_t=.364, p < 0.01$. The results shown in Table 9 indicated that there was a weak positive linear increase in the number of sentences and a moderate positive increase in cohesive devices in regard to the text length.

Table 9
Corpus correlations

Kendall's tau_b		WPT	SUPT	CDPT
WPT	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.386**	.585**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.004	.000
SUPT	Correlation Coefficient	.386**	1.000	.364**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.	.006
CDPT	Correlation Coefficient	.585**	.364**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.006	.

SPSS was used to compute Kendall's tau-b correlations of WPT and SUPT with the main cohesion categories i.e. Reference (R), Substitution (S), Ellipsis (E), Conjunction (C) and Lexical cohesion (L), and that of these categories with the overall CDPT. The test results showed a significant moderate positive correlation between WPT and R $r_t = .521, p < .01$, and L $r_t = .453, p < .01$. On the other hand, SUPT showed a significant moderate positive correlation only with L $r_t = .426, p < .01$. There was a strong positive significant relationship between CDPT and total referential devices (TR) $r_t = .649, p < .01$ and between CDPT and total Lexical cohesion (TL) $r_t = .625, p < .01$. Among the correlations between CDPT categories, R was weakly but positively correlated with L $r_t = .306, p < .05$, S was also weakly but positively correlated with L $r_t = .337, p < .05$, E was weakly but positively correlated with R $r_t = .327, p < .05$, and weakly negatively correlated with C $r_t = -.381, p < .05$. The results showed that there was a moderate increase in the use of R and L in relation to increases in the text length. However, increases in sentence length were indicative of the use of a moderately higher number of lexical devices. Increases in the use of referential cohesion indicated moderate increases in the use of Ellipses and Lexical cohesion. Importantly though, the results also revealed that an increase in the CDPT was marked by a high increase in TR and TL as opposed to total conjunction devices (TC), which were widely dispersed over the corpus.

Appropriate and inappropriate use of CDs

The descriptive statistics results presented in Table 10 showed that the appropriate use (A) of CDs was far more pervasive than the inappropriate (IA) CDs, except for IAR (*M = 3.83; SD = 2.422; Mdn = 4.50; IQR = 5*). Similarly, Kendal's tau revealed that coefficient correlations between appropriate and inappropriate CDs were not statistically significant, except for AR and IAR, $r_t = .311, p < .05$, which showed a weak positive association between the two variables, indicating a weak linear increase in IAR with an increase in AR.

Table 10
Correlation analysis of appropriate & inappropriate CDs

	AR	IAR	AS	IAS	AE	IAE	AC	IAC	AL	IAL
Mean	19.90	3.83	.33	.00	.67	.00	7.63	.60	31.40	.77
Median	18.50	4.50	.00	.00	.00	.00	7.50	.00	32.00	.00
SD	8.903	2.422	.661	.000	.844	.000	3.690	1.248	9.633	1.813
IQR	16	5	1	0	1	0	6	1	15	1
Sum	597	115	10	0	20	0	229	18	942	23

Results for the overuse of CDs in students' writing

For the present study, the measure of overuse of CDs was an important variable in ascertaining the extent to which cohesion created texture in students' texts. Table 11 reveals that there was a considerable presence of overused (O) CDs in the sample texts. A total of 395 overused items were identified in the corpus of CDs (n= 1954). Lexical cohesion (*M= 10.33; SD= 8.206; Mdn = 10.00; IQR = 14*), with 310 instances, was the most excessively used device. The results indicated that Lexical cohesion was quite consistently distributed across the texts. This was followed by Reference (*M= 2.13; SD= 3.213; Mdn = .50; IQR = 4*) with 64 items and Conjunction (*M= .70; SD= 1.055; Med = .00; IQR = 1*) with only 21 devices. The presence of Reference and Conjunction in the texts was more widely scattered compared to Lexical cohesion. Lexical cohesion constituted 15.86% of the overuse in the corpus, followed by Reference (3.27%) and Conjunction (1.07%) respectively.

Table 11
Descriptive statistics for overuse of CDs

CDs	M	SD	Mdn	IQR	N	% of the corpus
OR	2.13	3.213	.50	4	64	3.27 %
OC	.70	1.055	.00	1	21	1.07 %
OL	10.33	8.206	10.00	14	310	15.86 %

Correlation analysis for the overused CDs

Kendal's tau found a moderate positive significant relationship between OR and CDPT $r_{t}=.400, p < .01$ and between OL and CDPT $r_{t}=.448, p < .01$. OR was found to be significant and moderately positively related with both TR $r_{t}=.519, p < .01$ and OL $r_{t}=.416, p < .01$. OC had a moderate positive significant correlation with TC $r_{t}=.513, p < .01$ whereas OL showed a moderate positive significant relationship with TL $r_{t}=.504, p < .01$ and a weak positive significant correlation with TR $r_{t}=.293, p < .05$. The results indicated that there were moderate chances of an increase in the number of OR and OL when there was an increase in CDPT. Moreover, a corresponding moderate increase in OR, OC, and OL was expected as TR, TC, and TL increased in number. The results also pointed towards a moderate increase in OR with an increase in OL, and a small increase in OL with an increase in TR.

Discussion

The majority of the teachers disagreed that "*Students can use personal reference appropriately.*" (SQ1) and a slightly smaller proportion stayed neutral. The results seem to both support and contradict the results of analysis for referential cohesion in students' essays. The fact that referential cohesion is the second most commonly used device after lexical cohesion and a high proportion is appropriately used refute teachers' perceptions. Additionally, the empirical evidence that referential cohesion has the highest proportion of inappropriate use and the second highest percentage of overuse in the corpus indicates that students have problems while using reference items as cohesive devices such as the ambiguous referent, wrong pronoun number for the antecedent, placing a pronoun between the noun and verb phrase due to negative transfer, etc. From the overall corpus of 1954 CDs, students employed 36.43% of referential cohesion, which supports Bae (2001) but contradicts Na's (2011) study where referential cohesion has the highest percentage of use in the texts. Saudi undergraduate students thus seem to be quite comfortable while using reference devices. This seems logical because the appropriate use of Reference (30.55%) clearly outnumbers the inappropriate use (5.88%).

The inappropriate use of reference devices, on the other hand, is not very frequent but reveals some very useful information about students' functional use of language in regard to the use of CDs. These results also collate with teachers' perceptions. These figures point out that the students' issues are mainly with the pronominals; however, there are a few challenges in regard to the accurate use of the demonstratives also. The excerpt (i) below taken from a student's essay is an instance of how the demonstrative "*those*" refers back to "*behavioral problems*" mentioned in the previous sentence but is inappropriate as it violates the notion of proximity by ignoring nearness to remoteness. Instead, "*these*" would have been the right choice. This is, however, a prescriptive view of the use of demonstratives that are generally taught in the classroom. From an SFL (Systemic Functional Linguistics) point of view, for instance, the deictically distant "*those*" can be a valid choice.

   i. *I think video games cause behavioral problmes in youth more than the small benefits they get. In the following paraghraphs i will write more details about* <u>*those*</u> *behavioral problmes and the other side of good effects.*

The teacher respondents were almost evenly divided in their agreement and disagreement with "*Students can use demonstrative and comparative reference appropriately.*" (SQ2). A relatively lower percentage was neutral. Teachers' perceptions about the use of article "*the*" seem justified not only because of its complexity of use but also because of the cultural and L1 influences. The use of the definite article in Arabic is different from that in English, which accounts for sometimes specifying a general noun without any previous mention or placing

where an omission is needed. One reason seems to be the teaching of "*the*" as a grammatical item like that of the conjunctives mentioned later in this discussion. Since "*the*" is notional as a cohesive item, teaching of "*the*" should be modeled as such.

The pronominal *"they"* has been excessively used in example (ii) while referring back to *"people"* and *"parents"*. This may be because the students could not conceive of an alternative syntactic structure where they might have avoided such overuse. Secondly, they appear context bound to use "*they*" repeatedly as they exhibit repetition of lexical items, which is a highly prominent aspect of these students' rhetorical strategy. The obvious implication is the focus on teaching pronouns explicitly as cohesive devices rather than as grammatical items so that the students could grasp the notion of referential cohesion in context.

> ii. *Saudi people is known by eating rice by hands but now day <u>they</u> start to eat by using spon and forke and also it changes the way <u>they</u> speak to people. when <u>they</u> are traviling a lot <u>they</u> will start to hear alot of people talking and <u>they</u> may take their accent or the way <u>they</u> speak.*

The next two items "*Students can use substitution appropriately.*" (SQ3) and "*Students can use ellipsis (omission of a word, phrase, or clause) appropriately*" (SQ4) revealed teachers' agreement, which is supported by the textual evidence in regard to the use of substitution and ellipses. The minimal use of both these devices in the corpus is supported by Bae's (2001) study, which had less than 1% of these devices. Some instances of the use of Substitution and Ellipsis are presented below:

> iii. *In conclusion, it is right that video games have a lot of bad affects more than the good ones [S1] but i am not saying the parents should not allow them to play at all.*

> iv. *Although some people got their money from their parents, many [E1] worked hard to reach where they are now.*

These students seem to be applying some of the fundamental uses of both Substitution and Ellipsis in these examples. They, in fact, save the writer from encoding and decoding repetitive information and lend the text a sort of maturity of expression and style. This aspect is evident in the examples where the substituted or the ellipted item is located in the linguistic context of the text. For instance, in (iii) the proform "*one*" substitutes "*effects*", which is in the immediate textual context and creates a relationship of the referent and the presupposed - a mandatory qualification for the cohesive relation to exist. Similarly, (iv) shows how students used nominal and clausal ellipsis to achieve cohesion in their writing.

Items SQ5 and SQ6 "*Students can use coordinators appropriately.*" and "*Students can use subordinators appropriately*" received a high percentage of agreement and a slightly lower neutral response from the teachers. This is collated by the results of the analysis and supported by Mahmoud (2014) and Mohamed (2016) who discovered 91% and 94% correctly used conjunctions in students' writing respectively.

> v. *They would pay all their money to get their health back even if they already have everything a normal person would dream of. <u>And</u> this exactly shows why money isn't the reason that can make you happy in your life.*

However, the most significant revelation is in the use of the additive "*and*" which is, in Arabic discourse, reportedly the most frequently occurring conjunctive in its category (Mohamed-Sayidina, 2010). This aspect was also reported in the interviews of teachers for the present study. In fact, Arab students do use "*and*" in recurring patterns but the use is mostly that of a coordinator, and as Halliday and Hasan (1976 p.233) suggest, it is "structural rather than conjunctive". It can, however, be used as an additive device when "the 'and' relation operates conjunctively, between sentences, to give cohesion to a text - or rather to create text, by cohering one sentence to another - it is restricted to just a pair of sentences (Halliday & Hasan, 1976 p.234). This restriction on the use of "*and*" as an additive conjunctive has serious implications for future research on cohesion, and calls for empirical distinction between the structural and conjunctive use of "*and*". The teachers refer to the limited range of cohesive devices the Arab students use in their writing; for instance, one teacher reported: "*They only use the simple cohesive devices; they are 'and' and 'but'. But when it comes to complex and complicated cohesive devices such as 'however, in addition, furthermore, or in contrast', they don't.*" Students' texts reveal a limited range

of the use of cohesive devices, as referred to earlier. In addition, some teachers point out that Arab students make frequent use of only those CDs which are common in both languages such as the additive "*and*", "*for example*", the adversative "*but*", the causal "*because*", the temporal "*first*", "*secondly*", etc., which is supported by the results of the text analysis. Example (vi) highlights an error of form since the student could not structure the proper conjunctive "on the other side/hand" - a problem also noted by one of the teachers responding to an interview question for the present study.

> vi. <u>In the other side,</u> *youth who are living in cities will definitely lose their identity.*

The last two statements "*Students can use reiteration (repetition, synonyms, superordinates, general nouns) devices appropriately.*" (SQ7) and "*Students can use collocations appropriately.*" (SQ8) aimed to measure teachers' opinions about lexical cohesion. Most of the teachers agreed with both the ideas while a relatively smaller number remained neutral. These perceptions contradict results of lexical cohesion analysis of students' writing that reveal a very high proportion of repetition of the same item as compared to other devices for reiteration such as synonyms, superordinates, and general words. Similarly, a very low percentage of collocations is observed in students' essays. A lack of the use of lexical cohesion, especially the excessive dependence on repeating the same lexical item points to needed changes in writing curriculum and pedagogy. These results are consistent with most research findings on lexical cohesion in EFL contexts, especially in Arab contexts (Abdul Rahman, 2013; Khalil, 1989; Liu & Braine, 2005; McGee, 2009). This is also supported by the teacher participants in their response to interview and questionnaire items where they agreed on students' ability to use repetition (L1) and inability to use Collocation (L5). The results of appropriate lexical cohesion, however, contradict Berzlánovich (2008), who found a higher frequency of errors in lexical devices. Example (vii) illustrates the use of collocations while (viii)is a typical instance of L1 transfer. Unlike the English (*adjective + noun*) structure, Arabic follows the (*noun + adjective*) pattern, and this is repeatedly reflected in students' writing; hence, expressions such as "*identity culture*" and "*styles life*" are common.

> vii. *And* <u>argue</u> *that there is too much testing in YIC. Although some students* <u>oppose </u>*this argument, I* <u>agree</u> *there is too much testing in YIC.*

> viii. *Now a days technology had become one of youth needs which helps them to lose their* <u>identity culture</u> *as it connect them with the open world and give them many ways and* <u>styles life</u>*.*

A slightly higher percentage of the teachers believed that the students do not use cohesive devices effectively to produce academic texts and so a higher proportion of weaknesses in the use of cohesion is identified compared with the strengths. This is in line with the general notion about Arab EFL students' writing proficiency. Some students have been reported to make use of their cognition while using CDs. As one respondent observed: "*But most of the time their memory works for them like they may memorize how to use that cohesive device but if just try to change the context they lose that memory and they may commit some mistakes*". On the other hand, some teachers suggested that the problem is not with CDs but with vocabulary: "*The ideas are stuck in their heads because they can't formulate them in English*". This implies that the students are challenged when they have to organize a text using CDs. They seem to have the ideas but cannot express themselves because of the limited lexical range. The texts unveil that they mostly write around the topic, repeat phrases before the content, and start giving examples using "*for example/instance*". They repeat ideas more than once, either to highlight the importance of the idea, to convince the reader, or simply because they do not have suitable vocabulary to help them formulate their ideas. Some teachers argued that background schooling is responsible for writing weaknesses including the CDs: "*I think the Arab students are not trained from the beginning to organize the building blocks in an orderly manner and construct an argument in a cohesive and coherent way*".

The teachers were also requested to suggest measures for improvement in the use of cohesive devices in academic writing. The highest percentage felt that reading is the most crucial missing link that impedes the effective use of CDs in students' writing. This is also evident in the limited lexical range shown by the high frequency of repetition of the same lexical item in students' essays. One respondent observed: "*I think reading - both intensive and extensive- of the authentic text of the written material will help them to imbibe the true structure of the language*". A similar comment further substantiated the need for developing reading habits among Arab EFL students: "*To remedy this issue, they need to read more in English because reading in English enriches the vocabulary and also exposes them to styles of writing*". A similar percentage also called for curricular changes to

help the students make better use of CDs: "*So there is a gap between the course expectations and the students' level. I haven't seen a single course and a single part of the syllabus which focuses specifically on cohesive devices*". The curriculum should be sensitive to the fact that once students reach the university level, they need to write a lot. The writing course design should explicitly provide instruction on text-forming resources such as cohesion. It is part of writing. So, if in general, the elements that are specific to aspects of writing are not being taken care of, writing as an academic and language skill is also not being taken care of

The teachers also mentioned "*practice*" and "*pedagogy*" as important variables in this context. For instance, the following comments illustrates this point: "*So why don't we teach students these cohesive devices explicitly giving them ample examples, because most of them they know them.*" and "*The more they practice, the more chances are there that they become proficient writers*." First, there is a need to train the students how to write a cohesive paragraph. They should be made to understand that cohesion is semantic not structural. In this context, focusing on language universals can prove useful. Cohesion, in academic contexts, should be taught in relation to domains such as the humanities adopting a genre-based approach, which trains students to adopt appropriate register for the target texts, thereby facilitating the appropriate use of CDs. There is also the need to focus on supra-sentential i.e. discourse features and the flow of thoughts and ideas.

A good number of teachers also refer to the contextual factors that can be counted upon such as revamping the examination system, and student placement in writing courses should be level appropriate. Students should be motivated to write. More research into writing problems is needed to identify areas of improvement. There is also need for writing centers so that EFL support systems could be made effectively functional. When we empower students in the class, we give them the power to express themselves, to defend their ideas.

Conclusion

The results of the questionnaires and interviews revealed some significant trends regarding teachers' beliefs about the teaching and learning of academic writing in Arab EFL contexts. There were statements showing that they agreed on some issues; however, they mostly disagreed. Similarly, data from the text analysis confirms as well as contradicts these perceptions. This reflects the purely academic orientation of the study, which involves an objective enquiry into the state of things that relate to academic teaching in an EFL context.

The study is not without its limitations though. The fact that the sample was collected from a small EFL population in the Arab academic setting assigns limited generalizability to the study. The study did not include students' perceptions, which could have provided a peek into other dimensions of perceptual understanding in regard to textual formation and analysis. Owing to the paucity of space, the study did not focus on the analysis of individual cohesive items that otherwise could have provided a micro-level analysis of the cohesive system in the texts. Nevertheless, the study is expected to be useful in the sense that it can motivate further research to fill in the aforementioned gaps.

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The Effects of Collaborative Note-Taking in Flipped Learning Contexts

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While the benefits of shared note-taking during live lectures have been studied, the effects of shared note-taking in e-learning environments merit examination since such courses often feature asynchronous video lectures, allowing students to work together to construct notes over longer periods of time. A study (n=92) was conducted in the context of a flipped scientific writing course at a Korean university to investigate the effects of collaborative online note-taking on student learning. Students in the course were divided into two groups: members of the control were simply directed to view course videos and take notes individually, and members of the experimental group were asked to take collaborative notes in a shared online document. Student learning performance was measured through six online quizzes related to the course video lectures and through six related individual writing assignments. No differences were found in the learning outcomes of the control and the collaborative note-taking groups. However, significantly higher scores on related online quizzes and individual writing assignments were found in groups who took notes actively and for individuals who were major contributors to the group notes.

Keywords: Flipped classroom; online learning; collaborative note-taking; asynchronous instruction; online lecture videos

Introduction

Students have come to acknowledge the benefits of online learning, including broader course offerings and greater scheduling flexibility, as well as the ability to control instructional pacing (Parsad, Lewis, & Tice, 2008). As with more traditional forms of instruction, many e-learning environments rely on lectures as a means of instruction. As lectures are often provided asynchronously in the form of online videos, students have the ability to view videos at their convenience, and may also pause, rewind, fast-forward, or skip ahead (Costley, Fanguy, Baldwin, & Han, 2018). Some research has suggested that a learner's ability to control the flow of information reduces the cognitive demands of note-taking, as students can listen attentively to segments of the video and pause to take notes instead of having to split attention simultaneously between watching the lecture and taking notes (Balfour, 2006; Davis, Connolly, & Linfield, 2009; Marchand, Pearson, & Albon, 2014).

Research article

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While note-taking has traditionally been the task of an individual, cloud computing applications such as Google Docs and Microsoft Office Live allow students to collaborate on a single set of notes in a shared document. This collaboration may yield additional benefits in note-taking. Orndorff (2015) found that students divided the labor of taking notes in order to better concentrate on the lecture being delivered. Note-taking studies typically focus on synchronous note-taking taking place during a live lecture. However, as MOOCs increase in popularity (Chaplot, Rim, & Kim, 2015) and university lectures are increasingly hosted online (Dutton, Dutton, & Perry, 2001), students have the flexibility to view lecture content when they wish. As with note-taking in a lecture hall setting, the possibility exists for collaborative note-taking to take place, but the possibility of a different dynamic to that of Orndorff's study arises. That context is worth investigating, as it presents learners with the ability to free up cognitive resources while listening to lectures and taking notes by controlling the flow of information through pausing, rewinding, skipping ahead, etc. and by collaborating with classmates and dividing the labor of note-taking.

Note-taking and learning

Note-taking during lectures in a traditional classroom setting is an integral, prevalent part of education (Chen, 2013) and has been since Greek times (Rabinow, 1984). Traditionally, pen and paper are used to record salient points and examples so that factual content and concepts can be stored, referred back to, and reflected on at a later date, particularly prior to tests and examinations. Researchers have distinguished two functions of note-taking: storage (Miller, Galanter, & Pribram (1960) in Di Vesta and Gray (1972)) and encoding (Di Vesta and Gray, 1972). The former is done so that the mind does not have to remember everything (Makany, Kemp, & Dror, 2009), while the actual physical process of writing information down is thought to imprint such knowledge on one's memory (Peper & Mayer, 1978). The latter is a cognitive process whereby the "learner has linked the material to his [or her] existing cognitive structure—he [or she] has made it meaningful" and therefore learning is facilitated (Di Vesta and Gray, 1972, p. 8).

The underpinning principle of cognitive load theory is that only a limited amount of mental effort can be exerted by an individual's working memory while trying to process knowledge at a specific time (Costley & Lang, 2017a; Tabbers, Martens, & van Merriënboer, 2004). Note-taking during a lecture requires a combination of "comprehension, writing, and learning" (Piolat, Olive, & Kellogg, 2005, p. 301). Chen (2013) reports that doing these three simultaneously is a challenge for students – the indication being that it puts great strain on working memory. Essentially, it is difficult to construct new schemas (germane load), which in turn has a positive effect on learning (Lange & Costley, 2018b), if one is attempting to comprehend and take down notes simultaneously. For these reasons, the process is termed "a high resource-consuming activity" (p. 297) by Piolat et al. (2005).

Advantages of collaborative note-taking

The taking and utilizing of notes is not necessarily a lone pursuit by one learner, however, and a movement toward active learning in the late 1980s encouraged "enhanced lectures" by instructors that involved students comparing notes as part of a "pause procedure" (Bonwell, 1996). Ruhl, Hughes, & Schloss (1987) noted that short-term and long-term retention of facts improved significantly in participants in classes where pauses and clarification of notes in pairs took place. A recent study by Luo, Kiewra, and Samuelson (2016) also found that such pair work led to more original notes – that are content recorded prior to revision - being taken during lectures.

The advent of wireless internet and increasingly portable electronic devices has encouraged the use of laptops (Kay & Lauricella, 2011) and other electronic devices for note-taking in the lecture hall (Roberts & Rees, 2014). The benefits of using such equipment are that, for most people, typing is quicker than writing and involves less exertion. Electronic notes are also more easily edited, indexable, searchable, and stored (Weaver & Nilson, 2005). Collaboration is also facilitated as sharing can be done using a real-time, collaborative document such as a Google Doc, part of the Google Drive service. Google Drive enables the simultaneous writing and editing of a document by an almost unlimited number of people (Judd, Attebury, George, Marcum, & Montgomery, 2008). Such increased interaction between students has been shown to improve learning outcomes (Costley, 2016; Costley & Lange, 2016; Costley, Lange, & Han, 2016). A prior study by Orndorff (2015) found that those who collaborated to compile notes in live university lectures using Google Docs averaged almost one letter grade higher in their social science studies than those who did not. The division of roles also ensured notes were

comprehensive.

Recently, much has been made on social media and in academia of the practice of collaborative note-taking during lectures[1] . Such behavior – the digital sharing of one's notes to the entire class – has its detractors and its supporters. The latter note the advantages of open source information and how sharing notes enables different perspectives to be voiced and considered. At the basic level, it has the potential to facilitate better note-taking, as individuals learn from the styles and approaches used by contemporaries. However, concerns have also been raised, and detractors claim that students will be less inclined to take notes in this manner if it is compulsory or they may skip class if they know comprehensive notes of lecture proceedings are available. A study by Kiewra (1988) (in Kiewra, 1989) found that students who skipped lectures but borrowed notes taken by those in attendance did comparatively as well on tests featuring the content as those who went to the lectures and took notes. Interestingly, students who borrowed notes even did better on synthesis tests – the suggestion being that the original note-takers were too focused on the physical act of note-taking to make connections between the material. The borrowers had no such constraints; neither would our less active note-takers, having been freed up cognitively to focus on bigger picture issues. While there may be benefits to borrowing notes, academic integrity issues may also arise if students deliberately or inadvertently use the words of other students in their essays[1].

Note-taking in asynchronous online learning environments

A distinguishing feature of e-learning environments is that instruction is usually delivered asynchronously, allowing students to access course videos online at their convenience. When watching instructional videos asynchronously, students can pause, rewatch, or skip over parts of a lecture as needed, which has been reported to positively affect student note-taking and understanding of the learning content (Bruff, Fisher, McEwen, & Smith, 2013; Costley et al., 2018a; Veletsianos, Pasquini, & Reich, 2016). There have also been several studies in which recordings of live lectures are provided to students online as a supplement, and students in these studies report better concentration during the in-class live lecture component of their courses since notes can be completed or expanded later when reviewing the recorded version of the lecture online (Balfour, 2006; Davis et al., 2009; Marchand et al., 2014). Studies note that the asynchronous presentation of course content may also yield benefits for learners with disabilities, as it allows them to access content at their own pace, which enables them to take better notes (Graves, Asunda, Plant, & Goad, 2011; Twigg, 2009).

While there are few integrated note-taking features included in the major MOOC platforms (Veletsianos, Collier, & Schneider, 2015) – edX has recently added a note-taking tool for the text elements of its courses (Pérez-Álvarez, Maldonado-Mahauad, Sapunar-Opazo & Pérez-Sanagustín, 2017) - several tools exist to facilitate the taking of notes in e-learning including, but not restricted to, Livenotes, DyKnow, eMargo, AOF, u-Annotate (Steimle, Gurevych, & Mühlhäuser, 2007), and EduNotes (Popescu, Stefan, Ilie, & Ivanović, 2016). VideoNot.es permits you to type your comments whilst a video lecture from either Coursera, edX, Khan Academy, or Udacity plays. What you write is time-stamped and can then be shared via Google Drive2.

With specific relation to e-learning, Blom, Verma, Li, Skevi, and Dillenbourg (2013) speak of online learners using "a shared note taking tool," and participants in Veletsianos et al.'s (2015) study mention the importance of being able to share their notes with others while taking part in MOOCs. The authors of the study also claim that collaborative note-taking can maximize group and individual knowledge and interest in a subject, but warn that this practice could mean individuals fail to comprehend complicated ideas essential for knowledge construction.

The present study

Research has shown that note-taking is an effective learning strategy that improves learner recall and comprehension of content. However, a key drawback of note-taking during instruction is that it may lead to cognitive overload due to the heavy strain on working memory created by trying to listen and write all at once

[1] Guertin, L. (2016, December 28). Student collaborative note taking during lecture - encourage or discourage? Retrieved from http://blogs.agu.org/geoedtrek/2016/12/28/collaborative-note-taking/

[2] Garza, F. (2016, January 26). How to take better notes during MOOCs. Retrieved from https://www.springboard.com/blog/note-taking-apps/

(Chen, 2013; Piolat et al., 2005). Collaboration when note-taking may help to reduce some of this cognitive burden by allowing students to play particular roles while taking group notes (Orndorff, 2015). Asynchronous instruction has also been shown to free up cognitive resources during note-taking by allowing learners to control the pace of instruction through lecture behaviors such as pausing, rewinding, fast-forwarding, and skipping ahead in a lecture video (Davis et al., 2009; Graves et al., 2011; Marchand et al., 2014; Twigg, 2009; Veletsianos et al., 2016). While studies have examined the respective benefits of collaborative note-taking and of note-taking in asynchronous learning environments, to the best of the authors' knowledge, none have examined whether these benefits apply when these situations are combined, i.e., when notes are taken collaboratively in asynchronous learning environments. This is a worthwhile concept to explore.

Purpose and research questions

The present study examines the experiences of students (n=92) participating in flipped graduate-level scientific writing courses at a Korean university. "Flipped" in this context meant that students watched video lectures and took quizzes prior to classes where they practically applied what they had learned at home through collaborative writing activities (for more information about the collaborative writing activities, see Fanguy, Wang, & Baldwin, 2016). The aim of the study is to assess whether collaborative note-taking on online lecture videos yields benefits to student performance on related quizzes and individual writing homework assignments. This study examines the following research hypotheses:

    1a. Students who are asked to take group notes perform better in their individual writing tasks.
    1b. Students who are asked to take group notes will perform better on related online quizzes.
    1c. Students who are asked to take group notes derive benefit from being a member of an active group.
    1d. Students who are members of an active group must be active themselves to enjoy the benefits.

Materials and Methods

Participants

The present study monitored the note-taking of 92 graduate students from five sections of a compulsory scientific writing course at a science and engineering university. The students had a variety of majors, but all majors were in STEM fields.

Materials

The video lecture content focused on the organization, grammar, vocabulary, and content expected of a typical academic journal paper (for more information about the course videos, refer to Fanguy, Costley, & Baldwin, 2017 and Fanguy, Costley, Baldwin, Lange, & Wang, 2019). Six online quizzes were used to test how much content was learned from the online video lectures.

Instruments

The school's learning management system (LMS). Google Doc service.

Procedure

The lectures for the course were delivered via videos posted on the school's learning management system (LMS). Students' ability to assimilate this information and incorporate it into their own written product thus acts as a proxy for learning in our study. Thirty-two students (from two classes) were split into groups of either three or four individuals depending on class size. These groups were asked to take notes together using a Google Doc within Google Drive created by the professor in charge of the class. The remaining 60 (from three classes) were advised to take notes individually. All students were informed of their right to opt out of the study at any time and/or to abstain from note-taking at their own discretion.

Students met for face-to-face class once a week to complete task-based activities that tested students' practical application of the content covered in the video lectures. A group assignment for each journal paper section

required students to use the typical features, grammar, and language expected of that section. The assignment was submitted after class via the LMS and holistic feedback was provided by the instructor. It is of note that the note-taking groups were, for simplicity's sake, organized around the existing seating arrangements in week 5 of the semester; therefore, more often than not, the groups for in-class activities were identical to the note-taking groups.

Assessment during the course involved the writing of journal paper sections (i.e., the Introduction, Methodology, Results, Discussion & Conclusion, Abstract, and References) for the research that students were conducting in their laboratories. Students uploaded these assignments on the course LMS, and the instructor graded each submission on a scale of 0-10. These assignments were evaluated on the specific functions and features that should be respectively fulfilled and contained in the given section of a research manuscript. Language issues such as appropriate grammar and word choice were also assessed. Besides the numerical score, the instructor gave learners comprehensive feedback on their submissions, which included in-text comments, suggestions, and follow-up questions, and one to two paragraphs of terminal feedback for the entire assignment. These individual assignments accounted for a maximum of 60 points of the course total, with each writing assignment accounting for 10 points of the 100-point course total. In Tables 1-3 in the Results Section, the "Paper total" category refers to the combined score of these six sections of a research manuscript, with a maximum of 60 points.

Online quizzes were also part of the grading criteria and tested the application of knowledge gained from the online video lectures. They also served to measure student recall of the lecture content, which was necessary for actively taking part in the face-to-face problem-solving sessions and collaborative activities. There were a total of six online quizzes during the semester, with each comprising between 14 and 30 items. The quiz items were all multiple choice and allowed students to choose more than one correct answer. For quiz items with more than one correct answer option, partial credit was awarded for each correct answer selected, but no credit was awarded if an incorrect option was chosen, even if other correct answers were selected with it. Each quiz was worth 5% of the total course grade, accounting for a total of 30% of the total course grade.

Results

The first step in this research was the comparison of the experimental treatment condition (group note-taking) with the control group. The results of this analysis can be seen in Table 1. The means of the students' total quiz scores, their total paper scores, and the constituent parts of the paper were all compared using independent sample t-tests. The results showed that there were no statistically significant differences between the control group and the group that took collaborative notes.

After comparing the two experimental conditions, further analysis was conducted on the 32 subjects who were part of the collaborative note-taking condition. Among the 32 students in the collaborative note-taking condition, only 13 were active note-takers; that is, they took notes on a regular basis throughout the semester. The 13 active note-takers were compared to the 19 students who were in the collaborative note-taking condition but took no notes. As can be seen in Table 2, there were many statistically significant differences between the note-takers and non-note-takers. Active note-takers achieved significantly higher scores on the quizzes and on their research papers. Furthermore, for each individual section of the paper, active note-takers performed better than those who did not take notes. Although not all sections of the paper had statistically significant differences, there is a clear pattern of the note-takers performing better than those who did not contribute to the collaborative note-taking process.

Table 1
T-test comparing the means scores between the treatment and control groups

		N	Mean	SD	Mean difference	p
Quiz total	Control	60	22.30	3.71	-.581	.524
	Collaborative notes	32	22.88	4.66		
Intro	Control	60	7.33	2.07	-600	0.223
	Collaborative notes	32	7.93	1.41		
Methods	Control	60	7.9	1.39	-.491	0.272
	Collaborative notes	32	8.39	0.84		
Results	Control	60	7.48	2.41	-.313	.518
	Collaborative notes	32	7.8	1.74		
Dis & con	Control	60	8.18	1.99	.264	.525
	Collaborative notes	32	7.92	1.70		
Abstract	Control	60	8.32	1.86	0.418	.107
	Collaborative notes	32	7.9	2.95		
Paper total	Control	60	39.02	6.60	-.522	.714
	Collaborative notes	32	39.54	6.24		

Table 2
T-Test comparing active note-takers to participants who took no collaborative notes

		N	Mean	SD	Mean difference	P
Quiz total	Took no notes	19	21.2863	4.90169	-3.93445	.016
	Active note-takers	13	25.2208	3.18212		
Intro	Took no notes	19	7.67	1.690	-.655	.203
	Active note-takers	13	8.32	.773		
Methods	Took no notes	19	8.21	.924	-.458	.130
	Active note-takers	13	8.66	.623		
Results	Took no notes	19	7.84	1.404	-.746	.087
	Active note-takers	13	8.59	.695		
Dis & con	Took no notes	19	7.84	1.232	-.787	.047
	Active note-takers	13	8.62	.720		
Abstract	Took no notes	19	6.94	3.247	-1.759	.065
	Active note-takers	13	8.70	.674		
Paper total	Took no notes	19	38.49	5.478	-4.406	.005
	Active note-takers	13	42.90	2.503		

Finally, this study examined whether being a member of an active collaborative note-taking group had any effect on the dependent variables. Three out of a total of nine groups recorded no group notes in the Google Document. As can be seen in Table 3, membership in the six active note-taking groups had no effect on students' quiz results; however, it had a significant effect on the quality of the students' final papers, with students who were members of an active group scoring 15% more than those who were not members of an active group.

Table 3
T-Test comparing students who were members of active groups to those who were not members of active groups

		N	Mean	SD	Mean difference	p
Quiz total	Inactive group	10	21.8440	5.24568	.403	-1.51373
	Active group	22	23.3577	4.41894		
Intro	Inactive group	10	7.29	1.752	.084	-.930
	Active group	22	8.22	1.162		
Methods	Inactive group	10	7.71	.918	.001	-.989
	Active group	22	8.70	.591		
Results	Inactive group	10	7.37	1.193	.012	-1.134
	Active group	22	8.50	1.067		
Dis & con	Inactive group	10	7.41	.663	.008	-1.092
	Active group	22	8.50	1.116		
Abstract	Inactive group	10	5.71	3.970	.003	-2.832
	Active group	22	8.54	1.027		
Paper total	Inactive group	10	35.48	3.563	.000	-6.978
	Active group	22	42.46	3.880		

Discussion

The present research investigated collaborative note-taking and its relationship with students' learning outcomes. Students who participated in collaborative note-taking were compared to those who took notes individually in a flipped scientific writing class. The first finding of note was there were no statistically significant differences between students who were placed in the collaborative note-taking condition compared to those who took notes alone. That is, students gained no benefit to quiz or writing scores simply by being placed in a collaborative note-taking group, so Hypotheses 1a and 1b were not supported. Our assumption was that each collaborative note-taking group would produce at least some notes throughout the semester, but in three of the groups, no group notes were written. This may have been because the instruction to take notes was more of an advisory than a dictate. Personal preference for individual note-taking and/or traditional pen and paper may also have been the reasons for such behavior. When no group notes were produced, the interactional processes of group note-taking were unlikely to have occurred, precluding any learning benefits.

However, among the experimental group members, active note-takers performed significantly better than their non-note-taking counterparts when looking at their final piece of writing. Furthermore, individual section assignments written by active note-takers were better than those by non-active individuals (Table 2), with some of these differences being significant, providing support for Hypothesis 1d. However, Hypothesis 1c was rejected, as being a member of a group that had active members gave benefits to all members regardless of whether they actively took notes or not. Overall, students who were members of active groups scored significantly higher on the paper assignment as a whole than did those who were members of inactive groups.

Since actively produced collaborative notes were found to be beneficial, we examined the Google Documents they worked on in order to assess the types of interactions taking place therein. Interestingly, while Orndorff (2015) found that students took on roles and divided labor to produce collaborative notes in a synchronous live lecture setting, as anticipated, a different dynamic took place when participants collaborated to compile notes on video lectures viewed asynchronously. As there was a week between each face-to-face session, the student who viewed a particular video first tended to be the person who recorded the notes. The role-playing described

in the study conducted by Orndorff (2015) essentially became "turn-taking" in our study, where notes were added chronologically by whomever viewed the video lecture first and were rarely challenged or questioned. This may be explained by research on wikis - a similarly collaborative format - in which users were hesitant to alter one another's work (Dalke, Cassidy, Grobstein, & Blank, 2007) due to what Blau & Caspi (2009) perceive to be psychological ownership.

In terms of contribution, and more specifically word count, typically two students (out of a maximum of four) wrote the lion's share of the notes in active groups; this occurred in four of the six active groups. Twice the task was shared somewhat evenly by two of the group members, while on two other occasions, the ratio of work was 1:3. For the remaining two groups, one student wrote all the notes for one group, while the ratio of work distribution amongst members was 6:4:3:0 for the last group. Such behavior may be explained by Rienties, Tempelaar, Van den Bossche, Gijselaers, and Segers (2009) who found that certain students – particularly highly motivated ones - are more likely to contribute to and lead group activities than those with lower levels of motivation. Concerns about one's language skills (Hall & Buzwell, 2013) or even one's perceived status within the group (due to seniority) (Webb, 1997) may have been the reason for less participation by others.

One possible reason for the benefits found from collaborative note-taking is that when learners face challenges in learning environments that exceed their cognitive abilities, the complementary and shared knowledge and skills of a learning group may be beneficial (Hung, 2013). Studies have also shown that working in groups leads learners to more meaningful engagement with the course material and more interesting and memorable educational experiences (Jonassen & Kwon, 2001; Rogers & Price, 2008). Such benefit is in keeping with our findings from Table 3, and while there are several possible explanations for these results, a common one is that scaffolding occurs between group members, which assists weaker learners. While involved in group work, less active individuals can ride the coattails of more active members and still achieve similar success (Mello, 1993). As was the case in the study by Kiewra (1988) (in Kiewra, 1989), the less active note-takers in our study may have benefitted from reading the notes of their more active group members, enabling increased focus of cognitive resources on bigger picture issues in the course.

While active note-taking led to clear benefits for those within the group, a potential constraint to this approach is that, due to psychological ownership, the teamwork that we witnessed was not as interactive as it had the potential to be. Students were reluctant to change or comment upon each other's notes. This inactivity went against our expectations of lively interactions or the sharing of ideas and scaffolded language/knowledge support we had hoped for. The Google Documents platform offers collaborators a number of useful features for interaction, including comment threads, collaborative editing features, and even live chatting. However, we found no evidence that any of the students engaged in group note-taking used any of these features. This may be because students did not think that the material was challenging enough to merit a great deal of discussion or interaction on the notes they were taking. If so, the note-taking itself may have become an exercise in summary, something that is time-consuming and does not organically create the conditions for interaction. There was also a certain amount of presumption on our part that students would be familiar with Google Docs; however, comments made anecdotally by some participants suggest they were unfamiliar with the word processor's features. We recognize now that we could have taught students to better use the collaborative software. Another likely explanation for the lack of interaction is that the students may have discussed the notes in the weekly face-to-face class meetings. If so, perhaps discussing the notes online would have seemed inefficient or redundant. It is also possible that simply dividing the labor of note-taking was sufficient to help students free up cognitive resources to focus on the higher-level concepts of the course that they were exposed to.

Conclusion

In our study, collaboration was shown to benefit active note-takers and even passive members of active groups, due to the scaffolding and greater focus note-taking afforded them. While the results of the present study will be useful to instructors and content designers in flipped and online courses featuring online lecture videos, there were a number of limitations and areas for future research. More reliable results could be achieved with a greater number of participants. Furthermore, while the present study suggests possible reasons for the improved learning outcomes of group note-takers, a deeper textual analysis of students' notes is needed to reveal the levels of contributions students make and the roles they play during the collaborative note-taking process.

Despite the aforementioned limitations, the results of the present study are valuable because, to the best of our knowledge, they represent the first attempt to measure the effects on collaborative note-taking in the context of asynchronous instruction (i.e., online lecture videos).

A common criticism of e-learning is that students may feel a lack of social presence from the instructor or fellow class members. Interactive learning has often been suggested as a means to increase interaction in e-learning environments and to mitigate feelings of isolation, but the act of viewing online videos remains, itself, a solitary one. The results of the present study suggest that online group note-taking provides a means of collaboration between students when viewing online videos, an otherwise isolating facet of e-learning.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

The methods used in this study were approved by an Internal Review Board at the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology and adhere to the ethics policies of the institution. All subjects in the study were informed of their rights and participated voluntarily.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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The Plasticity of Students' Language Learning Beliefs: The Interplay of Gender, Grade and Educational Level

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Understanding learners' epistemological beliefs as one of the core segments affecting students' learning experiences is of cardinal importance both from the point of conveying new knowledge and acquiring it. In English language teaching, studying language learning beliefs has become a popular research area, with its genesis found in the seminal paper by Horwitz (1987), whose instrument (BALLI) was employed to collect the data in the present paper. In the under-researched context of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the current study explores the language learning beliefs of 233 elementary school and university students, taking into account the main and interaction effect of three factors: gender, grades, and educational level. Through ANOVA and MANOVA statistical analyses, the results revealed an insignificant main effect of gender and grades on the BALLI while the latter significantly affected one of the area of beliefs assessed by the test. Conversely, educational level demonstrated a significant main effect on both the BALLI and one area. Most importantly, the study showed interesting interplay among the three factors on the shaping of learners' stances. These findings bring significant realization into the complexity of students' beliefs as well as their ever-changing nature with relevant pedagogical implications for the field of second language acquisition.

Keywords: BALLI, beliefs, language learning, gender, grade, educational level

Introduction

In the era of highly diverse societies and ever-growing interdisciplinarity of human endeavor, education worldwide is facing new challenges, one of them being the challenge of effective and appropriate addressing of individual learners' needs (Okogbaa, 2017; York, 2014) shaped by their individual traits as well as current reality, which emerges as a necessary asset in modern education. In the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), this state of affairs has been taken into consideration for decades now, and the area has been significantly influenced and molded by this idea of having learners, rather than teachers, as the omphalos of discussion about language teaching and learning (Benson & Nunan, 2004). Under that realm of individuality, i.e. of both innate and acquired characteristics, including personality type (Dewaele & Furnham, 2000; Ehrman, 1990; Moody, 1988; Verhoeven & Vermeer, 2002), foreign language anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1994), cognitive styles (Chapelle & Green, 1992; Ehrman & Leaver, 2003), and learning strategies (Chaudron, 2003; Dörnyei, 2005; Oxford, 1990), one aspect has aroused a notable amount of interest among the experts – learners' belief systems (Csizer & Lukacs, 2010; Dörnyei, 2005; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009; Ellis, 1994; Ellis & Tanaka, 2003; Fillmore et al., 1979; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1992, 1993; Kalaja & Barcelos, 2003; Mercer, 2011; Naiman et al., 1978; Zhong, 2012a, 2014).

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Beliefs, here understood as "psychologically held understandings, premises, or propositions about the world that are felt to be true" (Richardson, 1996, p.103), or, in their more specific, language-related variation, learners' attitudes and conceptions about a second or foreign language (L2) learning process (Kalaja & Barcelos, 2003), underlie and directly as well as indirectly influence and shape L2 acquisition (Ellis, 1994; Gardner et al., 1999; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1992, 1993; Horwitz, 1999). In fact, according to Ellis (1994), interrelated with learning strategies and final outcomes of learning, these beliefs form a fundament upon which learners actualize their learning processes and mechanisms. Furthermore, it has been indicated that language learning beliefs propel language learning (Abdolahzadeh & Nia, 2014; Ghavamnia et al., 2011; Ren & Bai, 2016), lay the ground for conscious development of learning strategies (Azar & Saeidi, 2013; Ghavamnia et al., 2011), and lower the level of language anxiety (Abraham & Vann, 1987; Horwitz et al., 1986; Horwitz, 1988). A straightforward corollary of that appears to be that exploring and understanding language learning beliefs seems crucial for the creation and implementation of appropriate L2 curricula and micro-practices of L2 teachers and learners (Castellotti & Moore, 2002; Horwitz, 1999; Wenden, 1999).

