An Autoethnographic Study on Balancing the Dualities of EFL Instruction and Ph.D. Studies

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ABSTRACT

This autoethnographic study explores my intricate balance between dual roles of being an EFL instructor and a PhD student. I, a 27-year-old language instructor in Istanbul, try to delve into the personal and professional challenges which I encounter while pursuing doctoral studies. The narrative reflects the sense of in-betweenness and identity reconstruction as I navigate through teaching responsibilities and academic demands. By employing a qualitative autoethnographic approach, the study provides a personalized account of my experiences, offering insights into the identity formation process. The research highlights the transformative impact of the PhD journey on both teaching and research identities, emphasizing the need for further studies on the dual roles of PhD students to better understand their complexities and benefits.

KEYWORDS: Autoethnography; Personal narratives; EFL teaching; Doctoral studies

1. Introduction

The idea of writing about my experiences as a 27-year-old language instructor and a PhD student in Istanbul at first was scary as I could never talk about myself even on a daily basis. I could never talk about myself more than just a few sentences so writing about my personal experiences is a challenge for me. I decided to write about my experiences as I know that there are many PhD students, candidates and teachers who are going through similar experiences. I wanted to reflect upon my thoughts and my lived experiences in order to find myself as a novice researcher and a language teacher in these challenging times of my life. This paper, therefore, reflects my sense of in-betweenness as a teacher and a researcher.

As a language teacher at a prep school of a foundation university in Istanbul, I face challenges every day. One of them is balancing the workload and the new life of mine as a PhD student while the next is not pushing myself to burnout. At times, I wonder if I ever wanted to be a language teacher or did fate lead me here. I question my existence. Finding myself as a person is the main challenge and the goal of this paper. When I decided to write an autoethnography to share my insights, I did not know where to begin my story. I thought maybe writing about my work would help me find myself as a teacher. Then I thought about reflecting on my PhD journey to see how it helped me as a novice researcher in the field of ELT. But neither of these identities would describe who I was so I decided that I would write about it all. I will write about myself. Me. Seçil.

I was first introduced to autoethnography by an instructor during my master's courses. My professor who was enthusiastic about autoethnographies talked about how fascinating it was to write about his experiences in a research paper. I was impressed. As a course assignment and a final project paper, we were asked to write a duoethnography on our language learning experiences.

I remember that the writing process was strange because I was writing about *my* experiences and who would have wanted to read MY experiences as a language learner from Turkey? But I liked writing about my experiences and connecting my experiences with literature seemed legitimate. It was a research paper. It was an academic work. Then, I started reading more about autoethnographies and duoethnographies. I wrote my master's thesis based on a topic from a duoethnographic paper. Therefore, writing an autoethnography was expected from me - at least I was expecting it. With autoethnographies, the researcher is the phenomenon that is written about (Ellis, 2004) so I wanted to be the phenomenon this time. I wanted people to read my experiences and see that they are not alone in this identity search.

2. Where do I begin?

Reading, reading more, planning, teaching, discussions, reflections, presentations, writing, article submissions, courses, gradings, studying, no social life, why did I do this? What was my problem? Wasn't I happy the way things were? No, I wasn't. I was bored. I did not have anything to do all summer (3 weeks actually) … I did not have a purpose. Now I do. I have a purpose. What is it? I don't know. But what I know is that I don't have time for boredom. I have work. I have a PhD. I have lessons to give and courses to pass. Feedback to give and grades to get. Who was I? A teacher? A student? A researcher? I didn't know. I couldn't find myself. I didn't have time to question. When talking about my thoughts, and sharing how I feel with my colleagues and PhD friends, I realized that I wasn't alone. Everyone was feeling similar things. I started writing about how I felt during certain times such as before the finals or before certain deadlines, or before meetings at my work. I realized that I was stuck between teaching and researching. I was either too focused on teaching or studying. I couldn't balance the workload. I could not identify myself as a teacher or as a researcher. My in-betweenness led me here and in this paper, I reflect upon my identity development with a particular question in mind. Through my reflections, my observations, and my feelings, you, my readers are going to witness how I try to find an answer to this question: How has pursuing a PhD helped me (re)construct my identity as a teacher and a researcher? To address this research question, I delve into the literature on teacher identity and researcher identity along with employing an autoethnographic approach in applied linguistics.

2.1. Conceptual Framework

In this paper, I aim to set off and take you, my readers, with me on a journey of self-discovery of my identity as a teacher and a researcher. I started questioning my identity as a language teacher before I started my PhD studies. I adopt the concept of teacher identity development, which involves a dual process of meaning negotiation and identification (Wenger, 1999), to frame this journey. In this context, identification refers to participation in the teaching profession and incorporation into the teaching community, where individuals develop a feeling of self and purpose. According to Sachs (2005), teacher identity is something that is shaped by experience. My experience when I started teaching was that I loved the job. I loved my students, my curriculum, my colleagues, and my institution. I was happy and passionate, and I wanted to improve myself as a teacher. This passion led me to pursue a master's degree, where I discovered a new love—academia. I loved my master's courses. I fell in love with academia. However, falling in love with academia made me ignore my responsibilities as a teacher. Before I started my academic journey, I used to make sure that I enjoyed my lessons before my students did by preparing useful and fun activities. Then I started neglecting my lessons in order to pass my courses as a master's student. I was losing my identity as a teacher and gaining a researcher identity. The transition was difficult for me because my identity as a language teacher was evolving (Huang & Varghese, 2015; Morgan, 2007; Pavlenko, 2012) into something more fluid in line with my goals of becoming a researcher and pursuing an academic career. Retrospectively speaking, I was not making meaning, nor I was engaged in my teaching community because I knew I needed to achieve more in my academic career. I was overwhelmed because I was a language instructor at a prep school and my students were not motivated to learn English because I was not motivated enough to teach English anymore.

When I graduated from master's degree and submitted my thesis, I had 3 weeks of free time. This free time was for me to relax, not think about research or any PhD related things. I was determined to take a year off before I started my PhD, but I was bored. In these three weeks of free time, I did not know what to do. My colleague and a close friend had applied for a PhD program and encouraged me to do so by saying that we were bored by not doing anything all summer (three weeks) and we did not want to come to a deadlock by just teaching at the same institution. We had to pursue an academic career because that was who we were. Academicians. She was accepted to the PhD program she applied to, so it was my turn to apply and get accepted. I got in. Little did I know that this was going to be the most challenging year of my life both personally and professionally. I needed to form another identity. I could no longer rely on my teacher identity because I was not just a teacher anymore. I was also a PhD student. In the context of PhD, doctoral education student's identity is formed as they negotiate their multiple identities through the research process (Hoang & Pretorius, 2019). I was (re)forming my identity as a language instructor to become a researcher. As Goode (2010) stated identity is a "product of participation in communities", I as a PhD student needed to actively participate in the community in order to construct my identity as a researcher. I did not know which community I belonged to as I was stuck in between teaching and learning. I was either too focused on teaching and neglecting my PhD courses or the other way around. When I wanted to focus on my PhD courses, I felt as if I was neglecting my job, my students, and my identity as a teacher. But if I focused on teaching, I was neglecting my researcher self which I chose to create in the first place. Therefore, trying to balance these two distinct, complex, and demanding career paths became my goal in this evocative autoethnography (Ellis, 2009).

3. Autoethnography as a methodological approach

Because autoethnography enables a thorough, personalized inquiry into my identity transformation (Keleş, 2022), I chose it as the methodological technique for this study. Traditional scientific approaches claim that the researcher should put aside their subjectivity and voice in order to obtain and share the knowledge (Neuman, 1994). However, with the rise of postmodernism, inquiring knowledge has many ways and researchers could share their interpretation of the knowledge (Neuman, 1994). In this paper, I plan to derive meaning from my experiences by reflecting upon them in a personalized and individual narrative. To achieve this goal, I employed a qualitative autoethnographic approach rather than a quantitative approach as I thought it would allow me to be my own narrative of my life. An autoethnography is a qualitative research approach that enables the authors to explore, interpret, and share knowledge by being the subject of the study and make meaning of their lived experiences in their cultural and social contexts (Creswell, 2013; Ellis, 2004; Keleş, 2022; Sparkes, 2000). According to Wall (2006) an autoethnography is exploring oneself in a personalized manner about a phenomenon. While it does not suit the traditional and conventional writing method, autoethnography is an established qualitative method in educational research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Instead of working on a researched phenomenon, I choose to understand myself as a researcher and a language teacher, find myself as a person, and realize my "self" as an individual. My aim for this paper is to engage readers not as a passive reader but in a more relational manner in understanding the challenges I am going through as a PhD student and a language teacher. There are other PhD students who may be experiencing life and their PhDs differently, but this is a highly personal account as I am reflecting upon my experiences. As Ellis et al. (2011) stated, autoethnographies are epiphanies, moments that have significantly affected one's trajectory of life which may be chosen to write about. I choose to "collect my data" from my memories, my observations, thoughts, and memories as Keleş (2022) stated memories and recollections of thoughts are crucial in autoethnographies as the researchers focus on their lives and their stories.