Regardless of the straightforwardness of this analogy, however, the research corpus still seems inconclusive as to the manner and extent of the influence of these beliefs on learning, and their potential interaction with other elements of learners' individuality. Considering the abstraction and elusiveness of beliefs as psychological constructs, it becomes difficult to determine whether they alone lead to (un)successful L2 learning experiences. Therefore, this paper aims to explore the stratification of these beliefs in combination with other factors, in this particular case, gender, grades, and educational level. With that analysis, this study aims to provide clearer insights into the phenomenon and, consequently, less ambiguous implications for pedagogical practices.

Literature Review

Epistemological beliefs, i.e. beliefs or, broadly speaking, myths about the nature of knowledge and its acquisition, seem to be inherent to human beings, from Socrates and Piaget, to an EFL student in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In other words, an instance of knowledge acquisition is embedded in a set of personal insights (Omaggio, 1978) or implicit theories (Clark, 1988) about learning that not only shape the process of knowledge acquisition, but also, according to Thomas and Harri-Augustein (1983), reveal more about the abilities and performances of individual learners than may be explained through general learning theories. Studying them as forming components of metacognition (Flavell, 1987; Ryan, 1984), psychologists have found epistemological beliefs to extensively influence academic performance (Schoenfeld, 1985), information interpretation (Schommer, 1990; 1993), and persistence in learning (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). The need to understand the influence of such beliefs on learning outcomes has also been recognized by researchers on language acquisition (Benson, 2001; Oxford, 1992; Wenden, 2001), where Benson and Lor (1999) categorize them based on their methodological approach into the studies taking the normative approach (e.g. Horwitz, 1988; Kern, 1995; Kim-Yoon, 2000; Mantle-Bromley, 1995; Yang, 1992), the metacognitive approach (e.g. Goh, 1997; White, 1999, 1999a; Wenden, 1986a, 1986b, 1998, 1999), and the contextual approach (e.g. Benson & Lor, 1999; White, 1999). In the first category, Horwitz (1987) protrudes as one of the most significant researchers on this particular issue. Aware of the phenomenon of humans being bound to preconceiving beliefs and expectations before engaging in any learning experience, and with the aim of raising awareness among teachers and scholars about the diversity of language learning beliefs (LLBs) learners hold and their potential, positive as well as negative, consequences for learning and teaching processes, Horwitz (1987) conducted a study in which she explored the convictions of beginning university foreign language students. For the purposes of the study, the Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) was developed, grounded in common assumptions of L2 teachers and students about language learning, and extracted into five different exploratory categories: (1) foreign language aptitude, (2) difficulty of language learning, (3) nature of language learning, (4) learning and communication strategies, and (5) motivations and expectations. Thereby, she gave an impetus for further investigation, with BALLI-based studies having been conducted across different language groups and sociocultural realities (Ariogul & Onursal, 2009; Amuzie & Winke, 2009; Barcelos, 2000; Bernat, 2004, 2006; Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005; Diab, 2006; Hong, 2006; Horwitz, 1999; Kim, 2001; Kuntz, 1997; Mercer, 2011; Mori, 1999; Nikitina & Furuoka, 2007; Oz, 2007; Rieger, 2009; Siebert, 2003; Su, 1995; Tercanlioglu, 2004; Wenden, 1999; Yang, 1999; Zhang & Cui, 2010).

Reviewing them through the lens of more specific categorization, a number of them investigated the relationship between the beliefs and motivation (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005; Ehrman & Oxford, 1995; Samimy & Lee, 1997; White, 1999), several explored them in association with language learning strategies (Azar & Saeidi, 2013; Ghavamnia

et al., 2011), and yet others explored the correlation between LLBs and language proficiency (Abdolahzadeh & Nia, 2014; Fujiwara, 2014; Ghavamnia et al., 2011; Hong, 2006; Kunt, 1997; Mori, 1999; Park, 1995; Peacock, 1999; Samimy & Lee, 1997; Zhong, 2012a). The latest category perhaps most clearly illustrates the possible impact of LLBs on language learning, where a significant number of studies have shown a positive relationship between the constructs. There, exploring the correlation between the beliefs of 332 Korean university students and their English proficiency as reflected in their TOEFL scores, Park (1995) revealed that LLBs, alongside the use of learning strategies, positively predicted their success. More specifically, EFL learning confidence, the willingness to communicate in English, and the tendency to observe one's own progress, seemed to support their L2 acquisition, as was also found in Samimy and Lee's (1997) study of Chinese learners of EFL. In the same trend, Fujiwara (2014) found a positive correlation among Thai EFL university students, where more proficient ones were significantly more convinced that English is an easy language to learn, that their country's people and also themselves are good at learning foreign languages, and that their own learning outcomes are likely to be successful. They also demonstrated weak beliefs in the importance of grammar, translation, memorization, and 'perfect' language accuracy. A similar tendency of understanding the complexity of language learning process was found among Mori's (1999) participants, where, once again, LLBs were positively correlated with English proficiency, now of Japanese learners. Thus, the research corpus seems to indicate that more proficient L2 learners are likely to hold positive beliefs about their innate abilities as well as the potential outcomes of their learning, naturally implying higher confidence levels and potentially resulting in more open and frequent language use.

While the previous research observed language learning beliefs as part of the network of causal factors in the process of L2 learning, some other studies investigated them as molded by different factors, such as learners' culture (Horwitz, 1999; Lee, 2014; Mori, 1999; Poza, 2013; White, 1999), age (Fujiwara, 2014; Lee, 2014), type of L2 (Ariogul et al., 2009; Horwitz, 1988; Meshkat & Saeb, 2014), and gender (Bernat & Lloyd, 2007; Lee, 2014; Siebert, 2003; Tercanioglu, 2005). In terms of differences between females and males, Siebert (2003), carried out a study among 156 (64 female and 91 male) university students learning English in the United States, and found statistically significant differences in certain conceptions; e.g. male students were more likely than their female counterparts to highly rate their own language learning abilities as well as those of their country's people's, to estimate the learning time as shorter, to rate grammar as the most important part of language learning, etc. On the other hand, Siebert (2003), Bacon and Finnemann (1992) and Kunt (1997), all found that females expressed a stronger desire to interact with the target language culture and its speakers. These studies' findings were later questioned by research in which no statistically significant gender effect on LLBs was found (Bernart & Lloyd, 2007; Fujiwara, 2014; Lee, 2014; Tercanioglu, 2005). In the interpretation of their findings, Tercanlioglu (2005) suggested that the lack of differences might be an indicator of the need to understand the impact of these individual differences only in the context of other personal variables, such as age, stage of life, and cultural particularities.

Age, as one of these key variables, has also been a focal point of some LLB-based studies. There, Fujiwara (2014) explored whether there are any significant differences between three age groups of university-level participants, and found that age did not play an important role in the existence or strength of LLBs. Furthermore, Lee (2014) studied four different age groups, and also revealed that the effect of age on LLBs was not statistically significant. Khodadady (2009), on the other hand, discovered that, among his university-level students ranging from the age of 19 to 49, there was a statistically significant difference between sophomore undergraduate students and senior undergraduate as well as graduate students in eleven beliefs based on the BALLI. In relation to the effect of age or, more broadly, time, it is important to note certain studies in which language learning beliefs were considered to be in a constant state of flux, and were thus observed through longitudinal research. One of them was Elis and Tanaka's (2003) research, in which Japanese learners in a fifteen-week-long study abroad program significantly changed their beliefs, particularly relating to self-efficacy and confidence. In a similar fashion, Mercer's (2011) three-year-long study concluded that beliefs are dynamic constructs prone to change differing in character and frequency; some beliefs changed in terms of their content, other changed in terms of their strength, and certain convictions were almost immune to change. Zhong (2015) confirmed these findings, inferring that LLBs are modified over time under the influence of different contextual factors, such as changes in teaching approaches as well as the natural progression of a course.

These findings, being evidently and reasonably inconclusive in their entirety, point to the complexity of the phenomenon of LLBs and their relation with language learning. However, not many studies have focused

on simultaneous interactions of individual differences in the creation of LLBs, which is arguably crucial for elucidating the complexity and sensitiveness of any such construct (Gardner et al., 1997). Therefore, this study aims to provide a more detailed analysis by taking into consideration three different variables that may be determinative in the construction of LLBs; namely, gender, educational level, and grades of students in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Despite different studies related to the process of EFL learning having been conducted in this sociocultural context, such as the studies measuring the impact of diverse factors on students' English language proficiency as well as the proficiency itself (Brdarević-Čeljo et al., 2018; Delić et al., 2018; Habibić & Dubravac, 2016; Kovačević et al., 2018; Rizvić & Bećirović, 2017) and their use of learning/reading strategies (Bećirović et al., 2017; Bećirović et al., 2018; Brdarević-Čeljo & Asotić, 2017; Tankosić & Dubravac, 2016), studies exploring learners' LLBs are quite rare. Thus, one of the studies explored the state of LLBs among high-school students (Ozturk & Turkyilmaz, 2014), another one investigating the correlation between the beliefs and language learning strategies (Akbarov & Kovačević, 2015), and finally, the relationship between LLBs and the complexity of syntactic structures used by language learners (Kovačević, 2017). The study by Ozturk & Turkyilmaz (2014) showed that Bosnian high-school students tend to hold fairly strong beliefs about foreign language aptitude (M = 3.39), the difficulty of language learning (M = 3.06), the nature of language learning (M = 3.59), learning and communication strategies (M = 3.42), as well as motivation and expectations (M = 4.13). In their exploration of the relationship between LLBs and language learning strategies among Bosnian university students, Azamat and Kovačević (2015) discovered no statistically significant correlation between the constructs. Finally, Kovačević's (2017) recent study investigated whether LLBs affect the complexity of syntactic structures used by students and arrived at quite an unusual discovery of L2 learners with strong beliefs demonstrating simpler syntactic structures in their writings. Thus, in a country in which EFL teachers are facing issues with developing learners' proficiency regardless of the fact that being able to use English is becoming a sine qua non for an educated individual and where both formal and informal EFL learning opportunities are abundant, it seems crucial to make laborious scientific efforts in order to clarify what constitutes optimal learning conditions and requirements.

Thus, the presented study tested the following hypotheses:

1. There is no significant difference in the participants' beliefs about language learning (BALLI) based on their gender, educational level and average English grade. These factors do not interact in the effect on the learners' beliefs about language learning (BALLI).
2. There is no significant difference in the specific learners' beliefs about language learning, namely foreign language aptitude, the difficulty of language learning, the nature of language learning, learning and communication strategies, and motivation and expectations, based on their gender, age and grade. These factors do not interact in the effect on the aforementioned specific learner beliefs.

Methodology

Participants

The sample for the present study comprised 233 participants, all of whom at the time of collecting the data were studying in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 96 of them being male and 137 female. Two target groups were chosen, one of students in elementary education, aged 11-12, and the other of students with an age span between 18 and 25, studying at the university level. The former group of students were, thus, sixth-grade students from a state elementary school in Zenica-Doboj Canton, and the latter were first, second, third, or fourth-year students studying at two universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, one private in Sarajevo Canton and one state in Zenica-Doboj Canton, in the following faculties: Faculty of Education and Humanities, Faculty of Philosophy, Islamic Pedagogical Faculty, and School of Medicine.

Since the third characteristic by which the participants were compared was their English grades, they were asked to report their average English grade. The elementary school students provided the average grade from the previous three years during which they had been officially taught the English language. The junior students provided their average high school English grade, since at the time of conducting the research they had still not been graded in their English course at the university level, while the other students were asked to provide the grade they obtained in their university English course, with the exception of the English majors who were asked to provide their GPA. While the grade scale in elementary and high school ranged from 1 to 5, at the university

level the scale was 5 - 10. To make the comparison simpler, the university grades were adjusted and thus 5 was coded as 1, 6.00 - 6.99 as 2, 7.00 - 7.99 as 3, 8.00 – 8.99 as 4, and 9.00 - 10.00 as 5. All relevant details about the participants are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics for the participants

Group	N	Percent
Gender		
Male	96	41.2
Female	137	58.8
Educational level		
Elementary	118	50.6
University	115	49.4
Grade		
2	36	15.5
3	63	27
4	65	27.9
5	69	29.6
total	**233**	**100**

The instrument

The survey instrument for this study was the Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) designed by Horwitz (1987) and used in numerous studies as a reliable and valid instrument. It also proved internally consistent with the present study sample, with the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient being above .70 ($\alpha = .713$). The survey consists of 34 questions investigating five different areas of beliefs: (1) foreign language aptitude, (2) the difficulty of language learning, (3) the nature of language learning, (4) learning and communication strategies, and (5) motivations and expectations. The questionnaire was designed so that the items are rated on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1, 'strongly disagree' to 5, 'strongly agree'.

In addition to the main instrument, a general demographic survey identifying students' age, gender, and grades was used. Since some of the participants had not developed a considerable level of English proficiency, so they were given the survey in their mother tongue to ensure a full understanding of all the statements. Thus, the English majors completed the survey in English, and all the other students in Bosnian.

Procedure

After gaining consent from the relevant parties, the participants and their parents in the case of elementary school students, the researchers distributed the survey and provided clear and detailed guidelines. The students were informed that the survey was anonymous and were asked to provide accurate answers mirroring their beliefs, which would be used only for the purpose of this research. The surveys were completed at the participants' university/ school premises in the period from February 2017 to October 2018.

Data analysis

The data were analyzed using SPSS, by the means of which descriptive and inferential statistics were obtained. A factorial ANOVA was used to assess the impact of gender, educational level, and grades on the BALLI, while a factorial MANOVA was performed in order to check the impact of the aforementioned factors on the BALLI's five areas of beliefs. In addition to these comparisons based on the overall instrument and the specific areas of beliefs, the data for individual items were analyzed since this instrument, as suggested by its designer Horwitz (1985), is not an inventory yielding "a composite score" (p. 334), but individual items providing useful and relevant information pertaining to different domains of learner beliefs. Table 2 presents descriptive statistics for the overall BALLI as well as the areas of beliefs it assesses, namely foreign language aptitude, the difficulty

of language learning, the nature of language learning, learning and communication strategies, and motivation and expectations As can be seen, the mean scores were in the range from $M = 3.21$ for the area of the difficulty of language learning to $M = 4.12$ for the motivation and expectations area. The correlation coefficients indicating the relationship between the areas were not particularly high, but rather moderate, and sometimes the correlation was even insignificant, such as between the area of the difficulty of language learning, on the one hand, and the areas of motivation and expectations ($r = 109$, $p > .05$) and foreign language aptitude ($r = 102$, $p > 05$), on the other. The strongest correlation existed between the area of the nature of language learning and learning and communication strategies ($r = 493$, p < .01).

Table 2
Descriptive statistics and correlation for the BALLI and its subscales

Scale	M	SD	difficulty of language learning	nature of language learning	learning and communication strategies	motivation and expectations
foreign language aptitude	3.56	.45	102	.335**	.404**	.489**
difficulty of language learning	3.21	.47		.245**	.154*	.109
nature of language learning	3.70	.61			.493**	.351**
learning and communication strategies	3.44	.44				.317**
motivation and expectations	4.12	.59				
BALLI	3.60	.34				

Note: *correlation significant at the .05 level (two - tailed)
        **correlation significant at the .01 level (two - tailed)

Results

A three way ANOVA was performed to show the main and interaction effect of gender, educational level, and grades on the BALLI. The results revealed an insignificant main effect of gender $F(1, 217) = .989$, $p = .321$, η2 = .005, and grade $F(3, 217) = .441$, $p = .724$, η2 = .006. Thus, the male ($M = 3.57$) and female participants' ($M = 3.62$) beliefs were not significantly different on the BALLI nor were the beliefs of the groups with the average grade 2 ($M = 3.65$), grade 3 ($M = 3.55$), 4 ($M = 3.60$) and 5 ($M = 3.61$). However, the effect of educational level on the BALLI proved significant $F(1, 217) = 4.76$, $p = .030$, η2 = .021, with the mean obtained on the BALLI by the elementary school students ($M = 3.66$) surpassing the mean ($M = 3.54$) the university level students achieved on it. The interaction effect of gender X educational level was significant $F(1, 217) = 5.536$, $p = 0.20$, η2 = .025, with the elementary school female participants' ($M = 3.65$) and male participants' means ($M = 3.60$) being higher than those scored by the university female ($M = 3.59$) and male students ($M = 3.57$). Nevertheless, the interaction effects of gender X grade ($p = .777$), gender X educational level X grade ($p = .601$) and educational level X grade ($p = .076$) were insignificant.

A factorial MANOVA was conducted to check the main and interaction effect of gender, educational level, and grades on the areas of beliefs comprising the BALLI. The main effect of gender - Pillar's Trace = .044, $F(5, 213) = 1.98$, $p = .082$, partial eta squared = .044, on the overall dependent variables proved to be insignificant, whereas the main effect of educational level - Pillai's Trace = .069, $F(5, 213) = 3.16$, $p = .009$. partial eta squared = .069, as well as grades - Pillai's Trace = .123, $F(15, 645) = 1.84$, $p = .026$, partial eta squared = .041 was significant. The interaction effects of grade level X gender ($p = .900$), grade level X educational level ($p = .053$), and gender X educational level X grade level ($p = .881$) on the combined dependent variables were insignificant, while the interaction effect of gender X educational level - Pillai's Trace = .058, $F(5, 213) = 2.62$, $p = .025$, partial eta squared = .058 on the combined five aforementioned variables proved to be statistically significant.

When the main and interaction effects were analyzed separately for the areas, the effect of gender on all the areas individually was insignificant, although the mean scores achieved by the male and female participants were slightly different (Table 3). On the area of foreign language aptitude (Table 6), learning and communication strategies (Table 9), and motivation and expectations (Table 10), the scores by the female participants were a

bit higher, whereas the opposite findings were revealed in the case of the other two areas (Table 7, Table 8). For instance, the female participants agreed more strongly with the statements that they have special ability for learning foreign languages (*M* = 3.44), that everybody can learn a foreign language (M = 4.06), that women are better than men at learning languages (*M* = 2.87), that it is important to repeat and practice a lot (*M* = 4.55), that they feel shy speaking English to other people (*M* = 2.43), and that they would like to have English speaking friends (M = 4.30). On the other hand, the greater majority of the male participants accepted as true the statements that it is easier to speak than to understand a foreign language (*M* = 2.97), that it is best to learn English in an English speaking country (*M* = 4.15), and that in the process of language learning words are the most important (*M* = 4.07).

Educational level was shown to have a significant effect on the area of the nature of language learning $F(1,217)$ = 7.485, p = .007, $\eta2$ = .014 (Table 4), with the elementary school students expressing a stronger agreement with the statement that it is necessary to learn about English speaking cultures to speak English (*M* = 3.50), while also claiming a stronger belief in the importance of learning new words (*M* = 4.28), grammar (*M* = 3.95), and translation (*M* = 3.75). Conversely, the university students believed more in learning English in the target speaking country (*M* = 4.31) and the specificity of learning a foreign language in comparison to learning other subjects (*M* = 4.17) (Table 8).

The effect of grades was significant only on the area of motivation and expectations $F(3, 217)$ = 2.875, *p* = .037, $\eta2$ = .038 (Table 5), with the mean scores mainly rising in accordance with the grades, thus the better the grades, the more optimistic the learners were about their English proficiency development. Further comparisons among the students with different grades revealed that the better the grades were, the less shy the students were while speaking English, the less they believed that one should not say anything in English unless it can be said correctly, the less they believed that grammar is the most important aspect to be learned, and that it is easier to read and write than to speak and understand English, but the more they believed that English is an easy language to acquire (Table 10).

Table 3
Multivariate ANOVA between the male and female students on the subscales of the BALLI

| Scale | Gender | | | | p | η2 |
| | Male | | Female | | | |
	M	SD	M	SD		
Foreign language aptitude	3.48	.49	3.62	.41	.077	.014
Language learning difficulty	3.27	.46	3.16	.48	.065	.016
Nature of language learning	3.71	.65	3.69	.59	.943	.000
Learning and communication strategies	3.40	.49	3.47	.40	.284	.005
Motivation and expectations	4.06	.60	4.16	.58	.388	.003

Table 4
Multivariate ANOVA between the elementary and university students on the subscales of the BALLI

| Scale | Educational level | | | | p | η2 |
| | Elementary | | University | | | |
	M	SD	M	SD		
Foreign language aptitude	3.54	.47	3.58	.42	.557	.002
Language learning difficulty	3.34	.51	3.08	.40	.236	.075
Nature of language learning	3.83	.63	3.57	.57	.007	.033
Learning and communication strategies	3.50	.47	3.38	.39	.077	.014
Motivation and expectations	4.19	.62	4.04	.55	.053	.017

Table 5
Multivariate ANOVA between students with grades 2, 3, 4 and 5 on the subscales of the BALLI

Scale	Grade								P	η2
	2		3		4		5			
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Foreign language aptitude	3.51	.38	3.48	.47	3.64	.39	3.59	.49	.225	.020
Language learning difficulty	3.42	.46	3.23	.49	3.12	.45	3.17	.45	.489	.011
Nature of language learning	3.92	.71	3.71	.63	3.65	.54	3.63	.60	.077	.031
Learning and communication strategies	3.55	.41	3.43	.49	3.42	.41	3.41	.44	.551	.010
Motivation and expectations	3.87	.62	3.96	.64	4.19	.53	4.31	.50	.037	.038

The interaction of grade level X gender was insignificant in the effect on foreign language aptitude (p = .929), language learning difficulty (p = .854), the nature of language learning (p = .448), learning strategy and communication (p = .748), and motivation and expectations (p = .598). The same results were obtained in the case of the interaction effect of grade level X gender X educational level, with all the p values being higher than .05. However, the independent variables grade level X educational level significantly interacted in the effect on the nature of language learning $F(3, 233)$ = 3.18, p = .025, η2 = .042, while the effect of these variables was insignificant on the foreign language aptitude (p = .717), the difficulty of language learning (p = .141), learning and communication strategies (p = .072), and motivation and expectations (p = .221). Regarding the area of the nature of language learning, the scores of the elementary school students were generally higher than those of the university students with the exception of the students with grade level 2, where the university level students obtained a higher mean score (M = 4.09) in comparison to the elementary school students with the same grade level (M = 3.82). However, while the university students' mean scores were lower, as the grades increased from M = 4.09 for the students with grade level 2 to M = 3.40 for the students with grade level 5, the situation with elementary school students was not the same, the means having the following values: grade level 2 (M = 3.82), grade level 3 (M = 3.93), grade level 4 (M = 3.84) and grade level 5 (M = 3.77). (Figure 1).
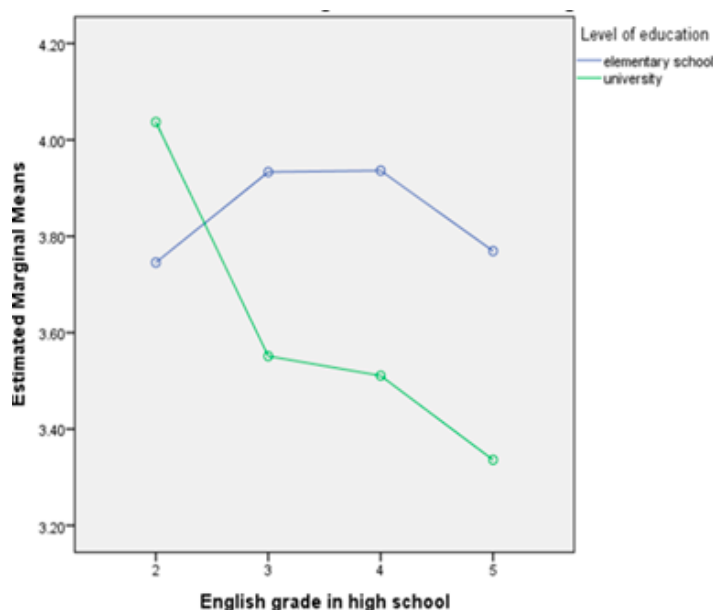
Figure 1. Differences between elementary school and university students across different grade groups on the subscale of the nature of language learning.

The analysis of the differences in the scores obtained for specific items constituting this area indicated that the elementary school students (M = 3.52) expressed a stronger belief in the necessity of knowing about the native culture in order to speak the target language than the university students (M = 2.84), although that increase in the grades was followed by decrease in the level of conviction, the means in the group of the elementary school

students ranging from (M = 4.00) to (M = 3.37), and from (M = 3.57) to (M = 2.56) among the university students. This was not the case with the statement that it is best to learn English in an English-speaking country, with the university students accepting it more readily as correct (M = 4.30) than the elementary school students (M = 3.84). Interestingly, while the scores were higher as the grades were lower in the former, from (M = 4.71) in the groups of the university students with grade level 2 to (M = 4.08) among the students with grade level 5, the opposite was noticed for the latter, the scores being in the range from (M = 3.77) among the students with grade level 2 to (M = 3.91) among those with grade level 5. Generally, the students at both the elementary (M = 4.28) and university level (M = 3.77) assigned more importance to vocabulary than grammar, with the mean scores for the statement related to the importance of grammar in the process of language learning being (M = 3.95) among the elementary and (M = 3.19) among the university students. However, while the elementary school students regardless of their grades expressed a strong belief in the importance of learning grammar, the scores among university students became lower as the grades were higher. Thus, the mean score in the university students group at grade level 2 (M = 3.36) fell to (M = 2.80) in the group of their peers at grade level 5. The variations among the students with different grades were not great in the case of the statement pertaining to the importance of translation, even though a stronger agreement with this statement was noticed among the elementary school students (M = 3.76) than among the university students (M = 3.17).

Gender X educational level proved to significantly interact in the effect on the three areas of beliefs, namely the nature of language learning $F(1, 217) = 6.96$, p = .009, $\eta2$ = .031, motivation and expectations $F(1, 217) = 4.231$, p = .041, η2 = .019, and learning and communication strategies $F(1, 217) = 7.627$, p = .006, η2 = .034, while the effect of the variables was insignificant on the area of foreign language aptitude (p = .601) and the difficulty of language learning (p = .580). When it comes to the nature of language learning, both the male and female students in elementary school (M = 3.52) believed in the importance of being familiar with the native culture more than the university students (M = 2.84), with the male students in both groups accepting the statement as correct a bit more readily. However, both the elementary (M = 3.84) and university students (M = 4.30) gave more importance to learning English in the target country, without significant variations between the male and female students. Interestingly, while the male elementary school students (M = 4.38) believed in the importance of learning new words more than the female students from the same group (M = 4.20), the opposite was noticed for the university students, with (M = 3.82) scored by the female students and (M = 3.68) by the male students. Furthermore, the male participants in elementary school (M = 3.81) believed more than the females (M = 3.51) that learning a language is different from learning other subjects, whereas the opposite was noticed for the female university students (M = 4.29) in comparison to the male students (M = 3.83). The greatest difference was observed in the case of the statement related to translation with the following means achieved by the female (M = 3.67) and male (M = 3.87) students in elementary school, and (M = 3.28) for the female and (M = 2.98) for the male university students.

Regarding the comparison between these groups on the area of motivation and expectations, the greatest differences were noticed for the beliefs pertaining to the statement that people in our country consider speaking English important. The mean obtained by the elementary school female students (M = 3.73) was slightly higher than the elementary school male students' mean (M = 3.67), but a much greater distinction was noticed among the university students, with the female students' mean (M = 3.89) greatly surpassing the one obtained by the male students (v3.27). The relation between the scores was also surprising in terms of items 22, 27, and 29. While the male students' means (M = 4.41 for item 22 and item 27, and M = 4.61 for item 29) were higher than the female students' (M = 4.10 for item 22, M = 4.37 for item 27, and M = 4.50 for item 29) in the group of the elementary school students, the opposite was found among the other group of the participants, with the means achieved by the female participants (M = 3.45 for item 22, M = 4.40 for item 27, and M = 4.58) being higher than the ones obtained by the male university students (M = 3.12 for item 22, v4.12 for item 27, and M = 4.46 for item 29).

Finally, as for the items constituting the area of learning and communication strategies, the male elementary school students (M = 2.54) felt more shy when speaking English with other people than the female students (M = 2.10), whereas the converse appears to be true in the group of the university students, with the mean achieved by the female students (M = 2.71) being much higher than the mean of the male students (M = 2.15). Moreover, while the elementary school students generally believed more strongly that excellent pronunciation presented a prerequisite for speaking English, the statement was more supported among the male elementary school students (M = 3.90) than among the female students (M = 3.83), while among the university students,

the female students (*M* = 3.42) expressed a stronger belief in this claim than the male students from the group (*M* = 3.20). The same was observed for the belief that it is OK to guess if one does not know the right word in English, as the male students (*M* = 3.78) in elementary school believed in this more firmly than the female students (*M* = 3.61), whereas the female university students (*M* = 3.76) agreed with the claim more readily than their male counterparts (*M* = 3.56). Similar findings were reported for item 20, i.e. the statement claiming that error correction in the initial stages of language learning is important for subsequent correct speaking in English. Thus, while more male (M = 3.98) than female (*M* = 3.66) elementary school students supported this belief, the mean among the female university students (*M* = 3.65) was higher than the mean among the male university students (*M* = 2.98). On the contrary, the female elementary school students seemed to enjoy practicing English with native speakers more than their male peers (*M* = 3.72), while the male university students (*M* = 4.05) were more likely to do so than the female students (*M* = 3.92).

Table 6
Multivariate ANOVA between different groups of the participants on the subscale of foreign language aptitude

Item	Total	Gender				Educational evel				Grade					
		Male	Female	p	η2	Eleme-ntary	Univer-sity	p	η2	2	3	4	5	p	η2
Item 1	4.28	4.27	4.28	.719	.001	4.10	4.46	.002	.046	4.28	4.22	4.26	4.34	.684	.007
Item 2	4.24	4.05	4.37	.078	.015	4.18	4.30	.499	.002	4.44	4.08	4.35	4.16	.290	.018
Item 5	3.28	3.22	3.32	.871	.000	3.14	3.42	.121	.012	3.09	3.35	3.44	3.16	.021	.046
Item 9	3.47	3.51	3.43	.888	.000	3.42	3.51	.696	.001	3.50	3.41	3.44	3.51	.990	.001
Item 10	2.68	2.69	2.66	.855	.000	2.78	2.57	.074	.015	2.97	2.52	2.80	2.54	.061	.035
Item 14	3.30	3.10	3.44	.051	.018	3.43	3.17	.504	.002	2.69	3.06	3.20	3.93	.000	.091
Item 17	2.73	2.54	2.87	.081	.015	2.69	2.77	.800	.000	2.80	2.76	2.85	2.56	.415	.014
Item 28	3.94	3.93	3.95	.987	.000	4.02	3.86	.109	.012	4.17	3.78	4.05	3.87	.741	.006
Item 31	4.00	3.93	4.06	.493	.002	3.98	4.03	.604	.001	3.72	4.05	4.16	3.97	.347	.016

Note: 1. It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language; 2.Some people have a special ability for learning foreign languages; 5. People from my country are good at learning foreign languages; 9. It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one; 10. People who are good at mathematics or science are not good at learning foreign languages; 14. I have a special ability for learning foreign languages; 17. Women are better than men at learning foreign languages; 28. People who speak more than one language are very intelligent; 31. Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.

Table 7
Multivariate ANOVA between different groups of the participants on the subscale of the difficulty of language learning

Item	Total	Gender				Educational evel				Grade					
		Male	Female	p	η2	Eleme-ntary	Univer-sity	p	η2	2	3	4	5	p	η2
Item 3	4.14	4.21	4.09	.064	.016	4.01	4.27	.046	.018	4.14	4.10	4.23	4.09	.601	.008
Item 23	2.92	2.97	2.88	.699	.001	3.32	2.50	.000	.105	3.39	2.78	2.86	2.86	.060	.034
Item 32	3.04	3.20	2.93	.199	.008	3.08	3.00	.496	.002	3.53	3.16	3.00	2.72	.029	.041
Item 33	2.64	2.58	2.68	.120	.011	2.89	2.39	.059	.017	3.28	2.79	2.25	2.55	.013	.049
Item 34	3.31	3.44	3.22	.122	.011	3.38	3.25	.952	.000	2.78	3.33	3.22	3.67	.000	.084

Note: 3.Some languages are easier to learn than others; 23. It is easier to speak than understand a foreign language; 32.It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it; 33. If someone spent one hour a day learning a language, how long would it take them to speak the language very well?

☒ Less than a year   ☒ 1-2 years   ☒ 2-3 years   ☒ 3-5 years   ☒ You cannot learn a language one hour a day.

34. English is a (.........) language. ☒ Very difficult ☒ Difficult ☒ Medium ☒ Easy ☒ Very easy

Table 8
Multivariate ANOVA between different groups of the participants on the subscale of the nature of language learning

Items	Total	Gender				Educational level				Grade					
		Male	Female	p	η2	Eleme-ntary	Univer-sity	p	η2	2	3	4	5	p	η2
Item 7	3.17	3.24	3.12	.973	.000	3.50	2.85	.000	.061	3.83	3.05	3.02	3.07	.004	.061
Item 11	4.07	4.15	4.02	.097	.013	3.85	4.31	.002	.047	4.14	4.11	4.11	3.97	.723	.006
Item 15	4.03	4.07	4.01	.473	.002	4.28	3.78	.000	.065	4.03	4.00	4.11	4.00	.245	.019
Item 21	3.57	3.52	3.61	.052	.018	3.95	3.19	.000	.123	3.72	3.66	3.41	3.57	.155	.024
Item 25	3.90	3.82	3.96	.455	.003	3.68	4.12	.039	.020	4.17	3.89	3.89	3.78	.743	.006
Item 26	3.46	3.47	3.46	.847	.000	3.75	3.17	.000	.062	3.67	3.57	3.33	3.38	.344	.016

Note: 7. It is necessary to learn about English speaking cultures to speak English; 11. It is best to learn English in an English speaking country; 15 The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning new words; 21. The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning grammar; 25. Learning a foreign language is different than learning other academic subjects; 26. The most important part of learning English is learning how to translate from my own language.

Table 9
Multivariate ANOVA between different groups of the participants on the subscale of learning and communication strategies

Item	Total	Gender				Educational evel				Grade					
		Male	Female	p	η2	Eleme-ntary	Univer-sity	p	η2	2	3	4	5	p	η2
Item 6	3.58	3.60	3.57	.869	.000	3.84	3.32	.002	.045	3.83	3.54	3.51	3.56	.567	.010
Item 8	2.11	2.03	2.16	.109	.012	2.22	1.99	.035	.022	2.42	2.14	2.09	1.93	.071	.033
Item 12	3.90	3.85	3.93	.748	.001	3.83	3.96	.120	.012	3.37	4.02	3.91	4.06	.061	.035
Item 13	3.69	3.68	3.69	.976	.000	3.68	3.69	.338	.004	3.78	3.62	3.71	3.68	.835	.004
Item 16	4.50	4.42	4.55	.176	.009	4.64	4.35	.036	.004	4.50	4.44	4.45	4.60	.983	.001
Item 19	2.41	2.39	2.43	.498	.002	2.31	2.52	.812	.000	3.11	2.63	2.33	1.93	.001	.075
Item 20	3.61	3.53	3.66	.632	.001	3.78	3.43	.012	.030	3.69	3.48	3.69	3.61	.651	.008
Item 24	3.72	3.63	3.79	.867	.000	3.74	3.70	.931	.000	3.67	3.64	3.71	3.83	.707	.007

Note: 6. It is important to speak English with an excellent pronunciation; 8. You shouldn't say anything in English until you can say it correctly; 12. I enjoy practicing English with the native speakers of English I meet; 13. It's OK to guess if you don't know a word in English; 16. It is important to repeat and practice a lot; 19. I feel shy speaking English with other people; 20. If beginning students are allowed to make mistakes in English, it will be difficult for them to speak correctly later on; 24. It's important to practice with audio materials.

Table 10
Multivariate ANOVA between different groups of the participants on the subscale of motivation and expectations

Item	Total	Gender				Educational evel				Grade					
		Male	Female	p	η2	Eleme-ntary	Univer-sity	p	η2	2	3	4	5	p	η2
Item 4	4.13	4.11	4.15	.955	.000	4.07	4.19	.178	.009	3.42	3.98	4.26	4.51	.000	.093
Item 18	3.68	3.22	3.84	.106	.012	3.70	3.67	.303	.005	3.37	3.56	3.91	3.75	.011	.051
Item 22	3.79	3.86	3.74	.571	.002	4.23	3.35	.000	.113	4.00	3.44	3.86	4.00	.135	.026
Item 27	4.33	4.30	4.35	.494	.002	4.36	4.30	.467	.003	4.14	4.40	4.30	4.40	.815	.004
Item 29	4.55	4.54	4.55	.636	.001	4.56	4.54	.884	.000	4.44	4.44	4.57	4.68	.292	.018
Item 30	4.22	4.09	4.30	.195	.008	4.22	4.21	.835	.000	4.00	3.95	4.28	4.51	.045	.038

Note: 4.I believe that I will learn to speak English better; 18. People in my country feel that it is important to speak English; 22. I would like to learn English so that I can get to know Americans/British better; 27. If I learn to speak English very well, I will have better job opportunities; 29. I want to learn to speak English very well; 30. I would like to have English speaking friends.

Discussion

The statistical analysis displayed in the previous section partially confirmed both hypotheses. The findings revealing that gender had no significant effect on the overall beliefs measured by means of the BALLI confirmed the results reported by Bernart and Lloyd (2007), Lee (2014), and Tercanioglu (2005), but contradicted those presented in Fujiwara (2014) and Bernat (2006). Even when the female and male students' stances were analyzed separately for the five areas of beliefs, no significant differences were observed. Thus, it appears that gender as a sole factor does not play a key role in modifying learners' beliefs in this case, as both the male and female participants shared more or less the same attitudes towards the English learning experience. Still, some minor differences were noticed; the female participants reported slightly higher motivation, similarly to the female participants in the Bacon and Finnemann's study (1992), tended to enjoy practicing more, and think that those who know more than one language are intelligent, as was held by the female participants in the study by Bernat and Lloyd (2007), and they also expressed greater readiness to speak with target language speakers, as found in the studies by Siebert (2003), Bacon and Finnemann (1992), and Kunt (1997). Even though these general tendencies seem to be evident across different research, some contrary findings were reported here. For instance, Siebert (2003) indicated that the male students believed more in their and their country people's language learning abilities, claimed they needed less time to learn English, and more strongly advocated correct pronunciation and grammar. While the present study results are in agreement with the majority of these findings, our female students emphasized the importance of grammar as well as the language learning abilities of the people from their country more than their male counterparts. Thus, although a marked similarity in the beliefs of students of varied cultural background seems to exist, some stances tend to be culture-specific.

Second, contrary to some earlier findings (Fujiwara, 2014; Mori, 1999; Park, 1995; Samimy & Lee, 1997), this study did not reveal any significant effect of achievement in terms of English grade level on the overall BALLI. However, when the stances were compared between the groups on specific areas of beliefs, they significantly differed on the area of motivation and expectations. Thus, those more successful students were more confident in their and their country people's capacity to learn English, as also indicated in Fujiwara's (2014) study. At the same time, the majority of those with better grades were also less shy and more skeptic about the importance of grammar, translation, and perfect pronunciation. Similarly, aligning with the results reported by Park (1995) and Samimy and Lee (1997), those who were more successful tended to have more confidence in their abilities and expressed a stronger willingness to communicate in English. On the contrary, the less successful students were more convinced that a prerequisite for successful oral communication in English was a deep knowledge of the target culture. These findings clearly indicate that the priority of successful language learners - the ones more confident, open, and communication-oriented - is effective communication rather than perfect grammar or pronunciation. Naturally, thanks to this attitude, the experience of language acquisition appears easier and more enjoyable.

Nevertheless, it seems that out of the three factors, the strongest impact was exerted by the educational level, i.e. the age of the participants. Although Fujiwara (1999) found no difference between age groups, it should be emphasized that the participants were 17 and 18-year old students in group 1, 19-year olds in group 2, and 20 + in group 3. The age difference between the current study's groups was much greater, so the stances of the groups significantly diverged in terms of the overall BALLI as well as the area of the nature of language learning, which might be attributed to the length and wealth of experiences acquiring different languages. Thus, the elementary school students highlighted the significance of learning about the target language culture, of grammar, correct pronunciation, learning new words, and translation, whereas the university students accentuated communication with the target language speakers as crucial for successful language acquisition. Interestingly, the older students believed more that children are better language learners than adults. Although there was no significant difference when it came to the statement related to the difficulty of English language learning, the results support the conclusion by Mantle-Bromley's study (1995) that younger students in their study tended to underestimate the difficulty of language learning in comparison with the university-level students in the studies by Horwitz (1988) and Kern (1995). Therefore, experience evidently modifies some of the attitudes, as it appears that students start appreciating acquisition through communication rather than explicit instruction after years of language learning. They also tend to become less shy when speaking and more readily accept errors as natural in the process of language learning. Their aims of language learning also seem to change, as they begin to see more value in learning English as one of the main assets in their prospective academic and professional pursuits rather than merely a cultural exchange or friendship with native speakers of the language.

After analyzing the differences in the stances related to the specific factors separately, their combined effect was investigated. The interaction effect of grades and gender, grades, and gender and educational level was insignificant on the overall BALLI as well as the separate areas of beliefs. Conversely, educational level and grades, although having an insignificant effect on the BALLI, proved to significantly impact the area of the nature of language learning. Thus, for example, the more successful the university students were, the less they believed in the value of learning English in the English-speaking country and in the importance of learning about the target language grammar, while either the contrary or no significant difference between the scores was noticed among the elementary school students. Similarly, educational level and gender were found to interact significantly in the effect on the BALLI and three areas: the nature of language learning, motivation and expectations, and learning and communication strategies. Thus, the beliefs common to one group of the participants seem to change over time. Therefore, while the male elementary school students in the initial learning stages tended to demonstrate stronger support for the importance of learning new words, guessing, translation, correct pronunciation, and error correction than their female classmates, the opposite was shown among university students. The elementary school male students also reported being more shy when speaking English, less ready to practice it with native speakers, and expressing a stronger wish to speak English well and learn it better for the sake of understanding the native culture as well as for their professional success, unlike the male university students. This clearly confirms that such epistemological beliefs are dynamic and moldable under the influence of new experiences (Ellis, 2003; Kern, 1995; Mercer, 2011; Zhong, 2015). However, this study also indicates that the impact of one factor becomes more evident when investigated in the interplay with other relevant factors. Some attitudes adopted by the majority of male elementary school students tend to get firmer support among female students after some time, even though both groups acquire the target language in similar learning conditions. Similarly, more successful students at an elementary school level do not necessarily report the same approval for some statements as those who are more successful at the university level. Therefore, any analysis of the relation or the impact of varied factors on the LLBs should be focused on their interplay to provide greater insight into the issue.

Conclusion

The present study attempted to analyze foreign language students' beliefs about their English language learning and to explore how three factors - gender, educational level, and grades, separately and interacting with one another - influenced their stances on foreign language aptitude, the difficulty and nature of language learning, learning and communication strategies, and motivation and expectations.

The results showed an insignificant effect of grades and gender and a significant effect of educational level on the overall beliefs expressed by the BALLI, while only the interaction effect of educational level and gender on the statements proved significant. On the other hand, when the impact of the factors was evaluated separately for the five areas, the effect of grades was significant on the stances related to the area of motivation and expectations, whereas educational level was found to significantly affect the area of the nature of language learning. Here, the interaction effect of grades and educational level was significant on the area of the nature of language learning, while educational level in the interaction with gender also significantly affected three areas, namely the nature of language learning, motivation and expectations, as well as learning and communication strategies.

In a broader interpretation, the study showed that, rather than understanding language learning beliefs as being shaped by isolated individual traits, it seems more beneficial to observe them as a fluid outcome of a combination of factors. Here, it was demonstrated that educational level plays an important role not only as an isolated factor but also in combination with, first of all, achievement, when shaping the understanding of the nature of language learning, and secondly, gender, in their influence on the entirety of the convictions as well as some specific areas.

Thus, considering the finding that educational level, i.e. age, carries a significant effect on beliefs, the study indicates that, first of all, beliefs are modifiable, and, secondly, that they change in synchronization with relevant experiences. Such a finding carries significant pedagogical implications mainly because it can serve as a sound basis for educators to intentionally work on their students' beliefs, with a specific method and direction in

mind. In terms of the method, educators should provide students with the opportunity to experience rather than hear about the ways in which their language learning can be more successful. Regarding the direction, teachers should work on remodeling their students' beliefs so that they mirror the ones held by more successful students.