As Keleş (2022) stated, personal memory, recollections, and thoughts are central parts of autoethnographies as the researcher is the phenomenon in this paper. I used my self-reflections as a form of data for this paper. According to Chang et al (2013), self-reflections are created by the researcher in the form of free writing regarding their experiences. While I was collecting my data from my self-reflections and my notes for this paper, I (re)organized them in a systematic and a purposeful approach. However, rather than employing a 'traditional' data analysis method to create themes and codes, I put the data in a chronological order to point out how my identity has remained constant and changed over time. This methodology aligns with Ellis's (2009) position that autoethnography is intended to be an introspective and expressive process, one that embodies the essence of experienced life in a way that is both systematic and highly subjective.

4. I am a teacher

Since the beginning of my career, I have always considered myself an ambitious language teacher who works to facilitate a welcoming environment where my students can feel safe to communicate in the target language without any hesitation to make mistakes. With this in mind, I have always tried to incorporate some communicative activities in the lessons or simply ask them about their personal lives in order to get them to speak, and participate in the lessons more. My approach to teaching, which is grounded in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) methodology (Brown, 2014), has always involved communicative activities for my students to make connections between their language learning experiences with the outside world. I initially thought that I tried to be a fun teacher who could understand her students, and connect with them on a personal level since there wouldn't be a big age difference between my students and I however, my approach was not just about being a fun teacher but creating a safe and welcoming environment for my students where they could feel valued and understood. Connecting with my students, spending time with them in break time, and asking and talking about their interests have always been one of my priorities in teaching as I was feeling connected and motivated when I felt close to my students. Learning about their interests has helped me plan my lessons accordingly and asking them to participate in an activity because they are 'experts' on the topic has been a driving motivation source in my teaching. I have always found ways to encourage my students to relate to my lessons on a personal level so that they would be motivated. Hence, my motivation. I was devoted to my profession, my students, and the institution that I work at. Within this context, when looked through an ethnographic lens, in my early teaching years, I viewed my classroom as a mirror of larger social and cultural dynamics.

5. My Ph.D. journey

Why did you start doing Ph.D.?

What is the point…

Do you want to be an academician?

You won't earn a lot of money. I think it's a waste of time…

Are you going to be a doctor? Aren't you just a teacher?

These were the questions that I heard when I told people that I was accepted to a PhD program. My not so close family members asked me what a PhD is and why I started doing it. There are two answers to this question actually, a funny one and the real reason. I always tell the funny one. So, here's it is. I am from a small town in Aydın which is in the Aegean part of Turkey. My family has a certain way of doing things like buying prescription drugs from a certain pharmacist who doesn't always have these pills, so I have to visit the pharmacist sometimes twice a week when the pills have arrived. The lady who runs the pharmacy knows all about my family, except me. Here's the fun part. The lady knows my mom and every time I go there, she asks me are you …(my mother's name)'s daughter? I say yes, I am. She proceeds with THE question. Are you the doctor or the other one? I tell her I am the OTHER one, not the doctor daughter of my mother. She then never asked me what I do, never said sorry because she could not remember my job, but she said say hi to your mother from me, then turned her back to do her job. So, I tell people that I started doing a PhD because one day I will go to the pharmacy and the lady will ask me the same question. Are you the doctor or the other one and I will say now I AM also a doctor… Although it's humorous, as this story reveals how social norms can have a significant impact on a person's identity, both personally and professionally.

But the real reason why I started doing a PhD was that I did not want to be just an English teacher at a prep school of a university. I wanted to achieve more. Pursuing an academic career, specifically, pursuing a PhD, marked an important turning point in my personal and professional life. My desire to achieve more than my position as an English teacher at a university preparatory school led me to make this decision. I wanted to be the best version of myself in terms of my education. I always wanted to pursue a PhD degree even when I knew that I only studied just enough to pass my courses. There has always been a pursuit of the best I could be in my life. I was raised like this. Be the best at what you do. It doesn't matter what you do but be the best at it. When I started my master's degree, I quite enjoyed the courses, literature, research, and the pursuit of knowing more in my field. After submitting my master's thesis, I felt an emptiness in my life. I knew I had to pursue an academic career, there wasn't, hasn't been a doubt in my mind on why I started doing my PhD. I knew and I was aware that everybody who is doing a PhD while working was feeling similar emotions such as burnout, exhaustion, and satisfaction at the same time. Adaptation to having these dual identities has not been an easy journey for me. The responsibilities of academic study gradually took in the time and energy I had spent creating engaging lessons for my students when I started my PhD. It quickly became too much to handle trying to balance my teaching duties and the demands of my PhD program. I began to question my identity as a teacher, which is the central topic in this autoethnographic study. During this time, from my teaching logs which were used to gather data, I noticed a decrease in the additional materials I prepared for my students and a change to a more cursory approach to lesson planning. As I got more and more focused on my academic work, the quality of my interactions and relationships with my students started to decline.

While questioning myself and my identity, I received an email from the vice principal of our institution asking to talk to me about the following year. As soon as I received that email, I started panicking as I was sure that they wanted to fire me because I was not meeting the expectations. I was not preparing extra materials, I was not putting extra effort in my lessons, and I was only following the coursebook. I somehow convinced myself that I was the worst instructor of all time even though I was meeting the deadlines for the feedback sessions and grade entries. I convinced myself that meeting the deadlines, entering the grades, attending the meetings, or participating in the professional development sessions were not enough to keep my job. That night, I could not sleep. There was something wrong because deep down I knew that I was not demonstrating my best teaching performance. When the time came for the meeting with the vice principal, I was trying to assure myself that I could be able to find another job soon. When I walked into the room, the principal and the vice principal were waiting for me. On the outside, I looked cool (*I mean, I hoped so...*) but on the inside, I was shaking. After a small talk on how the day was going, the vice principal asked me about my plans for the following year. (*Well, I was hoping to keep my job here…*). I told her that I was happy working there, and that I enjoyed teaching a lot (*maybe not at that exact moment but you know what I mean*). Then she asked me if I would be interested in the curriculum advisor position for the following year. (*WHAT??!! – I thought you were firing me*). Even today, while I am writing this autoethnography, I don't know why I thought they were firing me. I was a tenure, and it was a secured job. I guess my anxiety mode was on that day. They asked me to think about this offer. I was excited but nervous as well. The position entitled the duties of writing a curriculum for Track 2 students. We might need to change the books, so I was responsible for choosing the books, justifying my choice, and creating a plan with those books. Moreover, there was going to be a task group that would create another curriculum for 'true beginners' to help them catch up with their peers. I couldn't sleep that night either. I was thinking if I could be able to handle the workload. This decision-making process, which was documented in my reflective journals, involved assessing the role's possible advantages against the likelihood that it may increase my burnout. However, in the end, I accepted the Curriculum Advisor position for the following year at my institution. Taking on this role marked an additional turning point in my autoethnographic narrative since it gave me a chance to get back in touch with my teaching practice and strengthen my devotion to it. I was also going to be in a task group of 6 instructors, 3 future curriculum advisors, 2 future assessment team members, and the principal of the institution to create a curriculum. The main objective of this task group was to create a curriculum that would be based on the lexical approach by Michael Lewis (1993). When we started the meetings for this task group, we read books about the approach, had discussions on the chapters and prepared materials. This task group felt as if I was taking another PhD course and I loved it. I was excited to attend these meetings as I was studying for them just like I did for my PhD courses. With this job offer and task group meetings, I was motivated and connected to my institution and teaching practices. I was also learning to become a curriculum advisor while taking part in assessment training, professional development training and curriculum meetings. Even though I was motivated to take on these responsibilities, I was exhausted.

I kept remembering the teacher education courses that I took in the first semester of my PhD. We read lots of articles on how language teacher education should be, what kind of qualities language teachers should possess, and what are the roles of the institutions for their teachers to be able to feel secure, supported, and satisfied in their professions. I remember that in order to function well, I needed to feel satisfaction, security, and support, but something was missing as I was feeling burnout. I could feel that I wasn't able to handle the workload. At the beginning of my PhD, I was questioning my teacher identity as it overlapped with my researcher identity. But now, I had all these responsibilities, meetings to attend presentations to give, and papers to write and I realized that having a dual identity conflict was just the tip of the iceberg. I took on these roles, I applied for a PhD, and I accepted the curriculum advisor job offer but I could not manage the workload. I felt as if I had to be in many places, but I could not. This identity search became a part of me, and I could not stop thinking about the emptiness that I felt because of questioning myself a lot.