However, the strength of the notion that educational level plays a crucial role here was limited by the fact that this study's participants did not include a portion of high school students, which would have allowed for clearer indications of the gradual time-bound change of beliefs. Therefore, further research on this issue should include a larger and more diverse sample study. Moreover, as is naturally the case with quantitative instruments, another limitation of the study was the potentially simplified illustration of their beliefs due to statements that did not necessarily reflect the complexities beliefs usually possess. Therefore, another study with an additional instrument requiring participants to provide qualitative responses on both their beliefs and the modifications of those beliefs could paint a more layered and thus clearer picture of the matter. Along similar lines, it could be argued that this particular issue should be increasingly studied as a longitudinal study in which the gradual modifications could be researched not in the form of assumptions but rather tangible data on learners' transformations and thus naturally provide firmer inferences.

Finally, it is important to emphasize here that epistemological beliefs in general, and language learning beliefs in particular, are to be observed and researched continuously and variously in order to, first, inform educators that students' learning is grounded in a set of beliefs that navigate their experience and thus lead to positive or negative outcomes, and second, motivate them to bring awareness to and properly manage such convictions.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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The Relationship between L1 and L2 Reading Comprehension and Language and Reading Proficiency at the Tertiary Level

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The importance of reading is especially emphasized nowadays when the majority of information, irrespective of the source (books, daily press, professional literature, web sources, etc.), is primarily accessed via reading. Therefore, effective reading and reading comprehension are important in everyday life, but also in an academic setting. This particularly refers to pre-service preschool and primary school teachers, whose teacher training courses imply a good command of reading skills, but also teaching skills required for the development and teaching of pre-reading and reading skills. In L2 reading, there are additional issues that need to be considered, principally the possibility of skill transfer between the mother tongue and the second/foreign language. Hence, this research aimed to test reading comprehension in both Croatian (L1) and English (L2) languages in a group of university students (N=83), studying to become pre-service preschool and primary school teachers. Reading comprehension tests and a background questionnaire were used as research instruments in this mixed-method research. Contrary to our expectations, reading comprehension test results were fairly low, i.e. out of a total of 17 points, the mean results for the Croatian language reading comprehension test were M=13.6 (SD=2.05), while for the English language reading comprehension test they were M=11.29 (SD=2.24). The results were further correlated with the participants' self-assessed language knowledge and reading abilities in both languages. A positive correlation was found only between the English language reading comprehension test and the participants' self-assessed language knowledge and reading ability. Based on the obtained results, it may be proposed that teachers should focus more on developing reading skills and reading comprehension at all levels as well as in all of the languages that the learners are acquiring, especially in view of the proposed possibility of the transfer of skills among languages.

Keywords: language knowledge; reading; reading comprehension; self-assessed reading proficiency; transfer of skills

Introduction

Reading and Comprehension

It is difficult to imagine life in the modern world without reading because most of the information needed for everyday life is received (and transmitted) in written form. Therefore, it may be proposed that "A society can exist - many do exist - without writing, but no society can exist without reading" (Manguel, 1996, p. 7).

In addition to being *conditio sine qua non* of living in complex contemporary circumstances, reading has been attracting the interest of many scholars from different disciplines. Such an interdisciplinary approach to this phenomenon has yielded numerous definitions, thus confirming its complexity as there is still no single nor unambiguous denotation of the two main concepts: reading and reading comprehension. The development of reading as a skill followed by the development of reading ability (Pavličević-Franić, 2005) have been marked as a basic prerequisite of reading and comprehension. In reading models and theories, reading has been emphasized as an active or interactive process (Carrell, 1983; Grabe, 1988; Šamo, 2014)[1], which, in addition to the context of reading and the framework of individual readers' possibilities, includes both top-down and bottom-up models of interaction and text processing. Fostering the development of pre-reading skills generally starts in early childhood, and is particularly intense in the pre-primary stage, when reading as a language skill is associated with the other three language skills, i.e. listening, speaking, and writing. However, structured reading (and writing) instruction in Croatia does not begin until children start the first grade of primary school (Bežen, 2008; Teaching Plan and Programme for Primary School, 2006). In order for reading to transition from a skill to a person's ability level, reading comprehension as one of the key objectives of this language skill needs to be developed (Čudina-Obradović, 2014). Hence, during the stimulation and development of pre-reading and reading skills through various (non)structured activities and initial reading and writing instruction, preschool and primary school teachers need to constantly ask questions about both denotative and connotative meaning of words. In addition, by using various educational games, teachers may implement lexical-semantic exercises in accordance with cognitive and experiential abilities of early and preschool-aged, as well as primary school children. Thus, from the very beginning, the basic principle of reading is affirmed, stating that whatever one is reading, the focus should be on comprehension. Moreover, by revealing and comprehending different semantic layers in the information obtained through reading, we not only find the cognitive messages, but we also perceive the beauty in these messages, which is important both for the emotional and aesthetic development of preschool and early school-aged children. While reading, it is important to focus attention on the content, that is, the message that can be comprehended on the cognitive and emotional level, thus facilitating the discovery of the meaning of the entire text. According to Čudina-Obradović (2014, p. 193), the "complex idea of the text as a whole" is formed on the basis of previously acquired processes - from word meaning recognition to sentence meaning recognition and its implications (finding the propositions), and to making conclusions about how propositions are connected into a complex network of meanings for the purpose of building a mental model that would facilitate the deciphering of different semantic, linguistic, ethical, aesthetic and other text layers, especially in a literary text. In addition, reading comprehension facilitates the use of knowledge and its possible modifications, simultaneously revealing the world within and around each person at multiple levels. Among the preconditions for effective reading comprehension, a number of factors also need to be considered. Two important factors are language proficiency and reading skills, on which data may be obtained through tests or self-assessment. Although any data that is obtained through self-report heavily relies on the learners' honesty, the Common European Framework of Reference (Vijeće Europe, 2005) states that self-assessment may be used as a support measure, especially when a student's future does not directly depend on the assessment results.

The Transfer of Skills between L1 and L2

Reading and comprehension in an L1, as described in the previous section, are still considered less complex when compared to reading and comprehension in an L2. Despite the apparent differences between the L1 and L2, it has frequently been emphasized that the development of second/foreign language skills and knowledge is closely connected to the skills already existing in one's mother tongue (Gottardo & Mueller, 2009; Sparks, Patton, Ganschow, & Humbach, 2009). In addition, research has confirmed the existence of interlingual interactions and transfer between L1 and L2 (Mihaljević Djigunović, 2006; Sparks, Patton, & Luebbers, 2019), and the interaction has also been found to be bi-directional (Brown & Gullberg, 2008; Pavlenko & Jarvis, 2002). In other words, multilinguals' competences may best be described if viewed holistically as a global system with dynamically interacting subsystems (Cook, 1992; Herdina & Jessner, 2002), where the two (or more) languages are constantly interacting, thus contributing to either positive or negative transfer between the languages (see Koda (2004) for an overview of language transfer research).

Grabe (2010) asserts that L2 readers tend to transfer inherent cognitive reading skills such as phonological

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[1] Hudson, T. (2007). Teaching second language reading. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press; Grellet, F. (1981). Developing reading skills: A practical guide to reading comprehension exercises. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

and orthographic processing from one language to the other. Cross-language transfer of cognitive-linguistic abilities was also confirmed in a study investigating whether early reading abilities in an L1 may predict later literacy development in an L2 (Shum, Ho, Segel, & Au, 2016). A number of studies (Pae, 2018; Proctor, August, Carlo, & Snow, 2006; van Gelderen, Schoonen, Stoel, de Glopper, & Hulstijn, 2007; Yamashita, 2001) have confirmed significant relationships between L1 and L2 reading comprehension. Moreover, some studies have also confirmed that the mentioned influence may be bi-directional, i.e. L2 reading skills and strategies may influence L1 reading (Schwartz, Mendoza, & Meyer, 2017; Spies, Lara-Alecio, Tong, Irby, Garza, & Huerta, 2018). However, despite the possibility of the transfer, Grabe (2010) warns that it does not occur automatically, nor is it always positive, as there are a number of factors that may affect this process, whereby the two most frequently considered factors are reading ability and language proficiency in both the L1 and L2.

Aim and Hypotheses

The aim of the research was twofold: 1) to test reading comprehension (RC) in the Croatian and English languages on a sample of university students, and 2) to determine whether there is correlation between reading comprehension test results and students' self-assessed language proficiency and reading abilities in both languages.

Based on these objectives, the following hypotheses have been proposed:

H1. RC test results in the participants' mother tongue (Croatian) will be higher than those in the foreign language (English).

H2. A positive correlation will be established between RC test results in Croatian and English.

H3. A positive correlation will be determined for the Croatian RC test results, and the participants' self-assessed language proficiency and reading abilities in Croatian.

H4. A positive correlation will be determined for the English RC test results and the participants' self-assessed language proficiency and reading abilities in English.

Materials and Methods

Participants

A convenience sample of N = 83 female university students, whose average age was M = 21.34 (SD = 1.61)[2], participated in the research. The participants were enrolled in a two-semester English for Academic Purposes course at primary and preschool teacher education study programmes in Zagreb and Petrinja (Croatia). During their teacher education studies, students in Croatia enrol in a number of language and teaching methodology courses, where they acquire and develop knowledge about different reading strategies, and learn how to implement structured reading activities, teach reading, and assess reading comprehension. The reason this particular group of students was chosen for the research is because they will have to demonstrate a good command of reading comprehension and use different reading strategies in their future profession.

Materials

A mixed-method research design was applied in the study, i.e. the obtained results were analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The following research instruments were used: 1) a background questionnaire, which yielded data on the participants' age, language learning history, and a self-assessment of their language skills and reading abilities, and 2) reading comprehension tests in Croatian and English, specially designed for the present research. The tests comprise expository texts because this text type is most often used in academic writing (Benson, 1991). Both texts were taken from a developmental psychology university textbook (Vasta, Haith, & Miller, 1998), since Developmental Psychology is one of the courses taken by the research participants in both study programmes. According to Litz and Smith (2006), it is important, especially in testing, to use texts dealing with topics about which students possess appropriate knowledge (schemas) because in this way the application of logical thinking and conclusion skills is facilitated during text comprehension and processing. In the end, since it is considered that task type can contribute to students' success or failure on the test (Ferbežar

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[2] The research described in this paper is part of a larger study conducted in the process of the first author's PhD thesis writing, which investigated reading comprehension and reading strategies used by a group of university students in Croatia.

& Požgaj-Hadži, 2008), during test construction, participants' preferences have been considered, and various types of assignments and testing techniques were included. Each of the two tests consists of five tasks - two objective task types and three semi-open or open-ended tasks since this type of task is considered to positively influence deeper processing when reading (Carrell, Pharis, & Liberto, 1989). The task types are: 1) a gapped text with four sentences removed, the participants' task being to complete the text by correctly inserting the missing sentences, 2) open-ended question(s) related to the ideas presented in the text, 3) true/false statements based on the information given in the text, 4) suggesting an appropriate title for the given text, and 5) summarizing the text in 2-3 sentences.

Procedure

The sample of participants was a convenience one and included students enrolled in an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course at the higher education institution where the two researchers are employed. Prior to the research, all the participants were informed that their participation would be anonymous and voluntary and they could leave at any time. The purpose of the research was explained and they were asked to sign a consent form. The research itself was conducted in two phases, with the first phase including the completion of a pen-and-paper background questionnaire and the reading comprehension test in English. During the second phase two weeks later, the students completed the reading comprehension test in their L1 (Croatian). The research was conducted during regular EAP classes, and students were assured that the results would not affect their grades in the abovementioned course.

Given that the assessment of open-ended tasks has been criticized for its potential for subjectivity, evaluation scales were prepared for these tasks (tasks 4 and 5) in both RC tests, and three independent assessors evaluated the participants' responses in both languages. Finally, it is important to note that the participants had access to the texts while solving the tasks because the researchers wanted to eliminate any potential problems with information retrieval, which is often one of the factors contributing to students' success or failure when solving open-ended tasks (Alderson, 2000, p. 6).

Data Analysis

The obtained quantitative data were processed using the statistical package SPSS 15.0 for Windows (Statistical Package for Social Sciences), and the methods applied were those of descriptive statistics (frequencies, arithmetic mean (M), and standard deviation (SD)), inferential statistics (t-test), and correlation analyses.

Results and Discussion

Reading comprehension test in Croatian as the L1

The reading comprehension (RC) test was written in Croatian, and the participants were instructed to write their answers in Croatian as well. The obtained mean out of 17 possible points on the RC test in Croatian was M = 13.60 (SD = 2.05), with a minimum score of 6 and a maximum of 17. The first task on the test was an objective task in which the participants were asked to complete the text with the four omitted sentences listed below the text. According to established practice (Ferbežar & Požgaj-Hadži, 2008), in this type of task students receive 1 point for each correct sentence. The mean score was 3.31 (SD = 1.09), i.e. the majority of participants (N=58, 69.9%) achieved the maximum number of points (Table 1). The majority of mistakes (15.66%) were related to the inverted order of the second and third omitted sentences. Although there are clear signals in the text that facilitate task solving (the phrase in the text is '…*the only difference being that here the emphasis is on learning the general **ways of approaching** others…*', and the omitted sentence is '*Such **ways of approaching** can be sharing a toy….*'), some research participants failed to identify them, and the reason may be a lack of focus when reading.

For the second task, the participants were required to find specific information in the text and write it down. According to the assessment criteria, for each correct piece of information, the participants were given 0.5 of a point. The analysis of the results shows a relatively good score (M = 2.15, SD = 0.67), i.e. the highest percentage of participants (N = 33, 39.8%) received 2.5 out of the total of 3 points, and 15.7% (N = 13) had the maximum

number of points (Table 1). Although most answers were at least partially paraphrased, and since the instructions did not specify that copying verbatim was forbidden, such answers were also accepted as correct. The most common phrases copied verbatim belong to professional jargon: 'unpopular child', 'intervention programme(s)', 'socially competent children', 'social skills', etc.

The third task was true/false, which, according to Alderson (2000), is a popular testing technique, primarily because of the ease of its preparation. However, the author also states that the problem with this technique is that, because two responses are provided (correct/incorrect), the students have a fifty-fifty chance of guessing the correct answer. This may also have been the case in this research since this was the best-solved task on the whole test (M = 3.86, SD = 0.34), with 86.7% (N = 72) of the participants achieving the maximum number of points (Table 1).

Table 1
Croatian language reading comprehension test scores according to tasks

Number of points	1st task (max.= 4 points) (M=3.31; SD=1.09)		2nd task (max.= 3 points) (M= 2.15; SD=0.67)		3rd task (max.= 4 points) (M= 3.86; SD=0.34)		4th task (max.= 3 points) (M=1.62; SD=0.56)		5th task (max.= 4 points) (M=2.61; SD=0.75)	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
0	1	1.2	1	1.2	0	0	0	0	0	0
0.5			2	2.4			1	1.2	0	0
1	5	6	7	8.4	0	0	23	27.7	3	3.6
1.5			9	10.8			30	36.1	9	10.8
2	19	22.9	18	21.7	0	0	15	18.1	14	16.9
2.5			33	39.8			12	14.5	20	24.1
3	0	0	13	15.7	11	13.3	2	2.4	18	21.7
3.5									15	18.1
4	58	69.9			72	86.7			4	4.8

For the fourth task, the participants were asked to propose a title that would best fit the text they had read. Visinko (2014) states that this is one of the ways in which summarizing strategies can be taught and practiced. Research results obtained by Šamo (2011) have shown a significant correlation between the ability to interpret a text that was being read and summarizing its main points into a title, which confirms the appropriateness of this technique for testing reading comprehension. Since this is an open-type task, the criteria for the evaluation of participants' responses were defined according to the ones proposed by Rončević Zubković (2008). The task was assessed by three evaluators, and points were awarded with respect to the extent to which the title corresponded with the content, its linguistic accuracy, and whether or not it was copied verbatim from the text. The average score on this task was relatively low (M = 1.62, SD = 0.56). Most participants (N = 31, 36.1%) achieved 1.5 out of 3 points, and the maximum number of points was only scored by two participants. The original title of the article is *Peers as Therapists,* and the participants' responses showed that most of them recognized, at least partially, the underlying problem discussed in the text. Some of the proposed titles similar to the original were as follows: 'Peers as Therapists in Intervention Programmes', 'A Small Child - A Great Therapist', 'Peers – Therapists', and 'Peers as Social Therapists'. The titles that were not identical to the original, but corresponded to the topic of the text were also accepted as correct: 'Intervention Programmes for Children', 'Helping Children Who Are Unpopular among Peers', 'Helping Children Improve Their Social Skills', 'Enhancing Social Skills with the Help of Peers', and 'Using Interventions to Improve Children's Social Skills'. Some of the answers indicated participants' recognition of the basic theme or part of it, but they were either too general: 'Behaviour Patterns and Problems among Peers', 'Teaching Methods Useful with Children', and 'Unpopular Child and His/Her Peers', 'Children's Social Skills'; inaccurate: 'Intervention Programmes According to Odom and Strain in Which Peers Participate'; or unfinished: 'How to Include Less Socially Competent Children?'. Language errors were minimal and, since the phrases written by the participants were relatively short, no relationship between proficiency level in the Croatian language and the provided answers was observed.

For the fifth task, the participants were required to summarize the text. Summarizing "implies recognition, paraphrase and integration of essential information from the text" (Kolić-Vehovec & Muranović, 2004, p. 97), in other words, separating the relevant from the irrelevant information and organization of the selected data (Šamo, 2011), which is why it is considered one of "the most effective reading and learning strategies" (Pečjak et al., 2009, p. 258). Summary writing has been selected for this test because it is generally applied after reading (Duffy, 2009) and when practicing the retelling of a text (Visinko, 2014). Moreover, since the successful understanding of a text is essential for identifying key information (Celce-Murcia & Ohlstain, 2000), summarizing can be used as a good indicator of text comprehension. Evaluation criteria for this task have partially been defined according to Kolić-Vehovec and Muranović (2004): expressing the main idea, staying within the given frame with respect to the length, and using one's own words in writing the summary. The criteria that have been added are the language acceptability and the cohesion and coherence of the text. The obtained average result was relatively low (M = 2.61, SD = 0.75), and the most common reason seems to be the participants' failure to recognize the most important information, or the fact that the proposed summary was either too long or too short. Other mistakes that were observed were a lack of coherence and cohesion in the summary, inappropriate style, wrong collocations, as well as adding information related to personal experiences rather than summarizing the information presented in the text (e.g. 'Peers are the reason why some children are unpopular', 'There are unpopular children in each class. The goal of the preschool teacher is to integrate them with the other children').

Reading comprehension test in English as L2

This reading comprehension (RC) test was written in English, and the participants were required to write their answers in English as well, except for the last task – summarizing. Participants were given clear instructions that the abstract should be written in their mother tongue because the objective of the task was not to test the participants' production in their L2, but rather their comprehension. In other words, writing a summary in a foreign language may constitute a problem for L2 users since, despite text comprehension, they may not be able to express their ideas in the L2 due to insufficient language skills (Alderson, 2000). The obtained average score on the RC test in English was M = 11.29 (SD = 2.45), out of a total of 17 points, with the minimum score being 5 points and the maximum 16 points. One possible reason for the participants' relatively poor results on the test could be their insufficient vocabulary knowledge, which has been found to be one of the best predictors of reading comprehension (Burgoyne, Whiteley, & Hutchinson, 2011; Pečjak, Kolić-Vehovec, Rončević Zubković, & Ajdišek, 2009). Nagy and Scott (2000, as cited in Pečjak et al., 2009) argued that the knowledge and understanding of 90-95% of words in the text is necessary for comprehension. In addition, readers' background knowledge (Visinko, 2014) is also important, and it is possible that for some participants in the present research this knowledge may have been insufficient.

Table 2
English language reading comprehension test scores according to the tasks

Number of points	1st task (max.= 4 points) (M=2.33; SD=1.11)		2nd task (max.= 3 points) (M= 1.55; SD=0.76)		3rd task (max.= 4 points) (M=3.46; SD=0.70)		4th task (max. = 3 points) (M=1.72; SD=0.58)		5th task (max.= 4 points) (M=2.20; SD=0.67)	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
0	1	1.2	3	3.6	0	0	2	2.4	1	1.2
0.5			5	6			1	1.2	2	2.4
1	16	19.3	26	31.3	2	2.4	13	15.7	2	2.4
1.5			19	22.9			28	33.7	14	16.9
2	43	51.8	15	18.1	4	4.8	21	25.3	23	27.7
2.5			6	7.2			18	21.7	24	28.9
3	0	0	9	10.8	31	37.3	0	0	14	16.9
3.5									3	3.6
4	23	27.7			46	55.4			0	0

For the first task, just as on the RC test in Croatian, the participants were asked to complete the text with the four omitted sentences listed below the text. The average score was 2.33 (SD = 1.11), which means that more than half of the participants (N = 43, 51.8%) scored at least 2 out of a total of 4 points. The results also show that only 27.7% (N = 23) of the participants achieved the maximum number of points on this task (Table 2). However, it is interesting that as many as 45.78% (N = 38) of the participants inverted the order of the third and the fourth omitted sentences. The reason may be because the third sentence begins with the connective 'finally', and the participants may have mistakenly inserted it as the last in the text. This might indicate insufficient knowledge of connectives, which, in addition to metacognitive knowledge, have been found to be important for expository text comprehension (Welie, Schoonen, Kuiken, & van den Bergh, 2017).

For the second task, the participants had to find specific information in the text and use it to answer questions. For each correct answer, they received 0.5 of a point. The analysis of participants' scores indicated relatively poor results (M = 1.55, SD = 0.76), especially since 31.3% (N = 26) of the participants achieved only 1 out of 3 points, while only 10.8% (N = 9) of the participants received all 3 points (Table 2). This may be because they failed to identify the required information. Further analysis of the participants' answers revealed that most of them partially (N = 59, 71%), or completely (N = 13, 15.6%) copied phrases from the text, that is, only a few of the participants (N = 9, 10.8%) used paraphrasing. Such answers, as in the RC test in Croatian, were accepted as correct because task instructions did not specify that verbatim copying of the phrases from the text was forbidden, and the purpose of the task was not to test the participants' use of the English language but their reading comprehension. However, such a high percentage of complete or partial verbatim copying may pose a reason for concern. A possible explanation may be that because of their subjective or objective feeling of insufficient language competence in their L2, participants felt safer using the phrases from the original text, as was found in another research (Wu, 2013). Another reason may be their insufficiently developed and/or previously acquired (wrong) reading and/ or learning strategies. Namely, the results of the PISA 2009 survey (Braš Roth, Markočić Dekanić, Markuš, & Gregurović, 2010, p. 142) showed that as many as 49.32% of unsuccessful secondary school students in Croatia considered verbatim copying of sentences from a text to be a successful strategy. Naturally, additional tests and analyses should be carried out before making any definite conclusions about the causes of such language behaviour.

The analysis of the participants' paraphrased responses showed that paraphrase was used almost equally by participants with higher and lower levels of language proficiency[3]. However, in the answers provided by participants with a lower level of language proficiency more language errors were identified although the answers clearly indicated that they understood the text: S8 (self-assessment 3): ... 'they can avoid contact with the person who punish*[4] he/ she*'; S9 (self-assessment 2): 'children who exposed* to physical punishment may become aggresive* parent* latter*'. Conversely, and in line with the expectations, the participants with a higher level of language proficiency made fewer and minor language errors: S32 (self-assessment 4): 'if we use it appropriate*', or none at all, and a satisfactory level of reading comprehension and language use is apparent: S22 (self-assessment 5): 'punishment can reduce behaviours that are not a problem'; S36 (self-assessment 4): 'the punisher becomes the object of hate'; S51 (self-assessment 5): 'it can eliminate behaviour that was not a problem'. The paraphrased answers contained mostly minimal interventions such as omitting (in)definite articles or changing word classes (e.g. 'avoiding' instead of 'avoid', 'reduce' or 'reduction' instead of reducing, 'aggressive' instead of 'aggression'). The analysis confirmed that the proficiency level was again a significant factor, as the less proficient participants showed a considerable lack of comprehension: S11 (self-assessment 3): 'punishment is not a good teaching*', S31 (self-assessment 3): 'the individual who delivers the punishment sometimes becomes so closely associated*', S83 (self-assessment 3): 'Published* behaviour will not occur again'. In the last example, it is not completely clear whether the use of the word 'published' instead of 'punished' was merely a 'slip of the tongue', or whether the participant, because of insufficient language knowledge, replaced an unknown word with another that is phonologically similar to the original.

The third task was true/false, which, as mentioned earlier, may not be the most reliable as the participants may resort to guessing the correct answer. There is a possibility that this was the case in the present research since it was the best-solved task on the whole test (M = 3.46, SD = 0.70), that is 55.4% (N = 46) of the participants

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[3] Participants' language proficiency was determined on the basis of their self-assessment, and is expressed on a scale 1-5, where 1 indicates insufficient and 5 excellent language knowledge.

[4] All examples provided here are quotes of the students' answers and * signals words or phrases which have been written or used incorrectly by the students.

achieved the maximum number of points (Table 2). The analysis of the results showed that 37.3% (N = 31) of the participants made a mistake on the first sentence in the task ('Mild punishment can be effective in reducing undesirable behaviours'). It is assumed that the error is merely a result of the participants' haste and lack of attention, rather than lack of reading and / or language skills because the text that refers to this task states: 'Indeed, *moderate* to strong punishment, if delivered clearly and consistently, is effective in reducing undesirable behaviours. *Mild* punishment, in contrast, can actually increase the behaviour...'.

The fourth task required the participants to propose the most appropriate title for the given text, and just as the task on the Croatian RC test, the criteria were defined in advance, and the tasks were scored by three independent scorers. The results show that the average score on this task was relatively low (M = 1.72, SD = 0.58). The highest percentage (N = 28, 33.7%) of the participants received 1.5 out of 3 points, while no one scored the maximum number of points (Table 2). The original title of the text is *Effects and Side Effects of Punishment by Parents or Teachers,* and the analysis of the responses indicates that the vast majority (N = 25, 30.12%) corresponded to the original: 'Advantages and Disadvantages of Punishment', '(Dis)advantages of Punishment', and 'Good and Bad Sides of Punishment'. Šamo (2011) also found that on this type of assignment students most often use the words from the text, which, in addition to some of the previously mentioned reasons, may also be interpreted as an insufficiently developed ability to independently review the text. However, the reason why most of the titles proposed by the participants in this research contain the words 'advantages' and 'disadvantages' may be because the participants were asked to list advantages and disadvantages of punishment on the second task. Furthermore, most answers did identify punishment as a basic idea although some of the participants used inaccurate language or the answers were incomplete: S33 'What is Punishment?', S32 'Use* Punishment or Not?', S44 'Punishment - Is It Really the Best Choice?', S46 'Punishment is Not Always the Best Choice', S48 'Punishment and Its Consequences', S50 'Should We Punish Our Children?', and S53 'Punishment - To Be or Not to Be'. In some of the answers, punishment was recognized as the basic idea, but its interpretation was incorrect: S2 'Facts about Punishment', S58 'Punishment Destroyed Child* Soul', and S73 'Reduce Your Punishment'. Some of the titles were too detailed, which may be an indication of insufficiently developed summarizing skills. Further analysis and a comparison of the answers with the participants' language proficiency confirmed a relationship. Namely, participants with higher proficiency provided answers which were not only more accurate but also showed ingenuity and creativity: S70 (self-assessment 5): 'Punishment - How It Reflects on Children', S72 (self-assessment 5): 'Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Punishment as a Parenting Technique', S80 (self-assessment 4): 'Punishment and Behaviors: What's and Why's', and S23 (self-assessment 4): '(Dis) Advantages of Punishment'. As expected, answers provided by less proficient participants had more language errors: S52 (self-assessment 3): 'Punishment Is Not an* Answear*', S76 (self-assessment 2): 'Punishment in the Fifth* Facts', S10 (self-assessment 3): 'The Propriate* Punishment for the* Children', S11 (self-assessment 3): 'Do Not Punishment*, Teach Them!', and S12 (self-assessment 2): 'Punishment for a* Children's*'.

For the fifth task, the participants were required to write the text summary, thus demonstrating their comprehension and the ability to synthesize the information presented in the text. In scoring the tests, the three evaluators used the same criteria as for the test in Croatian. The analysis showed that a relatively low average score M = 2.20 (SD = 0.67) was achieved, with the highest percentage of participants achieving 2 (N = 23, 27.7%) or 2.5 points (N = 24, 28.9%) out of a total of 4. The most frequent mistakes resulted from the participants' inability to identify the most important facts. This may be related to the results of the PISA 2009 survey, which showed that checking whether the most important facts have been identified for summary writing was considered effective by all of the most successful Croatian secondary school students as opposed to the unsuccessful ones, of whom only 51.41% considered this strategy to be effective (Braš Roth et al., 2010, p. 142). Additionally, a common mistake observed in the present study was related to the fact that the summaries significantly exceeded the prescribed length. This further confirms the observation that Croatian students do not have sufficiently developed skills for separating important from less important information. One possible explanation for the obtained results may also be the participants' over-reliance on text features through the bottom-up model, i.e. it was found that because of the complexity of the language, students may have been unable to identify the key idea (Carrell, 1988; Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000).

Thus, it can be concluded that, given the presented results, it would be advisable to include in the curriculum some form of teaching summarizing and other reading strategies, especially as research has shown that reading strategy instruction may result in significant progress in reading (Kolić-Vehovec & Muranović, 2004; Okkinga, van Steensel, van Gelderen, van Schooten, Sleegers, & Arends, 2018; Vaughn, Swanson, Roberts, Wanzek,

Stillman-Spisak, Solis, & Simmons, 2013), and it has also been related to student attitudes toward reading and the motivation to read (Huang & Chen, 2019).

Comparison of the reading comprehension test results and the participants' self-assessed language proficiency and reading skills

By comparing the mean values of the total results from the reading comprehension tests in Croatian and English, a statistically significant difference (t = 8.605, df = 82, p = 0.000) was determined in favour of the RC test in Croatian. The analysis of individual tasks using the t-test showed that, apart from the fourth task (summarizing the text into a corresponding title), higher values were obtained on the RC test in Croatian, which confirms the first hypothesis.

Table 3
T-test for reading comprehension test results in L1 and L2 by task (Mikulec, 2016, p. 140)

	Reading comprehension (RC) test	N	M	SD	t	df	p
1st task	RC test in Croatian	83	3.31	1.09	6.531	82	0.000
	RC test in English	83	2.34	1.12			
2nd task	RC test in Croatian	83	2.16	0.67	6.318	82	0.000
	RC test in English	83	1.55	0.77			
3rd task	RC test in Croatian	83	3.87	0.34	5.091	82	0.000
	RC test in English	83	3.46	0.70			
4th task	RC test in Croatian	83	1.62	0.56	-1.106	82	0.272
	RC test in English	83	1.72	0.59			
5th task	RC test in Croatian	83	2.61	0.75	4.161	82	0.000
	RC test in English	83	2.20	0.68			

The data on the participants' self-assessed Croatian and English language proficiency and their reading skills in both languages were collected with the background questionnaire. T-test was used to compare participants' self-assessment of English as a foreign language (L2) (M = 3.64) and Croatian as a mother tongue (L1) (M = 4.23), and a statistically significant difference (t = -5.737, df = 82, p = 0.000) in favour of the L1 was found. It can be concluded that, as expected since Croatian is their mother tongue, the participants assessed their L1 proficiency to be higher than their L2 proficiency.

The results of the participants' self-assessed reading skills were similar to those of their self-assessed L1 and L2 skills. In other words, the average grade for the participants' self-assessed reading skills in English was M = 3.49 (SD = 0.80), while for Croatian it was somewhat higher at M = 4.66 (SD = 0.50). The t-test again confirmed a statistically significant difference (t = 13.164, df = 82, p = 0.000) in favour of the mother tongue.

In the research conducted by Perkins, Brutten, and Pohlman (1989, as cited in Grabe, 2009), a statistically significant positive correlation was found between L2 proficiency and L2 reading comprehension, as well as a low correlation between L1 and L2 reading comprehension. Correlation analysis of the examined variables was also applied in this study and the obtained results were similar to those mentioned above. In other words, the analysis of the RC test results in the L1 and L2 showed a statistically significant positive correlation (r = 0.424, p = 0.000), thus confirming the second hypothesis, and indicating a possible transfer of skills between the two languages, as proposed by other researchers (Cook, 2003; Koda, 2004; Mihaljević Djigunović, 2006).

A positive correlation was also determined between L1 reading comprehension test results and L2 language proficiency (r = 0.251, p = 0.000) and self-assessed reading abilities in the L2 (r = 0.254, p = 0.021). However, no positive correlation was established between the L1 reading comprehension test and L1 self-assessed proficiency, nor with self-assessed L1 reading abilities. Therefore, the third hypothesis was not confirmed.

Finally, a statistically significant correlation was determined between the L2 reading comprehension test results

and self-assessed L2 proficiency (r = 0.542, p = 0.000) as well as with self-assessed L2 reading abilities (r = 0.432, p = 0.000). Hence, the fourth hypothesis was confirmed.

The main limitation of the present study is related to the participants since the sample was a convenience one and homogenous with respect to gender, which may have affected the distribution of the obtained results. Moreover, the values for the students' language proficiency and reading abilities are solely based on self-reported data and may have therefore been biased. Hence, it is proposed that future studies apply a random sampling method and a heterogeneous sample as well as combining self-reported data with some more objective measures.

Conclusion

Preschool and primary school teachers should be proficient readers and therefore should have well-developed reading and reading comprehension skills as well as the abilities necessary to teach them effectively.

The research results presented in this paper show that the participants' reading comprehension is, as expected, better in their mother tongue than in a foreign language. The results further indicate that those participants whose reading comprehension skills were better in one language also had better comprehension skills in the other. Moreover, the results show that the participants who perceived their reading abilities and their language proficiency in L2 to be higher also had better comprehension results. However, an explanation as to why the same results were not obtained for the participants' L1 would require further investigation.

In addition, the analysis related to the use of verbatim phrases from the original suggests that the participants felt safer, especially in their L2, copying phrases from the text-based prompt. This might be interpreted as a subjective (or objective) sense of inadequate language competence, which was expectedly more pronounced in the L2 than in the mother tongue, but it may also refer to insufficiently developed and/or previously acquired ineffective reading or learning strategies. Therefore, we propose that, at all education levels - from elementary to university, and in all languages one is acquiring, it is important to implement the systematic instruction of different approaches, strategies, and specific procedures that contribute to efficient text comprehension.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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Pragmeme of Political Humour in Selected Nigerian Political Cartoons

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Political humour is a recurring element in print media and other genres, touching various areas of Nigerian political discourse. A number of research studies have investigated political humour in contemporary Nigerian political discourse. The political humour deployed in responding to some prominent political events in 2016, however, is relatively unexplored. This current endeavour, therefore, attempts to examine the pragmeme of humour in selected 2016 political events that are remediated in political cartoons. These include political matters such as *Nigeria's 56th Independence Anniversary*, the *crusade against corruption,* which Muhammadu Buhari commenced when he became the President of Nigeria, and the alleged *2016 budget padding scandal* that rocked the House of Representatives. The frameworks for the study comprise Flamson and Barrett's Encryption Theory of Humour and Mey's Pragmeme Theory. The six political cartoons that were subjected to discourse interpretations were culled from *Aprokotoons Media*, Nigeria's foremost internet-based cartoon journal with a large collection of relevant cartoon resources for print and electronic media. The results revealed that audiences who were well informed on these political activities were able to decrypt the cartoons because they shared the same key political knowledge as the cartoonist. Thus, honest laughter is produced, but on the other hand, the cartoons' essential features are subordinated to the pragmeme of humour of idle campaign promises and Nigeria's hopeless condition at 56; self-centred leadership, lawmakers who are lawbreakers, and that the worst form of corruption is selective justice. Hence, these findings enhance the public perception of the country's political actors, and underscore the need for rethinking the sensibility of political acts, promises, and decisions.

Keywords: encryption theory; political cartoon; political humour; pragmeme

Introduction

Humour, a natural phenomenon in human society, is as old as the use of language for human communications. In its different forms of verbal and non-verbal expressions, humour has the potential to consciously or unconsciously evoke laughter from an audience. Different spheres of human activity have generated specific and general humour to address issues of personal and general concern. In contemporary society, one of the general concerns of individuals is how their society is governed by administrators who are either elected or appointed. Often times, modern democracy has encouraged changes of power through elections and as a result, politicians are released to engage in the political game of election or re-election. These politicians deploy verbal and non-verbal language resources to attract public attention and to disparage their opponents. Nigerian politicians, for example, use humour in their language use with specific reference to their political experience in their immediate environment.

Against the background of the use of humour by Nigerian politicians, the Nigerian media has resorted to the use of humour (in this context, political humour) to satirise the misdemeanour of political leaders in the political landscape of the country. This is common in both print and online media in the form of political cartoons. Nearly all Nigerian Newspapers such as Punch, Daily Trust, The Guardian, and The Nation have sections for political cartoons on topical issues in the country. Political cartoons contain "both a visual and a textual message on political events presented through cultural symbols" (Gocek, 1998).

The epicentre of this paper, therefore, is on political humour as one potent tool that reflects on and conveys

paradigms of shared Nigerian political events in some selected Nigerian political cartoons. In this context, political humour is taken as an honest signal of shared common knowledge, attitudes, and preferences (Flamson & Barret, 2008). This position is relatively in tandem with a pragmatic theory, especially the theory of pragmeme, which situates speech acts (political humour being one) in the appropriate sociocultural context. Based on this background, our paper examines the pragmeme of political humour – linguistic and non-linguistic interpretive communicative resources being instantiated in Nigerian political cartoons, to target audience perceptions and stimulate political volte-face. With this intent, the paper claims that much of the verbal and non-verbal (pictorial) acts associated with political humour are dependent on the exigencies of rethinking the sensibility of political acts, promises, and decisions.

Political cartoons and political humour

Cartoons and humour are media reserves that have immemorially maintained an undeniable presence and influence in the communication of the age-old social institution known as politics. Based on this communicative role played by cartoons and humour, the two have preserved a symbiotic relationship with politics; thus, they are known as political cartoons and political humour in extant literature. Political cartoons have been avowed to be powerful communicative weapons used to satirise governments without incurring the wrath of the affected persons and institutions. They are capable of engendering distractions and instilling jokes. The significance of political cartoons also lies in the fact that they are able to give socio-political commentaries on vital areas of reality. In the words of Edwards and Winkler (1987:306), a political cartoon is "a graphic presentation typically designed in one-panel, non-continuing format to make an independent statement or observation on political events or social policy". Such statements or observations may often serve to undermine, unsettle, and oppose excesses of power consumption and authority, and as such they may be viewed as 'weapons of the weak', providing expressions of resistance and solidarity in opposition to political leaders and elites (Hammett, 2012). It is little wonder that Brown (2012:1) asserts that "from the printing press to the internet, political cartoons and imagery have proven to be invaluable tools of resistance while also posing serious threats to the governments they target". However, with these critical assignments rendered by cartoons, their role is not accredited and considered significant because of the poor cognition of some audiences. Through its channel (print media), political cartoons are seen as elitist weapons due to the small audience that can decipher the message. Thus, they tend to be an overlooked means of political discourse. Nonetheless, they are rhetorical texts that assist not only in interpreting and framing political discourse, but offering symbolic constructions of political and national identities (Edwards & McDonald, 2010), and consequently offer readers a clear, although possibly slanted, view of politicians/public figures in the political scenes.

Political humour includes any humorous text that not only makes reference to politics, but achieves the goal of politics by dealing with political issues, people, processes, events, or institutions. It is known to be a communicative resource for spotting, highlighting, and attacking incongruities originating in political discourse and action (Tsakona & Popa, 2011, Chun, 2004, & Warner, 2007). These incongruities are those political shortcomings that constitute a deviation from political norms, and consequently, in view of this nonconformity, become undoubtedly source material for the media. Political humour informs its audience about this political reality, and points out that this is, in fact, an incongruous reality (Tsakona & Popa, 2011). It commonly evolves into jokes or satirical verbal and non-verbal genres that accompany political commentary, comic sketches aiming to ridicule the blunders of politicians ruling the country: their decisions, behaviour, or attitudes (Poprawa, n.d.); which could be in the forms of incompetence, recklessness, or corruption, among others.

Political humour is one of the tasks of political cartoons, and it is prevalent in this media genre (political cartoons) because of its communicative potential without serious fear of reprisal. Although political cartoons may appear to be superficial, there is actually more to their triviality than meets the eyes. For every significant political discourse, cartoonists are able to extract vital news items, and in turn, replicate them with pictorial humorous edges in order to appeal to their readership. Consequently, by distilling political arguments and criticism into clear, easily digestible (and at times grossly caricatured) statements, they have oiled our political debate and helped shape public opinion (Greste, 2015). In a similar manner, they are able to engage their audience in politics and in the reasonableness of political acts and decisions (Tsakona & Popa, 2011). This audience involvement has been affirmed in Greste's (2015: I) when he signals that "we all love a good political cartoon. Whether we agree with the underlying sentiment or not, the biting wit and the sharp insight of a well-crafted caricature and its punch line are always deeply satisfying."

Humour, in politics, could be deployed by a cartoonist in three major ways, namely irony, satire, and sarcasm. In other words, political humour could be characteristically ironical, satirical, or sarcastic in its functions. If it is ironical, it portends that the literal meaning of what is presented is the opposite of what is intended; and should it be satirical, it exposes and denounces vices, follies, abuses, and casts judgement by scorning and ridiculing; through sarcasm, it praises but such acclaims are invectives.

A number of scholarly considerations have been directed to political humour. These research interests could be attributed to the dominance of hybrid forms of political reports over the years. For instance, Harris (2009)[1] and Dynel (2011) investigated humour in the American presidential race of 2008 and Polish pre-election debates of 2007 respectively. Mueller (2011), Archakis and Tsakona (2011), and Saftoiu and Popescu (2014) examined humour in parliamentary proceedings. Mueller probed into humour in the German Bundestag (German House of Representatives); with a focus on amusement and laughable parliamentary situations, Archakis and Tsakona (2011) considered humour in Greek parliamentary debates, while Saftoiu and Popescu (2014) attempted the construction and consolidation of the political brand 'The Tribune-Jester' in relation to the use of ethnic humour in the form of joking in Romania parliamentary discourse made by Corneliu Vadim Tudor. In the study of political humour in Nigerian political discourse, Taiwo (2007) made an enquiry into how Nigerian writers creatively and manipulatively deploy morphological and lexico-semantic nuances to ridicule politicians and the Nigerian Police Force. In the same vein, Abioye (2009) investigated satirical style as a source of literary comment in selected Nigerian newspapers. The work observed a general lack of knowledge of satire as a stylistic device, how it could be deployed effectively and, that writers find it safer to use indirect methods of criticising because of repression fears. On the internet, Adegoju and Oyebode (2015) engaged in the patterns of humour evidenced in the use of internet memes in the online campaign of the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria. The study revealed that memes serve the subversive purposes of detracting from the electoral value of the targets. On the other hand, Ogbo and Nuhu (2016) also explored satire as a form of imagery to depict some political issues in cartoons contained in some Nigerian national dailies.

These aforementioned scholarly works are brilliant efforts on political humour. However, it should be affirmed here that sufficient scholarly attention has not been given to the political humour deployed in responding to some prominent political events in Nigeria in the year 2016. This current endeavour therefore attempts to examine the pragmeme of political humour in recent political events within the Nigerian political clime in selected political cartoons. These are political topics such as *Nigeria's 56th Independence Anniversary* (in 2016), the *crusade against corruption* that Muhammadu Buhari commenced when he became the President of Nigeria, and the alleged *2016 budget padding scandal* that rocked the House of Representatives.

Theoretical Insights

The theoretical base of this article is eclectic, amalgamating insights from Flamson and Barrett's Encryption Theory of Humour and Mey's Pragmeme Theory. The two are briefly discussed in sequence, together with how they stand to adequately interpret the selected political cartoons for this paper.

The heart of Flamson and Barrett's theory of encryption-decryption stands in the submission that intentionally produced humour honestly signals the fact that speaker and audience share information, enabling the assessment of relative similarity and social assortment for compatibility over time (Flamson & Bryant, 2013). The impression given by this humour theory is that, essentially, humorous productions come with layers of inference of a speaker's meaning, the majority of which rely on access to implied information on the part of the conveyer of humour and the audience. The encryption model, thus, emanates from the notion that humour is an encoded form of communicative act, a message-based mechanism, whose inherent meaning could only be decrypted if its target audience has possession of a "key", that is, the common knowledge, attitudes, and preferences required to derive the implied messages contained in the piece. The degree to which the encrypted message seems non-random to key-holders strengthens the 'manifestness' of the speaker's possession of the key (Flamson & Bryant, 2013). This encrypted aspect of humour, in the words of Flamson and Barret (2008:262), "explains both a pervasive proximate aspect of humour (the non-random fit between the explicit information in jokes and the implicit background knowledge they refer to) and its ultimate function as a social assortment device", that is, its potency for engendering affiliations with compatible local peers.

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[1] Harris, M. K. (2009). The political application of humor. Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects. Retrieved from https://surface.syr.edu/honors_capstone/497

Within the encryption theory, humour is taken to have a pragmatic thrust, considering the fact that it is capable of indexing a mammoth amount of background information. Accordingly, Flamson and Barrett (2013) argue that encryption/humour is a special case of inferential communication that can be proximately described through relevance theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1995). They propose that humour:

> ...is a special encrypted form of ostensive behaviour that relies on principles of relevance to produce certain cognitive effects, but in such a way that some effects will only be made manifest to those who have a sufficiently similar cognitive environment to derive that implicit content. Audience members that do not share the cognitive environment with the speaker will derive more mundane inferences of speaker meaning, unaware of the encrypted information that has been conveyed. (2013:57)

The encryption and decryption process of humour is a cognitive effect that is considered a special form of relevance. A cognitive effect is obviously an adjustment in an individual's representation of the world. When a cognitive effect is positive, it is worth having. Other things being equal, the more positive cognitive effects something humourous spontaneously evokes in the audience, the more relevant it is. However, the more processing efforts involved in deriving its cognitive effects, the less relevant it is. A humorous text is especially relevant to any audience by virtue of its modest contextual effects on their environment and it is also relevant to that subset of audience members whose cognitive environments contain the key (Flamson & Bryant, 2013).

Plainly, the relevance theory has accorded the encryption theory comprehensive and detailing notions about the mechanisms of humour as an encrypted phenomenon whose funniness is not determined by its superficial content, but the relationship between its external content and its implied meaning understood by both its speaker and its audience, and thereby typifying humour as an oblique, subjective, and social assorting communicative act. Nevertheless, this paper considers the input of relevance theory as limited, taking into consideration that it conceives humour as a sensation bound to the principle that human cognition is built toward the maximisation of relevance, and that the motivation of humour (either verbal or non-verbal) is based on a speaker's intention; that is, the understanding by the speaker of what will be effective in a particular cognitively-oriented context, and that the interpretation of humour is predicated on a speaker's utterance having the same meaning as was intended within a particular cognitively-oriented context. Consequently, as an enhancement to all this, this paper has characterised humour as a pragmeme. Here, this idea of pragmeme is contingent on the notion of a pragmeme as submitted by Mey (2001), as situationally bound speech. It also transects with Carpone's (2005) view of a pragmeme as a situated speech act, which synergises the rules of language and that of a society in determining meaning; a meaning intended as a socially recognised object, sensitive to social expectations about the situation in which it is to be interpreted. As a situated speech act, a pragmeme undergoes transformations having been acted upon by the forces of a regimented situation, (in the arguments of Mey, 2010:2883, "the place where the linguistic interactants meet, not as disembodied 'talking heads', but as agents on the societal scene, bringing along their entire baggage of world knowledge: tacit and explicit presuppositions, expectations, and prejudices, as well as prior linguistic experiences") that reshapes the original illocutionary value of a speech act by adding contextual layers of meaning, or even may change the illocutionary value of the speech act (Capone, 2005).

Political humour, either verbal or non-verbal, is encrypted, but it is a pragmeme. When it is embedded, not only in a cognitively-oriented context, but in the entire situation which comprises the context of use, rules that transform what is being communicated into what it is meant in adherence to social constrains and lastly, the co-text, it fulfils social functions (Capone, 2010) rather than just implicating speaker meaning. In other words, political humour is a product of mutual interactional situations, and it is understood based on the social context in which it is uttered or designed. Instead of ordinarily decoding what political humour may mean, and trying to decipher its verbal and nonverbal content, the situation in which the entire political cartoons actually fit is activated to give a comprehensive account of such political humour. Therefore, this paper hypothesises that political cartoonists make use of encrypted political humour to pass across socio-political functions, where they both share social-political affordances with their audience.

Materials and Methods

Materials

The materials used for this paper comprise six (6) political cartoons derived from Aprokotoons Media (2016).2 This cartoon network was selected because it domiciles in Nigeria. In addition, it is well-informed of political events in the country, and is Nigeria's foremost cartoon journal with a large collection of relevant cartoon resources for print and electronic media. The attitude to events in Nigeria at the moment can be read outside the country differently, as well as the understanding of political practice, which recognition can be well-interpreted through the figurative series of political cartoons, which create conditions for pragmeme and provokes a wholesome interpretation to the encrypted humorous message.

Procedure

The political cartoons were non-randomly selected in view of their relevant political humorous pictorial renditions to exemplify certain political circumstances that echo the pragmatic humorous settings to clarify how this kind of humorous category is perceived and read by the target audience. They were selected for insightful exemplifications of Nigeria's 56th Independence Anniversary, the crusade against corruption of Muhammadu Buhari at the inception of his administration, and the alleged 2016 budget padding scandal that rocked the Nigerian House of Representatives. Accordingly, political humour (verbal and non-verbal) in these collections were critiqued with the theoretical apparatus of encryption and pragmeme. We have analyzed political cartoon as a genre because it uses symbolism as a convincing humorous technique, and it also includes a pragmeme to reflect a useful interpretation of a coded humorous message. We have deciphered the humorous intent conveyed by irony, labels, and symbols; the intent in political cartoons could be deciphered by readers or viewers due to general background knowledge. We have summarized and systematized the fact that symbolism, caricature, and labeling in the political cartoon are subject to the pragmeme of political humor, which reduces the anticorruption crusade to an inequitable political bias crusade.

Results and Discussion

A picture merits a thousand words, but in Nigeria it is important to consider the wedges of political situations in a country. This section of the paper examines some of these political circumstances as they are echoed with pragmemic political humorous embellishments in some selected cartoons to ascertain how such humour is instantiated to targeting audience perception.
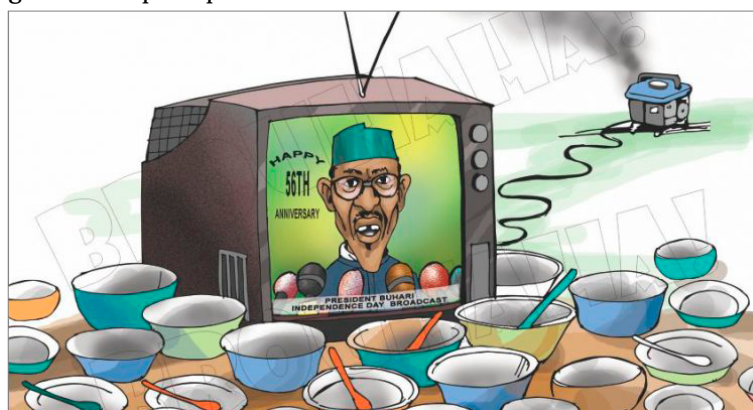

Figure 1. Cartoon 1a: 56th Independence Day broadcast.

October 1, every year, commemorates the freedom from British colonialism, which Nigeria attained in 1960. That year, the hovering British Union Jack was lowered, and the green-white-green flag was raised to recognise Nigeria's sovereignty. Thus, the date, October 1, has indelibly remained memorable in the annals of Nigeria, and

every year on that date, there are reflections on issues that hinge on the economic, social, religious, and political growth of the country. This reflection-exercise essentially starts from the president, who gives an inventory of issues during the mandatory October 1 broadcast.

On the occasion of Nigeria's 56th Independence Anniversary celebration, the man at the helms of affairs, President Muhammadu Buhari (PMB), expressed himself in a nationwide broadcast, thus:

> I know that uppermost in your minds today is the economic crisis. The recession for many individuals and families is real. For some, it means not being able to pay school fees, for others it's not being able to afford the high cost of food (rice and millet) or the high cost of local and international travel, and for many of our young people the recession means joblessness, sometimes after graduation from university or polytechnic. (*TELL*, October 1, 2016)[2]

Prior to this broadcast, Buhari had made convincing assurances of a better Nigeria through the *Change* mantra on which he had campaigned and solicited votes for his presidential bid the previous year. Hence, upon his assumption of office in May 29, 2015, there were high expectations as most Nigerians looked forward to the new government, which would wave a magic wand and make all challenges vanish. However, a year and several months into the Buhari administration, events did not actually unfold as anticipated even as the country celebrated her 56th Independence Anniversary. Thus, the cartoon, captioned in this paper as *56th Independence Day Broadcast* is a response to the state of Nigeria at 56.

The cartoon captures a despondent Nigeria at 56. The drawing presents an old-fashioned television powered by a mini-generating set, named *I pass my neighbour* in the Nigerian context. Shown on the television is a caricatured Muhammadu Buhari, giving a live broadcast on the 56th Independence Anniversary of Nigeria. What is significant in the cartoon is the cartoonist's striking use of symbols. A close examination of the cartoon reveals an ambience of poverty and stagnancy. The old-fashioned television is symbolic of Nigeria, a country stuck in the past; a crippled giant characterised by lack of an advanced, developed, or progressive economy. As economic experts have observed, Nigeria has been experiencing economic turbulence since late 2014, and in 2016, Nigeria's economic performance deteriorated as it entered a recession. This is a state engendered by a plunge in crude oil prices, a decline in oil production, and a reduction in non-oil exports, all of which contributed to the acute scarcity of foreign exchange (KPMG, 2017).[3] A similar symbol, in the cartoon, that gives Nigeria away as a weak country is the empty plates with spoons, which help portray poverty in its highest degree. The unfilled plates show that despite PMB's promises, hunger is ravaging the country. Apart from the perennial food insecurity, brought about by the vagaries of climate change, wrong economic policies of agriculture, and insecurity in the North East among others, hikes in food prices due to the 2016 recession give credence to this unpalatable situation. This serves to reinforce the position of the United Nations, the African Development Bank, and British Prime Minister Theresa May that Nigeria is the global poverty capital. The destitution of Nigeria and her people is also conspicuous in the *I pass my neighbour* (mini-generator), which is symbolic of a country that is still incapable of providing electricity for productive use.

The political cartoon under analysis, at this point, has inherently made use of symbolism as its persuasive humorous technique, and the workings of pragmeme should be incorporated to give a wholesome interpretation to the encrypted humorous message. Thus, in doing this, it is ascertained at this point that beyond the fact that the symbols in the cartoon represent the ugly circumstances of the nation at 56, the notion of symbolism in the cartoon speaks volumes to a striking contrast between the odious state of the country and the commonly shared campaign promises of PMB in 2014/2015. According to President Muhammadu Buhari:

> Our nation urgently needs fundamental political reform and improvement in governance, more transparency and accountable (sic). If you nominate me in December 2014, and elect me in February 2015, my administration will make our economy one of the fastest-growing emerging economies in the world with a real GDP growth averaging at least 10-12% annually…. Guarantee a minimum price for all cash crops and facilitate the storage of agricultural products to overcome seasonal shortages of selected food crops…. Generate,

[2] Buhari, M. (2016, October 1). 56th Independence Day anniversary broadcast. Tell. Retrieved from http://www.tell.ng
[3] KPMG (2017). National budget 2017, KPMG International.

transmit, and distribute electricity on a 24/7 basis whilst simultaneously ensuring the development of sustainable/renewable energy by 2019. (*Vanguard*, May 28, 2015)[4]

In spite of this, it was in 2016 that Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product further contracted negatively in the fourth quarter. According to the country's National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), "for the full year 2016, GDP contracted by 1.51 percent, indicating a real GDP of N67,984.20 billion (which is equivalent to approximately 188 million USD) for the year, the worst in more than 30 years" (*Sun,* March 1, 2017).[5] This contraction spelt a difficult season for Nigerians, who were confronted with a high cost of food, inflation, shrunken foreign reserves, an insubstantial currency, fuel shortages, and a problematic electric power supply. In this regard, there is an indication that symbolism in the cartoon is a rallying point for the humour that is entrenched in the cartoon. It is quite humorously critical that President Buhari, despite his *change* rhetoric, could not make Nigerians feel any difference even a year and several months into his administration. At 56, the biting hardship in Nigeria was a far cry from the president's appealing campaign promises. Symbolism, in the cartoon, is subordinated to the pragmeme of political humour, which appeals to the audience as regard the incommensurability in Buhari's slowly ineffective campaign promises and the reality of Nigeria's despair at 56.

The next cartoon titled, *Happy 56th Birthday/Anniversary*, is in the same category with cartoon 1a above as it also targets the 2016 Independence Anniversary.
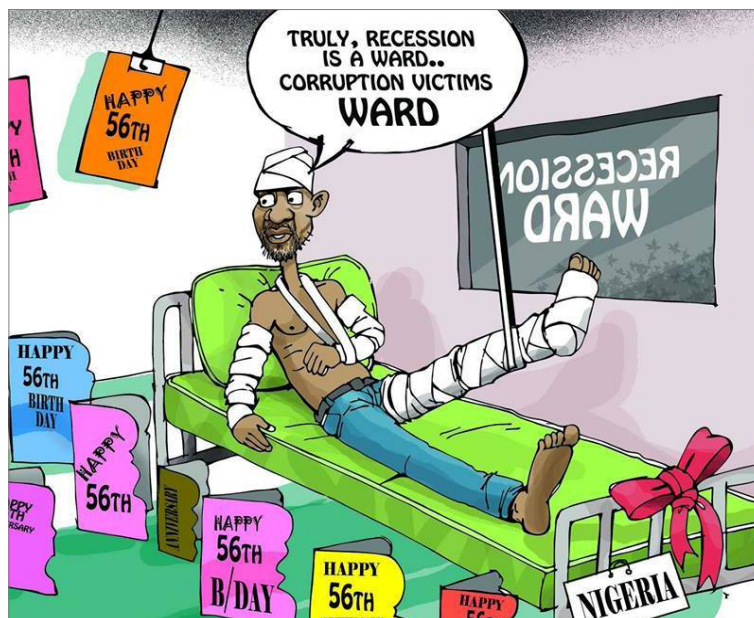

Figure 2. Cartoon 1b: Happy 56th birthday/anniversary.

Cartoon 1b, like 1a, encrypts the hopeless state of Nigeria at 56 with the aid of symbolism, irony, and labelling. Through the label, NIGERIA, at the nethermost part of the bunk, the entire hospital-ward pictorial representation symbolises Nigeria. It does not only indicate that recession is a prominent ward in Nigeria, it also suggests the ubiquity of recession in Nigeria in 2016. As signalled above, in 2016, Nigeria was being plagued by economic recession, which affected the lives and livelihood of her citizens, especially, the middle and lower classes across the country, and this in turn is translated into severe hunger, ill-health (which could not be reversed due to an outright lack of resources), and death. Typical of this poverty-stricken situation is the malnourished patient on bed, who is symbolic of ordinary Nigerians who were the ones that were actually battered by the biting recession. From the metaphorical label, TRULY, RECESSION IS A WARD… CORRUPTION VICTIMS **WARD**, recession is foregrounded to have been accommodated and it had also taken its toll on certain people in Nigeria; particularly people who directly suffered from the root cause of recession – corruption. This discourse is validated in the words of Magu, Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission

[4] Vanguard (2015, May 28). What Buhari promised Nigerians. Vanguard. Retrieved from http://www.vanguardngr.com

[5] Obasi, B., & Taiwo-Obanloye, J. (2017, March 1). Nigeria GDP Growth rate contracts by 1.3% in Q4, 2016-MBS. Sunnews. Retrieved from http:www.sunnewsonline.com

(EFCC), (quoted in *ThisDay,* 2017), who submitted that "corruption is virtually the sole reason for the country's current economic slump.... I maintain that economic recession is caused by corruption. About 90 per cent of the cause of recession is corruption..."[6] Magu is of the view that unscrupulous people stole state funds, which have been kept where they cannot be reached. The focal point is that it is the people, especially, public officials,[7] who have access to public funds that divert it, and once this is successfully carried out, it affects the populace who should have benefitted. Oby Ezekwesili (cited in *Africanews,* 22 November, 2018) thus sums up this scenario when she states that "corruption is a tax on the poor".[8] What is more to the situation being described by the cartoon is the use of irony. The beautiful and colourful card labels – Happy 56th Birthday/Happy 56th Anniversary and the red symbolic ribbon are ironical. They emphasise years of cheeriness, happiness, health, and prosperity, which should have been the state of Nigeria considering the years of independence amidst the atmosphere of gloom, depression, and economic despondency.

With the aid of irony, labels, and symbols, this cartoon is advertly encrypted with humourous intent, of which it could be avowed that readers or viewers would be able to decrypt by virtue of shared background knowledge. This is the humour that is affirmed to have evolved as a means of honestly signalling compatibility within local groups (in this case, the cartoonists and mostly Nigerian readers) by relying on the detection of encrypted information, their cognition of which is then signalled via honest laughter (Flamson & Bryant, 2013). However, in addition to the honest laughter, there is the certainty that the readership barely understood the hidden message, hence the need to resort to the framework of pragmeme.

The Independence Day of a country, like a birthday, is a revered day that brings about celebration. Such a day, among other features, expresses victorious emancipation from oppression and all forms of subjugation. Nigeria celebrated her 56th independence anniversary in 2016, but not without internal teething challenges such as economic recessions. In view of this situation, the symbolism, labels, and irony deployed in the present cartoon are used to assemble the force of the humour entrenched in it. The extremely sick fellow in the cartoon, who is symbolic of Nigeria, Nigerians, and their aggravated state of poverty during the recession, wittily encapsulates a narrow-minded heraldry of the Nigerian government on economic matters. Successive governments relied on oil because it accounted for more than 90 percent of foreign income, and failed to truly diversify the Nigerian economy due to their selfish interests. Therefore, in 2015 when oil prices fell significantly, the Nigerian naira suffered serious devaluation. Worse still, President Buhari could not prevent the recession that ensued after the collapse in oil prices due to poor economic transformation strategies. Next to the symbolism is the irony of the colourful greeting cards and red ribbon. These do not express any form of worthy celebration at 56; instead, they humorously depict the celebration of poverty, hopelessness, confusion, and lethargy engendered by the economic recession. At 56, Nigeria celebrated non-payment of monthly salaries, industrial actions, and worsening health care facilities. The labels, in particular, TRULY, RECESSION IS A WARD... CORRUPTION VICTIMS **WARD**, are a form of lampoon on Nigeria leaders, whose selfish interests and actions have incapacitated the Nigerian economy and ordinary citizens. Thus, it could be established that the symbolism, irony, and labels in the cartoon are subordinated to the pragmeme of humour, which impels rudderless, corrupt, and self-centred leadership that is unveiled in the perception of Nigerians. The next cartoon captures the anti-corruption crusade.

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[6] Obia, V. (2017, February 12). Magu: 90% of the cause of our recession is corruption. ThisDay. Retrieved from http://www.thisdaylive.com

[7] For instance, in 2016, Diezani Alison Madueke, a former Minister of Petroleum in Nigeria, was alleged to have looted $20b (see Pulse.ng, December 12, 2016).

[8] Alfa Shaban, A. (2018, November 22). Nigerian suffering bad governance, corruption –Oby Ezekwesili. Africannews. Retrieved from http://www.africannews.com

Figure 3. Cartoon 2a: The broom and its selective political victims.

A major victory convener that allowed Buhari to hit a home run in the 2015 presidential election was his anti-corruption profile, which stems from his past records as a former military ruler, and the series of campaign promises he made before the election. One of these promises was the pledge to combat corruption, which has been institutionalised in the Nigerian system. In his words:

> If you nominate me in December 2014 and elect me in February 2015, my administration will prevent the abuse and misuse of Executive, Legislative and public offices, through greater accountability, transparency, strict, and implementable anti-corruption laws, through strengthening and sanitising the EFCC and ICPC as independent entities... (*Vanguard*, May 28, 2015)

Upon his election, and swearing-in as President of Nigeria on May 29, 2015, Buhari did not only prevent the abuse of public offices by changing the leaderships of key anti-corruption agencies in Nigeria, he also commenced waging war on corrupt politicians and government officials who mostly functioned in the previous administration.[9]

As impressive as Buhari's anti-graft campaign was, it has been flawed by the perception that it was selective, insincere, and vindictive. Precisely, opinions and political interpretations have it that the war against corruption by the administration of Buhari was meant as a witch-hunt on members of the opposition party, the People's Democratic Party (PDP). It is, therefore, these mixed reactions toward the anti-corruption crusade that inform cartoon 2a titled *The broom and its selective political victims.*

Cartoon 2a encrypts PMB's activities within the anti-corruption crusade with the aid of symbolism, caricature, and labelling, and by virtue of mutual knowledge, partial decryption of the message of the cartoon is likely. However, to fully engage in the comprehension of the implication of the cartoon, insight from pragmeme is crucial. From the cartoon, the two twin apartments symbolise the two sovereign political parties in Nigeria: the opposition party, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the ruling party, the All Progressive Congress (APC). What foregrounds this symbol further are the umbrella, in green-white-red colours, hung on the top of the first apartment; which is symbolic of the PDP, and the broom, suspended on the top of the second apartment signifying the APC. Conspicuously next to this is the caricature of President Buhari through the exaggeration of his distinctive facial features. The costumes: starting from the bandana, the single-barrelled gun, the revolver, hanging in his side and the seemingly uniform cum native clothing symbolise battle, and at the same time, portray the president as a man entirely engaged in warfare. To cap it all, the flame emission from the single-

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9 The previous administration in this context portends Goodluck Jonathan's corrupt administration which Buhari's anti-corruption crusade unearthed, among several other corrupt cases, how the security funds that were approved for the purchase of arms through the office of the former National Security Adviser Colonel Sambo Dasuki (Rtd) were diverted into private pockets.

barrelled gun lying on his shoulder is symbolic of an ongoing war against some set of people. And who is this set of people? They are those in the first apartment – the PDP members. The shattered door signifies that the dwellers are not at peace. This is also evident in the lifeless body being dragged away by President Buhari.

This notion of selective anticorruption battle is validated in the words of Onueze Okocha, a top lawyer and Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN). According to him:

> It is very obvious. So far, those that have been accused, arrested, and arraigned for corruption-related offences are members of the PDP. We have not lost sight of the fact that many of the party's members defected to the APC. The former PDP members have been accused of wrongdoing, but they are untouched. I think the war is lopsided and not waged with an altruistic motive (*The Nation*, July 14, 2016).[10]

However, this submission was invalidated by Femi Adesina, Special Assistant to the President on Media and

Publicity, when he states:

> Why won't the president be selective, do you expect to just enter the street and begin to arrest everybody because he's fighting corruption? Of course no, you must have to select only those who are corrupt and as a matter of fact, not every Nigerian is corrupt (*Daily post*, August 20, 2018).[11]

Indeed, not every Nigerian is corrupt but Buhari, through the anti-corruption agencies, had to select only those who were corrupt. The fact that the second apartment, which housed APC members, remained un-attacked by the rampaging Buhari indicates that they are not culpable of corrupt offences. Nevertheless, the labelling: ...AND WHEN HE SAW THE BROOM, HE PASSED OVER US reinforces and contextualises the cartoon's non-verbal features. The labelling, apart from being an allusion to a verse in the Holy Bible, Exodus 12:13, "...and when I see the blood, I will pass over you...", has been distorted to accommodate the phenomenon of Buhari's selective anti-corruption judgement. Thus, it reinforces and contextualises the fact that members of the APC in the undamaged apartment are undeniably corrupt, but they have been redeemed from the wrath of the law and the anti-corruption weaponry of the president by virtue of being APC members. The broom, like the biblical blood, sets them free legally[12] from sentence and condemnation, which would have come upon them as a result of their corrupt profiles.

Cartoon 2a is indeed worthy with honest laughter because the cartoonist and his audience share the same political background and knowledge. However, there is more to the cartoon than mere common amusement. Further interpretation of the cartoon is aided through insights from the workings of pragmeme. Pragmeme, in this case, stretches the end products of the symbolism, caricatures, and labelling used in cartoon 2a beyond the various readings given to them in the preceding paragraphs. As a matter of fact, the symbols, caricatures, and labelling that are deployed in the cartoon are forces for the message of humour in the cartoon. There are glaring absurdities in Buhari's anti-graft war since the war has several times been derided as being selective and not addressing the whole gamut of corruption blindly. The symbols, the caricature (showcasing Buhari in the duty-post of selectively fighting corruption) and the labelling (revealing that APC members are free from being investigated) scorn the anti-corruption crusade and foreground the imbalance in the crusade. This asymmetrical face-off against corrupt Nigerians could be succinctly observed in the looters' list published from the Federal Ministry of Information in 2018, which contains the names of PDP officials alleged to have embezzled funds meant for the office of the former National Security Adviser to the President Goodluck Jonathan, Sambo Dasuki. According to a US-based political commentator, Badru Remi, "the fact that the APC government ... presented a list that reflected the opposition alone is a confirmation that the fight against corruption under President Buhari is merely political and must be dismissed with a wave of the hand" (*Punchng.com*, April 7, 2018).[13] Thus, the symbolism, caricatures, and labelling in the cartoon are subordinated to the pragmeme of political humour,

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[10] Mordi, R. (2016, July 14). Is Buhari's anticorruption war selective? The Nation. Retrieved from http://www.thenationonline.net

[11] Ameh, G. (2018, August 20). Why Buhari is selective in his anticorruption- presidency. Daily Post. Retrieved from http://www.dailypost.ng

[12] Examples of politicians who were freed from guilty verdicts were Rotimi Amaechi, a former member of the PDP, and Umar Ganduje. Rotimi Amaechi was alleged to have spent $140 million on Buhari's campaign, and stolen €500 million (TheTrent, 2016) while Umar Ganduje, the governor of Kano State, was alleged to have been seen in a scandalous video collecting huge amount of American dollars taken to bribe public works contractors.

[13] Punch (2018, April 7). Anticorruption: A tale of two looter's lists. Punch. Retrieved from http:/www.punchng.com

which relegates the anticorruption crusade to an insincere and unfair political prejudicial crusade.
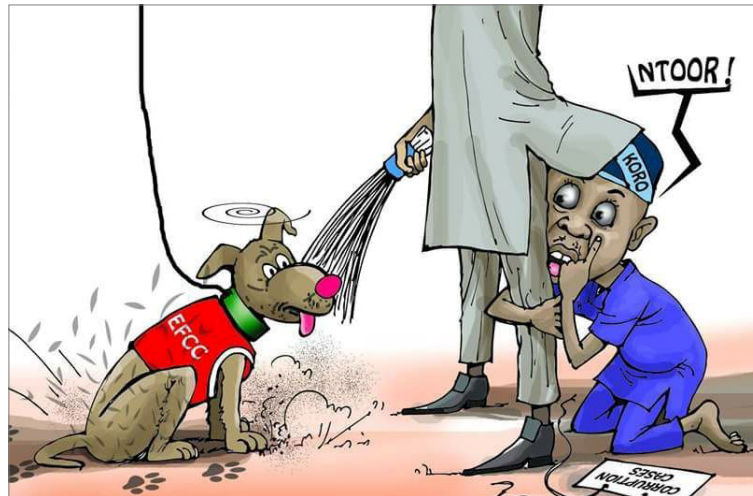

Figure 4. Cartoon 2b: Lame EFCC dog.

Cartoon 2b is in the same category as cartoon 2a. Its thematic direction is also corruption and the anti-corruption crusade of President Buhari. This cartoon is also encrypted, essentially, with symbolism and labelling, and because the audience and the cartoonist are grounded in the same socio-political orientation, the cartoon provokes honest laughter. The dog, labelled EFCC, symbolises the foremost anti-corruption agency in Nigeria, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission. The posture of the dog and the fact that its tongue hangs out of its mouth is symbolic of a dog that wants to attack its victim, but changes to a friendly mood towards its victim because its owner is present. This implies that the EFCC assumes an affable disposition toward a political situation that should be unequivocally inimical for the reason that it has been deinstitutionalised. This political situation occurs because the broom symbolises the ruling party that empowers the dog/EFCC; the headless entity holding it is President Buhari, and the entity, kneeling down and wrapping his hand around Buhari's leg while deriding the anti-corruption agency, is the former Minister for Defence in Goodluck Jonathan's administration, Senator Musiliu Obanikoro (politically nicknamed, Koro). The labelling: NTOOR (which means: to scorn) uttered by Koro, with his left index finger close to his eyes, KORO on his cap, and CORRUPTION CASES lying on the floor, underpin and situate the cartoon's symbolic features.

Senator Musiliu Obanikoro is an ex-PDP official, who is now in the APC. He had joined the ruling party, allegedly in order to evade a corruption case levelled against him by the EFCC. Joining the ruling party to escape the hammer of the law was a trend when the APC became the ruling party. This position is evinced in Onyema *et al* (2018). According to their submission:

> Anecdotal evidence suggests an emerging trend of high-ranking and strategically important politicians joining the ruling party, in order to assure some reduction in the rigour of criminal investigation. For example, there have been limited reports with respect to the investigation of Mr Musiliu Obanikoro (former minister under the People's Democratic Party (PDP)), Mr Godswill Akpabio (former Governor of Akwa Ibom) and Mr Martins Elechi (former Governor of Ebonyi State) (2018:8).

Senator Obanikoro was apprehended by the EFCC in 2016 for his alleged role in the diversion of ₦4.7bn from the account of the office of the National Security Adviser in 2014. Although it was said that he returned some of the funds, on November 25, 2017, he decamped to the APC. Having defected, his CORRUPTION CASES were dropped, and he could scorn the EFCC, NTOOR! Obanikoro's sins were forgiven, just as the party's national chairman, Adams Oshiomhole declared – "We have quite a number of other leaders, who have come…in fact, once you have joined the APC, all your sins are forgiven" (*Saharareporters*, January 18, 2019).[14]

By situating the features (symbols and labelling), and the cartoon *Lame EFCC Dog* within the idea of pragmemes, it could be stated that, beyond the honest laughter that these features evoke, the use of these specific symbols

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[14] Saharareporters (2019, January 18). Join APC and all your sins will be forgiven, Oshiomole declares. Saharareporters. Retrieved from http://www.saharareporters.com

and labelling are effective in derisively revealing conduct that does not conform to the essential tenets of an incorruptible anti-corruption scheme that works by unswerving and uncompromising adherence to ethical principles and values. Senator Musiliu Obanikoro is alleged to have pilfered national security funds but because he retreated to the ruling party, the allegations of financial profligacy levelled against him were literally swept under the carpet. Furthermore, the dog, which is symbolic of the EFCC in the cartoon, shows a slavish institution, and is denied the capacity to act on its own. It can only perform its duties with complete servitude to President Buhari. Thus, what the cartoon offers is an underlying pragmeme of humour effectively punctuating the whole anti-corruption system as deficient in integrity even though the scheme seems to be held in high-esteem by the general public.

The next set of cartoons to be examined revolve around the 2016 Appropriation Bill that was allegedly padded.

Figure 5. Cartoon 3a: Padding and insertions.

In the Nigerian context and in several other climes, the executive branch, headed by the president, is duly reserved the prerogative to prepare the country's appropriation bill for a particular fiscal year. Having planned it, the president presents the bill to the national parliament for onward approval, and after such endorsement it becomes the budget to be implemented. This is such a smooth sailing process for any country's budget that employs this procedure. Unfortunately, the Nigerian 2016 Appropriation Bill did not take this course. It was flawed and enmeshed in controversy. It is the most contentious bill considering the history of budgeting in Nigeria. Its polemical nature stems from the news that it was missing after presentation and the fact that its financial statements were allegedly bloated beyond proportion. Nevertheless, the latter characteristic outstretched public opinions. One of these views is lodged in cartoons 3a and 3b. The two cartoons are responses to the alleged padding of the 2016 Budget by some legislative officials of the National Assembly to the tune of ₦481 billion (which is equivalent to approximately 1.33 billion USD) (*Vanguard*, July 27, 2016).[15]

Cartoon 3a titled, *Padding* and *Insertions* is encrypted with symbolism, labelling, and caricature. Meanwhile, as a result of audiences' mutual knowledge regarding this issue in 2016, limited decryption manifested in the form of honest laughter, especially from the distorted faces of the symbolic legislators in the cartoon, is probable. However, to fully grasp the full message of the cartoon, insights from pragmeme are of great importance. In cartoon 3a, the four centipede-like beings labelled DOGARA and the full-bodied human being labelled JIBRIN are symbolic of notable officials of the Nigerian House of Representatives. The can, labelled HOUSE OF REPS, symbolises the House of Representative Chamber from which the legislators operate, and most importantly, it is symbolic of an ascertained allegation against the four officials contained there-in. These officials are the Speaker of the House of Representative himself, Yakubu Dogara, the Deputy Speaker, Yussuff Lasun, the Chief Whip, Alhassan Ado-Doguwa, and Minority Leader, Leo Ogor, and lastly, the official outside the can is the Chairman of the House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations, Abdulmumuni Jibrin. Hon. Jibrin was the legislator who raised the alarm and revealed that the 2016 budget had been padded and inserted with fake line items. Jibrin had alleged "the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Yakubu Dogara, and three other principal officers of the House of padding the 2016 budget to the tune of over N400bn" (equivalent to approximately 1.1 billion USD) (*Punch,* December 30, 2017).[16] He was reported to have stood by his allegations against the principal officers of the House of Representatives, namely, Dogara, Lasun, Ado-Dogunwa, and Ogor

[15] Daniel, S. (2016, July 27). Revealed: NASS padded 2016 budget with N481bn. Vanguard. Retrieved from http:/www.vanguardngr.com

16 Alagbe, J. (2017, December 30). 2018 Budget: worries over another era of padding. Punch. Retrieved from http://www.punchng.com

(*Punch,* August 19, 2016),[17] and this led to his suspension from the house. What he holds like a shield in the cartoon is a summary of the allegations: PADDING AND INSERTIONS. As revealed in *Vanguard* newspaper:

> …the lawmakers ingeniously removed some key projects proposed by the executive or drastically reduced their costs and introduced many others not contemplated by the Presidency, which prepared the budget. Among the projects whose votes were surreptitiously jerked up without the knowledge of the executive, were Nigerian railway modernization project: Lagos – Kano standard gauge rail line project, whose cost was raised by N32.5 billion and the consultancy dredging and river training works (609 million) under the Ministry of Transportation. Others, according to the document, are the Code of Conduct Bureau, which received an additional N4.4billion, and a provision for broadband internet service to National Assembly Nigcomsat, N318 million, training and consultancy for Nigcomsat 2 Projects, N3.5 billion, etc. in the Ministry of Communications. Most scandalous, according to the document, is the case of Ministry of Works, Power and Housing where 82 new projects, principally roads, with a total provision of about N50.63 billion, were inserted in the budget. (July 27, 2016)

These series of allegations of PADDING and INSERTIONS revealed by Jibrin were not in tune with some officials of the House of Representatives. Thus, Jibrin was sanctioned. Hence, the caricature of these officials as centipede-like beings validates the sanctions and their predatory nature given the allegations levelled against them. This destructive character demonstrated in the cartoon toward their accuser, Honourable Abdul Jibrin, is displayed in his removal as Chairman of the Committee on Appropriations by the leadership of the House of Representative following the alarming revelations he made regarding the 2016 budget.

Therefore, the prominent features in this cartoon, namely, symbolism – which stands for some of our soi-disant honourable members in the House of Representatives, labelling – which helps to situate the symbols and other non-verbal variables, and caricature – used to ridicule the Parliamentarians especially, the Honourable Speaker of the house who claimed: "I studied Law and I have been in the legislature and all this period; I have never heard of the word 'padding' being an offence under any law" (*Saharareporters,* August 6, 2016).[18] The horrific-hilarious faces of the honourable members, which raise a poignant rhetorical question (such as why did you reveal our secrets?), are all subordinated to the pragmeme of humour. This shows the dishonour in the alleged honourable members of the House of Representatives. It reveals their condemnable value and legislative misconduct, and exposes the fact that though their portfolios bear legislature, they are lawbreakers being burlesqued for making a mockery of the House of Representatives, Nigeria's second bicameral legislature, the National Assembly. This same pragmeme is also fully represented in the last cartoon (3b) examined in this paper titled, *Padded-Paddy-Paddy Lawmakers*.
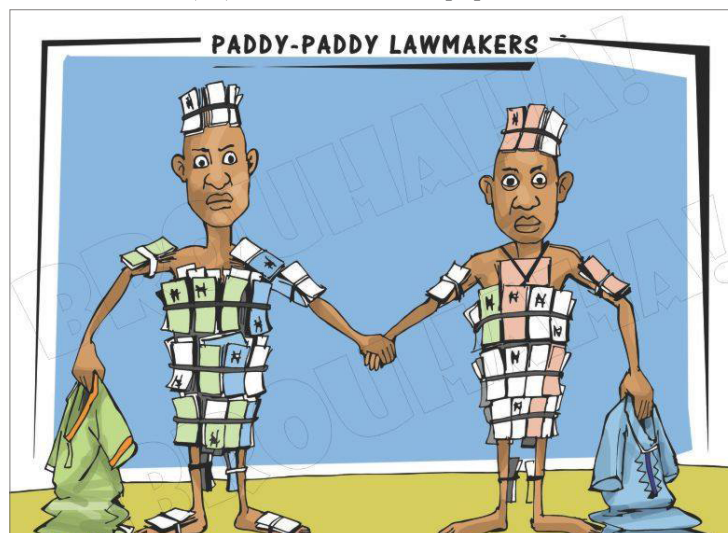
Figure 6. Cartoon 3b: Padded-paddy-paddy lawmakers.

No doubt, cartoon 3b has been encrypted with symbolism, caricature, and labelling, thereby engendering some

17 Ameh, J. (2016, August 19). Budget padding: 10 principal officers disown Jibrin. Punch. Retrieved from http://www.punchng.com

18 Saharareporters (2016, August 6). Dogara under fire for saying budget padding is not corruption. Saharareporters. Retrieved from http://www. saharareporters.com

honest laughter among audiences who are abreast of the case of disproportionately large funds inserted into the 2016 budget. However, on the other side of the honest laughter, there is the pragmeme of humour. Taking a look at cartoon 3b, unequivocally, those who have been symbolically exemplified in the cartoon are Honourable Abdul Jibrin, to the left and Honourable Speaker, Yakubu Dogara, to the right. The naira padded to their bodies is symbolic of the padded funds that were inserted and made the budget proposal more outrageous than the projects contained in it demanded. The glaring fact that Jibrin holds tightly to the hand of Dogara signifies and points to the culpability of Yakubu Dogara in the alleged budget padding scandal.

The leadership of the House of Representatives relieved Jibrin of his office as Chairman of the Committee on Appropriations, based on the allegations that he alone fixed the budget. As relayed by *Vanguard* (July 27, 2016)*,* "...the House of Representatives...alleged that Jibrin, singlehandedly changed the budget estimates presented by President Muhammadu Buhari to the National Assembly by adding N250 billion into it." However, Jibrin responded that rather than tell the truth, the leadership created the impression that he was sacked because he padded the 2016 budget (*Punch,* July 22, 2016).[19] These fragments of events thus justify the grabbing of Yakubu Dogara's hand by Abdul Jibrin, directing attention to deals jointly perpetrated. This nonverbal gesture is substantiated in the bold labelling: PADDY-PADDY LAWMAKERS. The semantics of PADDY in the Nigerian context point to a friendship formed to conceal crime. Thus, the labelling describes Dogara and Jibrin as lawmakers who are cronies in the enterprise of padding for pecuniary gains. This suggests that none of the lawmakers may be exculpated from the stuffing of the 2016 budget beyond the required funds. To, therefore, understand this cartoon to its fullest extent, perceptions from pragmeme are significant. Without casting doubt, the cartoon's essential features are subordinated to the pragmeme of humour of the legislative arm of the government that should, in actual fact, be in the business of making laws that will have a lasting impact on Nigerians and advance the progress of Nigeria, but whose leadership is snowed under by what profits them and not what benefits Nigerians. It also exposes members of the House who are only there for their own selfish ends, as portrayed by the symbolic naira notes padded to their bodies, and not being used in the interest of Nigerians.

Conclusion

Several scholarly works (Abioye, 2009, Adegoju & Oyebode, 2015, Taiwo, 2007, to name a few) have investigated humour in Nigerian political discourse, but very little attention has been directed towards some recent notable political events in the year 2016. This paper has examined the pragmeme of humour in the events of *Nigeria's 56th Independence Anniversary*, the *crusade against corruption,* and the alleged *2016 budget padding scandal* in selected cartoons. In interpreting the selected political cartoons, this paper engages the theoretical technicalities of the encryption theory of humour and pragmeme theory. With the former theory, it is ascertained that audiences who are well informed on these political happenings are able to decrypt the cartoons because they share the same political knowledge with the cartoonist, thus honest laughter is produced; and with the latter theory, the paper unveils actual embedded pragmatic forces (of idle campaign promises and Nigeria's hopeless reality at 56, self-centred leadership, and that the worst form of corruption is selective justice) in the cartoons. Hence, these findings are intended to enhance the public perception of our political actors and highlight the need for rethinking the sensibility in political acts, promises, and decisions.

Given that the year 2016 was filled with striking political events in Nigeria, future research could further engage in and examine the linguistic (and non-linguistic) implications of political incidents that are yet to be studied. This could be in debates, parliamentary proceedings, interviews, or those in forms of jokes, cartoons, or satirical drawings, to name but a few.

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Exploring Iranian EFL Learners' Listening Skills via TED Talks: Does Medium Make a Difference?

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This quasi-experimental study examined whether TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) talks could improve the listening skills of Iranian EFL learners. The study also explored whether the different media of instruction could have differing impacts on the students' learning. Sixty intermediate level male learners aged between 18 and 20 in three intact classes (n1=n2=n3=20) were the participants selected through convenience sampling. The groups were randomly assigned to two experimental groups and one control group after ensuring that they were at the same level of language proficiency. One of the experimental groups watched TED talks via mobile devices, another group watched them through laptops, and the control group practiced listening through DVDs and CDs of the course textbook (American File 2) for ten sessions. It is worth mentioning that the mobile group watched the videos outside of the class, whereas the laptop and control groups practiced listening in the class. Every session, the participants answered some comprehension questions to enable the researchers to measure their development. The repeated measures ANOVA showed the improvement of the listening skills of all participants in the three groups during the treatment. The results of the one-way ANOVA and post hoc comparison revealed statistically significant differences between the mobile group watching the TED talks and the control group, but no differences were found between the mobile group and the laptop group or between the control and the laptop groups. The researchers inferred that the observed difference was due to using TED talks via mobile devices in the study. They could also conclude that TED talks are useful sources of practicing listening skills. The study shows the efficacy of self-directed learning via mobile devices and has implications for teachers and practitioners who are seeking ways to extend language learning beyond the confinements of the classroom.

Keywords: computer-assisted language learning; EFL learners; listening skills; mobile learning; technology; TED talk

Introduction

Listening is a multifaceted process and plays a crucial role in the development of second language competence. However, the skill does not appear to be studied as much as other language skills, partly because of the assumption that merely exposing students to spoken language is sufficient for the improvement of listening comprehension.[1] Teachers find the listening skill a challenging task in the classroom, partly because they believe there is not much to do regarding its development (Goh, 2014). Traditionally, employing audiotapes followed by a set of comprehension questions was the only way to teach listening. However, the advancement of technology and its application in language teaching pedagogy has suggested that researchers have examined alternative

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[1] Carter, R., & Nunan, D. (Eds.), (2001). *The Cambridge guide to teaching English to speakers of other languages.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

ways for teaching the skill. The use of computers and multimedia technologies not only has facilitated teaching the listening skill (Vanderplank, 2010) but has also fostered individualized instruction (Tanner & Landon, 2009) and self-directed learning (Joo, Kim, & Cho, 2008; Lee & Lee, 2006). Technology in the classroom can accelerate learning by providing a more productive source of language input necessary for second/foreign language learning (Krashen, 1994).

Among various English learning sources, video files are the most popular form of training listening comprehension. Researchers have indicated that simultaneous audio and visual input could be beneficial for foreign language learners (Rashtchi & Afzali, 2011; Seo, 2002). Therefore, many studies related to EFL learning have employed video files as learning materials rather than merely audio or texts (e.g., Chapple & Curtis, 2000; Vanderplank, 2010; Williams & Thorne, 2000) and have reported the usefulness of videos over audio materials (Sulaiman, Muhammad, Ganapathy, Khairuddin, & Othman, 2017) in teaching listening. One reason for such efficacy is that video films establish a relationship between visual and auditory channels in listening comprehension (Hoven, 1999) and can give a more realistic picture of the new language and its culture in the classroom. Besides the linguistic features, such applications include paralinguistic characteristics such as body language, gestures, prosody, and the like, which convey meaning to the learners (Fidelman, 1997). Multimedia environments also allow the addition of visual and auditory information to a written text to improve comprehension. With the use of information in multiple presentation modes, comprehension can happen in textual form, visual form, auditory form, or any combination of these presentation modes (Schnotz & Grzondziel 1996). Meskill (1996) views the opportunity of multimedia users to process combined media (text, sound, and video) simultaneously, a popular trend in software design in general and learning products in particular. The role of images in developing listening comprehension has been the topic of various studies (e.g., Guichon & McLornan, 2008; Markham, Peter, & McCarthy, 2001; Sempleski, 2003). Movies have also been implemented to improve language learners' listening skills (e.g., Qiu, 2017; Safranj, 2015).