During one of the conversations that I was having with my PhD peers, I realized that we were experiencing the same emotions, we were going through the same experiences in different contexts. One of them was trying to balance motherhood, her job, and her PhD and the other two started working at new institutions so they were trying to adjust to their new workplaces. So, having these feelings of anxiety, tiredness, overwhelm and vacancy did not seem to be individual but rather collective feelings among PhD students. On the one hand, yes, I was overwhelmed, exhausted, and disengaged, but on the other hand, there were a lot of things that I was grateful for. Firstly, I was grateful that I could get to do my PhD, and that I was accepted to the ELT PhD program with a full scholarship, I was grateful that I had a job that paid well, I was grateful that my work was appreciated, I was grateful that I was asked to take on the curriculum advisor position, I was grateful that my students liked me. I realized that I should be focusing on these very important things in my life rather than dwelling on the negative feelings. My wonderful friends from the PhD courses and I would talk every day and share what was going on in our lives, how far we got with our research projects, and how we prepared for the courses. We would help each other share our notes, and remind each other about the task requirements, assignments, and deadlines. One day, as we were talking about our experiences with doing PhD while working, one of my friends said that she was overwhelmed and was considering taking a year off. We started talking about how every one of us were feeling the same things, we were also overwhelmed but we assured her that we would work together, help each other out and we would come through this journey together. That day I realized how lucky I was. We formed a unity and I strongly believe that my friends are the reason how I started to feel motivated again. Almost every day, we would motivate each other, help each other, and we would give each other reassurance that we were in this together and we would achieve our goals. Even on the days that one of us did not prepare well for a course, we would still assure each other that the others could take the lead during the class discussions, or we would make sure that we shared our notes beforehand. I had my wonderful friends with me during this exhausting and challenging journey, and I was not alone. I was only feeling lost because I did not know that others were experiencing the same feelings. Therefore, I am certain that you, my readers, will find something to relate to in this paper. I felt lost, you may feel lost. I felt exhausted, you may feel exhausted. I felt as if I could not manage the workload, you may feel as if you cannot manage the workload. However, I was not alone, and you are not alone. I did not need to decide if I was a teacher or a researcher, nor should you. I did not need to force myself to choose one, nor should you. I did not need to experience only the positive emotions, nor should you.

In the midst of the lessons, meetings, and training, I conducted a study on the sustainability of teacher research as I knew that research was a way of improving our teacher identity as well. I gave a presentation on the findings and even though it is a challenging process, it is very rewarding in improving our agency. I received good feedback from my colleagues, but they raised their concerns about not having the time (*tell me about it…*) or not being knowledgeable enough to conduct research. I answered their questions and tried to assure them that there was nothing to be afraid of as if I knew anything about balancing the workload or finding time. However, it boosted my confidence as I was the teacher and the researcher while presenting my research. Despite considering that I could be either a teacher or a researcher, starting with the idea of finding my identity, I realized pursuing a PhD helped me understand that I did not lose my teacher identity. In contrast, I noticed that, as I was taking my PhD courses, such as teacher education, I was aware of the teacher competencies thus, I could better act on the needs of the students and the curriculum with this awareness. During another course, through research, I realized that I could implement some theories or practices into my teaching context. With research methods courses, both qualitative and quantitative, I noticed that I could conduct research in my teaching context, and it could be beneficial for me, my students, and my institution. I did not lose my teacher identity but rather I was improving it by becoming a researcher.

6. Discussion and conclusion

In this autoethnography, I tried to delve into the goals, challenges, accomplishments, and failures of my identity search journey while pursuing a PhD in English Language Teaching (ELT) and teaching at the same time. This journey helped me (re)construct my identity as a teacher and a researcher. Before starting to pursue an academic career, I considered myself a language teacher who was motivated and enthusiastic about her job. That was the reason why I started doing my PhD actually, I wanted to increase this motivation and enthusiasm by developing professionally. However, the opposite happened as I realized that being an academician and pursuing a PhD was more rewarding. As Wenger (1999) stated, teacher identity was a form of meaning-making or creating ownership which I enjoyed doing at the beginning of my teaching career. I was motivated to teach; I knew I belonged

to my teaching community. In time, on the other hand, while pursuing a PhD, I was feeling as if I did not belong to teaching but to researching. I faced some challenges while teaching and doing my PhD. I could not balance the workload and that's why I felt demotivated towards teaching. I could not balance the workload that's why I could not prepare well enough for my courses. However, my wonderful PhD friends helped me through this challenging journey. They were the ones who felt the same, they were experiencing the same emotions, and they were the ones who made me realize that I was not alone in this journey. This realization led me throughout the rest of the academic year. By writing about my experiences, I realized that I was doing something more than just teaching or just being a PhD student. I was fulfilling my goals, and I was where I dreamt of being five years ago. The feelings of exhaustion, tiredness, and anxiety seemed normal, and I was not alone. When I was first introduced to autoethnographies by one of my professors during my master's degree, I did not like writing about my experiences, but I loved reading others'. I realized that those autoethnographies were relatable. As Wall (2006) stated, writing an autoethnography is self-exploration in a personalized manner, and I noticed that every PhD student was going through the same experiences, and was feeling burnout, anxiety, exhaustion, and accomplishment. I started writing about my experiences as I was willing to explore myself and share my vulnerabilities with whoever was willing to read my story, but I did not consider that I would benefit from it as much as I have. Therefore, this autoethnographic study is my self-expression of my self-realization and I know that if I am going through this experience as a PhD student, others are too. Maybe other PhD students will connect to my experiences or react differently to their experiences, but I believe autoethnographies especially evocative ethnographies (Ellis, 2009) will awake a feeling in someone.

Overall, as I have sought an answer to my research question; "How has pursuing a PhD helped me (re)construct my identity as a teacher and a researcher?", I have certainly taken some liberties with descriptive narratives to express my experiences in my own style and I have shared my vulnerabilities with you by presenting each decision and its rationale. This identity search has been a challenging journey for me as I have experienced a lack of and abundant emotions at the same time. I felt alone, empty, unsuccessful, and ineffective because I was stuck in between teaching and being a student; but I also felt powerful, united, sophisticated, successful, and effective thanks to my dearest PhD friends. I was able to overcome these challenges of my identity search through reflection, collaboration, and integration. In conclusion, I recommend further autoethnographic studies to focus on the in-betweenness of PhD students to understand the benefits and challenges of this difficult journey.

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A Critical Stylistic Analysis of Major Kaduna Nzeogwu Coup Speech

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the ideological underpinnings of the coup speech delivered on January 15, 1966, by Major Kaduna Nzeogwu. Employing Jeffries' (2010) Critical Stylistics theory as a methodological framework, the study conducts a linguistic analysis to uncover the political viewpoints and intentions of the coup plotters. The analysis reveals how specific linguistic choices and patterns were employed to communicate the plotters' intentions to the public, suppress dissent, and advocate for the establishment of military rule instead of democratic governance. The speech underscores the plotters' portrayal of their actions as necessary for national salvation, while framing democratic processes as ineffective. Additionally, the use of emotive language and authoritative tones served to bolster legitimacy and rally public support for the coup. The analysis further elucidates how the adopted linguistic strategies functioned to justify the overthrow of the existing government and the suspension of democratic institutions in Nigeria's First Republic. This Critical Stylistic study highlights the intricate power dynamics that underpinned the military intervention and emphasizes the role of language as a tool for ideological persuasion. By revealing the linguistic resources employed by the coup plotters, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how language can shape political realities and influence public perception during times of upheaval.

KEYWORDS: Critical stylistic, Analysis, Major Kaduna Nzeogwu, Coup speech, Ideological

1. Introduction

Language plays a fundamental role in communication. It serves not only as a means of interaction but also as a powerful tool for achieving political objectives. The stylistic choices made by speakers, whether in speeches, poetry, or essays, profoundly shape the impact of their messages. Stylistics, as a field of study, explores the creativity inherent in language, focusing on the expressive capacities available to all speakers rather than the unique talents of individuals. In the context of politics, the intrinsic link between language and power lies in its function as a medium for expressing opinions, ideologies, and viewpoints, often reflecting broader social, political, and economic stances.

Language's versatility allows speakers to shape thoughts, beliefs, and public opinion through various rhetorical techniques, including the use of imperative, declarative, and interrogative sentence types, as well as active and passive voice constructions. Salami (2010) emphasizes that language not only influences but can also control thoughts and beliefs, making it a crucial instrument in constructing political discourse. Political speeches, in particular, encapsulate ideologies and reflect the positions of both individual speakers and the groups they represent. As Van Dijk (2001) notes, political discourse conveys group ideologies through collective texts like party programs and institutional policies, while also reflecting personal beliefs and experiences.

The coup speech delivered by Major Kaduna Nzeogwu on January 15, 1966, serves as a powerful example of political discourse. Crafted for oral delivery via broadcast media, the speech aimed to rally public support for the coup leaders while coercing the acceptance of significant changes to Nigeria's civil and constitutional structures. The speech's linguistic strategies and rhetorical techniques warrant close examination to understand how the coup plotters justified their actions and persuaded the populace to endorse the revolution.