TED (Technology, Entertainment, and Design) utilizes an alternative form of media, including a website and YouTube channel, to broadcast its conference and spread ideas. TED talks are short speeches by speakers who belong to different social groups and communities who intend to share their pioneering experiences to motivate listeners and enhance their knowledge. Due to the exciting and groundbreaking topics of TED talks, they can be an excellent source for improving EFL/ESL learners' listening skills.

In the quest for finding a different way of teaching listening, the researchers of the present study decided to examine the usefulness of TED talk videos for enhancing the listening ability of Iranian EFL learners. Therefore, the participants of two experimental groups were exposed to TED talks via two technological environments – mobile devices and laptops. The mobile group watched TED talk videos outside of the class, whereas the laptop group was exposed to the videos in the class. The researchers compared the two experimental groups with a control group that used the audio-visual materials of their textbook (American File 2) to practice listening in the class. The researchers followed two objectives; the first objective was examining whether TED talks could help develop the listening skills of learners, and the second one was discovering whether the medium through which the learners received the materials had a significant role in enhancing their listening comprehension. Since EFL learners in Iran have limited exposure to English, the researchers assumed that TED talks could help them encounter real-life language. It is worth mentioning that in EFL situations, the quality and quantity of language input received from classroom instruction is constrained by factors such as time limitations, the absence of sufficient exposure of both teachers and learners to real-life language, and students' lack of interest to listen to artificial materials. One feature of TED talks is that the topics are thought-provoking and encouraging, which makes them more appealing to the learners' senses.

Literature Review

The listening process, as Goh (2014) puts forth, is both active and complex. It is active because it involves the extraction of meaning from the input, which is usually incomplete since listeners are not able to capture every word they hear, and it is complex because the construction of meaning while listening is related to an individual's cognitive processes. Besides, some inherent problems in measuring the learners' improvement (unlike speaking and writing) and manipulation of input (unlike reading) (Lynch, 2011) make the skill a more demanding activity that so many teachers feel unqualified to teach it (Field, 2008). Listening, as the primary source of input which can facilitate language learning, has been the cornerstone of many theories of SLA (Rost, 2011). It has also been shown to have a significant role in the acquisition of pronunciation (Trofimovich,

Lightbown, Halter, & Song, 2009), the improvement of vocabulary (Vidal, 2003), and grammar (Rashtchi, Nourozi Khiabani, & Roumiani, 2012). Studies have revealed its vital role in learning to interact in the language (Berninger & Abbott, 2010; Dickinson, Golinkoff, & Hirsh-Pasek, 2010; Kim, Wagner, & Lopez, 2012).

On the other hand, the authenticity of input during listening activities has received additional attention (Rost, 2011). Employing effectual input can lead to the emergence of speaking (Krashen & Terrell, 1983; Rost, 2011) as well as other language skills (Postovsky, 1974; Winitz, 1981). Authentic materials can also make the skill more accessible to learners and teachable for educators (Field, 2008; Takaesu, 2013; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012).

A focus on the authenticity of input has led researchers to recognize TED talks as useful for practicing the teaching of listening. One condition for authenticity, as in the TED talks, is the production of language by native speakers (Hwang, 2005; Morrison, 1989; Rogers & Medley, 1988). Therefore, implementing them allows students to have direct contact with the type of input that reflects actual communication in the target language (Breen, 1985). TED talks also contain the features which Field (2008) believes real conversations possess, such as prosody, false starts, hesitations, and filler devices.

The use of TED talks has been the subject of a number of studies. For example, Takaesu (2013) used TED talks as extensive material and found that they were useful for enhancing college students' listening skills. Ahluwalia (2018), based on her findings, argued that TED talks could promote the participants' listening skills, communication skills, and self-confidence. Likewise, Gagen-Lanning (2015) found that after receiving training on the use of metacognitive strategies, the participants could use TED talk videos to improve their listening skills in a self-directed learning environment.

In the present study, as stated above, TED talks were presented via two types of media in two groups; that is, laptops and mobile devices, which can relate the study to computer-assisted language learning (CALL) and mobile learning (m-learning) technologies. The use of technology in second or foreign language classrooms is not new (Dudeney & Hockly, 2007), and several studies provide evidence that the use of different forms of technology could be attractive for language learners and can help them achieve their goals. For example, emphasized the role of e-mails, the internet, and satellite and cable TV in enhancing the learning of young learners as they could create fun and increase attention when used efficiently.[2] Rashtchi and Hajihassani (2010) showed the usefulness of using weblogs in teaching reading. Many studies have verified the efficacy of CALL in learning pronunciation (Rahnavard & Mashhadi Heidar, 2017), reading (Marzban, 2011); speaking (James, 1996; Rashtchi & Khoshnevisan, 2009), vocabulary (Rashtchi & Aghili, 2014), motivation (Genc & Adyin, 2010), and autonomy (Zarei & Hashemipour, 2015).

Equally, mobile technology has attracted a great deal of attention from educators regarding integrating both conventional and innovative ways of teaching and learning into the curriculum as well as presenting adaptability and utility throughout a wide range of educational learning activities in diverse learning areas. Like other subject areas, language teachers have widely applied mobile gadgets in designing language courses to enable learners to gain access to resources and benefit from various educational experiences (Kukulska-Hulme & Traxler, 2005). Various definitions of mobile learning found in the literature refer to the advantage of making learning ubiquitous (e.g., Dye, Odingo, & Solstad, 2003; Hwang, Tsai, & Yang, 2008) which, according to Thomas (2005) can give "flexibility to learners in terms of community, autonomy, locationality, and relationality (p. 2). Denk, Wever, and Belfin (2007) suggest that mobile learning can lead to autonomous and individual learning.

The researchers of the present quasi-experimental study adopted a non-equivalent pretest-posttest control group design to investigate whether the use of TED talks via different media could enhance the listening ability of Iranian EFL learners. The following research questions gave direction to the study:

RQ1: Do the study groups (control, mobile, laptop) similarly benefit from the type of listening activities they experience during the treatment?

RQ2: Does the control group's performance on the listening tests show improvement from the first to the tenth session?

RQ3: Does the mobile group's performance on the listening tests show improvement from the first to the tenth session?

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[2] Brewster, J., Ellis, G., & Girard, D. (2004). The primary English teacher's guide. London: Penguin English Guides.

RQ4: Does the laptop group's performance on the listening tests show improvement from the first to the tenth session?

RQ5: Does employing TED Talks have any impact on the listening comprehension ability of Iranian EFL learners?

Materials and Methods

Participants

Based on convenience sampling, 60 Iranian male learners in three intact classes were selected from a language institute in Tehran. Their age ranged between 18 and 20 years old, their mother tongue was Persian, and they had learned English as a foreign language in Iran. Their proficiency level was intermediate according to the placement test that they took at the onset of the study.

Instruments

The first instrument was a general language proficiency test adopted from the Preliminary English Test (PET). The 60-item test consisted of listening, reading, and writing sections and was used as the pretest to ensure that there was no significant difference among the groups before the study. Two experienced teachers confirmed the content validity of the test, and Cronbach's alpha indicated that the test was reliable (r= 0.81).

Another instrument was a series of comprehension questions in multiple-choice format (Appendix A) related to the TED talk videos. The researchers prepared most of the questions, but some were taken from www.ed.ted.com. The tests measured the participants' listening improvement in each session. The reason for repeated measurement was that the type of materials used for instruction was very different in the groups, and the researchers needed to ensure that the control group was also benefitting from the treatment.

The third instrument was a 68-item listening posttest, which was adopted from the Longman Preparation Course for the TOEFL iBT test (Philips, 2015). Since the materials used in the three study groups were different, a general listening test was prepared and piloted. The assumption was that after practicing and receiving instructions, students' listening ability might improve. Therefore, the researchers were cautious not to prepare a test that was too easy for the participants and piloted the test with 30 upper-intermediate learners whose demographic characteristics (age, gender, education) were similar to those of the participants of the study. The reliability of the test computed via Cronbach's alpha was 0.82.

Materials

All groups studied *American File 2* (Latham-Koenig, Oxenden, & Seligson, 2013) as their textbook. Additionally, the control group received the audio and video files of the textbook as the listening material. For the mobile and laptop groups, the researchers selected ten TED talks (Appendix B) to examine their impact on the participants' listening skills. The criterion for selecting the TED talks was to have a variety of topics that could interest learners with different preferences.

Design and Variables

The current quasi-experimental study followed a nonequivalent control group pretest-posttest design. The listening skills were the dependent variable of the study, and the use of different materials (i.e., TED talks and textbook materials) were the independent variables of the study. The use of mobiles out of the class, laptops in the class, and CDs and DVDs were the moderator variables.

Experimental Groups. First, the researchers administered the general English proficiency test to verify that the groups were at the same level of language proficiency. Afterwards, the three classes were randomly assigned to experimental group one (mobile group, n=20), experimental group two (laptop group, n=20), and the control group (n=20). The treatment continued for ten sessions, three times a week, and each session was 90 minutes.

In each session, approximately 45 minutes were allocated to practicing listening. After the treatment, the participants in the three groups sat for the listening posttest.

Mobile Group. The members of this group installed the TED application on their mobiles. One day before the class, the teacher sent the learners a short message (SMS) informing them which TED video they had to download. They were asked to watch (and listen to) the TED talk as many times as they liked and take notes during the activity. In class, the learners, using their notes, discussed the content of the talk with their classmates, and negotiated the problems they had regarding understanding the talk. The group did not watch the videos in the class for two reasons. The first reason was that the researchers were interested in examining the impact of an out-of-class activity. The second was to encourage the participants to perform the required tasks, as they would not be able to participate in the class discussion and do the comprehension tests otherwise. In the class, the teacher answered their questions or explained the parts they had not understood.
Additionally, the teacher asked the learners about the number of times, where, and when they watched the videos. As reported, they usually watched the videos two or three times before the class. The important point was that they were pleased that they could pause the videos when they were interrupted for personal reasons. Then they took the reading comprehension test. The time allocated for class discussions and answering the questions was about 10 minutes (shorter than the other groups to limit learning to the out-of-class activities). Afterwards, they studied their textbook (*American File 2*); however, the teacher did not play the textbook's class DVDs or audio CDs during the treatment to keep a balance in the duration of exposure to listening materials in the three groups.

Laptop Group. This group watched the TED Talk videos on their laptops in the classroom. First, the participants watched the videos to have a general idea about the content of the talk. Then, during the second viewing, the learners were free to take notes, play the videos back, and to look up the meaning of words. Next, the teacher administered the comprehension test related to the lecture. They were free to use their notes while answering the test. As the final step, the participants watched the talk and compared their responses to the test with what they heard; however, they were not allowed to change their responses. This procedure usually took about 45 minutes, and the remaining time was allotted to teaching the textbook. Similar to the mobile group, the teacher did not play the DVDs and audio CDs from the book during the treatment. The participants of this group were satisfied with watching TED talks on their laptops and did the tests enthusiastically and energetically.

Control Group. The participants in the control group had the same textbook as the experimental groups. However, the teacher played the DVDs and audio CDs from the book in the class. The learners studied the book, did the listening tasks, and followed the activities manipulated by the teacher after listening to the audio CDs and watching the DVDs. The teacher answered their questions and tried to clarify the vague points. This group did not have access to the TED Talk application. The DVDs were displayed on the video projector screen, and a CD player was used to play audio CDs.

Results

As mentioned above, the researchers administered a general proficiency test at the outset of the study. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics obtained from the test. The skewness ratio of 0.49 (falling within ±1.96, obtained from dividing skewness statistic by standard) signifies the normal distribution of the scores. Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of the Groups

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	
	Statistic					Statistic	Std. Error
Groups	60	49.00	58.00	52.5333	2.26594	.154	.309
Valid N (listwise)	60						

As Table 2 shows, the mean of the control group (M= 52.5, SD= 1.98), the mobile group (M= 53.25, SD= 2.69), and the laptop group (M=51.85, SD=1.92) were very close to each other.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics of Each Group

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Control	20	52.5000	1.98680	.44426	51.5701	53.4299	49.00	56.00
Mobile	20	53.2500	2.69258	.60208	51.9898	54.5102	49.00	58.00
Laptop	20	51.8500	1.92696	.43088	50.9482	52.7518	49.00	56.00
Total	60	52.5333	2.26594	.29253	51.9480	53.1187	49.00	58.00

The Levene statistic [F (2, 57) = 2.054, p= .138] showed that the assumption of the homogeneity of variances was met, and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) could be run. As shown in Table 3, there was no statistically significant difference between the groups [F (2, 57) =1.975, p=0.148] regarding language proficiency at the onset of the study.

Table 3
One-way ANOVA Between the Means of the Groups, Proficiency Test

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	19.633	2	9.817	1.975	.148
Within Groups	283.300	57	4.970		
Total	302.933	59			

To answer the first research question of the study, which compared the degree of improvement of the groups' listening skills during the treatment, a one-way repeated-measures ANOVA was performed. Table 4 shows the means and standard deviations obtained from the students' performances on the comprehension tests. As can be seen, the average scores of students in the groups increased during the treatment. However, the slope of the increase in the scores of the mobile group is higher than the other groups, and the increase in the means of the control group shows the least improvement.

Table 4
Descriptive Statistics of the Groups on Reading Comprehension Questions

Sessions	Control		Mobile		Laptop	
	Mean	Std	Mean	Std	Mean	Std
First	4.65	1.93	6.30	2.54	5.20	1.91
Second	3.05	0.89	4.75	1.21	5.20	1.40
Third	3.80	0.89	5.15	1.04	5.30	1.87
Fourth	4.45	1.57	6.85	1.93	6.15	1.73
Fifth	5.35	1.57	7.25	1.68	5.90	1.71
Sixth	5.50	1.24	7.35	1.50	5.70	1.26
Seventh	4.85	1.09	6.95	1.85	5.45	1.47
Eighth	5.50	0.95	8.15	1.53	5.95	1.73
Ninth	5.60	0.68	8.80	1.06	6.55	1.36
Tenth	5.60	0.68	9.10	0.79	7.15	1.23

As Table 5 shows, the results of the skewness ratios in the groups were between ±1.96, which indicates a normal distribution of the scores and justifies utilizing parametric tests.

Table 5
Skewness Ratios of the Groups' Scores on the Reading Comprehension Tests

Session	Control Skewness	Mobile Skewness	Laptop Skewness
First	0.51	-0.01	0.49
Second	0.90	-0.06	0.89
Third	-0.06	1.23	0.21
Fourth	0.60	0.48	0.22
Fifth	0.17	-0.22	0.66
Sixth	-0.37	-0.57	0.81
Seventh	0.05	0.25	-0.11
Eighth	0.00	0.01	-0.59
Ninth	-0.40	-0.45	-0.89
tenth	0.71	-0.19	-0.51

For comparing the performances of the groups on the ten tests, a repeated-measures ANOVA was conducted. The significant results of the Mauchly's test (p<0.05) showed that the sphericity assumption was violated, and thus the Huynh-Feldt test was used to interpret the results of the F tests on the intra-group principal effect (time) and the interactive effect (time × group). As Table 6 shows, the effects of time, group, and time × group on students' scores were significant (p<0.01). Significant time indicates that there was a significant difference between students' mean scores in at least two sessions. The significance of the group's effect also shows that the mean scores of the students in at least two groups had a significant difference. The significance of the interactive effect of time × groups also reveals that the process of change in the students' average marks over ten sessions was different between the groups.

Table 6
Repeated Measures ANOVA for the Groups

S.O. V	SS	df	MS	F	p	Eta squared	Observed power
time	462.58	6.55	70.67	36.64	0.000	0.391	1
Time × group	107.17	13.09	8.19	4.24	0.000	0.130	1
Error	719.55	373.12	1.93				
Group	498.49	2.00	249.25	27.47	0.000	0.491	1
Error	517.21	57.00	9.07				

Note: Statistically significant at 0.01 level

Figure 1 shows the process of change in the participants' scores during the treatment sessions in the three groups.
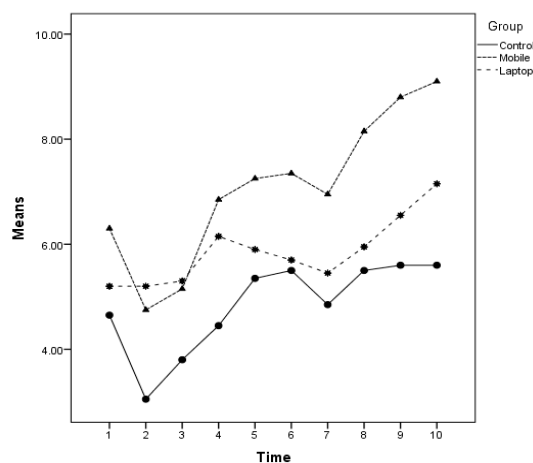

Figure 1. Groups' average test scores during treatment sessions.

Table 7 presents the comparison of the means of the groups. As the results show, there are significant differences between the groups. The highest score is for the mobile group (M=7.07) and then the laptop group (M= 5.86); that is, both groups showed significant differences from the control group. Therefore, the researchers concluded that the use of TED talks via mobiles and laptops was more effective than the audio and video files used by the control group.

Table 7
Bonferroni's / Spot-Test Results or Measuring the Difference between the Three Groups

Groups	Mean*	SEM
Control	4.84	0.213
Mobile	7.07	0.213
Laptop	5.86	0.213

Note: * Averages with at least one common name do not have a significant difference (p <0.05)

Since the interaction of time × group was significant and also to answer the second, third, and fourth research questions, four repeated-measures ANOVAs were conducted for each group separately. The results of the test for the control group showed that the effect of time was significant (Table 8). Therefore, the mean scores of the students during the different sessions had changed significantly. Considering the guidelines proposed by Cohen (1988), the eta squared =0.37 shows a large effect size, which means that 37% of the change in the dependent variable (listening skill) was due to the treatment.

Table 8
Repeated Measures ANOVA for the Control Group

S.O.V.	SS	Df	MS	F	p	Eta squared	Observed power
Time	135.21	9	15.02	12.51	0.000	0.397	1
Error	205.30	171	1.20				

Note: Statistically significant at 0.01 level

The results of the comparison between the means of the control group via Bonferroni's post hoc test showed that in the second and third sessions, the mean scores of the students decreased significantly compared to the first session while from the fourth to the tenth sessions, there was a significant increase in the learners' mean scores (Table 9).

Table 9
Bonferroni's Post Hoc Test to Compare Means in Different Treatment Sessions, Control Group

Groups	Control	
	Mean*	SEM
First	4.65abc	0.431
Second	3.05d	0.198
Third	3.8dc	0.200
Fourth	4.45bc	0.352
Fifth	5.35ab	0.350
Sixth	5.5ab	0.276
Seventh	4.85abc	0.244
Eighth	5.5ab	0.212
Ninth	5.6a	0.152
Tenth	5.6a	0.152

Note: * Averages with at least one common name do not have a significant difference (p <0.05)

The results of the repeated measures ANOVA for the mobile group (Table 10) showed that the effect of time was significant (p <0.05). Therefore, the mean scores of the students during the different sessions had changed significantly. The magnitude of the differences in the means was very large (eta squared=0.55).

Table 10
Repeated Measures ANOVA for Mobile Group

S.O.V.	SS	df	MS	F	P	Eta squared	Observed power
Time	362.31	9	40.26	23.26	0.000	0.550	1
Error	296.00	171	1.73				

Note: Statistically significant at 0.01 level

The mean comparison for the mobile group (Table 11) showed that in the second session, the average score of the students decreased significantly compared to the first session. While from the third to the tenth session, gradually, there was an increase in the students' average scores.

Table 11
Bonferroni's Post Hoc Test to Compare Means in Different Treatment Sessions, Mobile Group

Groups	Mobile	
	Mean*	SEM
First	6.3dc	0.567
Second	4.75e	0.270
Third	5.15de	0.233
Fourth	6.85bc	0.431
Fifth	7.25bc	0.376
Sixth	7.35bc	0.335
Seventh	6.95bc	0.413
Eighth	8.15ab	0.342
Ninth	8.8a	0.236
tenth	9.1a	0.176

Note: Averages with at least one common name do not have a significant difference (p<0.05)

The results of the repeated measures ANOVA for the laptop group (Table 12) showed that the effect of time was significant (p<0.05), and the mean scores of students during the different sessions had changed significantly. Similar to the laptop group, the magnitude of the differences in the means was very large (eta squared=0.55).

Table 12
Repeated Measures ANOVA for the Laptop Group

S.O.V.	SS	df	MS	F	p	Eta squared	Observed power
Time	362.31	9	40.26	23.26	0.000	0.55	1
Error	296.00	171	1.73				

Statistically significant at 0.01 level

The means of the laptop group obtained from administering the reading comprehension test shows the steadiness of the scores and an increase in the fourth and last sessions.

Table 13
Bonferroni's Post Hoc Test to Compare Means in Different Treatment Sessions, Laptop Group

Groups	Laptop	
	Mean*	SEM
First	5.2c	0.427
Second	5.2c	0.313
Third	5.3c	0.417
Fourth	6.15abc	0.386
Fifth	5.9bc	0.383
Sixth	5.7bc	0.282
Seventh	5.45bc	0.328
Eighth	5.95bc	0.387
Ninth	6.55ab	0.303
tenth	7.15a	0.274

Note: Averages with at least one common name do not have a significant difference (p <0.05)

A one-way ANOVA was performed to answer the fifth research question and examine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the posttest results of the experimental and control groups. As Table 14 signifies, there is a significant difference between the performance of the three groups in the listening posttest [F (2, 57) =8.20, p=.001].

Table 14
ANOVA for Pretest and Posttest Scores

Test	S.O.V	SS	df	MS	F	p
Pretest	Between group	1447.03	2	723.52	8.20	0.001
	Within group	5031.90	57	88.28		
Posttest	Between group	372.1	2	186.050	3.413	0.040
	Within group	3106.75	57	54.504		

Tukey's post hoc test examined where the difference between the groups lay. As shown in Table 15, the mobile group outperformed the control group. However, there is no statistically significant difference between the mobile group and the laptop group and the laptop group and the control group (p> 0.05).

Table 15
Tukey's Post Hoc Comparison Between the Groups

Dependent Variable	Level	Group (i)	Group (j)	Mean deviation	SEM	p
		Control	Mobile	6.1	2.33	0.03*
	Post-test	Control	Laptop	3.05	2.33	0.393
		Mobile	Laptop	-3.05	2.33	0.398

Discussion

The statistical analysis conducted to answer the first research question of the study showed a significant difference between the three groups of the study in favor of the group that received TED talks via mobile phones. The laptop group also had a significantly better performance than the control group. This finding, consistent with previous studies, shows the importance of technology in language learning (e.g., Brett, 1995; Fidelman,

1997; Warschauer & Healey, 1998). It also finds support from those scholars who underscored the importance of ubiquitous learning (e.g., Boyinbod & Akintola, 2008; Casey, 2005; Jones & Jo, 2004; Yahya, Ahmad, & Abd Jalil, 2010). The fact that the participants in the mobile group could select where, when, and how many times to watch the TED talks, as they asserted, could have an impact on boosting their listening skills. The researchers of the present study assume that when the participants could have the possibility to listen when they were ready, they could better focus on the talks and were cognitively more prepared to learn.

The lack of facing time constraints could also have affected their learning. Additionally, it is worth mentioning that the fact that the mobile group watched the talks outside the classroom and answered the tests in the classroom could have encouraged them to keep the information in their memory for a more extended period. Adjusting the learning to personal preferences and personality characteristics (Kukulska-Hulme,2009; Tanner & Landon, 2009) could be another reason for the success of the participants in the mobile group. Similarly, the present study is in line with previous studies that accentuated the role of self-directed learning in learners' achievement and satisfaction (e.g., Joo, Kim, & Cho, 2008; Lee & Lee, 2006; Lai, Shum, & Tian, 2016).

The results of the repeated measures ANOVAs for answering the second, third, and fourth research questions revealed that the treatment in the three groups was useful and could result in the development of the participants' listening skills. These results, in general, showed the developmental stages the participants followed in the groups. However, by scrutinizing the process of improvement reflected in the scores obtained from the comprehension tests, we can see that the mobile group experienced a more considerable increase in its mean scores than the laptop and control groups. It is noteworthy that the control group had the smallest amount of improvement. These results lead the researchers to conclude that mobile learning was more effective than other types of instruction. The use of TED talks could also be responsible for the higher mean scores in the mobile and laptop groups.

The results of the one-way ANOVA, conducted for answering the fifth research question, showed a significant difference among the groups. However, contrary to the results obtained from the classroom performances of the groups on the comprehension tests, no statistically significant difference was found between the control group and the laptop group, although the materials were different in the two groups. In view of the results, two possibilities arise. First, it could be due to the length of tests; that is to say, ten items could not adequately measure learners' listening skills. Second, using laptops, as stated by the participants and verified by the teacher, was fascinating and could encourage learners to approach the tests more enthusiastically.

Moreover, the lack of a statistically significant difference between the laptop and mobile groups urged the researchers to infer that the significant difference observed in the posttest was not due to employing TED talks. In other words, the lack of a statistically significant difference between the control and laptop groups neutralizes the impact of medium and material.

On the other hand, the nonexistence of a significant difference between the mobile group and laptop group cancels out the effectiveness of the materials enabling the researchers to emphasize the efficacy of using technology for teaching listening skills. However, it can be concluded that the significant difference between the mobile group and the control group was due to the use of mobiles, TED talks, and ubiquitous learning combined. Thus, the researchers deduced that the use of mobile was the primary reason for the findings. The fact that mobile learning, unlike computer-based learning, offers learners the flexibility to choose the best time and location for learning (Keegan, 2005), provides them with the opportunity to more deeply engage in the process of learning, and as Traxler (2011) puts forth, enables them to "enhance, extend and enrich the concept and activity of learning" (p. 6).

Several researchers have supported the potential of mobile devices in language learning (e.g., Godwin-Jones, 2004; Kadyte, 2004; Tan & Liu, 2004), claiming that it can enhance students' motivation and encourage their sense of responsibility (Savill-Smith & Kent, 2003), and can meet their needs in accordance with their lifestyles (Kukulska-Hulme, 2006). Another reason for the efficacy of mobile learning over classroom-based technologies is that it provides individuals with diverse occasions to learn rather than restraining them in pre-determined situations (Traxler, 2011).

Conclusion

The findings of this study suggest mobile phones have positive effects on the listening comprehension of EFL learners, although it does not reject the role of laptops or audio tracks and videos in improving their listening skills. Moreover, the findings contribute to the role of using technology in developing listening skills. Accordingly, the study supports the role of multimedia, CALL, and MALL in boosting learning. However, the integration of technology as a learning tool cannot blur the role of the teacher in the classroom and only plays a supplementary role in the process of learning. The findings of this study should be of interest to English teachers who are in search of methods for improving EFL learners' listening comprehension knowledge. This experiment suggests that TED talks can be used as authentic materials in the listening classes and is consistent with research on self-directed learning. The researchers suggest more research with both male and female learners utilizing the TED application for improving listening skills. Qualitative studies that focus on learners' mental processes could be illuminating as well.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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Appendix A

Comprehension Questions
Let's Talk About Dying
Peter Saul

1. *About how many of Peter Saul's cells died while you watched this talk (assuming you watched it straight through without stopping)?*
a) One million cells
b) One hundred million cells
c) Two thousand cells
d) It's a video of a talk, so technically none of his cells died while I watched

2. *According to the speaker, the death rate for males in Australia has ....*
a) halved   b) doubled   c) decreased   d) increased

3. *What surprised Peter Saul during his interaction with Jim and Kathleen?*
a) Jim had such a severe case of pneumonia that he could not talk.
b) Kathleen wanted everything possible to be done to help Jim.
c) Jim and Kathleen had never discussed the possibility of Jim's becoming sick or dying.
d) Jim had lived to 49.

4. *Which of the following is the most common of the four ways to go?*
a) frailty   b) sudden death   c) organ failure   d) terminal illness

5. *As we know that we are all going to die, what is really important?*
a) when we die   b) how we die   c) where we die   d) all of the items

6. *What was the overwhelming reaction to the respecting Patient Choices program at John Hunter Hospital?*
a) Patients and their families were uncomfortable with the idea of discussing death.
b) Patients and their families appreciated the program and thought it should be normal hospital practice.
c) Patients and their families were so enthusiastic about the program that they continued the dialogue even after funding ran out.
d) Patients and their families voiced frustration at the hospital's inability to fulfill their wishes.

7. *Longevity means.............................. .*
a) more old age, not more youth
b) more age, not more youth
c) more youth, not old age
d) more young age, not more youth

8. *What's the "big idea" concerning the end of life care Peter Saul discussed?*
a) The ICU should develop better methods to help the increasingly frail live longer.
b) The medical industry should make faster advances in life-saving technologies.
c) Euthanasia should become a culturally-accepted and government-funded program.
d) The process of dying should be reclaimed from the current medicalized model.

9. *The survey of nursing home residents in the Newcastle area demonstrated that .... of them had a plan about what to do when their hearts stopped beating.*
a) One in a hundred
b) Five hundred
c) Hundred
d) One million

10. *What does he think about euthanasia?*
a) It's a game   b) It's a sideshow   c) It's a hear beat   d) It's dying process

*Questions 1,3, 4, 6, 8 are taken from www.ed.ted.com.

Appendix B

List and Order of Presentation of TED Talks

1. Global power shifts- Joseph Nye (part one)
2. Global power shifts- Joseph Nye (part two)
3. Mosquito, malaria, and education - Bill Gates
4. How Curiosity got us to Mars - Bobak Ferdowsi
5. Forget shopping. Soon you'll download your new clothes - Danit Peleg
6. What adults can learn from kids - Adora Svitak
7. Your body language shapes who you are - Amy Cuddy
8. How to control someone else's arm with your brain - Greg Gage
9. Making a car for blind drivers - Dennis Hong
10. Let's talk about dying - Peter Saul

Does Autonomy Really Matter in Language Learning?

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The main aim of this study was to unravel the possible relationship between individuals' level of autonomy as EFL learners and academic success in terms of language learning at the tertiary level. Additionally, this quantitative study focused on exploring EFL learners' level of autonomy and also the relationship between learner autonomy and some personal factors, including gender, age, English level, and the length of English education. In order to assess the participants' levels of autonomy, a questionnaire consisting of 66 items was administered to 267 university students, who were Turkish-speakers of English as a foreign language. The findings showed that more than half of the learners (65.2%) had a high autonomy level with a mean autonomy score of 461.37 out of 660. As for the personal variables, only gender was found to be a significant factor in regards to learners' autonomy, in this case, in favour of females. Correlation analysis revealed a positive correlation between learner autonomy level and the academic success of language learners. In other words, the academic success of language learners increased with their autonomy and vice versa. In accordance with the literature, the present study revealed that learner autonomy could be considered one of the factors that affects the success of language learners. Based on the findings, it might be suggested that learner autonomy and possible ways to promote it in and out of class should be given more importance. Further empirical research was suggested in order to comprehend unexplored aspects of learner autonomy in language learning.

Keywords: learner autonomy; language proficiency; academic success/performance; EFL students; foreign language learning

Introduction

Toward the end of the 20th century, significant changes emerged as a result of social, technological, and economic improvements. Personal computers, the internet, mobile phones, etc. might be listed as some of the leading changes affecting almost all of the study areas. As a result, an information explosion has emerged and made the concept of lifelong learning necessary for individuals. In order for people to be able to handle all the information coming from different channels, they need to take responsibility for their own learning (Benson, 2001). In addition, more attention has been given to learner autonomy all around the globe due to the paradigm shift from a teacher-centred to a learner-centred approach (Balçıkanlı, 2010; Benson, 2001; Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012; Ertürk, 2016; Lee, 2016; Little, 2007, 2017; Liu, 2012). The number of studies with different standpoints related to autonomy has been increasing rapidly. Researchers have focused on autonomy training (Dam, 2003; Little, 1995), language learning strategies (Oxford, 1999), curriculum (Cotterall, 2000), textbooks (Reinders & Balçıkanlı, 2011), online tools (Lee, 2016; Sanprasert, 2010; Reinders, 2006), and teachers' beliefs and attitudes (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012) in order to foster autonomy. Meanwhile, other researchers have explored the variables that might affect learner autonomy such as gender (Naeeini, Riazi & Salehi, 2012; Üstünlüoğlu, 2009; Zhao & Chen, 2014), proficiency (English) level (Dafei, 2007; Zarei & Zarei, 2015), length of education (Tuo & Xia, 2017), and academic success (Lowe, 2009; Ng, Confessore, Yusoff, Abdul Aziz & Lajis, 2011; Tilfarlioglu & Ciftci, 2011; Yen & Lui, 2009).

Among all these constructs, it has been asserted that there is a positive relationship between learners' level of

autonomy and their academic success (Lowe, 2009; Ng, Confessore, & Abdullah, 2012; Yen & Liu, 2009). There are a number of studies that highlight learner autonomy and its relation with the aforementioned constructs; however, there have been limited deliberate attempts to examine the relationship between learner autonomy and language proficiency (Alrabai, 2017; Dafei, 2007; Ghorbandordinejad & Ahmadabad, 2016; Liu, 2012; Myartawan, Latief, & Suharmanto, 2013). In the field of language learning and teaching, students are expected to become more involved in the language learning process. As Little (2002) points out, for learners who are not aware of their responsibilities, and are unwilling to take responsibility for their own learning, it is troublesome to reflect on their own learning process critically.

Dafei (2007) states that students' English proficiency is significantly and positively related to their learner autonomy and the more autonomous learners become, the more likely they achieve high language proficiency. However, while Dafei (2007) points out the intimate relationship between autonomy and language learning, this relationship has mostly been examined on a theoretical level and there is a need for empirical research. Thus, the present study aimed to explore language learners' levels of autonomy and the variables that might affect learners' autonomy, including gender, age, English level, and the length of English education. Additionally, the current study focused on investigating the possible relationship between autonomy and English proficiency as higher levels of autonomy are generally associated with effective learning and it is believed that learners with higher levels of autonomy tend to be more successful in language learning than those who are less autonomous.

Learner Autonomy

The importance of autonomy became evident after the Council of Europe's Modern Languages Project was established in 1971. Thanks to this project, the concept of autonomy entered the field of language education. One of the most important outcomes of this project was the Centre de Recherches et d' Applications en Langues (CRAPEL), which turned into an excellent source of research and helped the concept of autonomy become more recognizable (Holec, 1981). Different scholars and researchers have defined autonomy according to their own perspective. For example, while Holec (1981, p. 3) defines autonomy as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning", Benson (2001, p. 47) states that autonomy is "the capacity to take control over one's own learning". Another definition belongs to Little (1999, p. 4), who believes that autonomy is "a capacity – for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action". One can come across several definitions of learner autonomy in the literature; however, it can be seen that all of them share a common ground, which is: "knowledge is something built by the learner" (Candy, 1991, p. 207). Little (1991, p. 3) suggests that there has been a tendency to misunderstand the concept since it might be considered "synonymous with self-instruction or a new methodology". Little (1991, p. 3) also emphasizes that autonomy does not mean that "autonomous learners make the teachers redundant". In line with Little's ideas, Holec (1981) pinpoints that autonomy is not a kind of approach but a learning goal.

The main reason that autonomy has attracted so much attention in various cultures is because it promotes motivation and, as a result, it ensures the effectiveness of learning (Bhattacharya & Chauhan, 2010; Liu, 2012; Sanprasert, 2010). Autonomy plays a key role in language learning because autonomous learners find ways to overcome issues that could lead to diminishing their motivation. Moreover, Little (2003) argues that effective communication is based on complex skills that can be acquired through use, and learners who reveal social autonomy in their learning environment will be more successful communicators. Similarly, other researchers have emphasized that academic success in foreign language learning depends on students developing some amount of autonomy (Benson & Huang, 2008; Dam & Legenhausen, 2010). In EFL (English as a foreign language) contexts like Turkey where language learning mainly takes place in the classroom and learners lack opportunities to practice the target language outside the classroom, it is a demanding task to keep students' motivation high (Ho, 1998; Liu, 2012; Tilfarlioglu & Ciftci, 2011).

Although the question whether autonomy can be measured or not has been a controversial issue among researchers (Benson, 2010; Dam & Legenhausen, 2010; Lamb, 2010), Benson (2010) highlights that the most prominent problem regarding measuring autonomy is defining its observable components. As discussed in the literature, the multidimensionality of autonomy (Benson, 2001), the nature of autonomy as a capacity (Confessore & Park, 2004), and the developmental process of autonomy (Little, 1991) are other problematic issues that stem from the difficulties observing the components of autonomy. In spite of these difficulties, Benson (2010, p. 95) argues that autonomy can be "a testable construct in foreign language education contexts in the sense that it can reasonably be reduced to measurable behaviours in which control over aspects of the language learning process are

displayed". It has also been suggested in the literature that learners' level of autonomy is highly associated with the culture to which they belong. For instance, Chan (2001) claims that in some cultures including China, Japan, and Turkey, promoting learner autonomy can be harder than in Western cultures because the former are part of an exam-oriented and competitive educational system that diminishes teachers' power to include autonomy-raising activities in the class.

In the Turkish EFL context, the findings on levels of learner autonomy have been controversial. Dokuz (2009) suggests that learners in Turkey have a positive attitude toward autonomy and they could be defined as autonomous learners as they are eager to take risks to learn what is asked for them to learn on their own. This result might be seen as unexpected because Yumuk (2002) and Sert (2006) suggest that in Turkish classrooms, the teachers' role does not allow students to be autonomous, and as traditional education methods are common students are seen as passive listeners. Moreover, they state that no significant steps are being undertaken to promote learner autonomy within and beyond the classroom. Accordingly, Turkish students could be considered to have a low level of autonomy. Nonetheless, more recent studies have emphasized the fact that Turkish students have positive attitudes towards learner autonomy (İmre, 2015; Ünal, Çeliköz & Sarı, 2017) and that language learners are open to being autonomous and willing to study actively and independently under guidance (Olur, 2013), which can be accepted as signs of change. In order to overcome the inconsistency among the various research findings, we felt the need to have a closer look at the level of autonomy of Turkish EFL learners. Olur (2013) conducted a study to investigate 98 high school students' awareness of learner autonomy by focusing on aspects such as learner roles, responsibilities, and reasons for language learning and concluded that high school students are open to being autonomous but under guidance; in other words, the participants were generally willing to study actively and independently but the responsibility section showed that they mostly expected to be directed or controlled by their teachers.

As the findings of previous studies conducted in the Turkish context are controversial, factors including gender, age, length of education, and language proficiency were included in the present study so as to comprehend the effect of these variables and the concept of learner autonomy better. Among these variables, gender has been the most popular one. In some previous studies, gender has not been found to be a significant factor on learner autonomy (Naeeini et al., 2012; Tuo & Xia, 2017). However, according to the findings of several other studies, gender seems to be an important variable in autonomy and some differences between male and female students have been put forward in favour of females. That is to say, female learners were found to be more autonomous than male learners (Lowe, 2009; Varol & Yılmaz, 2010; Zhao & Chen, 2014). Another variable included in the present study was age because there are no research studies focusing the effects of age as a variable on learner autonomy. By including this variable, the researchers of the present study aimed to find out whether older students or younger ones display better levels of autonomy. The findings of the present study related to age can give us some clues about which age group might be more oriented toward autonomy in classroom activities. According to Benson (2001, p. 59), individuals are born self-directed learners, yet cultural factors including child-raising styles and the school system might affect the development of learner autonomy (Boyno, 2011). In the same vein, Thomson (1996) highlighted that autonomy is part of human nature and toddlers take control of learning their mother tongue; however, as learning becomes more complicated, the school system intervenes and teenagers or adults tend to avoid self-directed learning and are in favour of being directed by teachers and teaching materials. By adding the third variable the length of education in the present study, the researchers aimed to discover if early starters to language learning might have a higher level of autonomy. Tuo and Xia (2017) reported that the longer the educational experience is, the higher the level of autonomous learning awareness and behaviour. As for the last variable, the English level of learners was also included in the present study since there have been mismatches among the findings of studies regarding the effect of learners' level of English on their autonomy. For instance, Dafei (2007) and Myartawan et al. (2013) suggested learners' level of English positively correlates with their autonomy; that is to say, students with a higher levels of autonomy benefitted in terms of having a higher English level. On the other hand, Zarei and Zarei (2015) reported that the language level of students is not an influential factor for either their autonomy or motivation.

Academic Success

'Success' is a wide-ranging concept because it embraces various aspects of life including relationship success, job success, and academic success. Additionally, success is also flexible because its measures and criteria can be very subjective. When language proficiency is considered a form of success, it is hard to conceptualize. In previous studies, some researchers have tried to define language proficiency. For instance, Solórzano (2008) argues that

language proficiency can be defined as structural proficiency, mastery of discrete language elements, or functional proficiency, being able to use appropriate language in a specific social context. Furthermore, Cummins (2008) defines language proficiency in two different ways: the first one is social language proficiency, which refers to the skills required in social contexts; and the second one, academic language proficiency, which is oral and written abilities students use at school. Regardless of which definition of language proficiency is chosen, the aim of English instructors is to help their students become proficient users of the target language or basically to be successful in language learning.

Lavin (cited in Lowe, 2009, p.18) provides a useful definition of the term academic performance and briefly describes it as "some method of expressing a student's scholastic standing and usually this is a grade for a course, an average for a group of courses in a subject area, or an average for all courses expressed on a 0-to-100 or other quantitative scale". Although there are several ways to evaluate academic success, grades and grade point averages (GPA) measures are the most common tools as they are readily available assessments for institutions and they enable us to measure the accomplishment of learning objectives as well as the acquisition of skills and competencies (York, Gibson & Rankin, 2015). Benson (2010) highlights the difficulty in evaluating a learner's proficiency by means of tests since language proficiency is a multidimensional construct.

It is clear that being successful in language learning is a complex task that is related to numerous factors such as strategy use (Oxford, 1989), affective factors (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993), and individual differences (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). Oxford (1999, p. 120) emphasizes that the real challenge regarding language learning is "to help create more effective language learners who will be able to use their new languages for actual communication". Therefore, strategy use, language proficiency, and learner autonomy must work together to meet this challenge. Oxford (1999, p. 111) also claims that autonomy leads to greater success or proficiency and summarizes the situation by using "five A's", "Ability, Attitude + Action = Autonomy → Achievement". Once the previous studies focusing on learners' autonomy and success were taken into consideration, it was found that the correlation between academic success and learner autonomy is positive and linear, which suggests that the academic success of language learners increased with their autonomy and vice versa (Alrabai, 2017; Tilfarlioglu & Ciftci, 2011; Tuo & Xia, 2017; Yen & Liu, 2009). For instance, Lowe (2009) investigated the correlation between learner autonomy as measured by the Learner Autonomy Profile-Short Form (LAP-SF) and academic performance measured by GPA. The results of Lowe's study revealed that there is a positive, significant correlation between the LAP-SF total score and total GPA, indicating a significant relationship between learner autonomy and academic performance. Another study exploring the relationship between learner autonomy and final grades was carried out by Yen and Lui (2009) and the results suggest that learner autonomy is a valid predictor of course success and final grades in community college online courses.

In addition to the aforementioned studies that focused on students' general success, some of the researchers attempt to figure out the relationship between learner autonomy and language proficiency in terms of academic success. In the Indonesian cultural context, Myartawan et al. (2013) investigated the correlation between learner autonomy, self-efficacy, and English proficiency. The sample consisted of 120 Balinese university students. The data analysis revealed that learner autonomy and English proficiency have a significant, strong, positive relationship. In other words, it seems that students with a higher level of autonomy also have a higher level of language proficiency in English. In the Turkish EFL context, Tilfarlioglu and Ciftci (2011) investigated the relationship among self-efficacy, learner autonomy, and academic success among 250 preparatory school students from five different universities. They confirmed a strong link between learner autonomy and language proficiency; that is to say, more autonomous learners become more successful in the process of language learning. From the studies described above, it is apparent that a relationship exists between learner autonomy and academic performance of language learners, yet there is a limited number of research studies focusing on this relationship in the Turkish EFL context. Thus, the aim of the present study is to contribute to a deeper understanding of learner autonomy by providing insights into its relationship with academic success regarding language proficiency and with some personal factors including age, gender, the length of English education, and English level. In line with the purposes of this study, the following questions guided the research:

1. What is the level of autonomy of Turkish EFL learners at the tertiary level?
2. Is there a statistically significant relationship between some personal factors–including age, gender, the length of English education and English level– and the learners' level of autonomy?
3. What is the relationship between learner autonomy and the academic performance of Turkish EFL learners regarding language proficiency?