2. Background of the January 15, 1966 coup speech

The January 15, 1966 coup d'état marked a pivotal moment in Nigeria's political history. Led by Major Kaduna Nzeogwu and a group of army officers, the coup sought to overthrow the government of Prime Minister Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, accusing his administration of corruption, despotism, and mismanagement. This military intervention was framed as a necessary response to the political instability and violence that followed the controversial 1965 regional elections in the Western Region, as well as the broader electoral conflicts of 1964.

In his speech, Nzeogwu outlined several reasons for the coup. He cited the growing chaos and violence in the country, stemming from political mismanagement and widespread public discontent. The speech criticized the incumbent government for its incompetence and authoritarian tendencies, highlighting a pattern of crisis mismanagement dating back to 1962. Nzeogwu also expressed concern over the misuse of the military to suppress dissent, which had fostered resentment among military officers towards the political class. Furthermore, the speech addressed the rampant corruption within the ruling elite and the politicization of the military. The coup plotters argued that political interference had undermined military standards, especially with attempts to diminish Southern influence in the army—a legacy of colonial favoritism towards Southern officers based on qualifications.

Although many decades have passed since the January 1966 coup, the significance of this event remains relevant today. This study delves into the historical context of Nigeria's first military intervention, while also highlighting the necessity of a Critical Stylistic Analysis of Nzeogwu's speech. Such an analysis reveals the power dynamics that led to the coup and it explains the subsequent suspension of democratic institutions and, uncovers the linguistic techniques used to persuade the populace and justify the actions of the coup plotters. The study is not only of linguistic and political importance but also contributes to a deeper historical understanding of Nigeria's turbulent political evolution.

This research scrutinizes the linguistic resources employed by the coup plotters in their speech through the lens of Jeffries' Critical Stylistics toolkit. By analyzing the speech within the realms of military and political discourse—marked by themes of force, coercion, and domination—the study reveals how power and ideology are embedded in the language used. Through this detailed examination, the study seeks to illuminate the complex interplay between language, ideology, and power in one of Nigeria's most critical historical moments. The data for this study were primarily derived from Nzeogwu's speech which was sourced online, notably from Wikipedia (Wikipedia contributors, 2024).

3. Literature Review

Critical Stylistics denotes the stylistic activity involved in verifying social meanings through systematic language analysis, drawing from critical linguistics and CDA (Norgaard et al., 2010). This concept is rooted in Jeffries' work, which illustrates the interconnections between language, power, and ideology. Jeffries first introduced the term in 2007 to highlight the strengths of stylistics and CDA in revealing how ideologies are embedded within texts.

In her 2010 publication, Jeffries emphasizes that CS aims to compile the primary functions of texts in representing realities, providing a comprehensive set of tools for critical analysis that exceeds existing CDA methodologies. She outlines various analytical tools known as textual conceptual functions, which are based on semantic-grammatical theories, enabling a nuanced exploration of representational practices within texts (Berlin, 2020).

Critical Stylistics (CS) is an emerging field within applied linguistics that aims to bridge stylistics which focuses on textual choices and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) which centers on ideological manifestations (Newsome, 2002). According to Jeffries (2010), CS seeks to synthesize the functions of texts in representing realities, thereby providing a more rigorous theoretical framework and methodology for CDA. Jeffries emphasizes that CS introduces a comprehensive toolkit of analytical tools that, while not exhaustive, surpasses what is available in existing CDA literature.

Gee (2014) argues that CS maintains a neutral stance in terms of political alignment, positing that all texts are inherently ideologically motivated, whether consciously or unconsciously. The primary goal of CS is to systematically uncover and expose these hidden ideologies within texts and discourses. By integrating stylistics and CDA, CS combines analytical tools from both approaches to provide a holistic analysis of meaning in various texts.

A significant distinction between CS and CDA lies in the toolkit available for analysis. While CDA is critiqued for lacking a comprehensive set of analytical tools, CS offers a systematic analytical model that incorporates resources from stylistics and critical linguistics. This enables CS to elucidate the linguistic choices of text producers and their potential ideological implications (Newsome, 2002).

Jeffries contends that Critical Linguistics and CDA do not provide a robust framework for revealing hidden ideologies within texts. To address this gap, she introduces ten analytical tools that resemble the eclectic models developed by scholars such as Fowler (1991), Simpson (1993), and Fairclough (1989) to examine textual ideologies.

CS primarily focuses on uncovering underlying ideologies manifested through language in both literary and non-literary texts, regardless of external circumstances (Jeffries, 2014). In contrast, CDA prioritizes external contexts—including social, historical, and visual elements—in its analysis. Despite this distinction, Jeffries acknowledges the insightful utility of stylistic analysis in examining both fiction and non-fiction texts, thus enriching the overall discourse.

While CS has made significant contributions to the understanding of language, power, and ideology, some scholars have raised critical perspectives on its scope and application. Critics argue that CS, while comprehensive in its toolkit, may still fall short in addressing the broader socio-political contexts that shape language use. For instance, while CS focuses on the linguistic mechanisms of ideology, it may neglect the social practices and power relations that inform those mechanisms.

Moreover, some researchers contend that the emphasis on linguistic features may overshadow the qualitative aspects of discourse, such as the emotional and cultural dimensions that play a crucial role in shaping public opinion and political discourse. This critique suggests that while CS provides valuable insights into the structural elements of texts, it may benefit from integrating a more holistic approach that includes the social and cultural contexts of discourse.

In essence, Critical Stylistics represents a valuable intersection of stylistics and CDA, offering a robust analytical framework for exploring the ideologies embedded in texts. However, ongoing discussions about its limitations highlight the need for a more integrative approach that considers the complex interplay between language, ideology, and the socio-political environment. As the field continues to evolve, these critiques will be essential for refining the methodologies and expanding the theoretical underpinnings of Critical Stylistics.

4. The adopted models

This research utilizes Jeffries' (2010) Critical Stylistics theory as the analytical framework. Jeffries' (2010) Critical Stylistics theory identifies ideological positioning through Critical Stylistic strategies or identifies ten tools such as Representing (Actions/Events/States), Negating, Equating, and Contrasting, Presenting Other's Speech and Thoughts, etc., which have proved instrumental in interpreting the underlying ideologies in both non-fiction and literary data. The analytical framework becomes an appropriate tool to discern embedded ideologies within the January 15, 1966 coup speech by analyzing various linguistic choices and patterns employed to convey confidence to the populace, suppress public dissent, and establish military rule (militocracy) in place of democracy. The study adopts Jeffries' (2010) ten tools analytical model as a framework for analyzing linguistic choices and patterns within the coup speech aimed at uncovering embedded ideologies and communicative intentions.

5. Theoretical Framework

Lesley Jeffries' Critical Stylistics (CS) theory, introduced in 2010, offers a powerful analytical framework for exploring the intricate relationship between language, ideology, and power. It integrates stylistic analysis which focuses on the specific linguistic choices made in texts with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) which examines how language both reflects and constructs social ideologies. Within this framework, Jeffries identifies ten key analytical tools and strategies which are designed to unveil different layers of meaning and intention within a text. Among these tools is *Vocabulary Choice*, which delves into the selection of words and their connotations, as well as the implications they carry. *Transitivity Analysis* examines how verbs and verb phrases represent actions, events, and relationships. *Modality* investigates the degrees of certainty, possibility, or obligation expressed through language, while *Metaphor and Metonymy* uncover the ideological implications of figurative language. Additionally, *Implicature* seeks to reveal meanings that are implied rather than explicitly stated, and *Speech and Thought Representation* analyzes how both are depicted in a text. The tools of *Evaluation and Appraisal* explore the evaluative and emotive functions of language, and *Naming and Labeling* investigate how individuals or groups are categorized and defined through language. *Representation and Referring* look at how entities are constructed and referred to, while *Intertextuality and Interdiscursivity* examine the relationships between different texts and discourses. Jeffries' Critical Stylistics thus provides a

comprehensive approach to interpreting the complex interplay between language, ideology, and social power, especially within the context of significant historical events. This makes it an ideal framework for analyzing the January 15, 1966, coup speech. By applying Critical Stylistics to the speech, the linguistic choices and patterns employed by the coup plotters are critically examined, revealing the underlying ideologies that shaped their communicative intentions. This approach enables a deeper understanding of how language was used not only to convey their perspective but also to manipulate and influence public opinion during this pivotal moment in Nigeria's history.

6. Text analysis and methodology

The methods of analysis of the text involved a close reading with data systematically categorized for examination at various levels. The methodology focused on identifying a dichotomy between linguistic forms and functions to uncover hidden ideologies embedded within the discourse. The analysis was organized into four thematic categories: *Naming and Describing* which focuses on how language is used to name entities and describe the world within the text. It explores the nuanced information conveyed through noun phrases and the packaging of worldviews and opinions. *Equating and Contrasting* examines how the text presents different entities or ideas as either equivalent or opposed to one another. This contrast shapes interpretations and reveals underlying ideological positions. *Representing Action/States/Events* delves into the choice of verbs and verbal elements within the text, influencing how readers interpret actions, events, or states presented in the discourse. *Presenting Others' Speech and Thoughts* focuses on how the text represents the speech and thoughts of other participants. This includes evaluating how the author mediates and presents the words and ideas of different individuals within the text. By employing these four critical stylistic tools and organizing the analysis into these thematic categories, the study systematically revealed the embedded ideologies and shed light on the communicative strategies employed in the text.

6.1. Representing actions

Jeffries (2010:41) identifies the following material actions: Material Action Intention [MAT], Material Action Supervention [MAS], and Material Action Event [MAE]. To analyze the verbal elements (predicators) and the actions and processes conveyed through lexical verbs in the text, we identify the material actions and processes that take place between the participants as identified by Jeffries (2010:41). This helps explore how the lexical choices manifest the ideological intent of the speaker. Here are some examples and analyses below:

6.1.1. Material action intention

Material Action Intention (MAT) involves verbs that indicate the speaker's intentions or purposes. The selection of these verbs serves to project authority and determination. By utilizing verbs such as *declare, ban, assure, promise,* and *establish,* the speaker not only communicates specific actions but also establishes a framework of control and legitimacy.

Examples:

I declare martial law over the Northern Provinces of Nigeria

Here, *declare* functions as a powerful assertion of control. It signifies a unilateral decision-making process, reinforcing the speaker's authority and the gravity of the situation.

All political, cultural, tribal and trade union activities... are banned until further notice.

The verb *ban* indicates a prohibition that conveys decisiveness and the establishment of new social norms, illustrating the regime's intent to suppress dissent and maintain order.

I am to assure all foreigners... that their rights will continue to be respected.

The verb *assure* reflects a deliberate attempt to manage perception and instill a sense of security, even while imposing martial law. This indicates a dual strategy of control and reassurance.

But what we do promise every law-abiding citizen is freedom from fear and all forms of oppression.

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6.1.3.Material Action Event (MAE):

Material Action Event (MAE) refers to actions that are enacted as events, often associated with enforcement and consequences. Verbs like *imprison, punish, penalize, and rectify* create a vivid picture of the regime's capacity for enforcement, illustrating the consequences of disobedience and the overarching theme of control.

Examples:

Refusal or neglect to perform normal duties... will be punishable by a sentence imposed by the local military commander.

The verb *punishable* conveys a direct threat, establishing a clear link between behavior and consequence. This choice of verb emphasizes the regime's power to enforce compliance.

Spying, harmful or injurious publications... will be punished by any suitable sentence deemed fit by the local military commander.

Punished here reinforces the concept of surveillance and control over information. It portrays dissent as a criminal act, thereby legitimizing severe repercussions.

Tearing down an order of the day... will be penalized by death.

The bluntness of *penalized by death* creates a chilling effect, emphasizing the ultimate consequence of disobedience. This extreme measure reflects the regime's oppressive nature and serves as a deterrent against dissent.

The selection of verbs in the coup speech is a deliberate choice that reflects the ideological stance of the speaker. Each category of material action; MAT, MAS, and MAE highlights different facets of power: intention, intervention, and enforcement. The overall lexical choices convey an authoritative, interventionist, and punitive regime, aiming to control the narrative, suppress dissent, and reshape societal norms. This linguistic strategy not only informs the audience of the actions being taken but also seeks to instill fear, compliance, and a sense of inevitability regarding the regime's authority and governance. Thus, the speech serves as both a declaration of intent and a means of asserting control over the populace during a time of upheaval.

6.2. Prioritizing

Prioritizing is a conceptual tool. The English clause generally utilises an information structure which positions new and important information at the clause final (Jeffries, 2010:77). Analyzing the tool of Prioritizing which is also known as a conceptual tool in Jeffries' Critical Stylistics, focuses on how the text structures information to emphasize what is considered new and important, typically positioning such information towards the end of clauses. Prioritizing is achieved through the strategic placement of key information to highlight its significance.

6.2.1.Immediate Declaration of Authority

Example:

I declare martial law over the Northern Provinces of Nigeria.

In this clause, the act of declaring martial law is front-loaded, which serves to assert the speaker's authority from the outset. The immediate announcement of such a drastic measure sets a tone of urgency and control, suggesting that the situation is critical and that decisive action is required. By placing this declaration upfront, the speaker not only communicates the action but also instills a sense of inevitability regarding the enforcement of martial law, reinforcing the ideological stance of an authoritarian regime poised to take drastic measures for stability.

6.2.2.Clear prohibition of activities

Example:

All political, cultural, tribal and trade union activities, together with all demonstrations and unauthorised gatherings, excluding religious worship, are banned until further notice.

The structure of this sentence places the wide-ranging prohibitions near the beginning, establishing the gravity of the measures being implemented. By highlighting the ban on various activities, the speaker underscores the regime's intent to control public life comprehensively. This prioritization reflects an ideological stance focused on suppressing dissent and ensuring conformity, as it explicitly communicates the limitations imposed on civil liberties. The strategic placement of *banned until further notice* at the end underscores the indefinite nature of these restrictions, suggesting that the control will be sustained indefinitely, further instilling a sense of powerlessness among the populace.

6.2.3.Enumerating Offenses with Severe Consequences

Example:

You are hereby warned that looting, arson, homosexuality, rape, embezzlement, bribery or corruption, obstruction of the revolution, sabotage, subversion, false alarms and assistance to foreign invaders, are all offenses punishable by death sentence.

Analysis:

This complex sentence utilizes a list format that builds in intensity, leading to the climactic declaration of the punishment. By prioritizing the various offenses and culminating with the ultimate penalty '***death***' the speaker emphasizes the severity of the regime's stance on law enforcement. This structure serves to instill fear, reinforcing the ideological message that dissent and criminal behavior will not be tolerated. The inclusion of *'**homosexuality***' alongside more traditionally criminal offenses suggests a broader ideological agenda targeting not just crime, but also societal norms and identities, positioning the regime as a moral arbiter.

6.2.4.Defining the "Enemies of the States"

Example:

Our enemies are the political profiteers, the swindlers, the men in high and low places that seek bribes and demand 10 percent; those that seek to keep the country divided permanently so that they can remain in office as ministers or VIPs at least, the tribalists, the nepotists, those that make the country look big for nothing before international circles, those that have corrupted our society and put the Nigerian political calendar back by their words and deeds.

The enumeration of enemies is progressively structured, leading the audience through a series of increasingly grave accusations. By prioritizing the most egregious categories of enemies towards the end, the speaker emphasizes a multifaceted threat to national unity and progress. This strategic arrangement not only portrays the regime as a necessary force against corruption and division but also fosters a collective sense of identity among the populace. The rhetorical choice to position these enemies prominently serves to unify the audience against a common foe, reinforcing the speaker's ideological narrative of righteousness and urgency.

The tool of Prioritizing effectively shapes the ideological framework of the coup speech by structuring information in a way that emphasizes key actions, prohibitions and societal threats. By placing significant information towards the end of clauses, the speaker enhances the urgency and importance of their messages and aligns the audience's focus with the regime's authoritarian intent. The linguistic choices made throughout the speech reflect a deliberate strategy to instill fear, promote compliance and consolidate power thereby highlighting the ideological underpinnings of control and suppression in the face of

perceived threats to the state. Through this analysis, we see how prioritization serves as a powerful mechanism for not only conveying information but also shaping public perception and reinforcing the regime's authority.

6.3. Equating and contrasting

Jeffries (2010:52) recognizes that the English language has a lexical system with the possibility for words to be semantically similar or semantically opposed. To conduct a comprehensive analysis of how the text exploits linguistic devices to project-specific worldviews regarding the similarities and oppositions of the participants, we examine how the text establishes synonymies (similarities) and antonyms (contrasts) between different elements. The linguistic strategies of equating (establishing synonymies) and contrasting (establishing oppositions) play a crucial role in shaping the ideological intent of the coup speech. By leveraging semantic relationships, the speaker crafts a narrative that delineates between acceptable and unacceptable behaviors, aligning them with the broader goals of the regime. This analysis explores how these strategies manifest in the text, revealing underlying worldviews and reinforcing the speaker's authority.

Here are some examples for analysis:

6.3.1. Establishing synonymies (similarities)

6.3.1.1. Political measures and stability

The actions of *declaring martial law, suspending the constitution, and dissolving elected assemblies* are linked with the vision of a *strong united, and prosperous nation, free from corruption and internal strife*.

This lexical connection frames military interventions as necessary steps toward achieving national stability. By synonymizing authoritative measures with the goal of a prosperous nation, the speaker constructs a narrative that justifies drastic actions as essential for collective wellbeing. This reflects an ideological intent to normalize authoritarianism as a means to achieve societal progress, positioning the regime's actions as not merely reactionary but fundamentally constructive.