Methodology

Research Context and Participants

The study took place in the School of Foreign Languages of a Turkish medium state university in the southern part of Turkey. For most of the departments and faculties, including architecture, engineering, medicine, and civil aviation, it is compulsory to complete a one-year preparatory program in which the students only focus on language learning before taking departmental courses. The School of Foreign Languages administers a placement test for all newly accepted first year students at the beginning of the academic year, and approximately 1,250 students enrol in the preparatory program each year. According to their preferences or the expectations of the students' departments, the students can take the test in one of these languages: English, German, or French. In the test, the students who score 60 points or more start their departmental courses, and those who score lower than 60 points are expected to complete a one-year intensive language program in the language of their choice.

The course content of the School of Foreign Languages aims to help students acquire English language proficiency for their undergraduate studies. To reach this aim, a general course book and some supplementary materials for each skill (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) are utilized by the instructors. Communicative language teaching methodology was adopted and the course book was selected with this in mind. Although students are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning process by using project work and portfolios, there is no explicit training promoting learner autonomy. Learners need to complete 800 hours of English classes and accomplish descriptors for each level (A1-breakthrough, A2-waystage, and B1-threshold) according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). For instance, an A2 level learner is expected to understand short, simple texts containing the highest frequency vocabulary, including a proportion of shared international vocabulary items; and identify specific information in simple written material such as letters, brochures, and short newspaper or online articles according to the reading descriptor of this level.

The aim of the study, participation terms, and issues related to withdrawal were explained to all the classes personally by one of the researchers. A sample of 267 volunteered university students who were taking one-year intensive English courses participated in the study through convenience sampling. The ease of this sampling technique was the principal reason for this selection. Even though nearly 30 classes, which included nearly 500 students, showed interest in the study, 20% of them did not consent to share their GPA. In addition, almost 10% of the questionnaires were eliminated due to missing information. Furthermore, 20 of the students could not complete the course because of attendance problems and they were not allowed to take the final exam. After all of the eliminations, 267 students from 16 different classes were accepted as participants. Their ages ranged between 17 and 29 (SD = 1.25) with a mean of 19.3. According to the CEFR, the students were placed into A1 (breakthrough), A2 (waystage), and B1 (threshold) level classes. Details of the participants' demographic information are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Demographic Information of the Participants (N = 267)

Variable		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	124	46.4
	Female	143	53.6
English Level	A1	130	48.7
	A2	63	23.6
	B1	74	27.7
Length of English Education	1- 5 years	30	11.3
	6 - 10 years	222	83.1
	11-15 years	15	5.6

Instruments

Two data collection instruments were used in the current study. The first one is a questionnaire, the Learner Autonomy Profile-Short Form (LAP-SF), which aims to assess individuals' level of autonomy as learners. By keeping the previous discussions related to the measurability of learner autonomy in mind, we selected the short form of the learner Autonomy Profile (LAP) (Carr, 1999; Derrick, 2001; Meyer, 2001; Ponton, 1999) as a data collection instrument, as it is a battery tool that assesses different aspects of autonomy (desire, resourcefulness, initiative, and persistence) by using four separate Likert-type scales and provides a total autonomy score for each learner. The long form of the LAP was used to extract 66 items by its creators to develop the short form in order to increase the likelihood of high concurrent validity. Confessore and Park (2004) consider the LAP-SF a sufficient tool to make an initial assessment of each respondent's learner autonomy profile. The validity of the LAP-SF was tested with the sample of 1340 respondents and high Cronbach's alpha values and significant inter-correlations were found between subscales (Yen & Liu, 2009). The LAP-SF consists of 66 items arranged in the Likert-type scale from zero (never perform the behaviour) to ten (always perform the behaviour). Similar to the long version of the LAP, the LAP-SF includes four main constructs: desire, resourcefulness, initiative, and persistence. Briefly, desire describes an individual's motivation to participate in a learning experience, while resourcefulness means a learner's intention to be resourceful. The third component, initiative, describes a person's willingness to initiate learning and the last one, persistence, describes a person's intention to continue learning activities. Confessore (2000) states that when four of the components come together, they achieve an accurate assessment of individuals' autonomous behaviors.

In the present study, a total score on the LAP-SF was utilized in order to evaluate individuals' level of autonomy as learners. A higher total score on the LAP-SF is accepted as the learners having a high level of learner autonomy. Prior to the actual administration of the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted with a group of 40 preparatory school students from different levels and based on their feedback on the questionnaire, it was turned into a more reader-friendly format and the wording of some confusing items was revised. In previous studies, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from 0.88 to 0.93 (Confessore & Park, 2004). For this study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the LAP-SF was reported as .92, which can be defined as a high value as it is over .70. At the end of the questionnaire, a small personal data section was included to get information about the participants' gender, age, English level, and length of learning English.

In this article, success is studied in the form of academic success in language proficiency since all the participants were first-year university students who were taking one-year intensive English instruction. Thus, the terms academic success/performance and language proficiency have been used interchangeably. Even though there are different uses and definitions of success in the literature, in the present study, we used academic performance and language proficiency to refer to the students' academic success in language learning, which was represented by GPA. As the second data source, the GPAs of the students were requested from the student affairs office to evaluate the participants' success in language learning. An explanation part at the beginning of the questionnaire and the personal information part were prepared in the native language of the participants (Turkish) in order to avoid any misunderstandings. For both data collection sources, permission from the participants and the School of Foreign Languages was received before the data collection procedure. At the beginning of the semester, a consent form was taken from each of the participants to obtain and use their GPA for the present study.

The participants' academic success related to language proficiency is represented by their GPA that they obtained from the average of four progress tests and a final test in that specific semester during which the study was conducted. In order to ensure the reliability and validity of the tests during the semester, questions that belong to the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) were utilized in the four progress tests and the final test. IELTS was developed by language experts and has been accepted as one of the most reputable tests to assess the language proficiency of those who want to work or study in an English-speaking context. In the general version of the IELTS tests, the four English skills (listening, reading, writing, and speaking) are assessed. According to the IELTS homepage, the Cronbach's alpha values of the reading and listening tests are estimated 0.88 . Benson (2010) emphasizes the necessity of capturing all of the dimensions of foreign language proficiency and that is why both the final test and the progress tests were included to estimate the students' GPA. In the present study, the participants' GPA was calculated by averaging the 40% of the progress test results and 60% of the final test. Accordingly, it was assumed that the students' GPA reflected the overall language proficiency of the students.

Data Collection and Analysis

In this quantitative study, one of the researchers visited all the classes in the data collection process and informed preparatory program students about the study. The classes in which all of the students volunteered were selected into the participant group since the LAP-SF was going to be administered during the English lessons at the end of the spring semester. Under normal circumstances, the LAP-SF is administered online but most of the students in the preparatory classes do not have computer access outside the campus; consequently, the researchers preferred to administer a paper-pen form of the questionnaire. During the administration of the questionnaire to all levels, the first researcher was in the class in order to answer questions and prevent possible misunderstandings.

All the tests that were used to calculate students GPAs were administered during the spring semester two months apart. Moreover, the final test was administered two weeks after spring term ended. In both the progress tests and the final test, four language skills were tested by using IELTS question types including matching headings with paragraphs, multiple choice, true/false, summary completion, sentence completion, table completion, and for writing the students were asked to write a letter or a report based on a chart.

In this correlational study, both descriptive and inferential analyses were conducted to shed light on the relationship between the individuals' level of autonomy as learners and their language proficiency. Prior to any type of analysis, the data were firstly screened for several characteristics such as missing data, influential outliers, and normality. After eliminating the missing data and correcting outliers, we conducted Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests to understand whether the data were normally distributed or not. As Table 2 shows, both the autonomy scores and the GPA of the participants were normally distributed ($p > 0.05$); therefore, parametric tests were conducted in the following phases of the study.

Table 2
Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	**df**	**Sig.**	**Statistic**	**df**	**Sig.**
Autonomy	.042	267	.200	.988	267	.022
GPA	.060	267	.020	.992	267	.167

Secondly, descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were provided in order to describe the participants' characteristics. The individuals' level of autonomy as learners was defined by minimum and maximum autonomy scores. Moreover, independent t-tests and one-way ANOVA tests were applied to investigate the relationship between different personal variables and learner autonomy. As for the relationship between learner autonomy and student success, a Pearson Correlation Coefficient analysis was conducted. All of the statistical computations were carried out by using the IBM SPSS Statistics 20 software program.

Results

The Average Level of Autonomy of Turkish EFL Learners at Tertiary Level

In order to explore the students' level of autonomy, first, the overall mean for the 267 participants' LAP-SF score was computed. In the LAP-SF, the lowest possible score was 0 (zero) and the highest possible score was 660. In the present study, the minimum and maximum scores found were 237 and 624, respectively. Additionally, the mean of the learner autonomy scores was found to be 461.37 (SD = 62.150). If we take the maximum score into consideration, it can be said that 461.37 was a relatively high score. After analysing the means, we divided the scores of the LAP-SF into three groups in order to quantify the learners' autonomous behaviour by considering the minimum and maximum scores of the LAP-SF.

Table 3
Autonomy Level Groups

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum. Percent
Valid	Low Autonomy	0	0	0	0
	Moderate Autonomy	93	34.8	34.8	34.8
	High Autonomy	174	65.2	65.2	100.0
	Total	267	100.0	100.0	

As presented in Table 3, the students with scores above 441 were categorized as having a *high autonomy* level; the learners with scores from 221 to 440 were identified as having a *moderate autonomy* level while the ones with scores below 221 were considered having a low autonomy level. Among the participants, none of them was categorized as having *low autonomy*, 34.8% of the participants were in the moderately autonomous group and 65.2% of the participants were in the highly autonomous group. In other words, based on the LAP-SF scores, the majority of the Turkish EFL learners were found to be highly autonomous.

Learner Autonomy and Personal Factors

To investigate the relationship between some personal factors and learner autonomy, independent t-tests and one-way ANOVA techniques were applied, and the findings are presented respectively in the following sections.

Gender. As Table 4 reveals, gender seems to be an important factor for autonomy. There is a significant relationship between learner autonomy and gender in the present study.

Table 4
Gender and Learner Autonomy

Learner Autonomy	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Autonomy	Female	143	470.10	63.527	5.312
	Male	124	451.29	59.187	5.315

After analysing the data, it was found out that the female participants, with a mean score of 470, were more autonomous than the male participants with a mean score of 451. A t-test was performed to determine whether gender variable created a difference regarding learner autonomy and there was a significant difference between the autonomy scores of female and male participants: t (265) = 2,491, p = 0,013. It can be seen that the female students outperformed the male students in autonomy scores.

Age. Another variable in the present study was age. According to the results of the one-way ANOVA presented in Table 5, the participants' level of autonomy did not seem to be related to their age.

Table 5
Age and Learner Autonomy

Learner Autonomy	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	65220.011	10	6522.001	1735	.073
Within Groups	962238.019	256	3758.742		
Total	1027458.030	266			

This finding may stem from the fact that nearly 95% of the participants were between the ages 18 and 20. That is to say, there were too many students in the same age group, and this made it difficult to reach a comprehensible conclusion. This could be considered one of the constraints of the study.

Length of English education. Length of English education was the third independent variable in the present study. Table 6 shows whether the learners' level of autonomy changes according to how long they have studied English.

Table 6
Length of Education and Learner Autonomy

Learner Autonomy	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	29259.262	13	2250.712	.570	.877
Within Groups	998198.767	253	3945.449		
Total	1027458.029	266			

The results indicated that the students' length of English education had no impact on their autonomy. The fact that most of the participants had been studying English for many years and they were now in the same group might prevent differences in findings related to the length of studying English.

English level. The last variable taken into consideration in this study was the students' English level which was tested at the beginning of the semester by using a skills-based exam. In order to explore the relationship between English level defined by the CEFR (A1, A2 and B1) and the learners' level of autonomy, One-Way ANOVA analyses were performed.

Table 7
English Level and Learner Autonomy

Learner Autonomy	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	189.674	2	94.837	.024	.976
Within Groups	1027268.356	264	3891.168		
Total	1027458.030	266			

As presented in Table 7, like age and length of English education, English level did not seem to be a significant variable for autonomy; nonetheless, as the study was conducted in the middle of the semester, the level differences that could be easily observed at the beginning of the year might have disappeared when this study was conducted.

The Relationship between Learner Autonomy and Academic Performance

The participants' LAP-SF scores and GPA were analysed through a Pearson Correlation Coefficient analysis to find out whether there was a relationship between the individuals' level of autonomy as learners and their academic success in terms of language proficiency. Pearson Correlation Coefficient is a measure that determines the linear relationship between two variables and its values can range from -1 to +1. Values closer to 1 indicate a closer relationship between two variables, while values closer to 0 indicate a weak correlation (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006).

Table 8
Correlation between Learner Autonomy and Academic Performance

		GPA	Autonomy
	Pearson Correlation	1	.243**
GPA	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	267	267
Autonomy	Pearson Correlation	.243**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	267	267

Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As shown in Table 8, there was a positive correlation between the individuals' level of autonomy as learners and their academic success ($r = .243$, $p < .01$). This relationship reveals that the more autonomous learners are, the more successful they become in the process of language learning.

Discussion

Regarding the first research question "What is the average level of autonomy of Turkish EFL learners at the tertiary level?", the data revealed that more than half of the Turkish university students in the study were highly autonomous and none of the participants fell into the category of low autonomy. Unlike this finding, previous studies conducted in Turkey at the beginning of the 2000s indicated that a traditional approach was adopted by teachers and thus students did not show many autonomous behaviours (Sert, 2006; Yumuk, 2002). However, during the 2010s, there have been some promising changes in Turkish educational policy, such as introducing the European Language Portfolio into the educational system and increasing the number of language courses. Accordingly, more recent studies signal a different tendency as students seem to have a more positive attitude towards autonomy and they are willing to take some responsibility for their own learning process (Dokuz, 2009; Olur, 2013; Ünal et al., 2017). In line with the findings of recent studies, the present study also revealed that Turkish students are becoming more willing to take responsibility for their own learning. Thus, we can suggest that if teachers and the curriculum support learners' autonomous behaviours, they tend to show more autonomy.

In relation to the second research question concerning whether there is a statistically significant relationship between some personal factors and the learners' level of autonomy, it was found that gender was the only variable that revealed a significant relationship with learner autonomy. This finding is in line with the findings of previous studies (Boyno, 2011; Lowe, 2009; Varol & Yılmaz, 2010; Zhao & Chen, 2014). One possible reason for this difference between genders may stem from females' tendency to mature earlier than males both physically and psychologically. Another possible reason might be the cultural values that impose more responsibility on females. In addition, the fact that females outperformed males is not a surprising finding as Green and Oxford (1995) put forward that females use more learning strategies and thus they are more successful language learners. Similarly, females seem to be more open to trying new things and are better at self-studying and doing non-compulsory assignments, which makes them more autonomous in and outside the classroom (Varol & Yılmaz, 2010). According to Turkish child-raising customs, females are encouraged to take more responsibility than males. As learner autonomy is closely related to taking responsibility, it is not surprising to see that females have higher autonomy scores than males.

Regarding the other variables, which were age, length of English education, and English level, none of them showed a significant relationship with learner autonomy. There could be several reasons for these results. In terms of age, 247 out of the 267 total participants were between 18 and 20. This meant that 95% of the participants fell in the same age group. Since the participants' ages were very close, it might have affected the results. In other words, a large group of participants in such a limited age range might make it difficult to reach a comprehensible conclusion. Consequently, it was not surprising that age did not reveal any relationship with learner autonomy.

The length of English education was also included in this research study to see whether there is a relationship between length of English education and autonomy. However, it was found that there was not a significant relationship between the length of English education and learner autonomy. Unlike Tuo and Xia (2017) who found a positive correlation between learner autonomy and the length of English education, learning experience or length of education was not found to be an important factor for learner autonomy in the present study. Tuo and Xia (2017) suggest that the positive relationship between the length of education and autonomy is a result of curriculum reform in Chinese higher education. In China, more emphasis has been given to promoting autonomous learning behaviour by using multimedia facilities; however, there is no deliberate attempt in the Turkish higher education curriculum and this might be the underlying reason why length of education was not found to be an important factor for learner autonomy. Moreover, the demographic information revealed that the majority of the participants had been learning English for nine or more years (up to 15). The fact that most of the participants had been studying English for many years might have prevented the detection of differences related to this variable. Most Turkish EFL learners have been learning English for a long time and this education has generally been compulsory since they started fourth grade of elementary school. Hence, the variable of length of English education was expected to have a neutral effect.

Regarding the participants' English level and autonomy, the data analysis revealed that there was not a significant relationship between these two variables. In the sample group, based on the test that was administered at the beginning of the semester, there were 130 A1 level, 63 A2 level, and 74 B1 level students according to the CEFR.

Both A1 and A2 level students were expected to reach a B1 level by the end of the term. On the other hand, the aim of the B1 level students was to reach a B2 level. This study was conducted just before the final test. In other words, more than 70% of the participants reached the same level, which was a B1 level. As the majority of the participants were at the same English level, it might have not been possible to see the relationship between the English level and learner autonomy in this study. Another possible reason for not finding any differences is the fact that English level groups were established at the beginning of the fall term; however, learners' autonomy level was measured in the middle of the spring term. Therefore, some of the learners' English levels might have improved as a result of becoming more autonomous over time.

The third research question put forward the main concern of this study, which was to explore whether there is a relationship between learner autonomy and language proficiency in Turkish students at the tertiary level. In order to reach this aim, the data gathered from questionnaires and the students' GPA were analysed using a Pearson Correlation Coefficient analysis. A positive but weak correlation between learner autonomy and academic success was found. In line with this finding, previous research studies (Alrabai, 2017; Dafei, 2007; Ghorbandordinejad & Ahmadabad, 2016; Lowe, 2009; Myartawan et al., 2013; Tilfarlioglu & Ciftci, 2011; Tuo & Xia, 2017; Yen & Liu, 2009) conducted in various countries suggest a positive correlation between these two constructs. In the literature, there is a widespread belief that more autonomy positively influences efficient learning, which facilitates the achievement of higher levels of language proficiency (Dafei, 2007; Ghorbandordinejad & Ahmadabad, 2016). Therefore, it can be concluded that learner autonomy and academic success mutually reinforce each other. In short, it is possible to say that learner autonomy is related to language success. A student with a higher level of autonomy tends to achieve high academic scores; on the other hand, those with a low degree of learner autonomy are likely to achieve low scores. This finding emphasizes the importance of learner autonomy in successful language learning processes.

There were some restrictions in this study. First, the sample consisted of students enrolled at a single state university. Therefore, the results may not be generalizable to all university students throughout the country. Secondly, although the instrument sought to minimize these issues, it is possible that question ambiguity, personal bias, and a lack of knowledge by the respondents were present. Furthermore, it should be taken into consideration that this was not a longitudinal study; thus, the overall stability of the study may be subject to question. Another limitation is related to the timeline of the study. The English level groups (A1, A2, and B1) were formed at the beginning of the fall semester. The study was conducted during the spring term and students' GPAs and their autonomy scores belonged to the second term. Therefore, some students' levels might have changed over time or they might be more successful than others due to their higher autonomy. Lastly, participants' age intervals were limited. The majority (95%) were between 18 and 20 years old. Hence, the results may not be generalizable for younger or older groups.

Conclusion

In the current study, a link was found between autonomy and learners' language learning achievements. This finding emphasizes that learners who take responsibility for their own learning tend to be more successful in language learning. Thus, the concept of autonomy is significant for all language learners and teachers. What really matters is to understand the role of autonomy in language learning and find ways to foster it, such as through pair work, group work, computer-assisted language learning, distance learning, out-of-class learning, self-instruction, and self-reflection. We believe it is crucial to create opportunities to promote learner autonomy by using awareness-raising activities, fostering self-assessment, and engaging learners in cooperative work. However, it may not be realistic to expect students to take responsibility for their learning in a short time and teachers, as the authority in the classroom, might not be ready to hand over responsibility to learners. Hence, principles of autonomy should be included in the training of both pre-service and in-service teacher education programs. In addition to learners and teachers, the curriculum, assessment tools, and books need to be reorganized in accordance with the principles of autonomy.

To date, the relationship between autonomy and language learning has largely been explored at the theoretical level and lacks empirical support. There is a need for more comprehensive and experimental studies that focus on observing autonomy in the classrooms by including teachers' and students' concerns and attitudes.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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Referential Coherence of Academic Texts: A Corpus-Based Analysis of L2 Research Papers in Management

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This paper focuses on referential coherence, which is seen as a crucial attribute of effective academic writing. Findings are reported from a corpus study of Russian students' research proposals. The learners' use of anaphoric expressions is compared with a reference corpus, which comprises research articles published in peer-reviewed journals. It was hypothesised that learners use anaphora less frequently than professional writers and face some difficulties when using anaphoric expressions. The results of the analysis partly confirmed the hypothesis and allowed the identification of particular problems connected with the students' use of anaphoric expressions, which were then classified into several groups. Examples of exercises aimed at dealing with the identified problems are also provided. It is hoped that the reported findings, as well as the author's suggested reasons for the problems and possible ways of dealing with them, will be useful for EAP practitioners, researchers, and students writing their research papers in English.

Keywords: referential coherence; second language writing; corpus analysis; anaphora; EAP

Introduction

Despite the existence of a substantial number of studies on text coherence, this significant attribute of academic style remains under-researched in the field of L2 writing. Coherence in an academic text is no less important than its content, however, it frequently turns out to be difficult to achieve, especially for second language learners (see, for example, Al Sharoufi, 2014; Hyland, 2004; Hyland & Tse, 2004; Leńko-Szimańska, 2004), therefore demanding the close attention of researchers and teachers of academic writing.

Coherence is researched in two aspects: *relational* and *referential* (see, for example, Degand et al., 1999). Relational coherence and *coherence relations* are referred to as "the cornerstone of comprehension" (Graesser et al., 2003, p. 82). They comprise, for instance, List, Cause and Consequence, and Problem and Solution, which are expressed in a text by various linguistic markers, such as connectives and lexical cue phrases. The other type of coherence, called referential coherence, is achieved via the use of referential markers, mainly *anaphora*. Anaphora is defined as a language phenomenon that introduces the connection between a "pointing back expression", called *anaphor* (or *referent*), and *antecedent*, i.e. the text segment an anaphor refers to (see, for example, Charaudeau & Maingueneau, 2000, p. 45; p. 14; Ducrot & Schaeffer, 1995: p. 458; Halliday & Hasan, 1976; Matysiak, 2007, p. 183). Anaphora plays an important role in a text because it relates the current information to the intended referent. This is essential for expressing the thematic structure of the discourse and its comprehension (Vonk et al., 1992).

EAP learners are generally familiar with relational coherence because it is frequently addressed in various textbooks and guides on academic writing, some of which even provide lists of linking expressions to be used in different situations.[1] However, referential coherence markers, i.e. anaphora, are rarely focused on in EAP courses,

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[1] Bailey, S. (2006). Academic Writing: A handbook for international students. New York, NY: Routledge, UK; Greetham, B. (2001). How to write better essays. New Yourk, NY: Palgrave; Mounsey, C. (2002). Essays and dissertations. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press; Soles. D., & Lawler, G. (2005). The academic essay: How to plan, draft, write and revise. Abergale, UK: Glmp Ltd.

despite the fact that the use of anaphoric expressions deserves close attention, being a crucial component of academic text coherence. Anaphora frequently occurs in academic texts, which makes it an essential topic for academic writing instruction (Crompton, 2017). It was assumed that L2 writers have even more difficulties than L1 writers with the effective use of anaphoric expressions because anaphora is quite a complex linguistic feature whose accurate use requires a high level of language proficiency.

This work aims at investigating anaphoric expressions as a marker of coherence in an academic text. Being an EAP practitioner who often deals with students' papers and basing on previous research findings in this field (e.g., Leńko-Szimańska, 2004), the author hypothesised that L2 learners underuse referential markers in their texts in comparison with expert writers. It was also expected to find some specific problems with the use of anaphora caused by the students' lack of English language proficiency and the influence of their native language. It was posited that researching the way L2 learners use anaphora in their texts and comparing it to experts' usage could allow some problems the students face when using anaphoric expressions to be detected. Understanding the reasons can direct teachers to more efficient ways of tackling the issues in EAP and ESL classrooms.

Therefore, it was assumed that the research findings might be useful for EAP practitioners, researchers, and students writing their research papers in English.

First, it is necessary to mention that the term *coherence* is often used alongside *cohesion*. Some scholars differentiate between them, stating that cohesion contributes to coherence, i.e. grammatical and lexical units used in a text to create connections between its parts signal coherence (see, for example, de Beaugrande, 1980; Halliday & Hasan, 1976; Tanskanen, 2006; Witte & Faigley, 1981). De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981) claim that coherence is "not a mere feature of texts, but rather the outcome of cognitive processes among text users" (De Beaugrande & Dressler, 1981, p. 6). In some works (see, for example, Halliday and Hasan, 1976)[2], the word 'cohesion' is used to refer to the grammatical and lexical markers used to make a text cohesive, while Witte and Faigly make a clear distinction between Halliday and Hasan's 'cohesion' and 'coherence' (1981, : p 199), the former limited to the words and syntax, the latter involving the broader social-cultural context. There are also some authors who do not distinguish between the two terms, such as Kleijn et al. (2019). Following Fahnestock (1983) and Degand et al. (1999), in this paper, the term *coherence* is used as a more succinct one to refer to the relations existing between successive sentences and paragraphs (Degand et al., 1999) formed in a text via various linguistic means.

Coherence in different types of writing has been explored by a number of scholars. For example, Bunton (1999) focused on textual signaling in PhD theses of Hong Kong research students. He concluded that despite some inconsistency in their use, overall, textual signals contribute to maintaining coherence of a long text. Hyland (2004) and Hyland and Tse (2004) analysed an extensive corpus of ESL learners' masters and doctoral dissertations. The studies showed a high frequency of metadiscoursal devices, namely transitions, which contribute to a text's coherence, in the works under consideration the frequency was higher in doctoral in comparison with masters dissertations. Some studies of coherence in students' writing showed English L2 students tend to over-use particular cohesive devices, for example, linking adverbials (Shaw, 2009) or use them differently from the way native speakers do (Gardezi & Nesi, 2009). Interactive and Interactional metadiscourse markers in Chinese students' academic writing in two disciplines, Literary Criticism and Translation Studies, were studied by Li and Wharton (2012). The featured students studied through the medium of English in different universities located in China and the UK. It was found that local institutional conventions had a stronger effect on the learners' use of metadiscourse markers than disciplinary factors.

Degand et al. (1999) explored *relational* and *referential* coherence, which are aimed at helping the reader integrate the text contents and discourse values into a global structure for easier interpretation. Both types of coherence act as tools for establishing "the continuity of meaning and reference", which make a mere sequence of clauses and sentences become a text (Cornish 2009, p. 572-573). However, while relational coherence has been paid substantial attention in linguistics literature (see, for example, Hoek et al., 2017; Kleijn, Pander Maat, & Sanders, 2019; Sanders, Land & Mulder, 2007; Sanders & Noordman, 2000) and EAP textbooks (see, for example, Bailey, 2006; Greetham, 2001; Mounsey, 2002; Northedge, 2005; Soles & Lawler, 2005), referential coherence appears to be understudied.

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[2] Halliday, M. A., & Matthiessen, C. (2013). Halliday's Introduction to Functional Grammar (4th ed.). Milton Park, UK: Routledge.

Referential coherence, as mentioned above, is realized in a text by referential markers, namely anaphora (Degand et al., 1999). Anaphors are seen as "an essential pillar supporting the overlay of [coherence] relation in fleshing out and integrating their discourse values" (Cornish, 2009, p. 590). Several studies have posited that the absence of referential coherence between two successive sentences or clauses has a negative influence on comprehension (see, for example, Clark & Haviland, 1977; Lesgold et al., 1979). Degand et al. (1999) also studied the influence of linguistic markers of referential coherence on the comprehension of expository discourse. They prepared texts in which anaphors where difficult to resolve and asked respondents to read them and answer some questions to check comprehension. The researchers found that less coherent texts were harder to understand. The role of coherence markers on the 'readability' of an academic text was explored by Basturkmen & von Randow (2014) who observed the use of signals of text organisation and concession relations with and without signalling in postgraduate argumentative essays. The authors concluded that postgraduate students are generally well aware of the necessity to guide the reader via the use of 'reading cues'; however some of them might use those cues inappropriately.

The ability of second language writers to use anaphoric expressions in their texts has also been explored; however, the number of such studies is quite scarce. Thus, Plakans and Gebril (2017) studied anaphors alongside with logical operators as a measure of cohesion in TOEFL iBT writing tasks. They found that the effect size for anaphor reference was smaller than that for logic operators. Al Sharoufi (2014) analysed the use of anaphora, cataphora, and transitional signals in L2 students' academic essays. The author claims that the use of referential elements causes some difficulties for students, but the paper does not specify what particular problems with the use of anaphora were identified. Leńko-Szimańska (2004) focused on specific patterns of misuse of demonstratives as anaphora in Polish students' essays. She concluded that most problems occur with the use of *that* and *those* as determiners, which are overused by learners in comparison with the native speaker norm. Another finding was that Polish students tend to underuse *those* as a demonstrative pronoun. These errors are explained by the influence of the Polish language, which lacks articles.

Overall, earlier studies investigated the use cohesive devices in L2 students' writing and reported positive relations between cohesion features and writing quality. However, research into referential coherence in learners' texts seems to be very limited. Thus, the characteristics of use of anaphoric expressions by L2 learners have yet to be explored. Exploring referential markers could facilitate a better understanding of how the coherence of an academic text is achieved providing links to pedagogical interventions and writing strategy development.

The aforementioned studies either did not explicitly take into account the different linguistic means that can be used to establish this referential coherence, e.g., nominal, verbal, and adverbial anaphora, and their use in a text, or explored only a limited number of them (see, for example, Leńko-Szimańska, 2004). In this paper, the aim is to focus on three types of anaphora that contribute to the creation of coherence in an academic text and to research the use of anaphoric expressions in L2 students' writing by comparing them with examples found in experts' texts.

Materials

The analysis was based on two corpora. The learner corpus was a collection of 58 samples of students' writing. The writers were fourth-year management students of the National Research University Higher School of Economics, Perm, Russia. The samples were research proposals which they wrote as part of the course of English for Academic Purposes. The research proposals were brief descriptions of the students' diploma projects written in English amounting to roughly 2500 words. Russian is the native language of all the learners. Their level of proficiency in English is approximately B2-C1, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The learner corpus data were compared to a reference corpus.

The reference corpus comprises articles from peer-reviewed journals in Management – Journal of Management (JM) – 25 articles; Journal of Management Studies (JMS) – 20 articles; and Academy of Management Journal (AM) – 17 articles (62 in total). They are all leading academic journals with a current H index of 145, 119, and 227 (2017) correspondingly, which attests to them being quite influential in the international business and management studies discourse community. All publications refer to the period from 2013 to 2016. The full list of the sources quoted in this paper can be found in Appendix 2.

It was assumed that the two corpora were comparable since a paper published in a peer-reviewed journal is considered to be a model for students to follow, i.e. a perfect example of an academic text – a text type that comprises various research-oriented genres, such as dissertations, monographs, and presentations (Swales 1990). Therefore, it is necessary for EAP learners to conform to the conventions of the genre (Hiltunen, 2016), which include the use of anaphoric expressions. When studying the distinctive characteristics of L2 texts, it is also important to base the research on a norm (Granger, 2015). In the EAP context, this norm, as mentioned above, is taken to be represented by articles from peer-reviewed journals, therefore such comparisons appear to be very useful for pedagogical purposes. This practice is well-established in learner corpus research. For example, Lee and Chen (2009), who compared a corpus of expert academic writing consisting of journal articles and a corpus of undergraduate dissertations, claim that the comparison gave them "added confidence" that they were focusing on the right issues (p. 154).

The corpora amount to approximately 130,000 and 694,000 words respectively (after all tables, formulas, graphs, charts, and reference lists were removed from the texts). Since the study takes into account normalized frequency rates per 1,000 words, it is assumed that the differences in the size of corpora do not distort the overall tendencies identified during the analysis. The comparison of a sample corpus (a learner corpus in this case) to a larger corpus is also considered to be appropriate. In this case, the larger corpus represents a text norm against which the second corpus is compared (Rayson & Garside, 2000).

Another argument for the comparability of the corpora is that despite the fact that the texts the corpora consist of are from different genres, i.e. research proposals and research articles, they both belong to academic discourse and have very similar structures. They both describe the topic of the research and the gap in knowledge, include literature review on the topic, outline research methods, and give the results of the data analysis (anticipated results in the case of students' works).

Research Design

All texts were first processed with the help of the AntConc concordance programme, which is typically applied as a text analysis tool for processing corpus data. Nevertheless, it was also necessary to examine the texts manually in order to obtain both qualitative and quantitative results because some of the language means under consideration can perform different functions (e.g. *it* can be a subject pronoun and an object pronoun; *her* – an object pronoun and a possessive adjective). In a similar vein, some potential anaphora expressions could in fact not be performing an anaphoric function, e.g. *It* as in example 1. Therefore, the contexts of use of some tokens needed to be considered in order to select relevant examples. Thus, instances with *it* used as a dummy subject were not taken into account, while sentences with *it* used as a personal or object pronoun (examples 2 and 3) were included into the analysis.

(1) ***It** is necessary to examine the degree to which the venture is structured in a manner that promotes free and open communication and knowledge sharing* (JMS 2016-8).

(2) *When a new practice is introduced that employees do not support, **it** may lead employees to withhold their effort and commitment* (AM 2015-1).

(3) *Our qualitative results show that such time before compliance is often invested in activities that help decision makers to learn more about the practice itself, about others' reactions to **it*** (AM 2015-1).

For qualitative analysis, contrastive interlanguage analysis (CIA) (Gilquin, 2000/2001; Granger, 1996) was employed to identify specific features of the use of anaphoric expressions in the L2 learner corpus. This methodology involves the juxtaposition of learner language and an expert speaker reference corpus in order to identify differences and similarities between them. Despite the fact that in the CIA framework the terms 'underuse' and 'overuse' are considered to be neutral and descriptive, not prescriptive (Granger, 2015), in terms of teaching EAP, the revealed frequency differences require close analysis in order to detect possible systematic problems students might have with the use of anaphoric expressions. The observed discrepancies in the learners' and expert writers' use of anaphora were then classified into four groups based on the types of errors students make.

The study focuses on three types of anaphora identified by Gardelle (2012): nominal (4), verbal (5), and adverbial (6) in order to get a more comprehensive picture of the use of anaphora in academic discourse.

(4) *Our experimental results revealed that* **decision makers** *saw opportunities for increased legitimacy if* **they** *complied early with the coercive demand primarily when* **they** *faced low institutional complexity. As institutional complexity increased,* **they** *planned increasing delays in* **their** *compliance* (AM 2015-1).

(5) *Hospitals that* **did not offer robotic surgery,** *especially when other nearby hospitals* **did,** *risked losing appeal and patients* (AM 2015-6).

(6) *I belong to that category of people that, I mean, if I read one night about a new intervention performed in* **Boston,** *the following day I was rushing* **there** *to see how they do it* (AM 2015-6).

The referential markers selected for analysis were: subject, object, reflexive and indefinite pronouns, demonstratives (both pronouns and adjectives), possessive adjectives, auxiliary verbs *do, does, did* functioning as substitutes, and the adverbs *here* and *there*.

Analysis

The significance of the differences in frequencies was calculated with log-likelihood tests (Dunning, 1993). According to Smith (2009), in corpus studies log-likelihood values can be interpreted in the following way: the log likelihood ⩾ 6.63 means that the result is significant at the 1% level ($p < 0.01$); the log likelihood ⩾ 3.84 means that the result is significant at the 5% level ($p < 0.05$).

In order to measure the size of the difference of normalised frequency of a word in the two corpora effect size metric (%DIFF) was used. It indicates the proportion of the difference. Negative %DIFF values show that the word has a higher normalized frequency in the reference corpus (Gabrielatos & Marchi, 2012) than in the leaner one.

Results

Nominal anaphora

The language units under consideration and the results of the corpus analysis are presented in Table 1.

Overall, nominal anaphora was marginally more frequently used by expert writers than by learners (21070 (30.360 per 1000 words) occurrences in total in the reference corpus vs 3865 (29.730 per 1000 words) occurrences in the learner corpus). In some cases, the log-likelihood values demonstrated that the difference between the learner and reference corpora was significant and worth attention.

Subject pronouns. Generally, learners used subject pronouns in their writing less frequently than expert writers. The log-likelihood values show the significance of the difference between the learner and expert corpora at the 1% level. The largest significant difference was detected for the subject pronoun *they* (%DIFF = -54.73).
The results of the corpus analysis show that the only subject pronoun students tend to use more often in comparison with expert writers was *it* (approximately 3.5 occurrences per 1000 words in the learner corpus vs about 2.3 in the reference corpus) which was the second largest significant difference among all the subject pronouns under consideration (%DIFF = 53.43).

Possessive adjectives. The largest effect size value was found for *its* (%DIFF=95.43), which alongside with *his* was more frequently used by learners. However, the difference of use for the latter was found to be insignificant, while the former was significant at the 1% level, demonstrating the second most significant log-likelihood value in the group of 96.22. *Their* and *her* were much more common in the reference corpus than in the learner one (%DIFF=-54.34 and -42.82 respectively).

Object pronouns. Despite the fact that the difference in the use of object pronouns between the two corpora turned out to be insignificant, there were some interesting findings. For example, as can be seen from the table, in the reference corpus, object pronouns were used more extensively with the largest effect size value of -67.65 found for *her*. The exception was *it* which prevailed in the learner corpus.

Reflexive pronouns. In professional writing reflexive, pronouns occurred more often than in student writing, with *itself* being an exception: it was used by learners more than twice as frequently as by expert writers and had the largest significant difference with %DIFF=109.73.

Demonstratives. The difference in the use of all the demonstratives between the learner corpus and the reference corpus was significant at the 1% level. Demonstratives in general were more common in the learner corpus (the normalized frequencies are 10.46 for the learner corpus and 9.31 for the reference one). This result is consistent with Leńko-Szimańska's findings (2004) who revealed that learners generally overuse demonstratives when compared with native speakers. Students tended to use *this* much more often than expert writers and this difference had the largest effect size value of 49.33.

Indefinite pronouns. The difference in the total use of possessive adjectives between learners and expert writers was the largest significant difference among all the anaphoric expressions analysed (%DIFF=69.57). The significant difference in the use of indefinite pronouns was found only for *one*. Interestingly, it was used more than three times as often in the learner corpus as in expert writing, while *ones* was more frequently employed in the reference corpus.

Relative pronouns. The largest effect size value in the group of relative pronouns was found for *who*, while the difference in the use of *whose* in the learner and reference corpora happened to be insignificant. *Who* was more often used by expert writers, whereas *which* occurred more frequently in the learner corpus.

Verbal anaphora

Halliday and Hasan (1976) posited that verbal anaphora is important for coherence because it serves to link sentences in a text in "the same way as the nominal substitute one" (p. 113). Nominal anaphora and verbal anaphora share many common features. For example, like the former, the latter has "an experiential structure in which the lexical verb expresses the 'Thing'", i.e. an action, event, or relation (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 113).

According to the data in this study, verbal anaphora is a less frequent phenomenon in academic discourse than nominal anaphora. The results of the corpus analysis of verbal anaphora are presented in Table 2.

The data clearly show that verbal anaphora was much more common in the reference corpus that in the learner one. However, a significant difference was only detected for *do*.

Adverbial anaphora

The results of the analysis are presented in Table 3.
Table 3 shows that adverbial anaphora was more frequently used by expert writers than by students. However, the difference only appeared to be significant for *here*.

Discussion

The quantitative analysis of the referential coherence, which is realised by the three types of anaphora, showed that overall it is more common in expert writing than in students' papers, thus confirming the hypothesis. The differences in the use of anaphoric expressions in the two corpora were further explored through qualitative analysis. Problems in the learners' use of anaphoric expressions were classified into four groups and reasons for why the students wrote in a certain way will be discussed.

Repetition of a chunk of language (a word or phrase). The corpus examples reveal that the students tended to repeat nouns rather than omit repeating words or replace them with pronouns (21 cases in the corpus). This

might be responsible for the revealed underuse of nominal anaphora in the learner corpus. Thus, examples 7a and 7b demonstrate the sentences in which the subject pronouns *he* and *they,* which were found to be underused by the learners in comparison with expert writers, could have been employed instead of the repeated noun.

(7) (a) **Manager** *eliminates the suppliers whose mark, with respect to a criterion, is lower than the minimal mark. Thus,* **manager** *chooses one of the suppliers satisfying the minimum level of all the criteria.*

(b) *Although* **respondents** *are likely to be understood and to allow that such goods will be more expensive, but for ensuring environmental safety* **respondents** *agree to pay.*

In examples 8a and 8b the use of the indefinite pronoun ones, which was also underused by learners, would have been appropriate, however the students preferred to repeat the plural noun:

(8) (a) *Companies that appreciate and care about employees, are more likely to attract effective* **employees**.

(b) *The first group of theories consists of utilitarian* **theories**.

Similarly, the learners tended to avoid using auxiliary verbs as substitutes, which was also revealed by the qualitative analysis (see Table 2). They preferred to repeat the main verb(s), which results in longer sentences on the one hand, and bad style and a lack of coherence on the other:

(9) *Many organizations strive to reduce production loss to gain an advantage over their main competitors or to reduce costs, but only few companies manage to* **gain it and reduce their costs**.

Like in the cases of nominal and verbal anaphora, the findings showed that some students preferred to use repetition rather than employ adverbial anaphora to avoid it. Thus, in example 10, instead of repeating in the organisation twice, there could have been used in the second part of the sentence:

(10) *Observation will include the observation of the current situation in the organization, complete examination of all the key processes* **in the organization** *and identification of the bottlenecks.*

The motivation for repeating words in the learners' texts might lie in the learners' not feeling confident about using anaphoric expressions, namely indefinite pronouns and verb substitutes, because they are rarely taught this in ESL courses. This goes in line with the findings of Ferris (1994) who investigated essays of L2 writers of different levels of language proficiency. She concluded that in order to achieve textual cohesion, lower proficiency writers tended to rely on repletion, while the more advanced learners employed a variety of referential cohesion devices.

To deal with the issue of learners' repeating chunks of language, teachers could offer students sentences with repetition taken from learner corpora for editing with the use of different kinds of anaphora. An example of such an editing exercise is presented in Appendix 1.

Superfluous use of anaphoric expressions. The analysis of concordance lines revealed that learners sometimes use anaphoric expressions unnecessarily (18 cases in the corpus), like in the case of *it* in 11a and 11b. This correlates with the results of the quantitative analysis showing that the students used the subject pronoun *it* more frequently than expert writers.

(11) (a) *Furthermore, this method is the least resource-consuming and* **it** *allows to test the hypothesis on a real market, using MVP.*

(b) *The main advantages of SWOT are that it is simple to conduct and* **it** *is not costly for the organization.*

The analysis of corpus examples showed that in some writings the demonstrative *this* occurred as many as 44 times; and it also occurred more frequently in the learner corpus than in the expert one. That figure appears to

be large in comparison with the average use of *this* in the learner corpus, which accounted for 18 instances per text. Examples 10a and 10b demonstrate the learners' overuse of *this*:

(12) (a) *However, **this** paper supposes the use of customer development methodology for several reasons. Firstly, **this** method was adapted to IT-projects, for example, **this** technique involves the use of the approach of agile software development. Furthermore, **this** method is the least resource-consuming and it allows to test the hypothesis on a real market, using MVP. Finally, **this** technique was actually applied in practice in the majority of successful start-ups that participated in start-up accelerator of Russian Internet Initiatives Development Fund.*

(b) ***This** model is quite conventional. Although **this** approach is quite prejudiced, in any case it would be better to consider **this** approach.*

The overuse of *this* in the learner corpus might be due to the fact that the students tended to use *this* instead of the definite article or any other modifiers. This can be explained by the influence of their native language, where there are no articles. Therefore, the learners, being afraid of making an error with the definite article in English, preferred to use *this* to be on the safe side. This finding goes in line with Leńko-Szimańska's research (2004), which also explained Polish students' overuse of demonstrative pronouns by the influence of their native language.

It is the author's belief that providing students with extensive practice of the use of articles and closer attention to words and phrases that could replace demonstratives in a sentence may help to solve these problems. For example, in-class analysis of choices utilized by expert writers can help to improve learners' writing (see Exercise 2 in Appendix 1, which demonstrates the use of the definite article for establishing relational coherence in professional writing).