6.3.1.2. Proclamations and enforcement

The relationship between actions such as *looting, arson, and bribery* and their corresponding severe punishments such as *death sentence, incarceration, etc.,* underscores strict enforcement of the order. By aligning specific behaviors with harsh penalties, the speaker communicates a clear message: compliance is non-negotiable. The use of synonymies here emphasizes the regime's commitment to order and stability, framing punitive measures as protective actions against threats to the revolutionary cause. This reflects an ideological stance that equates strict enforcement with societal health, reinforcing the idea that order must be maintained at all costs.

6.3.1.3. Civic duties and allegiance:

The expectation of maximum cooperation is equated with *civic duties, cooperation,* and *allegiance*. By linking civic duties to allegiance, the speaker establishes a framework of mutual responsibility between the state and its citizens. This synonymy serves to reinforce the idea that active participation and compliance are synonymous with loyalty to the regime. The ideological intent is clear: to cultivate a sense of collective responsibility and to frame any dissent as a betrayal, thereby fostering a culture of obedience.

6.3.2. Establishing oppositions (contrast):

6.3.2.1. Political enemies and desired unity

The speech delineates *enemies of the revolution; political profiteers, swindlers and corrupt officials* from the envisioned unity of the nation. This contrast highlights a dual worldview: those who obstruct progress versus those who embody the ideals of unity and integrity. By portraying political enemies as external threats to national stability, the speaker reinforces a sense of urgency and righteousness in the regime's actions. This ideological stance frames the revolutionary government as a necessary blockade against corruption, thereby justifying its authoritarian measures.

6.3.2.2. Forbidden activities and desired conduct

A clear opposition is drawn between banned activities such as *political gatherings, demonstrations* and acceptable behaviors in the realm of religious *worship.* This linguistic contrast not only delineates permissible from prohibited actions but also positions the regime as a guardian of societal order. By allowing religious worship while banning political expressions, the speaker creates a moral hierarchy that elevates certain forms of expression while demonizing others. The ideological intent here is to control the narrative surrounding civic engagement, portraying the regime as both protective and punitive in maintaining social harmony.

6.3.2.3. Legal obedience and disloyalty

The distinction between *law-abiding citizens* and those labeled as *disloyal* underscores a profound ideological divide. By contrasting *compliance with established norms* against *disloyalty,* the speaker cultivates an atmosphere of suspicion towards dissenters. This opposition not only stigmatizes non-compliance but also elevates the status of those who adhere to the regime's expectations. The ideological intent is to foster a culture of surveillance and self-policing among the populace, where loyalty is rewarded and dissent is vilified.

The linguistic strategies of equating and contrasting in the coup speech effectively project a specific worldview that reinforces the regime's authority and ideological framework. Through synonymies, the speaker constructs a narrative that normalizes authoritarian measures as pathways to stability and prosperity, while oppositions delineate clear boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. This manipulation of language not only conveys the regime's intentions but also shapes public perception, fostering an environment of compliance and control. Eventually, these strategies serve to legitimize the regime's actions while creating a collective identity rooted in loyalty and obedience which effectively aligns the populace with the revolutionary objectives set forth by the speech.

6.4. Naming and describing

Naming and describing is one of the potent weapons employed by the producers of texts to convey ideologies. The use of naming and describing in the coup speech is a powerful rhetorical strategy that conveys ideological motives and shapes the audience's perception. By carefully selecting nouns and noun phrases, the speaker constructs a narrative that legitimizes the revolutionary actions and positions the regime as a necessary authority.

Let us examine the following

6.4.1.Authority and identity

Supreme Council of the Revolution of the Nigerian Armed Forces

The title *Supreme Council* inherently suggests ultimate authority and decision-making power which position this body as the pinnacle of governance. This naming conveys an ideological stance that frames the council as the rightful leader of the nation, asserting its dominance over all other entities. By coupling this with the *Revolution of the Nigerian Armed Forces,* the speaker not only provides an identity to the military but also reinforces the idea that the coup is a necessary uprising against previous governance. This nomenclature effectively legitimizes military rule as a unifying force aimed at restoring order and progress, shaping the public's perception of the coup as a patriotic duty.

6.4.2.Control and urgency

Martial Law

The term *martial law* evokes immediate connotations of strict enforcement and military oversight. This naming serves to communicate a shift from civilian governance to military control, signaling to the populace that extraordinary measures are required to restore order. By invoking this term, the speaker emphasizes urgency and necessity, framing the imposition of martial law as a protective measure rather than a punitive one. This ideological intent is aimed at garnering public support for the drastic measures, reinforcing the narrative that such actions are vital for the nation's survival.

6.4.3.Disregarding democratic norms

Constitution Suspended

The phrase *Constitution Suspended* serves as a stark indicator of the regime's departure from established democratic principles. This naming reflects an ideological position that prioritizes the revolutionary agenda over legal frameworks. By describing the constitution as suspended, the speaker implies a temporary but necessary abrogation of civil rights in favor of centralized authority. This framing cultivates a perception that traditional governance structures are inadequate in addressing the nation's crises, thus legitimizing the regime's actions as essential for national rejuvenation.

6.4.4.Centralized governance

Regional Government and Elected Assemblies Dissolved

The combination of *Regional Government* and *Elected Assemblies* conveys a clear message about the dismantling of existing governance structures. This use of noun groups indicates a transition to a more centralized and authoritarian form of rule. The phrase implies a rejection of democratic representation, reinforcing the ideology that the previous systems were ineffective or corrupt. By framing the dissolution of these bodies as a means to achieve stability, the speaker constructs a narrative that legitimizes the concentration of power within the Revolutionary Council.

6.4.5. Identifying enemies

Enemies of the Revolution

The phrase *Enemies of the Revolution* identifies and categorizes various groups as adversaries to the regime's goals. This naming creates a clear dichotomy between those who support the revolutionary cause and those who obstruct it. By labeling *political profiteers, swindlers,* and *other dissenters* as enemies, the speaker not only delegitimizes their actions but also unifies the populace against a common foe. This ideological framing positions the revolution as a moral struggle against corruption, fostering a sense of collective identity and purpose among the supporters of the regime.

6.4.6. Promoting Compliance

Law-Abiding Citizens

The term *Law-Abiding Citizens* frames the desired behavior of the populace in compliance with the new order. This naming reinforces the notion that obedience to revolutionary decrees is synonymous with patriotism and loyalty. By positioning *law-abiding individuals* as ideal citizens, the speaker aims to instill a sense of moral duty and responsibility among the populace, encouraging adherence to the regime's demands. This linguistic choice emphasizes the ideological intent of creating a compliant society that views adherence to the new order as a civic virtue.

The techniques of naming and describing in the coup speech are instrumental in shaping the ideological framework of the text. By carefully selecting nouns and noun phrases, the speaker conveys authority, urgency, and a clear moral dichotomy between supporters and detractors of the regime. This strategic use of language not only legitimizes the actions of the Revolutionary Council but also fosters a sense of collective identity and compliance among the populace. The ideological underpinnings embedded in these linguistic choices serve to reinforce the narrative of a necessary and justified revolution, ultimately shaping the audience's understanding of the regime's objectives and actions. Through this analysis, we see how naming and describing are not just stylistic devices but potent tools for ideological persuasion, framing the revolutionary narrative in a way that seeks to unify and control public perception.

Adopting the toolkit of Jeffries' Critical Stylistics (2010) has enabled us to determine that the devices such as naming, representing events and processes, equating and contrasting, and presenting others' speech among others, were exploited in the January 15, 1966 military coup speech in Nigeria. The apparatuses help to imprint the textual opinions, beliefs, and worldviews about the intentions behind the staged military coup in the reader's mind.

7. Conclusion

The application of Jeffries' Critical Stylistics toolkit in this study revealed that the military coup speech in question portrayed politicians in highly negative terms, depicting them as marauders, looters, saboteurs, and nepotists. It also cast them as subversive elements and enemies of the state. Furthermore, the speech framed the revolution as a necessary response to pressing national issues such as arson, corruption, and tribalism, which plagued Nigeria during the First Republic. Through the lens of Critical Stylistics, this analysis has enhanced our understanding of the linguistic strategies used to communicate sensitive and critical socio-political issues to the populace. The coup plotters, in this case, employed rhetorical tools to present a specific perspective on the state of the nation, particularly in relation to political profiteers, swindlers, and those who sought to perpetuate divisions for personal gain.

This research holds significant implications for the academic field, as it underscores the power of discourse in shaping public perception and political narratives. By dissecting the linguistic structures within the speech, we gain insights into how political discourse, particularly in military settings, differs in its use of coercion and intimidation from more subtle forms of democratic political speech aimed at garnering support and public trust. The patterns of discussion identified in this study not only provide clarity on the rhetorical methods used during the Nigerian military coup of January 15, 1966, but also contribute to the broader understanding of how language functions as a tool for persuasion and manipulation in political contexts.

For other researchers, this study opens avenues for further investigation into the use of language in political discourse, particularly in non-democratic settings. It emphasizes the need for continued exploration of how linguistic choices reflect and perpetuate power dynamics, influence public opinion, and shape historical narratives. The findings underscore the importance

of critical discourse analysis as a means to decode political intentions and the far-reaching impact of language in both historical and contemporary political contexts.

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An Intersectional Visual Analysis of Iranian EFL Textbook of "Vision 2" for Analyzing Visual Representations of Gender, Race, and Nation

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ABSTRACT

English textbooks can be the frontiers of Second Language (L2) and world views for English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners. This qualitative study aimed to uncover how pictures of Iranian-published English textbooks represent identities in terms of gender, race, and nation. To this end, an intersectional lens was employed for analyzing the English textbook Vision 2 taught in Iranian high school as the subject of the study. Analysis of visual data, using the models proposed by Nelson (2019) and Zarza (2018), indicated that Vision 2 failed to offer a successful and realistic representation of gender, race, and nation for EFL learners. Insufficient representations of female characters, different races, and nations were the most prominent findings of the present research. This study provided some explanations and suggestions for the following revision of EFL textbooks.

KEYWORDS: EFL; Intersectionality; Textbook analysis; Vision 2

1. Introduction

The intersectionality concept originated in old decades but the term was coined in 1989 by Crenshaw in the U.S. (Crenshaw, 1994). Today, this concept has advanced in other research areas such as Sociology (Choo & Ferree, 2010), Education (Tefera et al., 2018), Medicine (Wilson et al., 2019), Mathematics Education (Bullock, 2018), Chemistry (French et al., 2023), and Psychology (Grzanka et al., 2020). The reason for the importance of studying intersectionality in education in general and in EFL education in particular might be the crucial role of educational materials in shaping learners' thoughts and their subsequent actions and behaviors in response to social and international interactions (Myers, 1997; Reid, & Miller, 1980; Wijayanti et al., 2022).

English textbooks in public education not only clarify the compilers' ideas and their thoughts but they can uncover compilers' intentions for training potential learners and preparing them for their future roles. Although learners usually are not limited to public educational materials for learning fundamental steps and views in socialization and internationalization, EFL materials in public education can play a pivotal role in nurturing social and international views for those who accept public

educational materials as the foundation for education. Remembering that the purpose of the educational system has been noted to prepare individuals for getting social roles and considering the rapid advances in the digital era for studying, working, and living as an international citizen, this study tried to shed light on the untouched aspect of intersectionality in Iranian public education. In sum, educational systems are not responsible for teaching basic knowledge to individuals but they have to utilize broader views to train people for a peaceful and collaborative version of social and international lifestyles. Further, the collection of Vision has been one of the revised versions of EFL education in public education in Iran, so the contribution of this study can play a role for educational policy-makers, material developers, and course designers. In addition, EFL teachers might find this study, interesting and relevant to their professions.

2. Literature review

Textbook analysis has been recognized as one of the key lines of research in ELT. In recent decades and studies on textbook analysis and visual analysis have increased (Gulya & Fehérvári, 2023; Hamid, 2022; Sleeter, & Grant, 2017; Ullah, & Skelton, 2013) and some of them are reviewed in this section.

2.1. Visual textbook analysis

Mulcahy and Samuels (1987) in their study of illustrations over three hundred years in the U.S. published textbooks discussed that pictorial aspects of textbooks can resemble the graphical arts of ancient caves i.e. both of these examples aimed at interacting through pictures. Based on their study, hieroglyphics, Chinese scripts, and TV commercials were also in the categorization of visual interactions. The main contribution of pictures in educational materials such as textbooks has been notified as the learning facilitators (Chen et al., 2019; Hafiz, & Anisa, 2022). This critical contribution does not seem to be replaced by other things in all kinds of textbooks either ELT or other subjects (Nisak et al., 2021). Further, Masur (1998) pointed to the use of superficial pictures as the inevitable aspect of textbooks for the ease of meaning-making. Continuing this line of research, Stylianidou (2002) confirmed that visual aspects of textbooks not only facilitate understanding but can also facilitate teachers' tasks in teaching. From cognitive, affective, and motivational psychology, Lenzner et al. (2013) noticed students' attention, motivation, and affective aspects in response to pictures in textbooks. According to their findings, when students had a low level of background knowledge in a given part, pictures could help students to compensate in the learning process. In recent years, Derakhshan (2024) studied and discussed on the importance of visual aspects of textbooks and noted that issues such as culture seem to be part of Iranian EFL textbooks. Thus, examining textbooks in terms of different semiotic approaches seems to be critical for updating textbooks. This line of research still seems to have great potential for investigation.

2.2. Gender representations in textbooks

Searching in the studies of gender representation in textbooks uncovered that the main motive for such studies has been recognized as providing an equal opportunity for both genders to obtain social roles in their societies (Blumberg, 2008). Prior studies have shown that women were presented with the role of mother in EFL textbooks which can display that textbooks were not representative of the real world (Otlowski, 2003). Since pictorial aspects of textbooks can be "memorable", this part of education deserves high attention and expertise works (Levin, & Mayer, 2012).

To review some of the relevant literature, Law, and Chen (2004) in their analysis of textbooks in Hong Kong observed that textbooks preserved the stereotypes of genders. In the subsequent research, Good et al. (2010) advanced beyond recognition of stereotypes of gender textbooks and suggestions. They could also predict how these gender stereotypes can endanger female social roles and statuses. In the following study, Foroutan (2012) also examined how genders were presented in Iranian textbooks in terms of socialization theory for understanding the educational system and materials. Based on his study, the representation of genders in textbooks can influence gender socialization. He also identified that male and female stereotypes were observed hierarchically in the textbooks. In the next study, Sovič and Hus (2015) studied textbooks for the gender stereotype and reported that they could observe that although the material and contents were adapted for young learners' cognitive system, the male characters were presented more in comparison with female characters in the textbooks. In the following international research, Islam and Asadullah (2018) also checked textbooks published by Malaysian, Indonesian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi educational systems and confirmed that textbooks were not impartial in terms of gender in the educational context. In the following study, Lestariyana et al. (2020) checked gender roles in Indonesian ELT textbooks and reported that the stereotypes of genders were presented in the textbook thus; they suggested that considering the role of textbooks in transforming values for the next generations, it might be very determinative to consider gender equality and possible bias in compiling textbooks. In the next research, Hosseini Ahmadabadi and Azad (2023) tried to analyze ELT textbooks in Iran with an EFL teachers' lens. The main focus of their study was on the representation of gender and gender pedagogical effects. Having conducted a survey and semi-structured interview with 330 male and female EFL teachers, they reported that male characters had a significant role in the contents represented in the textbook. They also reported that EFL teachers believed that the inequality observed in the gender roles of the textbooks can influence students' future social roles

either in education or in vocation. As noted above gender stereotypes cannot be linked to one context thus the study of gender bias and stereotypes seems to have a contribution beyond local settings.

Despite many attempts to analyze Iranian textbooks in general (Seddighi et al., 2021; Zarei, & Hossein Nia, 2023) and English textbooks in particular (Rashidi & Kehtarfard, 2014), there are still aspects of textbooks which need investigation. This study examined how intersectionality might be considered in the pictures of English textbooks in Iran. The main point that differentiates the present study from the previous ones such as Hosseini Ahmadabadi and Azad (2023) might be the concentration on pictorial aspects of EFL textbooks, as the part of the textbook that can catch students' attention even before the reading phase. The crucial impression caused by textbook pictures was one of the key motivations for selecting this aspect of textbooks (Kasmaienezhadfard et al., 2015). Textbook pictures can shape students' meaning of learning, creativity process, imaginary assumption, motivation, stable learning facilitator, and homogenizing society (Kasmaienezhadfard et al., 2015; Perlmutter, 1997; Yasar, & Seremet, 2007). Considering the mentioned issues, Iranian textbooks seem not to be sought for intersectionality in the presented pictures. In addition, EFL textbooks as the compulsory part of general and public education would be taught at every kind of education at the high-school levels (even at skill-based education), thus, the importance of EFL textbooks can go beyond what might be assumed. Regardless of the possibility of English language use for students' future occupations, pictures of EFL textbooks can influence students' cognitive systems for a long time if not lifelong.

Rezki and Yassine (2024) compared gender representation in two different EFL textbooks i.e., Algerian EFL textbook "At the Crossroads" and the French EFL textbook "Let's Meet Up". They used a multimodal analysis for different sections of images, grammar, and visual designs. According to their findings, male characters were used in both EFL textbooks more than female characters. In addition, male characters had more prominent roles than female characters. Based on their conclusion, the Algerian EFL textbook "At the Crossroads" and the French EFL textbook "Let's Meet Up" could not provide a condition for gender equality in the visual aspects of the textbooks while textbooks were published in two different countries and systems. Collectively, such studies imply revisions and improvements of textbooks, policies, and subsequently views in real life.