Plural and singular forms. The author observed some systematic errors that learners make when referring to plural nouns (15 cases in the corpus). This concerns almost all types of anaphoric expressions used to refer to plural nouns, namely the subject and object pronouns *it,* which are used instead of *they* and *them* correspondingly (see examples 13, 14a and 14b); as well as the possessive adjective *its* (example 15) and the demonstrative pronoun *this* (examples 16a and 16b). This finding also correlates with the results of the quantitative analysis, which revealed general underuse of plural forms of nominal anaphora in the learner corpus:

(13) *Methods are effective only if **it** brings results in accordance with the goals and objectives.*

(14) (a) *To obtain more specific information on each point I will select criteria and make a comparison of results according to **it**.*

(b) *The coach reflects the client's actions and helps to transform **it** into autonomous abilities (functions).*

(15) *The main idea in the third sub-group of corporate citizenship is that corporations can take **its** rightful place in society, next to other "citizens".*

(16) (a) *The interview questionnaire will be developed on the basis of the reviewed literature, and it will help in gathering all the relevant data from **this** major informants.*

(b) ***This** beliefs and expectations produce norms that powerfully shape the behavior of individuals and groups in the organization*

The misuse of plural and singular forms, namely demonstrative pronouns, cannot be explained by L1 interference, as the variability of demonstrative pronouns is typical of the Russian language (Rahimova & Yusupova, 2015). These findings suggest that plural forms, like articles, demand special attention in academic writing instruction. Once aware of the problem, an EAP teacher can anticipate and prevent possible mistakes in plural forms by drawing students' attention to the relevant grammar rules and provide examples of their use during the initial stages of the course. For example, error correction exercises focusing on plural forms of nominal anaphora can be used to solve the problem (see Exercise 3 in Appendix 1).

Wrong patterns. Examples of patterns used by the learners that were different from the norm, i.e. those used in the reference corpus, were found for possessive adjectives as well as reflexive and relative pronouns (19 cases in the corpus).

In the reference corpus the possessive adjective *their* was commonly used when referring to a person whose gender is unknown:

> (17) (a) *As long as a person does **their** job, they can expect to stay in their job* (AM 2015-3).
>
> (b) *In response, the employee regulates **their** emotion and emotional expression to meet the requirements of **their** job and achieve organizational goals* (JMS 2014-8).

However, in the learner corpus *his* was usually used in this situation:

> (18) (a) *The method of coaching is based on the communicative cooperation in building partnerships between the coach and **his** client.*
>
> (b) *The owner of business conducts market analysis when **he** communicates with **his** customers about business or checks the prices of **his** competitors.*

The use of *his* (as well as *he* in 18b) would have been justified if the gender of the coach from 16a or the business owner from 18b had been revealed earlier in the texts, but it was not the case. The learners were trying to make some general statements without referring to a particular person. This might be explained by the influence of Russian in which the noun 'person' is masculine, so it is common to use masculine pronouns to refer to a person whose gender is unknown. According to Pavlou and Potter (1994), Russian, being a highly inflected language, has difficulty responding to the societal demand of avoiding gender-biased language.

Another anaphoric expression that causes difficulties is the reflexive pronoun *themselves*. The most common patterns in which *themselves* was used in the reference corpus are shown in Table 4.

However, in the learner corpus the most common pattern with *themselves* (5 cases out of 12) was 'a verb + a noun + themselves':

> (19) *Additional sources of information **are the employees themselves** and their personal experience.*

Another reflexive pronoun that causes difficulties for learners is *itself*. The analysis of concordance lines with *itself* showed that students tend to misuse it, for example:

> (20) (a) *Therefore, the manager not only **itself** has to adhere to ethical standards, but also has to provide their observance in the organization in general.*
>
> (b) *To develop a business model **itself**, I am going to use Osterwalder's techniques including Value Proposition Design, Prototyping and Business Processes Design.*

The reflexive pronoun *itself* can only refer to inanimate entities. In 18a it obviously refers to the antecedent *manager*, so the anaphor *himself/herself* should have been used instead. In Russian, to express the idea of sentence 20a the pronoun *sam* would be used, which has the same form for animate and inanimate entities. In contrast to English, Russian reflexive pronouns do not agree with their antecedent in number and gender, nor do they express animacy (Toldova et al., 2016). So the error, again, can be caused by the influence of the learners' native language. Secondly, the position of *itself* in the sentence does not appear to be quite normal. It would have been more natural to use it after the verb phrase *adhere to ethical standards*.

In 20b *itself* cannot be used after the noun phrase with the indefinite article. It would be correct to say *the business model itself*, but, having checked the context of use, it was concluded that the student did not mean a definite business model, so the reflexive pronoun in this sentence should be omitted.

The relative pronouns *which* was also sometimes used inaccurately in the learner corpus. For example:

(21) (a) *External marketing of the employer brand is the second step that is needed to attract potential employees, **which** may become loyal employees in the future.*

(b) *It is important to note, that some scholars, **which** investigations could be included at the present subgroup, consider employee displacement as a conception similar to the category of mass dismissals.*

In the author's view, errors in the use of relative pronouns can be caused by the influence of the students' native language. In Russian, the use of the relative pronoun *kotoryi* does not depend on the animacy of the antecedent.

The problem should be anticipated by teachers and the differences in the use of reflexive and relative pronouns in the two languages should be given thorough attention.

Verbal anaphora was also sometimes used incorrectly by the students. For example, in 22 to express the present tense meaning of the main verb, the anaphor *do* should be used.

(22) *It means that a company must have not only finished goods stocks like distributors **have**, but stocks of raw materials and spare parts, too.*

This might not be the influence of Russian but rather the insufficient attention verbal anaphora is given in ESL textbooks, as mentioned above.

Therefore, the reason for avoiding anaphora is likely to be the absence of specific teaching and the influence of the students' native language. Although some of the identified problems might appear quite basic and specific ESL issues (e.g. reflexives), the current research suggests the necessity of revising them in EAP courses, especially in relation to anaphora, in order to avoid confusion when later using anaphoric expressions in academic contexts. Special attention should be given to errors connected with the interference of learners' native language (e.g. the misuse of demonstratives and relative pronouns by Russian students). To tackle the problems, data-driven learning activities can be employed. Students can be given corpus examples from both experts' texts and their peers' writings. The former could demonstrate how anaphoric expressions serve to link parts of a text, as well as provide them with some usage patterns. The latter may be used for error correction and editing tasks.

Conclusion

This paper focused on referential coherence realised in academic texts with anaphoric expressions. Anaphora plays an important role in a text because it creates the cohesive chains (Halliday and Hasan, 1976) that are essential for text development. The author compared the use of anaphoric expressions in two corpora – a learner corpus that comprised L2 management students' writings and a reference corpus that included articles from peer-reviewed journals in management. The quantitative analysis provided evidence that there were significant differences in the use of anaphoric expressions in the two corpora, which confirmed the hypothesis. The qualitative analysis of the data identified four groups of problems learners had when using anaphoric expressions, some of which are in line with previous research (Leńko-Szimańska, 2004). The findings can be useful for academic writing instructors in terms of directing them to topics that deserve closer attention in EAP classrooms, as well as suggesting possible ways of dealing with the issues.

The author did not study referential coherence in other types of student writing, for example, academic essays, which is an obvious limitation of this work. Additionally, to make the task manageable, only a limited number of anaphoric expressions were examined. Another possible limitation of this research is that the observed differences in the use of anaphoric expressions may be due to the different contexts that the learner and expert texts were written in. Thus, the learners wrote their texts in a pedagogical context while the professional authors were knowledge producers. However, despite these limitations, the results from this study can shed light on some peculiarities of the way L2 students use anaphoric expressions in their academic texts.

The author believes that this paper is the first comparative study of learner and reference corpora focusing on referential coherence, and as such it may serve as a baseline for future studies. More data may be collected to extend both the learner corpus and the reference corpus. The collected data may also be compared to the data from a corpus of general English to analyse the use of anaphora in different types of discourse.

Acknowledgments

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Appendix 1

Examples of exercises focusing on the identified problems with the use of anaphoric expressions in L2 writing.

Exercise 1. Improve the sentences below using appropriate pronouns:

1. For this reason, the research question is what factors affect the settlement period of troubled assets? In order to answer the research question, a series of tasks should be fulfilled.
2. Let us consider a step-by-step procedure of event study. The usual algorithm of the event study methodology consists of several steps.
3. Undoubtedly, it is impossible to use all existing methods in my study. Thus, the limitation of my study is the narrowed set of methods.
4. The second part of this work is devoted to advantages and disadvantages of one person companies which is subdivided into the comparison of one person companies in the Russian Federation and other countries, advantages of such companies and disadvantages of one person companies, the main problems created by the use of such companies.
5. Probably not all of the factors tested will appear to be significant factors.

Exercise 2. Read the extracts from journal papers in management. How are ideas connected in the texts?

(1) In a vignette experiment and follow-up interviews, we "introduced" a coercive demand to adopt a new practice in Dutch childcare under conditions in which employees and parent– customers either did or did not support the practice. We asked childcare managers when they would comply with the coercive demand (Study 1) and how they would respond to pressures from employees and parent– customers prior to compliance (Study 2).

(2) When an institutional pressure features force and coercion, the target of the pressure would appear to have little choice but to comply — and quickly. Yet, if other important constituents view the compliance behavior as illegitimate, the target is caught between conflicting constraints, or a proverbial rock and a hard place.

(3) Thus, need satisfaction reflects an organization's demonstration of its trustworthiness which therefore engenders employee trust in the organization. The satisfaction of needs should not only reduce uncertainty about the trustor's intentions or behaviours but also signal the trustor's investment in a social exchange relationship leading to trust in organization.

Exercise 3. Correct the sentences below:

1) The study of pricing strategies is an important practical issue, because it helps to understand how and why consumers are willing to pay for certain apartments, location factors and its characteristics.
2) It means, that some relations between parties may not be regulated by the law because this norms just don`t exist.
3) All companies should take proper care of its business-processes.
4) That approaches consider firm activities from a different perspective seeing it as complements, not substitutes.
5) There are five stages in this concepts: identification of value, identification of stream, alignment of stream, pulling and continuous improvement.

Appendix 2

List of the articles from the reference corpus cited in the paper.

AM 2015-1 Raaijmakers, A. G., Vermeulen, P. A., Meeus, M. T., & Zietsma, C. (2015). I need time! Exploring pathways to compliance under institutional complexity. *Academy of Management Journal*, *58*(1), 85-110.

AM 2015-3 Barrick, M. R., Thurgood, G. R., Smith, T. A., & Courtright, S. H. (2015). Collective organizational engagement: Linking motivational antecedents, strategic implementation, and firm performance. *Academy of Management journal*, *58*(1), 111-135.

AM 2015-6 Compagni, A., Mele, V., & Ravasi, D. (2015). How early implementations influence later adoptions of innovation: Social positioning and skill reproduction in the diffusion of robotic surgery. *Academy of Management Journal*, *58*(1), 242-278.

JMS 2014-8 O'Brien, E. and Linehan, C. (2014). A balancing act: Emotional challenges in the HR role. Journal of Management Studies, 51(8), 1257–85.

JMS 2016-8 Dai, Y., Roundy, P. T., Chok, J. I., Ding, F., & Byun, G. (2016). 'Who Knows What?'in New Venture Teams: Transactive Memory Systems as a Micro-Foundation of Entrepreneurial Orientation. *Journal of Management Studies*, *53*(8), 1320-1347.

Tables

Table 1
Frequency of nominal anaphora in the learner corpus and reference corpus

№	Referential marker	Absolute and normalized frequency (per 1000 words)		Log-Likelihood	%DIFF
		Learner Corpus	Reference Corpus		
	Subject pronouns				
	he	52 (0.400)	280 (0.403)	0.00	-0.86
	she	11 (0.084)	113 (0.162)	5.14	-48.03**
	it	459 (3.531)	1597 (2.301)	60.19	53.43***
	they	208 (1.600)	2453 (3.534)	150.90	-54.73***
	Total	730 (5.615)	4443 (6.402)	11.12	-12.29***
	Possessive adjectives				
	his	69 (0.530)	300 (0.432)	2.26	22.78
	her	17 (0.131)	156 (0.225)	5.20	-42.82**
	its	328 (2.523)	896 (1.291)	96.22	95.43***
	their	324 (1.800)	3788 (5.458)	229.12	-54.34***
	Total	738 (5.676)	5140 (7.406)	48.75	-23.35***
	Object pronouns				
	him	5 (0.038)	57 (0.082)	3.28	-53.17
	her	2 (0.015)	33 (0.048)	3.39	-67.65
	it	122 (0.938)	555 (0.800)	2.47	17.35
	them	122 (0.938)	653 (0.940)	0.00	-0.26
	Total	251 (1.930)	1298 (1.870)	0.21	3.23
	Reflexive pronouns				
	himself	1 (0.008)	14 (0.020)	1.15	-61.87
	herself	0	14 (0.020)	4.81	-100**
	itself	33 (0.254)	84 (0.121)	11.52	109.73***
	themselves	12 (0.092)	224 (0.323)	26.37	-71.40***
	Total	46 (0.353)	336 (0.484)	4.30	-26.91**

Demonstratives				
this	1054 (8.107)	3768 (5.429)	122.50	49.33***
these	239 (1.838)	1996 (2.876)	48.05	-36.08***
those	67 (0.515)	698 (1.006)	32.87	-48.76***
Total	1360 (10.461)	6462 (9.311)	14.86	12.35***
Indefinite pronouns				
one	20 (0.154)	30 (0.043)	16.87	255.90***
ones	7 (0.054)	55 (0.079)	1.02	-32.06
Total	27 (0.207)	85 (0.122)	5.19	69.57**
Relative pronouns				
which	588 (4.523)	2252 (3.245)	48.11	39.39***
who	109 (0.838)	965 (1.390)	28.66	-39.70***
whose	13 (0.100)	89 (0.128)	0.75	-22.02
Total	710 (5.461)	3306 (4.763)	10.60	14.65***

Note: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05 — significant at the 1% and 5% levels correspondingly.

Table 2
Frequency of verbal anaphora in the learner corpus and reference corpus

№	Referential marker	Absolute and normalized frequency (per 1000 words)		Log-Likelihood	%DIFF
		Learner Corpus	**Reference Corpus**		
	do	**5 (0.038)**	**151 (0.218)**	**26.08**	**-82.32***
	does	**1 (0.008)**	**8 (0.012)**	**0.16**	**-33.27**
	did	**2 (0.015)**	**29 (0.042)**	**2.51**	**-63.18**
	Total	**8 (0.061)**	**188 (0.270)**	**27.26**	**-77.82***

Note: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05 — significant at the 1% and 5% levels correspondingly.

Table 3
Frequency of adverbial anaphora in the learner corpus and reference corpus

№	Referential marker	Absolute and normalized frequency (per 1000 words)		Log-Likelihood	%DIFF
		Learner Corpus	**Reference Corpus**		
	here	15 (0.115	194 (0.280)	14.09	-58.72***
	there	32 (0.246)	174 (0.251)	0.01	-1.82
	Total	47 (0.361)	368 (0.530)	6.75	-31.82***

Note: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05 — significant at the 1% and 5% levels correspondingly.

Table 4
The most common patterns with themselves in the reference corpus

Pattern	Absolute Frequency	Example
see / saw themselves as + a noun / adjective / present participle	8	The second group also saw themselves as making a sacrifice (JMS2014-51)
a verb + themselves and others	8	With this added perspective, scholars might have a better grasp on how people perceive themselves and others in the context of a status change (AM 2016-59).
to make themselves + a verb / more + an adjective	5	Some scholars have noted that firms engage in downsizing to make themselves more attractive to potential buyers (JM 2013-39)

Perfectionist Types in the English as a Foreign Language Teaching Profession in Russia

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This study examines perfectionism in the English language teaching profession in Russia. The aims are threefold: 1) to use latent profile analysis (LPA) to classify English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers into different types of perfectionists; 2) to compare different types of perfectionists using depression-anxiety-stress indicators (DASS); 3) to study the link between perfectionism and the perception of one's professional teaching activity. We used convenience sampling by collecting data from 117 English teachers (5% males, 95% females; age range 20-64; M= 39; SD=12) with the Short Almost Perfect Scale (SAPS) and the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale-21 (DASS-21). LPA was conducted to determine the optimal number of types of individuals based on their SAPS profile. Three distinct classes of perfectionists were found (adaptive, maladaptive, non-perfectionists). 27% of the respondents fell into the category of maladaptive perfectionists with high scores on both the Standards and Discrepancy subscales. Teachers with higher Standards tend to be more aware of their perfectionism. Teachers who are less satisfied with their English proficiency tend to be more stressed at work. However, the results of the study did not indicate significant differences between the perfectionist types on anxiety, depression, and stress. The findings suggest the need to develop these scales further for measuring perfectionism in the teaching profession and in EFL teaching particularly.

Keywords: perfectionism; Short Almost Perfect Scale; adaptive perfectionists; maladaptive perfectionists; EFL teaching profession; latent profile analysis

Introduction

Perfectionism is regarded as a personality trait with positive and negative implications that affects all aspects of human life (Fletcher & Shim, 2019; Rice & Slaney, 2002; Stoeber & Otto, 2006). Although early studies mainly focused on its negative side and positive correlations with psychological distress indicators (Stoeber & Otto, 2006), perfectionism has been studied as a multidimensional construct since the 1990s. The acceptance of the multidimensional nature of this construct resulted in a number of studies classifying individuals into different types of perfectionists. The different types of perfectionists, along with nonperfectionists, were first identified in Rice and Slaney's (2002) study using the Almost Perfect Scale-Revised (APS-R; Slaney, Rice, Mobley, Trippi,

& Ashby, 2001). Although there are other measures of perfectionism (for example, The Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (MPS; Hewitt & Flett, 1991), the APS-R has been the perfectionism measure most often used to classify individuals into these different types. A short form of APS-R has recently been developed – Short Almost Perfect Scale (SAPS; Rice, Richardson, & Tueller, 2014) and the translated version was validated for the Russian sample (Wang, Permyakova, & Sheveleva, 2016). The SAPS core subscales used to differentiate perfectionists are "Standards" and "Discrepancy". "Standards" measure the level of high expectations one has for him or herself. "Discrepancy" measures the perceived gap between one's ideal standards and performance. Adaptive perfectionists are characterized as having high "Standards" and relatively low "Discrepancy" between their standards and performance. Maladaptive perfectionists have both high "Standards" and "Discrepancy". Individuals who scored low on both "Standards" and "Discrepancy" are labeled as nonperfectionists.

Theoretical Overview

A number of studies have examined perfectionism in relation to professional field in different countries' samples. Slaney, Ashby, and Trippi (1995) discussed how the construct of perfectionism is potentially important for career choice and career development. Further studies demonstrated that the meaning and the measurement of perfectionism can be related to a variety of career variables (Akre, Falkum, Hoftvedt, & Aasland, 1997; Berry, 2002; Li, Hou, Chi, Liu, & Hager, 2014; O'Brien & Page, 1994; Pawlowski, Kaganer, & Cater, 2007).

A substantial body of research affirmed the emotional nature of the teaching profession (Mawhinney & Rinke, 2018; Taxer, Becker-Kurz, & Frenzel, 2019), which is often found as the most credible explanation in linking perfectionism with distress variables such as anxiety, stress, and burnout (Comerchero, 2008; Kenny, Davis, & Oates, 2004; Stoeber & Rennert, 2008; Travers & Cooper, 1996). For instance, researchers explained the association between dimensions of perfectionism and indices of job stress (the intensity and frequency of professional distress, emotional manifestations, and physiological manifestations) and perceptions of organizational support (measures of job satisfaction, job expectancy, and absenteeism) in teachers and coaches (Flett, Hewitt, & Hallett, 1995; Tashman, Tenenbaum, & Eklund, 2010). A significant association was also detected between socially prescribed perfectionism and low job satisfaction. It was concluded that social expectations of perfectionism are highly relevant to the understanding of teacher stress. Similar findings in relation to coping, maladaptive perfectionism, and stress were found in university professors (Dunn, Whelton, & Sharpe, 2006).

There are only a few studies on perfectionism in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers. Mahmoodi-Shahrebabaki (2017) investigated the correlations between perfectionism and burnout levels among 276 Iranian EFL teachers. The findings revealed that, compared to other dimensions of burnout, depersonalization was more significantly affected by both direct and indirect effects of perfectionism. Moreover, the statistically insignificant direct associations between perfectionism and emotional exhaustion became significant due to the intervening impact of anxiety.

Pishghadam, Fatemi, and Ghaviandam (2013) designed and validated a Scale on English Language Teacher Perfectionism (SELTP). The scale was constructed by picking out the most common aspects of English language teachers' perfectionistic orientations. The constructed scale was used by Ghorbanzadeh & Rezaie (2016) to investigate the relationship between English language teacher perfectionism (SELTP), teacher burnout (Maslach Burnout Inventory), and teacher efficacy (Teacher Efficacy Scale) with a sample 114 EFL Iranian male and female teachers. Results indicated that there was a high positive correlation between perfectionism, teacher burnout, and efficacy, that female teachers were more efficacious than male ones, and that the magnitude of correlation coefficients was higher for the male participants.

A different line of research studied the relationships between three dimensions of perfectionism (self-oriented, other-oriented, and socially prescribed) and reflectivity on a sample of 289 Iranian English as a Foreign Language teachers (Shokrollahi & Baradaran, 2014). Perfectionism was measured with The Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (MPS; Hewitt & Flett, 1991) and reflectivity – with The English Language Teaching Reflection Inventory (ELTRI; Akbari, Behzadpoor, & Dadvand, 2010). The results showed that there is a statistically significant relationship between three dimensions of perfectionism and reflectivity, and perfectionism is a significant predictor of teachers' reflectivity.

Current Study

To our knowledge, this is the first study to address perfectionism in EFL teachers in Russia despite the fact that perfectionism is deeply embedded in Russian culture (Lisauskene, 2007) and that foreign language teaching and learning in Russia is historically connected with striving for perfection and native speaker proficiency. Ter-Minasova, in her seminal report (2014), argues that foreign language learning and teaching in the Soviet times was based on the motto "The Soviet means the excellent" and set the same goal: to give perfect knowledge of the language being studied.

The aims of this study are threefold: 1) to use latent profile analysis to classify respondents / EFL teachers into different types of perfectionists; 2) to compare different types of perfectionists using mental health indicators; and 3) to study the link between perfectionism and the perception of one's professional teaching activity.

Materials and Methods

Participants

We used convenience sampling for collecting data from 117 English teachers (5% males, 95% females; age range 20-64; M= 39; SD=12) working in secondary schools in Russia. There was a wide age range with 22% from 20-29, 30% from 30-39, 16% from 40-49, 29% from 50-59, and 3% over 60 years old. The majority of the participants had a university level degree (96%) and the remaining part had vocational training. In terms of years of experience in teaching, 8% had fewer than two years, 33% had 2-5 years, 8% had 5-10 years, 13% had 10-20 years, and 38% had over 20 years.

Procedure

The research survey was presented in Russian and took between 20 and 30 minutes to complete. Participation was voluntary and the respondents were invited to participate in the study by staying after a workshop to complete a paper-and-pencil questionnaire. This research complied with the research ethical code of the university where it was administered. There was no financial compensation or additional incentive for participating.

Measures

Short Almost Perfect Scale (SAPS; Rice et al., 2014). The SAPS consists of two subscales - "Standards" (4 items; e.g. "I have high expectations for myself.") and "Discrepancy" (4 items; e.g. "Doing my best never seems to be enough.") and is used to measure perfectionism. The Standards' subscale measures the level of perfectionistic striving by assessing one's setting of high expectations. The "Discrepancy" subscale measures the level of perfectionistic concerns by assessing each participant's tendency to perceive a gap between their standards and performance. The SAPS was translated into Russian on the basis of three-step back-translation guidelines (Wang et al., 2016). Participants rated each item on a seven-point Likert scale: 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The Cronbach alphas ranged from .85 to .87 for "Standards" and .84 to .87 for "Discrepancy" in the original scale development study (Rice et al., 2014). In this study, the Cronbach alphas for the Standards and Discrepancy scores were .72 and .62, respectively.

Depression Anxiety Stress Scale-21 (DASS-21; Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). The DASS assesses the levels of depression, anxiety, and stress. It includes three subscales: "Depression" (7 items; e.g., "I couldn't seem to experience any positive feeling at all."), "Anxiety" (7 items; e.g., "I was aware of dryness of my mouth."), and "Stress" (7 items; e.g., "I found it hard to wind down."). The DASS is rated on a four-point Likert scale: 0 (did not apply to me at all) to 3 (applied to me very much, or most of the time). The Russian version of the DASS was obtained from the DASS website. In a previous study, Cronbach alphas for the "Depression, Anxiety, and Stress" subscale scores were .90, .88, and .91, respectively (Henry & Crawford, 2005). In this study, the Cronbach alphas for the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress scores were .74, .84, and .88, respectively.

Additional Questions. Four additional questions were asked: 1) Do you agree with the statement that you are a perfectionist? (rated on the scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree); 2) Have you ever been called a perfectionist? (rated on the scale from 1 (no, never) to 3 (yes, often); 3) How satisfied are you with your English language competency? (rated on the scale from 1 (completely dissatisfied) to 5 (completely satisfied); 4) How satisfied are you with your students' English competency? (rated on the scale from 1 (completely dissatisfied) to 5 (completely satisfied).

Statistical Method. First, a bivariate correlation was conducted using SPSS 22 to examine the strength and direction of associations across all study variables. Next, latent profile analysis (LPA) was conducted in this study through Mplus 7 to classify participants into different profiles of perfectionist. Finally, the auxiliary function in MPlus 7 was conducted to compare the profiles of perfectionists on various study variables using posterior probability-based multiple imputations. Below, we provide a description of LPA and the advantages of using this method.

LPA is a person-centered approach that classifies individuals based on shared characteristics of their perfectionism scores. Methodologically, we used a person-centered approach (i.e. focusing on classifying individuals into distinct profile groups and identifying characteristics of each profile group) in the present study to classify profile types of perfectionists, as opposed to a variable-centered approach (e.g., regression, correlations) that focuses on examining the relationships among variables. LPA is considered a more advanced statistical method across different person-centered approaches. Compared to cluster analysis, which is a common method used to classify individuals into perfectionist types, LPA allows researchers to identify latent constructs based on membership probability that best describe each profile group from multiple observed variables (McCutcheon, 1987). Participants' group membership is based on underlying latent variables (Nylund, Asparouhov, & Muthén, 2007). In other words, unlike cluster analysis, LPA does not assign group memberships. Instead, probabilities associated with each group are calculated for each participant.

For a model-based approach like LPA, fit statistics and significance tests are used to determine the class solution. A number of indicators are used to determine the model fit in LPA. Bayesian information criterion (BIC; Schwartz, 1978) is considered the best indicator of true model fit (Nylund et al., 2007). Additionally, the Lo-Mendel-Rubin test (Lo, Mendell, & Rubin, 2001) compares the model fits between two nested models that differ by one class. Specifically, a significant adjusted Lo-Mendell-Rubin Likelihood Ratio Test (aLRT) p value indicates whether the model fit of a certain solution is significantly better than the solution with one fewer class. Lastly, entropy was used to evaluate the precision of classification for each solution.

Results

Intercorrelations

Correlation analysis was conducted between the study variables and the results are shown in Table 1. In this Russian sample, "Standards" and "Discrepancy" were minimally correlated ($r = -.17$). "Perfectionistic Standards" was positively correlated with the extent to which participants viewed themselves as perfectionists. This means that those teachers who labeled themselves as perfectionists scored high on such scale items as "I expect the best from myself." and "I have a strong need to strive for excellence." However, "Perfectionistic Discrepancy" was not significantly correlated with participants' view of whether they were perfectionists. Neither "Perfectionistic Standards" nor "Discrepancy" were significantly correlated with whether others viewed the participant as a perfectionist.

The "Perfectionistic Discrepancy" subscale was significantly and positively correlated with "Anxiety, Depression, and Stress". In this sample, the teachers who had high scores on such scale items as "I am hardly ever satisfied with my performance." and "I often feel disappointment after completing a task because I know I could have done better." demonstrated higher levels of anxiety and depression. However, perfectionistic Standards were not significantly correlated with any of the distress variables.

Interestingly, there was significant and positive correlation ($r = .44$) between those who agreed with the

statement that they are perfectionists and those who had been called perfectionists by others.

Table 1
Intercorrelations Between Study Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Mean	SD
Standards	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	19.26	4.00
Discrepancy	-.17	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	19.26	4.00
Anxiety	.03	.39***	-	-	-	-	-	-	4.45	4.31
Depression	.01	.38***	.72***	-	-	-	-	-	4.91	3.59
Stress	.09	.22*	.70***	.68***	-	-	-	-	8.53	4.88
Perfectionist-Self	.27**	-.07	.02	.12	.02	-	-	-	3.25	0.99
Perfectionist-Other	.12	-.12	.02	.09	.03	.44***	-	-	1.83	0.88
EngSat-Self	.15	-.13	-.08	-.13	-.26**	.03	-.01	-	3.06	1.01
EngSat-Students	.01	-.06	-.02	-.14	-.06	.02	.00	.07	2.84	0.96

Note. * p < .001. N = 117.

Latent Profile Analysis of SAPS Item Scores

We conducted latent profile analyses (LPA) to determine the optimal number of distinct types of individuals based on their SAPS perfectionism profile. All eight SAPS item scores were used as LPA indicators. The first step was to determine the optimal class solution for the data by examining the Bayesian information criterion (BIC; Schwartz, 1978), the sample-size adjusted Bayesian information criterion (aBIC; Sclove, 1987), and the Lo-Mendel-Rubin adjusted likelihood ratio test (LMR; Lo et al., 2002). For all these indices, smaller values indicate a better model fit. Entropy values, for which closer to 1.0 indicates better classification precision, were also examined. Theory, parsimony, class prevalence, and interpretability (percent of participants and unique information provided by an additional class) were also important factors to consider in deciding the number of classes (Jung & Wickrama, 2008).

LPA fit indices for two through five class solutions are presented in Table 2. A three-class solution was selected based on this solution having the lowest BIC (2650.58). The three-class solution represented the three types of perfectionists (i.e., adaptive, maladaptive, and non- perfectionists) that fit with the theory (Hamachek, 1978) and empirical studies (e.g., Rice & Ashby, 2007, Rice et al., 2014). The three classes included: (a) those that scored high on "Standards", but relatively low on "Discrepancy" items (Adaptive Perfectionists; 34%), (b) those exhibiting high scores on both "Standards" and "Discrepancy" items (Maladaptive Perfectionists; 27%), and (c) a group with low scores on both "Standards" and "Discrepancy" items (Nonperfectionists, 39%). The estimated SAPS means of each predicted group membership from the LPA are presented in Figure 1, Appendix.

Table 2
Fit Indices Latent Profile Analyses for 2 to 5 Class Models

Model	LL	BIC	aBIC	aLRT p	Entropy
2-class model	-1281.12	2681.29	2602.26	.019	0.72
3-class model	-1244.33	2650.58	2543.10	.269	0.81
4-class model	-1227.88	2660.54	2524.61	.101	0.86
5-class model	-1212.60	2672.84	2508.46	.648	0.88

Note. LL = log likelihood; BIC = Bayesian information criterion; aBIC = adjusted Bayesian information criterion; aLRT p = adjusted Lo-Mendell-Rubin Likelihood Ratio Test p value. Smaller values indicate a better fit of the model. Entropy values close to 1.0 indicate higher classification precision. All entropy ratings indicate acceptable fit.

Comparing Perfectionist Types

The three classes of perfectionist types were compared on the basis of the study variables (see Table 3). We used the auxiliary function in MPlus to conduct the equality of tests of means across classes using posterior probability-based multiple imputations. The results did not indicate any significant differences between

the perfectionist types on measures of distress. However, the estimated mean values point to maladaptive perfectionists having higher levels of distress.

Table 3
Estimated Means by Perfectionists Types on Study Variables

	Adaptive Perfectionists 37%		Maladaptive Perfectionists 24%		Non-Perfectionists 39%		
Variable	M	SE	M	SE	M	SE	Sig (p < .05)
Standards	22.55	0.42	19.54	0.61	15.92	0.45	NP < MP < AP
Discrepancy	10.97	0.42	17.82	0.56	13.37	0.41	AP< NP < MP
Anxiety	3.77	0.63	5.24	0.86	4.60	0.71	non-sig
Depression	4.49	0.54	5.88	0.73	4.70	0.58	non-sig
Stress	8.42	0.75	8.85	0.97	8.44	0.77	non-sig

Note. N = 117.

Discussion

The first aim of this study was to classify and examine different types of perfectionists in a sample of Russian EFL teachers using latent profile analysis. Three distinct classes of perfectionists were found (adaptive, maladaptive, non-perfectionists). 24% of the respondents fell into the category of maladaptive perfectionists with high scores on both "Standards" and "Discrepancy" subscales. This means that almost a quarter of the respondents fell into the "risk category".

The second aim was to compare different types of perfectionists using mental health indicators. However, the results of the study did not indicate significant differences between the perfectionists types for anxiety, depression, and stress. This raises the issue of whether a new scale to measure perfectionism in teachers, especially EFL teachers, is needed.

Thirdly, the study showed the link between perfectionism measures and the way EFL teachers perceive the way they work. The results demonstrated that teachers with higher Standards tend to be more aware of the fact that they are perfectionists. Moreover, teachers who are less satisfied with their English proficiency tend to be more stressed at work. If this is the case, teachers might be concerned with their self-image and strive for perfection to reduce the possibility of not knowing something within the field of their professional expertise. Taking into account the excessive external demands within the education system in Russia and the lack of consistent support from employers, teachers are likely to develop perfectionistic qualities within the working environment. These findings are in line with previous studies on perfectionism among professionals with complex jobs. In addition, higher discrepancy scores in the maladaptive perfectionist class resonate with previous results on higher levels of distress variables, which may indicate the need to look deeper into discrepancy dimensions of the construct. With reference to applying these findings, developing coping mechanisms may remain problematic. This can be taken into consideration for continuous professional development programs, mentorships, and assessment, as well as more general programming issues for occupational psychological well-being (Gordeeva, Sychev, & Osin, 2010; Leontiev, Mandrikova, Osin, Plotnikova, & Rasskazova, 2007).

Another point of interest in the findings is the strong connection between perfectionistic standards and the ability to recognize one's own perfectionism in the EFL teachers' sample. While it supports the results of Shokrollahi & Baradaran (2014), who posited that perfectionism is linked with reflectivity in EFL teachers, it also deepens the understanding of this link. As reflectivity in the teaching profession is believed to have a positive impact on work effectiveness (Larsen-Freeman, 2000), this finding adds to the understanding of the positive dimensions of perfectionism. Reflection is an essential part of teachers' professional development, which is why deliberative self-assessment with a valid instrument and implementing knowledge into instructional practice will help EFL teachers become more aware and more skilled at incorporating perfectionism evidence with the possibility of foreseeing the consequences of their actions. In turn, these may promote a further cycle of teachers' self-inquiry.

This study has practical implications for the professional longevity of EFL teachers. Almost a quarter of the respondents fell in the category of maladaptive perfectionists. Previous studies showed a strong link between maladaptive perfectionism, low job satisfaction, and professional burn-out. Thus, the professional longevity of EFL teachers might have a link to the psychological characteristics of perfectionism. Understanding this link could add to the range of ways to retain EFL teachers in the profession. In light of the literature overview, further prospects to relate career variables such as intrinsic-extrinsic motivation, burnout, workaholism, to the classes of perfectionists might be helpful. Stress and coping strategies in regard to teaching experience and organizational structure may also be worth investigating.

Conclusion

The current study showed three distinct classes of perfectionists, with almost a quarter of the respondents falling into the category of maladaptive perfectionists. The need to develop a scale to measure teacher perfectionism was also discussed.

Several limitations of this study should be mentioned. First, the limited sample size with uneven gender distribution should be taken into account. The sample in this study was predominantly female (95%). It should be noted though that this sample reflects the gender distribution in the EFL teaching profession in Russia. Future studies may benefit from a larger sample size with a higher percentage of male respondents. Second, no statistically significant differences were found on the measures of distress between the perfectionist types. Further studies could be conducted to examine the reasons behind these findings. Third, a qualitative study could give a better understanding of how perfectionism impacts the teaching profession.

Despite the limitations discussed above, we believe that the results of this study could be used to draw attention to the issue of teacher perfectionism and its influence on the way students are taught. Teachers could become more aware of the emotional challenges of perfectionism and the way this personality traits shape the way they teach.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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Appendix
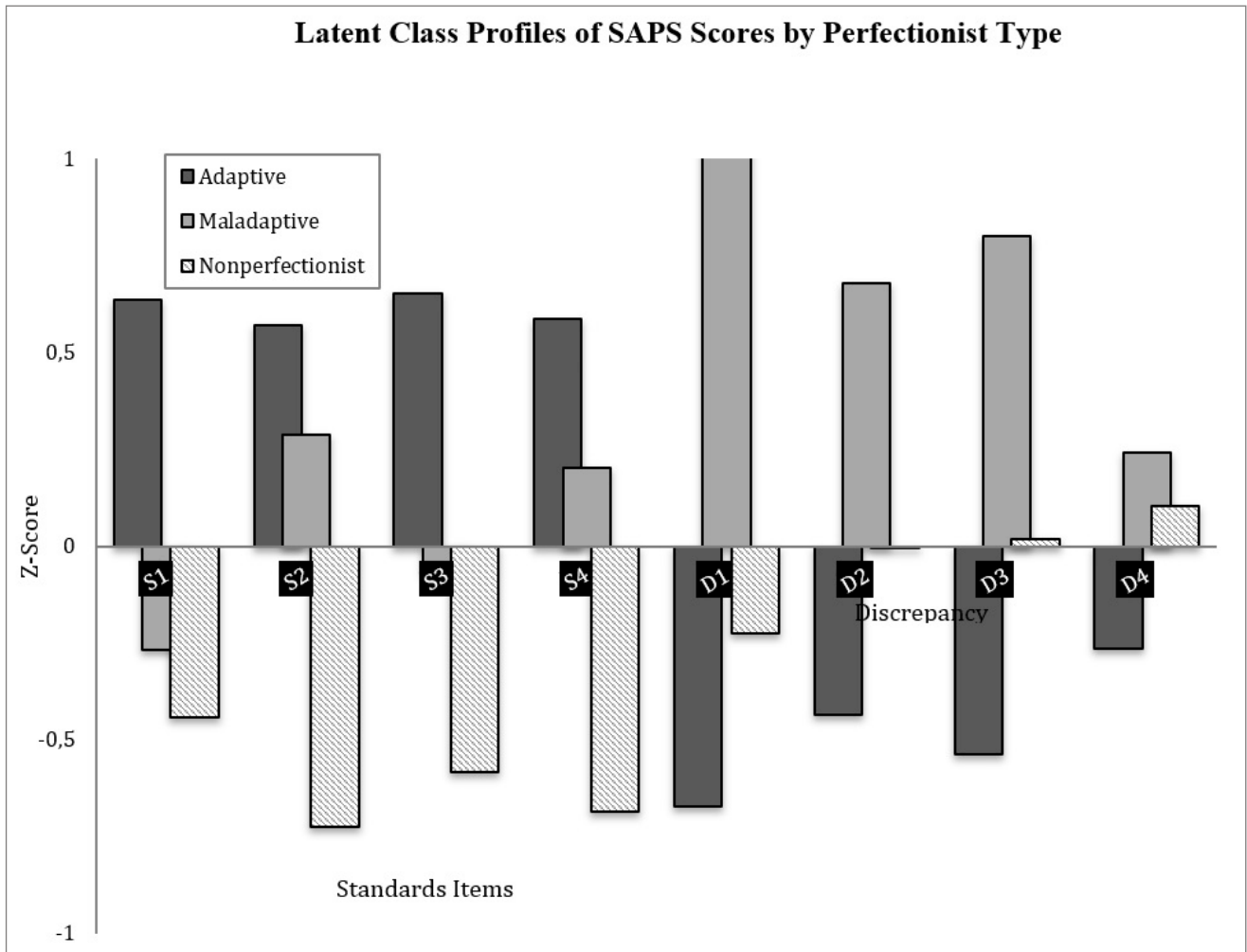
Figure 1. Latent Class Profiles of SAPS scores by Perfectionist Type.

Development of Foreign Language Education in China under the Belt and Road Initiative

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China's launch of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has had profound linguistic implications on its foreign language education policy. Successful foreign language programs are vital to any country's national security and global interest promotion. An analysis of China's current foreign language education with the BRI compliance will provide the backdrop for this paper's suggestions. The challenges and opportunities associated with the development of foreign language education in today's China will be analyzed under these four aspects: 1) improving in the variety and quality of foreign language education, 2) developing students' international and intercultural competence, 3) deepening general education in target languages, and 4) strengthening English as the lingua franca for expertise training. Even with the significant progress made thus far since 40 years of "Reform and Opening-up", China still has a long way to go in developing its national foreign language capacity to serve its expanding national interests for development.

Keywords: Belt and Road Initiative; foreign language education; national interests; language policy; China's development

Introduction

The launch of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)[1] reflects a new shift in the role China plays in the international arena. With an ever-increasing global interest, China is expanding its foreign language resources to facilitate regional expertise, multilateral exchanges, and global governance. Under this background, there is great demand and intense international competition for quality talent with foreign language ability and regional expertise, who "are imbued with global vision, well-versed in international rules"[2], in the fields of economics and finance, science and technology, and education and culture.

Spanning three continents, Asia, Europe, and Africa, the Belt and Road connects 65 countries and 4.4 billion people, or 63% of the world's population, including over 50 different official languages. Since economic cooperation and cultural exchange are largely based on efficient communication utilizing their native languages, foreign languages play an integral and significant role in the implementation of the BRI.

However, a quick observation of the current state of affairs of foreign language education in China reveals a shortage of strategically-important languages being taught. This is particularly true with Belt and Road languages. Several years ago, from 2010 to 2013, only about 20 official languages in the Belt and Road region were available for college students nationwide. Among these 20 foreign language departments, there remain significant problems such as the small recruitment scope, an unbalanced male-female ratio, and an undiversified curriculum (Wen, 2015). Therefore, the current linguistic service that China can provide remains severely inadequate for the pragmatic demand of the BRI's implementation. Under such a background, this paper hopes to shed new light on what the BRI brings to foreign language education and how this national interest directive should guide future development on the belief that foreign language education is an indispensable part of the Initiative's realization.

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[1] For the definition of the BRI, please see: http://www.china.org.cn/english/china_key_words/2019-04/17/content_74691589.htm

[2] *Outline of China's National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development* (2010–2020)

What does the BRI Mean to Foreign Language Education?

The BRI represents a profound transformation of national interest strategy and is an essential step in China's increased proactive participation in regional and global governance and development. This Initiative sets forth several cooperation priorities, including policy coordination, facilities connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration, and people-to-people bonding. To achieve these goals, the countries along the Belt and Road are supposed to be actively involved in a wide range of areas, such as infrastructure connectivity, industrial investment, resource development, economic (trade) cooperation, financial cooperation, cultural exchanges, environmental protection, and maritime cooperation. To a large extent, linguistic competence, cultural respect, and mutual understanding presented by those who are engaged in these areas will facilitate the activities. In other words, "language" under the implementation of the BRI not only works as the prominent communicative tool but also provides the basis for regional studies and cultural development, at the same time fulfilling China's national interests and development needs.

Generally speaking, political philosophy and national interests inevitably determine a country's policy-making, including foreign language planning. China primarily "weighs its foreign language need with its international exchange activities, with particular reference to its economic, political, and cultural exchange activities with foreign countries in the global arena" (Gong & Guo, 2019: 28). In other words, the scope and quality of foreign languages available in China should provide significant and vital support for the country to launch a series of economic initiatives, to promote more people-to-people exchanges, and deepen strategic ties with the countries along the Belt and Road. In this sense, foreign language education in China should be considered from the perspective of its national strategy and thus regarded as an essential factor for China's continued global rise.

Such consideration comes from the acknowledgment that foreign languages are a valuable resource for a nation. Ruíz (1983) claims that the basic orientation or attitude that governments have toward language and its role in society influence the nature of language planning efforts in practice. He proposes three orientations: language-as-a-problem, language-as-a-right, and language-as-a-resource. Most countries focused their attention on the first two aspects in the early days of their language planning. Using China as an example, in the 1950s, the government implemented simplified Chinese written characters and Pinyin systems. The government also provided rights-affirmation with the legalization of mother language usage among all ethnic minorities living within the country. These attempts reflect China's orientation of language-as-a-problem and language-as-a-right toward its role in the process of national modernization.

Therefore, with its further comprehensive development and expanding interest, China has gradually paid particular attention to the idea of recognizing language-as-a-resource. Scholars and administrators began to realize the scope and quality of foreign languages available in China can provide significant and vital support for the country to launch a series of global or regional initiatives, to promote more people-to-people exchanges, and thus deepen strategic ties with the countries along the Belt and Road.

Developing National Foreign Language Capacity: Definition and Experience

With an increasing need for communication and collaboration in today's global affairs, any country that aims to shoulder more international responsibility or raise its global impact must expand its international executive ability. Without a doubt, national foreign language capacity is a foundation for such an ability. This section discusses the definition of national foreign language capacity and the experience of some countries.

National language capacity refers to "the total of a nation's ability to grasp linguistic resources, provide language services, deal with linguistic issues, develop the language, and related tasks". A nation's language capacity is both a function of its hard and soft power, and plays a critical role in "social progress and cultural inheritance, in promoting economic development and technological innovation, and in protecting a country's national security and international development" (Zhao, 2016).

As part of national language capacity, *foreign language capacity* is considered to be closely related to the problems of national security and the global interest of a country. Wen, Su & Jian (2011:4-5) refer to national foreign language capacity as "a nation's ability to cope with various language events." The fundamental standard to measure a nation's foreign language capacity is the type and quality of foreign language resources in that nation. Therefore, foreign language education serves as the primary vehicle to satisfy this need.

We can see this point from the examples of some most geographically important countries' practices (USA, Russia, and France)[3], which interpret the significance of developing foreign language education as an integral part of their national security and global interest policies.

In the USA, after the September 11th terrorist attacks, the government increasingly realized the importance of foreign languages in maintaining its national security (DeCamp et al., 2012). At that time, several members of Congress initiated bills to promote foreign language education for the sake of national interest and security, including *the National Security Language Act* by Rush D. Holt and the *National Foreign Language Coordination Act* by Daniel Akaka and other senators. After a series of proposed bills and conferences, President George W. Bush officially released the *National Security Language Initiative* in 2006. In addition to overall national language capacity, the US government also attaches great importance to foreign language capability in the military to improve its security and global mobility. *The National Security Education Program*[4] and two other documents (*Defense Language Transformation Roadmap* and *DoD Strategic Plan for Language Skills, Regional Expertise, and Cultural Capabilities: 2011-2016*) that are released by the Department of Defense systematically reflect the thought and practice of foreign language strategy in the military sector.[5] In brief, a series of measures have been taken to ensure that the US Army obtains a rather strong foreign language capacity in terms of the number of languages and the management of its abundant foreign language resources.

In Russia, the most esteemed universities, including Saint-Petersburg State University, Lomonosov Moscow State University, and Moscow State Institute of International Relations, maintain a wide variety of high-quality foreign language resources, and the government also makes a concerted effort to improve the foreign language capacity of its military (Li, 2014).

Similarly, in France, INALCO (*Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales*) currently offers programs in approximately 100 languages and cultures, which endow the nation with extensive foreign language capacity and equips it with the ability to tackle international affairs and events through the employment of foreign languages (Dai, 2014).

These countries fully recognize the importance of rich and vibrant foreign language resources since that is what largely determines a nation's capacity to gather and analyze intelligence, covert communication, and military coordination in the international community. China, however, as the second-largest global economic contributor, has a wide gap when compared with the other large economies in the world in terms of foreign language capacity. With the ever-expanding demand for global cooperation in today's world, China needs to systematically improve its foreign language capacity to match its historically-changing mission, as a regional power with immense global influence.

How to Respond: Foreign Language Education Reform in China

Language education policy focuses on "what languages are desirable in the repertoire of speakers in the community and for what purposes those languages will be used" (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997: 126). In the context of the BRI, the purpose of the language education policy is to enhance China's foreign language capacity and promote the implementation of the Initiative. With more people voicing their concerns regarding the reform of foreign language education in China, the government began to consider some specific and practical approaches to improve China's national foreign language capacity. This section offers our suggestions on how to improve it through a scientific and practical top-down design of foreign language education in the sector of Chinese higher education.

Under the BRI, we will consider the development of foreign language education from the four aspects explained below.

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[3] The USA is a global power without a doubt. Both Russia and France are important powers in Eurasia, producing massive influence on global affairs. The analysis of these three countries can provide evidence of how national foreign language capacity is built.
[4] National Security Education Program, National Defense University & Department of Defense. (2003). United States Civilian Linguist Reserve Corps Feasibility Study. Available at https://nsep.gov/docs/CivilianLinguistReserveCorpsFeasibilityStudy.pdf
[5] GAO. (2011). Military training: Actions needed to improve planning and coordination of Army and Marine Corps language and culture training. Retrieved from https://www.gao.gov/assets/320/318899.pdf

Improve the Variety and Quality of Foreign Language Education

If we observe the higher education community in China as a whole, English ranks at the top as the first foreign language for most institutions. This country has the most significant number of students in the world who are learning English through formal instruction (Wen, 2012). Numerous institutions or departments of "foreign languages" consist of English and one or more of several other languages. Most of these other foreign languages are relatively common-usage languages, such as French, Japanese, German, or Spanish. Other more exotic foreign languages, including those strategically and geopolitically crucial for dealing with Belt and Road countries but minor in terms of the speaking population, can be found in only a relatively small number of settings. Even in these professional institutes or colleges, the total number of foreign languages accessible to students is still quite small. The three most esteemed professional institutions for foreign language talent cultivation in China provide a relatively limited number of foreign language courses when compared to their counterparts in the USA or Russia. According to the homepage introduction of these three leading foreign language education institutions, Beijing Foreign Studies University[6] provides 98 foreign language courses currently, Shanghai International Studies University[7] 42, and Guangdong University of Foreign Studies[8] 26.

An indigent foreign language resource in this nation will impede national security maintenance and global-interest exploration. A country seeking more proactive participation in global affairs needs to hold rich foreign language resources. For example, the USA and Russia rank their "critical languages" in terms of the security requirement and their national interest. Considering the engagement of foreign languages with national interest and security, the government should realize that the market demands could not regulate the design of foreign language education. As an emerging country that bears increasing responsibility in global governance, China should also plan for and designate some foreign languages as "critical languages" and effectively promote the acquisition of these languages among its students.

Fortunately, as a response to the need to extend the variety of foreign languages, major foreign language institutes and universities have already launched their plans. Beijing Foreign Studies University, for example, pledged to establish over one hundred language departments before 2020, which will cover all the languages used by the countries that have diplomatic ties with China. Shanghai International Studies University plans to add another ten foreign language departments or courses within three years, all responding to languages used by Belt and Road countries.

Develop Students' Intercultural Competence and International Experience

In today's higher education sector, a consensus has been reached that intercultural competence training plays an essential role in the successful practice of foreign language education (Borjian, 2014).

As the world's largest developing country and a permanent member of the UN Security Council, China plays an active role as a participant, defender, and reformer of the contemporary international order in the United Nations. However, the current number of Chinese staff in the UN is only 546, or 1.46% of total UN staff, which is below the "desirable range" assigned by the UN. Conversely, the staff from the USA comprises 2531, or 6.75% of all UN staff.[9] Additionally, the number of senior Chinese officials in international organizations remains disproportionately small. The small number and low proportion of Chinese staff in the UN do not conform with the international status reflected by China's contributions in today's world. This disparity will undermine China's global discourse power, its power in drafting and revising international regulations, and the expansion of its global interests.

High-level foreign language talent is always required in the competitive fields of trade, finance, education, science, and technology. There is, therefore, a strong need for foreign language and regional research talent that is committed to high-level academic endeavors, is imbued with multilingual competence, has a global vision, and can actively participate and compete on an international level. Undoubtedly, foreign language education serves as an indispensable channel to cultivate these talents (Hunter, White & Godbey 2006; Dai & Wang, 2015:3).

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[6] http://www.bfsu.edu.cn/overview
[7] http://www.shisu.edu.cn/about/introducing-sisu
[8] http://www.gdufs.edu.cn/About%20GDUFS/General%20Information.htm
[9] Composition of the Secretariat: staff demographics, 22 April 2019. Document No. A/74/82.

For those non-foreign language majors at Chinese universities, some intercultural courses given in English have been accessible to them, mostly in the form of *College English Teaching*. Shu (2013) believes that English teaching should foster students' intercultural competence, meet the need for the internationalization of Chinese higher education, and eventually serve China's national interest in the further opening to the outside world. So, for these students, the English courses help develop intercultural competence and familiarize them with international conventions. Additionally, the organization of intercultural activities on campus is also an important key to developing students' intercultural competence (Huang, 2015; 2017). Different sorts of activities target different dimensions of intercultural competence. These goals include: improving students' intercultural awareness and equipping them with basic intercultural/international knowledge, developing their capacity to reflect and think from an intercultural perspective, and providing opportunities to interact with people from around the world. To put this idea into practice, Huang (2017) developed a four-module system for a co-curricular activity-based intercultural competence training program and offers suggestions for its implementation. Under such a system, a pedagogical design is introduced for intercultural education using the BRI theme to help students in developing and assessing their intercultural competence. It is believed that this pedagogical design and its practice are feasible and accessible to students in both the Chinese setting and the international arena (Huang, 2018).

Deepen General Education for Target Languages

General education is not new in China. These courses cover a wide and diverse range of disciplines and fields, which are usually accessible to all the students at the university. However, tradition holds that these courses are usually taught in Chinese, even at the top universities. In recent years, some universities in China, in an effort to pursue internationalization at home, began to initiate general education courses in foreign languages (basically in English). For example, during the past several years, Tongji University has provided a series of general education courses given in several foreign languages, such as the English/German[10]-taught courses entitled "China Today"[11], which are accessible for both Chinese students and international students in the university. These English/German-taught courses focus on a general introduction to China from both diachronic and synchronic perspectives in a global context. According to the syllabi, the students are supposed to develop an overall understanding of China's history, culture, society, economy, foreign relations, environmental protection, urban development, and intellectual property, etc. The aim is to equip students with reasonable points of view on China's rise, while supporting more proactive participation in global governance. The courses should lead students to more comprehensive education on Chinese traditional values and updated spirit. Obviously, the teaching builds bridges across different disciplines in students' knowledge development, which is a trend in today's universities' internationalization (Schechter, 1993).

Meanwhile, through these courses, students are trained to view global development and China's wisdom critically, and further "tell a good story" of China in English or German to the international community by adopting an international discourse system. Undoubtedly, this attempt is helpful for introducing the experience of contemporary China's prosperity and peaceful rise, and share the wisdom of China's contributions to world development.

Inspired by the practice at Tongji University, we suggest that foreign language institutions and other universities establish courses taught in foreign languages in fields that focus on contemporary China and the world, especially humanities and social science. These general education courses with foreign language mediation will help to train foreign language majors and other students with the capacity of bridging China with the world. This provides an indispensable level of competence for the youth and future of China to improve China's national image in the global arena.

Strengthen English as the Lingua Franca in Expertise Training

From the perspective of national foreign language capacity, teaching each of the languages spoken in the Belt and Road countries is a worthy goal. Multilingualism, after all, leads to a more diversified world and promotes intercultural communication. However, the *status quo* of English as a *lingua franca* and its dominant prevalence

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[10] The history of Tongji University can be traced back to 1907, when the German Medical School was founded by Erich Paulun, a German doctor. Therefore, German teaching is a tradition that has existed for the last century.

[11] The courses package includes: Intercultural Communication, Multiculturalism and Global Governance, Chinese History and Culture, China's Foreign Affairs and International Relations, China's Socio-Economic Development, Shape and Growth of the Town & Village in China, Cultural Heritage Conservation in China, Sustainable Development in China, Chinese Intellectual Property Protection, Urban Culture and Urban Aesthetics, and Chinese Music and Songs.

in the international community are irrefutable facts (Huang, 2017: 185). This produces a problem of how to motivate students to learn other foreign languages in addition to English.

To solve this problem, educators should find a feasible way to initiate more robust foreign language programs that focus on common foreign languages, including English. Practically, a competent international talent should be equipped with a good command of two and more foreign languages (one of which should be English) and non-linguistic-based expertise in a specific field of study. Excellent language proficiency by itself will not lead to an adequate capacity for meaningful participation in international cooperation and competition. In this sense, to cultivate "compound talents" in foreign language departments must be advocated in China. "Compound" here means students should acquire enough professional knowledge and skills in specific fields in addition to their excellent proficiency in foreign languages. The expertise knowledge could exist in fields such as business, economics, finance, law, management, diplomacy, or international relations.

For example, some foreign language institutions in China practice the idea that the curriculum should combine language skill development with regional expertise. In the courses developing regional expertise, special attention should be paid to certain disciplinary knowledge training, especially in political science, economics, law, anthropology, and linguistics. Meanwhile, others attach greater importance to developing students' skills of other foreign languages in addition to English, French, or the other commonly spoken languages in the international community. Therefore, "English + less-commonly spoken foreign language + certain expertise" or "English + two or three less-commonly spoken foreign languages" are the frequent models adopted by these institutions. Expertise training, together with foreign language education, will improve students' career competence and provide a practical basis for their motivation and willingness to learn other less-attractive languages spoken by the Belt and Road countries.

Based on the previous discussion, the roadmap for strengthening China's foreign language capacity is illustrated as follows:
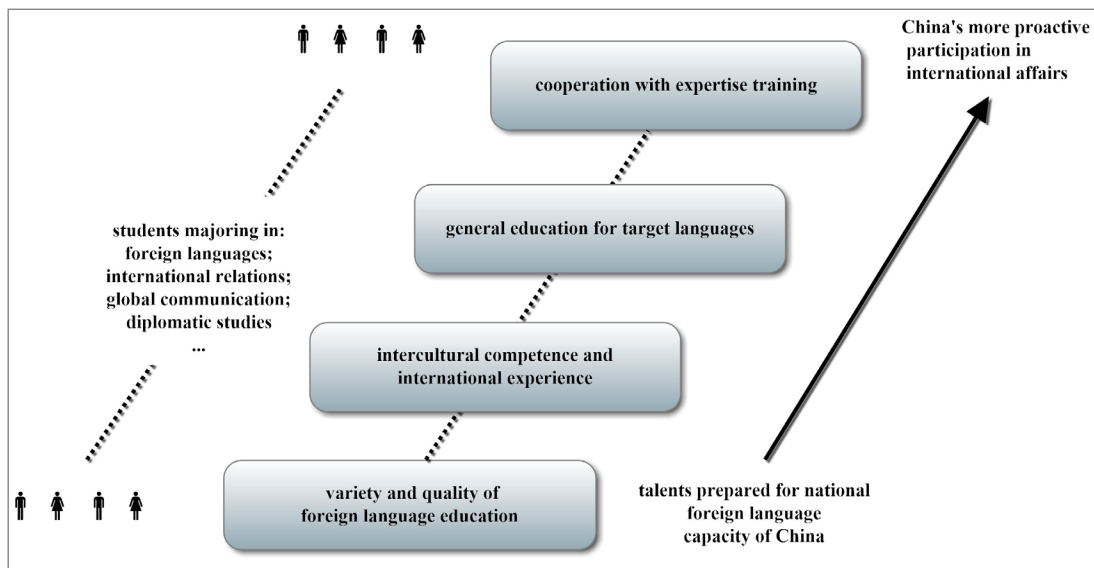
Diagram 1. A Roadmap to Strengthen China's Foreign Language Capacity through Foreign Language Education.

This roadmap also presents the necessary components that are needed for China's proactive participation in international affairs, cooperation, and competition from the perspective of foreign language talent development.

Conclusion

China's rapid rise and its proactive participation in global governance have led the country to pursue more world-connected national interests and shoulder more international responsibilities, which breeds the implementation of the BRI. A project of this magnitude reminded Chinese educators in the foreign language sector of the necessity and urgency of improving the nation's foreign language capacity for the sake of national

interest. This task, ultimately, lies in the reform of foreign language education and the cultivation of high-quality talents. Fortunately, an increasing number of scholars in China have helped the government move on to this task (Zhao & Huang, 2016).

From the previous discussion, we can see that foreign language education in China is not just a simple issue of teaching. Instead, it bears immense responsibility for maintaining China's national interest in the global era in which China is playing an increasingly important role. Therefore, it can be understood why foreign language education matters so much in the implementation of the BRI and China's further involvement in international affairs.

At the current stage, the Chinese government should initiate a complete redesign of foreign language education, and set up a specific institution or administrative mechanism to coordinate national foreign language education (Li, 2010), which is to plan, practice and evaluate the teaching for all relevant institutions. In the USA, the counterpart organization would be the National Foreign Language Center, which is an institution claiming "to improve the capacity of the U.S. to communicate in languages other than English."[12]

Although some Chinese scholars claim that "the number and scale of non-English foreign language degree programs in Chinese universities have been growing dramatically" (Han, Gao & Xia, 2019: 5), the exact foreign language needs in China should be evaluated systemically in light of the economic, political, and cultural exchange needs in the BRI (Gong & Guo, 2019). Based on scientific planning needed for foreign language education, more foreign language talents should be cultivated, including high-quality translators or interpreters, staff in international organizations, business and law talents with excellent command of foreign languages, etc. These human resources will facilitate exchanges and cooperation among the countries or regions along the Belt and Road regions, and further promote China's participation in global affairs, or at least "tell a better story" to help the international community understand China's rise and hopefully reduce any misunderstandings or perceived hostilities.

Although there is "a significant leap in the growth of non-English foreign language programs in Chinese universities, many of these programs need to address a variety of challenges including 'unrealistic' curriculum objectives, teacher shortages, and attracting high-quality applicants" (Han, Gao & Xia, 2019). China has been an emerging economic and political power in the world after 40 years of "Reform and Opening-up". Nevertheless, this country still has a long way to go in developing its competitive national foreign language capacity. Even so, China's development, of course, will provide valuable experience for other emerging economies to more actively participate in global affairs and seek their own interests.

Acknowledgment

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Integrating Information and Communication Technologies in English for Specific Purposes

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The tenth volume of the book 'Integrating Information and Communication Technologies in English for Specific Purposes', edited by Dr. Rosa Muñoz-Luna and Dr. Lidia Taillefer, was published in 2018 by Springer International Publishing AG Switzerland.

Many books have been written on the subject of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) since the emergence of the concept in the early1960s but the present book is unique in its approach as it is an effort to digitalize the various aspects of ESP, thereby widening the scope and vision of ESP practitioners and learners. The book provides research-based practical knowledge from professional experts on the incorporation of modern means of information technology to boost the efficacy level of teaching and learning of the English language. It provides insights related to ESP, EAP (English for Academic Purposes), and EOP (English for Occupational Purposes) in contexts where English is used or taught as a second or a foreign language.

The book consists of three sections. Section One dwells upon the pedagogical principles in English for specific purposes, Section Two focuses on English for academic purposes, and the third section deals with English for occupational purposes. The foreword by Dr. Augustyn Surdyk stimulates the interest of the readers by highlighting the features and significance of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and ludology in the teaching and learning of English language. As the book implies, ICTs include the internet, emails, audio & video live communication, and other technologies facilitating face-to-face interaction; whereas, the discipline of ludology refers to game studies. Ludology is equally important in maintaining the effectiveness of learning. Both ludic techniques and ICTs refer to gamification, which is used to 'increase engagement, efficiency and positive attitudes' (p. vii).

The introduction contains a detailed overview of the book and subsequently gives some glimpses into the
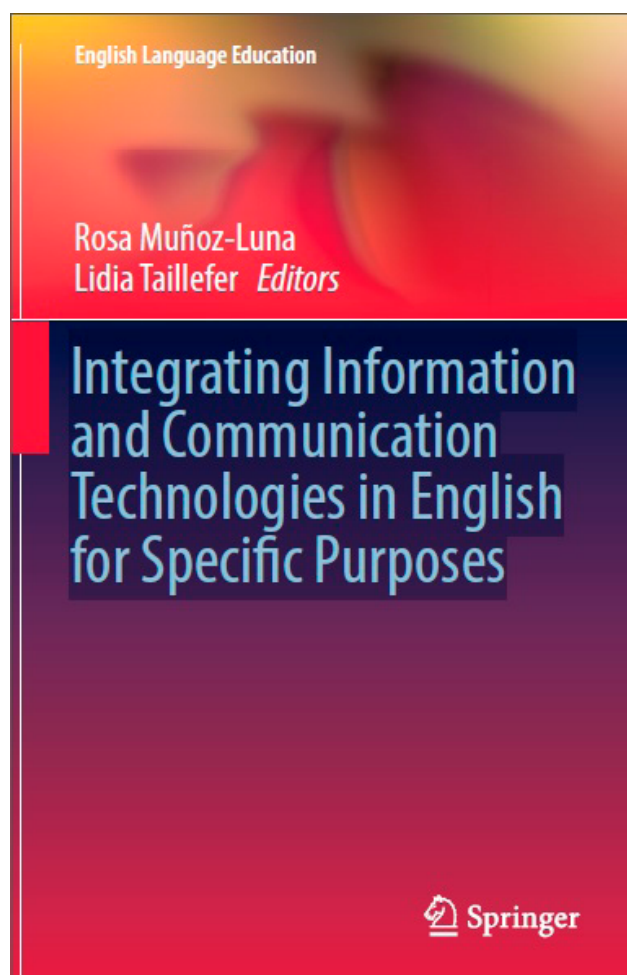
various chapters. The editors explain that 'ESP' is an umbrella term. They show that it can incorporate the latest technologies in the academic field as well as in occupational settings. They assert that 'innovation' can only be achieved in ESP, EAP, or EOP through the 'proficient use of technology' (p.1). It is underlined that teachers and professionals can make teaching and learning innovative through practical training on a continuous basis. The prime focus of this book is to enable language users and practitioners from all domains of learning to develop innovative methods based on online teaching and learning tools.

Section One of the book consists of three chapters and presents a panoramic picture of different aspects of ESP in the perspective of modern requirements. Chapter One, headlined "Integrating Technology in ESP: Pedagogical Principles and Practice" by Li Li, highlights the advantages and restrictions of technologies within ESP. The author suggests that the new technologies in ESP are not flourishing due to a lack of computer literacy. The information technologies allow ESP students to experience real life situations, enhancing their communicative competence. Likewise, computer-mediated communications (CMC), like Skype or email also play a vital role in ESP. According to Li, "the Internet is considered an authentic resource for natural, context-rich and culturally specific materials." (p. 12). These technologies not only provide a proper environment for interaction and self-directed learning but also motivate and engage learners. Proceeding further, Li then clarifies five principles for integrating technologies into ESP. He then provides examples related to corpus and web-based materials. Indeed, this detailed discussion introduces new trends in the field of ESP. Conforming to Li, Nesi, (2013) also integrates corpus studies from the various domains of ESP such as EAP and EOP. She illustrates the various implications of corpora in ESP. Similarly, Bloch, (n.d.) suggests the importance of incorporation of blogs, Facebook pages, Twitter, email, etc. in the process of teaching and learning. He states that "the experiences with these technologies that students bring from both inside and outside the classroom may be invaluable in their future careers." (p. 387).

Chapter Two, titled "Using Technology in the Teaching of ESP: Some Reflections Based on Practice" by Sandra Stroo, Rosa Muñoz-Luna, and Antonio Jurado-Navas, provides a detailed discussion on the use of some basic computer software and applications in ESP classroom settings. The authors not only focus on software and technologies but also elaborate on their pedagogical implications. They reassert that practice of the learning material in its proper context is necessary for language acquisition. For teaching EAP at higher levels, the researchers suggest that "technology should provide a shared virtual and blended-learning space where collective learning can be facilitated." (p.29). The chapter further highlights the importance of software like 'Turnitin' and 'Ephorus' for managing plagiarism free writing. Likewise, the importance of 'Clicker (Educlick)', smartphones, movie clips, etc. is also under scrutiny. Thus, the chapter is full of information that may encourage readers to think of implementing modern technologies when teaching ESP.

Chapter Three in Section One headlined "Independent ESP Learners: The Case for Blended Learning" is authored by Renia López-Ozieblo. The researcher suggests that the learning process can be made effective through "...a methodology that combines a face-to-face approach with the use of information and communications technology (ICT)" (p.37). She also recommends to maintain social interaction, which plays a key role in the process of second language acquisition (SLA). The chapter is filled with many examples of learning language through online social interaction. Online courses and their analysis, particularly 'MOOCs', are also discussed. Last but not least, the author focuses on highly effective technological and pedagogical approaches for meeting the already planned objectives.

Section Two enriches readers with deep insights regarding the use of internet resources for developing academic essay writing skills. This section is essentially aimed at language teachers at high school or university levels. Section Two is comprised of four chapters. It starts with a chapter entitled "The Internet as a Pedagogical Tool in the Writing Process: A Research-Based Approach" by Mercedes Díez-Prados and Ana Belén Cabrejas-Peñuelas. The chapter offers a detailed discussion on the use of internet applications, i.e. Web 2.0 for facilitating academic writing tasks and many practical examples are given. The authors go over all of the key stages of academic writing and a number of corresponding websites. Although internet technologies seem quite beneficial for those who are computer literate and study in well-equipped settings, such techniques are not that efficient in locations where there are no appropriate computer facilities or internet access.

Chapter Two, titled "Learning Management Systems for Teaching at the University Level: Students' Attitudes and Real Usage in the Classroom" by Antonio Jurado-Navas, deals with students' behaviour in the computer-

enhanced environment for learning language. The author analyses the efficacy of 'learning management systems' (LMSs) and students' perceptions and attitudes concerning these systems. The chapter dwells on removing the anxiety of students when learning second languages. The author contends that the LMS and the teacher both have a role to play in soothing students' anxiety. The author puts forward a research-based study on the reactions and behaviors of undergraduate students in the context of online management procedures. The data were collected through a questionnaire and showed that most university teachers use online systems to upload study materials for their students. It is also noted that students prefer small-group interactive sessions that impart information rather than big-group sessions focusing on errors. This chapter enables teachers to frame their classroom pedagogy accordingly.

In Chapter Three (Section 2), headlined "English for Academic Purposes: A Proposal to Improve Listening Skills of Education Students", Ana María Ramos-García highlights different reasons for poor listening skills and presents strategies to enhance them. The author also shares her research on developing anxiety-free listening environments. She emphasizes the importance of using online listening materials such as podcasts and other web-accessible materials. She suggests listening strategies and recommends learners to maintain their listening record in online diaries for later discussion. This programme reduces the anxiety level of students as inadequate listening skills lead to stress in the classroom.

The last chapter of Section Two, "Multimedia EAP Learning in Virtual Reality: Second Life in an English Department" by Lan Li, presents her research based on investigations into teaching English using Second Life, a 3D simulator where students and their teacher can interact in English like videogame characters. She agrees with Mayer's cognitive theory of multimedia learning, which asserts that "people build mental representations from words and pictures" (Mayer, 2005, p.109). The data show that learning English in a Second Life setting is highly interactive, interesting, and entertaining.

The strategies mentioned in these chapters of Section Two are highly effective, but their limitations cannot be ignored. Such technologies are not easily accessed in some developing countries and locations. Students there may even be unaware of their existence.

Section Three of the book covers the ins and outs of English for Occupational Purposes. This section provides a deeper understanding to teachers and instructors who are willing to design language courses for occupational purposes. Chapter One here is headlined "ESP and Free Online Dictionaries" and authored by Pedro A. Fuertes-Olivera. The researcher emphasizes the use of free online dictionaries, especially for business and economic studies. He situates the concept of ESP in the context of a Spanish university and suggests using Wikipedia and other specialized dictionaries to gain knowledge related to a specific field.

Chapter Two, "Translation, Virtual Environments and ICT Tools for Achieving Competence in Language for Specific Purposes" by Encarnación Postigo-Pinazo and Concepción Mira-Rueda, critically evaluates the authenticity of translation procedures for achieving complete competence in language use for specific purposes. The authors suggest skills and strategies to improve translations. They present research carried out in the medical care field. The essay also looks into competence levels of translators and interpreters in the Spanish context. As Spain is famous for medical tourism, the authors mention that "in medical tourism, citizens of highly developed nations bypass services offered in their own communities and travel to less developed areas of the world for medical care (p.146).

Chapter Three, titled "A Business English Course in the Digital Era: Design and Analysis" by Lidia Taillefer, puts forward a detailed overview of the complete course design for business English. The author strongly recommends integrating online resources to make the course more productive. The chapter also highlights the limitations and advantages of blended courses. Like the previous chapter, the last chapter of this book, "Online Course Design for Translation into English" by Leah Leone, also gives insights into planning and developing an online course for teaching translation skills. She analyses her learners' needs and then incorporates activities based on the latest technologies into training translators to become professionally competent.

This brief overview of the chapters should clearly demonstrate that this book is a unique gift for English language teachers, learners, and researchers who want to innovate their classrooms by incorporating Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) within the fields of ESP, EAP, and EOP. The contents of this book are based

on the practical experiences of the authors. All of the contributors represent their full professional expertise and motivate teachers and learners to find technical solutions related to the problems in ESP, EAP, or EOP. Even an average computer user can get access to new online learning resources and obtain the maximum benefit. But at the same time, traditional teaching methods cannot be simply set aside. The integration of traditional approaches to language teaching with modern technologies may produce better outcomes. Furthermore, some of the abovementioned technologies may not be applicable in all contexts; only highly skilled teachers and learners can use them without reservation.

This book is a valuable asset for the ESP researchers, teachers, students, and instructors. The core contents of these chapters will certainly help to make the teaching and learning of English an energizing experience.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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Embracing Multilingualism Across Educational Contexts. Edited by Corinne A. Seals and Vincent Ieni Olsen-Reeder. Wellington, Victoria University Press, 2019. 389 pp. ISBN 9781776562916

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The book entitled "Embracing Multilingualism Across Educational Contexts" edited by Corinne A. Seals and Vincent Ieni Olsen-Reeder, Victoria University Press was first published in 2019. It is aimed at revealing and systematizing current cultural trends and experiences embodied in both nationally identical and internationally oriented projects within the educational space of the 21st century. The book is also aimed at mobilizing the education policymakers, the international community, and civil society organizations trying to ensure that the right to education for all people – particularly language and cultural minorities – is upheld both in developing and developed countries.

The authors of the book share their views on some urgent and far-reaching issues related to rapid changes in modern world educational paradigms caused by dynamically developing interrelationships between global communication and national development on one hand and requirements to correlate emerging virtual forms of collaboration in different spheres of human activities on the international level on the other.

The significance of this monograph is the emphasis on "translanguaging" , which is usually interpreted as a rapidly growing field of research both in theory and in practice because it provides an opportunity to push forward adequate understanding of renewed linguistic terminology and is able to challenge cross-cultural experiences and multimodal means of expression and communication that multilinguals navigate in educational settings on a daily basis. Touching on traditional and diverse elements of multilingual research, such as code switching, code meshing, polylingualism, polylanguaging, plurilingualism, hybridity, hybrid language practices, and flexible dynamic bilingual education, the contributors focus strongly upon the ability of translanguaging to assist in explaining how multilinguals go about their language choices in real contexts. The book also takes a fresh look at the necessity to transform various teaching/ learning methods and empirical educational schemes to meet the challenges of the second millennium.
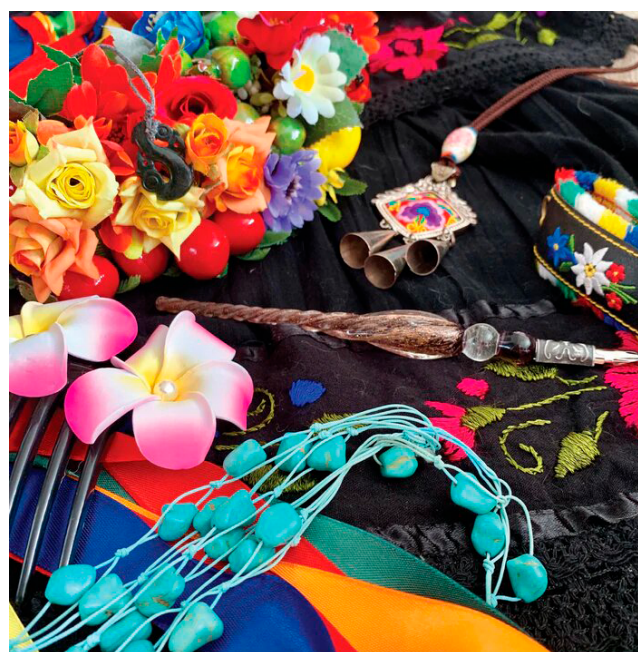
The use of translanguaging educational potential for revealing effective ways and means of social and cultural adaptation to modern changes in language training models for multilinguals in the epoch of globalization. Modern experts in education postulate the thesis that the need to facilitate the process of language acquisition in different multinational communities is a 'must' for both Western countries (Sweden, Germany, Austria, etc.) facing the problems of migration consequences and for Eastern countries with an original multilingual schoolscape, where the necessity to meet the challenges of globalization is considered a strong impetus for introducing innovative shifts into the language educational paradigms with regard to both national and international educational settings. The book also makes an interesting point about translanguaging methodology integrated into the curricula and syllabi for multilingual audiences.

The book is divided into 13 chapters, progressing from a focus on translanguaging ways of understanding multilinguals' interactions with the world toward building awareness of the cognitive, emotional, and social merits of multilingualism and multilingual education in the terms of ethnographic approach, interview methodology, and translingual pedagogical models. The essays, written by authors who are without any doubt experts in the study of translanguaging ways and means aimed at effective modifying modern methods of language training, are devoted to the detailed descriptions of cases with regard to ethnographic, sociolinguistic, cognitive, and pedagogical aspects of professional educational experiences. The contributions are grouped into two parts. The key topics covered by the authors of the essays from the first strand of the book concern the advantages of encouraging linguistic diversity and multilingualism in educational contexts when minority languages (Samoan, the language versions of Māori communities in New Zealand, the Ryukyuan language family consisting of at least five distinct languages -Amamian, Kunigami, Uchinaaguchi/Okinawan, Miyakoan, Yaeyaman, Dunan, traditionally spoken in the Ryukyu Islands - a chain of islands in the southwest region of Japan) are involved in classroom language training across a wide range of current linguistic environments. Each chapter included in the book contains a description of both teachers' and students' achievements and outcomes due to the application of various ways and means aimed at increasing the process of adaptation to new linguocultural settings. The merits of teaching techniques based on the application of a home or mother language in the classrooms with a number of different national communities worldwide to provide a passionate intellectual engagement with the challenges to support second language acquisition in education are discussed by some of the most distinguished experts in bilingual training (Corinne A. Seals and Russell Pine from Victoria University of Wellington; Verbra Pfeiffer from Stellenbosch University in South Africa, majoring in multilingual education; Chun-Mei Chen from Taiwan and Judith Purkarthofer from the Center of Minority Languages in Oslo University working out the most effective dominant language regimes in the bilingual communities). The most effective models for the socialization of children through the appropriate language choice, which helps to keep the reality of their homes and the knowledge of wider community traditions, are described in details in **Chapter 2** "Using both Samoan and English to shape understanding, reasoning, and appreciation during a book experience in an A'oga Amata: An example of translanguaging" prepared by *Feaua'i Amosa Burgess and Sadie Fiti* and in **Chaper 4** entitled "TransAcquisition Pedagogy with emergent bilinguals in Indigenous and minority groups for cultural and linguistic sustainability" written by *Sophie Tauwehe Tamati*. Both authors are summing up the outcomes of their collaboration with a teaching staff conducting experiments on mixed groups of students. The discussion of the merits and demerits of translanguage pedagogical techniques contributing to a holistic approach to language education with varied heritage language backgrounds proves the advantages of introducing home language elements in oral communication and in classroom activities. One noticeable feature about the cases is the less frequent use of dual language interactions between the teacher and the children who feel free to use their home language vocabulary while talking with their friends and classmates.

The language scholars' opinion about code-switching in these cases is tolerant enough. They believe that a dedicated focus on heritage languages contributes to both Indigenous and immigrant education level due to the necessity of their continued revitalization and maintenance in a time when linguistic diversity is constantly under threat by languages perceived as more powerful. However, the crucial role of the first language in the students' linguistic repertoire is strongly emphasized by the researchers recommending the integration of home language elements into the teaching instructions and classroom activities than eliminating them from the school curricula. Analyzing the linguistic repertoires of the students with varied heritage language backgrounds in terms of translanguage pedagogical techniques, some authors appreciate the use of alternative languages for shaping understanding and reasoning skills (*Judith Purkarthofer, Jenny Rosŭn, Boglőrka Straszer, and Esa Wedin*). They believe it is only within the translanguaging approach that an appropriate educational model can be created.

Another disputable issue concerns the learners' age. It is in many cases that the translanguaging pedagogical profile is traditionally aimed at forming conversational skills relevant for young learners who live with their families and have to use home languages both at home and in schools. **Chapter 3** "The use of translanguaging to bridge sociocultural knowledge in a puna reo" presents the results of research conducted in 2017. The authors discuss the educational profile of the second most-spoken language in New Zealand, which is a superdiverse country with over 160 languages spoken by residents every day. Te reo Māori is recognized as an integral part of the country's multilingual and multicultural heritage, and has been Aotearoa NZ's first officially recognized language (since 1987) and, therefore, is justly considered the language of Māori identity. Taking into consideration the necessity to promote the preservation and revitalization of Te reo Māori's linguistic and cultural identity, the local government is sponsoring teaching environments for te reo Māori providing the puna reo project, within which children under five years old are taught bilingually through te reo Māori and English. The puna reo is a place where multicultural, multilingual and Aotearoa NZ is fostered, as well as being a place where translanguaging naturally occurs.

As a concluding statement to this part of the book, it's possible to say that the discussions around developments in minority languages teaching projects and language acquisition aimed at using translanguaging to bridge sociocultural knowledge and national identity, because it is based upon a good mix of academic experience, global knowledge, and contemporary research accounts.

In the second part of the book, the authors interpreting translanguaging potential present a comprehensive and well-balanced narrative of the strategies integrated into the educational spaces of European countries. They focus their attention on the problems of migrants' needs in foreign language contexts and the requirements of modern educational language standards through which the process of foreign high school students' adaptation is facilitated on the international level. One peculiar feature of these issues is the shift from oral communication towards writing, which is considered a self-regulating mechanism in which bi/multilingual students can engage, rather than a pedagogy to be used in the teaching of writing itself. The students' awareness of their home language and the ways they can use it to strengthen their academic writing skills are discussed in detail in **Chapter 7** "Austria's curriculum for heritage language education across languages: A case study in balancing speakers' needs on the local, national and international level". Here, Judith Purkarthofe dwells on the Austrian case of code-switching, distinguishing between two main strands of research. The first strand, named the linguistic proficiency approach, takes a stronger interest in an individual's proficiency and focuses on pedagogical aspects of supporting language learners when they are neither native speakers nor foreign language learners (Turkish immigrants in the Netherlands talking about their feelings of anxiety in relation to their heritage language). The second strand, that the authors rename the self-esteem approach, focuses on the social conditions of learning: social hierarchies and inequalities both within and beyond the classroom, various geopolitical factors, etc.). Furthermore, in this chapter the author also writes about specific ways and means for promoting teachers' language education in Austria, because the linguistic and pedagogical qualifications of teachers are not thought of as a 'must' in this country. However, the situation with the requirements for teaching staff's competence has changed and later some reforms in education development curriculum for teachers were introduced.

Chapter 8, "Maintaining, developing and revitalizing: Language ideologies in national education policy and home language instruction in compulsory school in Sweden", and **Chapter 9,** "Embracing multilingualism in school through multilingual' educational staff: Insights into the interplay of policies and practices", deal with Swedish and German 'multilingual change', which may be regarded as an integrative model aimed at integrating newly arrived pupils and their language practices in mainstream classes from the very beginning and constructing multilingual teaching teams at a starting school level.

In **Chapter 9,** the scholars show the importance of psycholinguistic and socio-political factors for regarding expansion of linguistic resources aimed at balancing migration-related resources in Germany is growing, due to the emergence of multilingualism resulting from transnational mobility. At the same time, the opposition to this multilingual reality and the monolingual approach in the educational contexts of many countries, including Germany, is demonstrated. This discrepancy calls for new trends within the multilingual educational models and consequently it requires the involvement of both theoreticians and practitioners in the process of modelling creation. The learners' language biographies together with sociolects, regiolects, and different linguistic registers of national languages are also taken into consideration by language policymakers. Assuming that social power relations are certainly dependent upon different forms of capital: cultural capital, social

capital, and economic capital, the authors believe that the position of an individual within the social space is determined by the capital it holds, i.e. by competencies and educational qualifications, by social contacts, and by material possessions. Commenting on different market values of languages and their varieties within a society, the authors conclude that a certain way of speaking always subliminally refers to the origin of the individual, his or her educational career, and his or her position in the social space. Thus, speakers of dialects or minority languages are unconsciously socially classified and are often ascribed a low level of professional competence. The socially legitimate majority language, on the other hand, functions as cultural capital that can be transformed into economic capital. These hierarchical differences between languages are not natural, however, but socio-politically constructed. After Bourdieu's (1990) theory of language as capital and linguistic market, the authors state that language practices might be regarded as strategies of self-positioning in social spaces, which is a convincing argument for the improvement of existing educational programs for adaptation and integration. Chapter 9 "Experiences of attitudes to translanguaging in the classroom" (Vesna Busic and Kirk P. H. Sullivan) presents an overview of Swedish education policies, specifically in relation to the political and social ideas that have created the current conflicting discourses in law and policy. Focusing on the legal aspects of protecting the status of Swedish from English, both experts stress the points related to creating not only a linguistic hierarchy with Swedish at the top, but also conflict situations that are occurring due to educational policies promoting multilingualism. Developing theoretical assumptions about translanguaging as an effective educational approach in which teachers and students are allowed to use all their linguistic and semiotic resources in teaching and learning, the scholars write about the advantages of integrated applications of linguistic and semiotic resources in language education.

To develop the translanguaging ideology in **Chapters 10** and **11** entitled "New to the classroom: Experiences of attitudes to translanguaging" and "Remixing pedagogies and fluidity of spaces in a community-based schoolscape", the thesis of translanguaging's contribution into modern teaching and learning methodology based on the integration of multilingual experiences is supported by visual aids and by speculations about the merits of various pedagogical cases intended to navigate learners in their multilingual everyday life and existence.

> "Multilingual education: Encouraging students to use their language backgrounds" written by Verbra Pfeiffer, provides a detailed account of the attempts to find appropriate ways to use a home language when writing for academic purposes. The differences in educational university standards for academic writing in South Africa and in Switzerland, multilinguals in those countries have to deal with similar challenges when they write in one language and think in another. Taking up the issue of home language integration in the university curriculum, Pfeiffer proves the advantages of the educational approach based on translanguaging within which the home language's role is relevant for both teachers' and learners' academic performance in different geopolitical situations.

The final chapter, "Implementation of a Bilingual Model Based on the Integration of Translanguaging, English, and Content", and the Conclusion under the title "Reflecting on Trends in Translanguaging across Educational Contexts" are devoted to summing up the most popular trends in modern bilingual and multilingual educational spaces and the role of diverse language policy in establishing various schemes providing immersive language education on a global scale.

There is one passage in the book under review that stands apart from the rest of the issues and it concerns the ideas of political discourse associated with the diversity of modern educational spaces caused by the expansion of cultural, economic, and linguistic mobility and by the necessity of uniting efforts in the struggle for national identification integrated into international educational projects. On this issue, the author evaluates the merits of a multilingualism educational approach to the development of innovative strategies aimed at balancing the most interesting empirical results obtained by the contributors.

Postulating the ideas of multicultural cooperation for the language educational profile, the contributors are using the term 'translanguaging', which seems disputable in some cases and might be replaced by another more acceptable terminological unit 'code-switching'. It could also be useful to add some ideas and concepts revealing the details of language interactions occurring in the professional discourses embracing various training schemes from the university educational settings.

A wide range of information about translanguaging as a means of innovating the multilingual educational space covered in this book underlines the validity of the outcomes and the flexibility of the strategies described by the experts in multilingual educational environments. The well-structured and carefully prepared bibliographies serve as useful navigators in the voluminous cross-cultural research space.

Overall, "Embracing Multilingualism Across Educational Contexts" is a comprehensive and significant contribution to a better understanding of theory and practice on multilingual education in the context of globalization.

Thanking our reviewers, 2019

The editors of Journal of Language and Education would like to express their gratitude to all the reviewers who helped us work on each issue.

You helped us take JLE from an idea 5 years ago to a full-fledged quality publication indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, DOAJ, EBSCO, etc.

The reviewers' expertise and benevolence contributed greatly to this success. We value and truly appreciate the time and effort of our reviewers who provided insightful analysis of the manuscripts and helped us to assure quality of the journal.

Your reviews became the foundation of every decision the editorial board made regarding the submissions. At the same time, the reviewers' input proved incredibly helpful to the authors who took their manuscripts to the next level of publication quality by responding to your comments and suggestions.

Our reviewers are an essential part of the JLE family, so we would like to take this opportunity to thank you and to express our sincere appreciation of your contribution!

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