2.3. Race representation in textbooks

Race has been noted as one of the critical variables in analyzing textbooks, because textbooks cannot be seen as a bank of information but rather, they convey messages for teachers and students (Smith, 2024). Considering the influences of pictures in textbooks, pictures depicted in the textbooks have been studied in different fields such as Mathematics (Pohle et al., 2024). According to Pohle et al. (2024), probably, one of the most prominent effects of neglecting race in the visual aspects of textbooks might be noted in the problematic stereotypes in professions and social role acceptance.

Another instance of focusing on race in visual aspects of textbooks was carried out for the History textbooks in the U.S. (Lewis & Crowley, 2024). The investigation of the History textbooks uncovered that the neglected groups (people of color in this case) were also neglected from their social benefits (Lewis & Crowley, 2024). As it seems, the negative consequences of a lack of consideration for visual aspects of race in textbooks can lead to problems in social and even economic policies. The current literature on intersectionality can uncover how race representations were neglected in the research aspects of EFL research and teachings therefore identifying gaps and filling the gaps need to be followed in the Iranian EFL setting.

2.4. Nation representation in textbooks

The emphasis on the critical role of involving other nations and introducing their culture seems to be pivotal in L2 education (Javed, & Atta, 2024). One of the advantages of representing different nations in the textbooks might be identifying variables in different cultures and learners' own cultures (Astaifi & El Allame, 2024; Khoeriah et al., 2024). In addition, the representation of nations in EFL textbooks can shape learners' ideologies (Shah, 2023). In this regard, Durna (2023) checked the variable of the nation in the History textbooks of Germany, Spain, and Turkey. Based on her findings, representations of pictures were in line with the views that the countries were interested in such as dominance, policies, and economics.

After notifying the importance of adding nations into EFL textbooks, it is also considerable to mention why it is a pitfall for not involving other nations in the EFL textbooks. One of the detrimental consequences of lack of consideration in adding other nations to foreign language education might be lack of developing intercultural for the learners (Sadeghzadegan et al., 2024).

3. Methodology

3.1. Analytical framework

The emphasis on the critical role of involving other nations and introducing their culture seems to be pivotal in L2 education (Javed, & Atta, 2024). One of the advantages of representing different nations in the textbooks might be identifying variables

in different cultures and learners' own cultures (Astaifi & El Allame, 2024; Khoeriah et al., 2024). In addition, the representation of nations in EFL textbooks can shape learners' ideologies (Shah, 2023). In this regard, Durna (2023) checked the variable of the nation in the History textbooks of Germany, Spain, and Turkey. Based on her findings, representations of pictures were in line with the views that the countries were interested in such as dominance, policies, and economics.

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3.2. Method

This textbook analysis used the models of Nelson (2019), and Zarza (2018) for the visual content analysis of the textbook of Vision 2 for analyzing textbooks' representation of gender, race, and nation, of identities in pictures of individuals in public English textbooks published for high school students in Iran. Vision 2 met the required criteria of this study: 1) it was the nationally published textbook taught in both public and private schools in Iran, and 2) it had pictures and illustrations of people. Table 1 presents the preliminary features of Vision 2.

Table 1. Data Source: Vision 2 preliminary features

No.	Title	Page analysis
1	Vision 2	Total pages= 110 Pages with photo/ illustrations of people= 37 Analyzed pictures=51

As Table 1 reports, the raw data of this study (51 pictures) were collected from 37 pages in which the illustration of human beings was presented either in the form of real photos of individuals or in the format of drawing and painting. The raw data was classified based on the variables of the investigation i.e., gender, race, and class. To this end, the pictures were saved into electronic forms with brief explanations for subsequent categorizations. Another issue for categorizing the pictures was the consideration of pictures captions but it became apparent that pictures in the English textbooks lacked captions for additional information. In other words, the pictures were used as the instructional facilitator and decorating pages therefore, the book compilers seem to assume that no caption was needed.

One of the authors coded the pictures and then the coded tables were double-checked by other assistant experts. After examination and classification of the pictures, 51 Pictures were selected for the final analysis based on the models of Nelson (2019), and Zarza (2018). The software of M.S. Excel was used for the data classification; summarization and analysis (see the Appendix section). The coding table was checked and analyzed based on the research questions, variables,s and the purpose of the study. The results obtained from the analyzing models are presented in the subsequent section.

4. Results

In the analysis stage, it became apparent that among 51 pictures, only one picture encompassed characters of both genders male and female. Table 2 reports gender distribution in textbook pictures.

Table 2. Gender distribution in Vision 2 pictures

Genders in a picture	Number of pictures	Percent (%)
M & F	1	1.96
Male	37	72.54
Female	13	25.49
Total	51	100

As shown in Table 2, males were the dominant characters in the visual analysis of Vision 2. Table 3 focused on the alphabetical order of the races shown in Vision 2.

Table 3. Race distribution in Vision 2 pictures

Race in a picture	Number of pictures	Percent
African American	2	3.92
American	2	3.92
Asian	45	88.23
European	2	3.92
Total	51	100

Table 4 displays the distribution of nations in the pictures of Vision 2.

Table 4. Nation distribution in Vision 2

Nation representation in a picture	Number of pictures	Percent
African American	2	3.92
American	1	1.96
Arabian	1	1.96
European	2	3.92
Iranian	45	88.23
Total	51	100

The qualitative analysis of the visual aspects of Vision 2 uncovered that Vision 2 emphasized the role of men, the Iranian race, and the nation.

5. Discussion

The findings could verify that revised Iranian EFL textbooks still focused on male and national race and nation. In other words, Iranian EFL textbooks were used to expand EFL learners' interests in their nation and culture. The obtained results could be similar results in the studies conducted by Sadeghzadegan et al. (2024) who also admitted the traditional views in Iranian EFL textbooks. The results were also similar to Phuong and Vanderstraeten (2024) who noted the emphasis on National Identity in EFL textbooks. Such similarity might be linked to the war experiences of the two countries Iran and Vietnam and the considerations of their territory. While these findings can trigger solutions for following revisions of the textbooks, it seems vital to check and examine EFL textbooks' content and visual aspects with experts. The key question of such view might be "Why do EFL learners need to study English?" if the answer is to communicate with other nations, races, and genders thus those groups should be added to the EFL textbooks' visual and content parts. Another assumption for interpreting this result might be preserving young generations from being attracted by Western culture and possibly preventing future brain drain. While it is worth noting that brain drain can have other reasons, the scope of this study does not discuss further on this aspect.

One of the possible reasons for achieving these results might be the stabilized traditional views on women's role in social life despite the revolutionized status of women in comparison with past eras. Another possible explanation for the findings might be the lack of opportunity for interacting with other nations. If there were a considerable number of international communications with diverse nations and races, there might be considerations into the chance of such interactions and thus adding the pictures of diverse groups in Vision 2. While there are many chances to watch different nations and races on social media these days, it seems necessary to add representations for less-attended groups in the EFL textbooks. Another possible explanation for the current status might be dealing with the conservative approach to teaching and learning Western languages and culture that has been followed by the authorities in Iran (Orakcı & Khalili, 2024). Such an approach could lead to preventing the use of Western's (or other nations' and races') elements. Since this approach cannot provide a real picture of the world for the EFL learners; this approach seems to need revisions based on the EFL learners' needs.

The main contribution of this study might be uncovering how people may see the English language, English language learning, and individuals of other nations. The findings of this study can also clarify how Iranian English textbooks looked and taught globalized views in EFL education. Probably, this study might emphasize that EFL education should not be regarded as training in grammar, vocabulary, and written aspects of the English language. In other words, learning a new language necessitates considering the target language and global cultures, and more importantly the latest educational trends (Khalili, & Adel, 2024; 2023a & 2023b).

Although the relevant theories of this study were discussed above, this study can be linked to the other theories. In other words, since the case of gender in the intersectionality theory can be linked to feminist studies, this study can be linked to Feminist Theory as well. The main role of Feminist theory has been noted to be providing equity and equal opportunity for

women in social settings. Textbooks can play a significant role in shaping equal social roles for women. Female students can accept that they have authority over their personal lives to create promotional opportunities for themselves while male students can accept the beneficial role of women in their societies. Thus, no one can assume that education has been seen as the end of individuals' social lives, but it is the starting point for advancing in sciences and jobs (Knudsen, 2006).

One of the main contributions of this study was reminding which groups were neglected in the EFL textbooks and need to be considered in future revisions of the present draft. As there have been revisions for the present textbooks, the promising approach of the Ministry of Education in improving textbooks might be another positive part of this study.

6. Conclusion

Having analyzed the visual aspect of Vision 2, this study will suggest remedies for coping with such as condition. Reminding the absence of minorities in Vision 2 can clarify that the revised version of Vision 2 might be more productive by adding neglected groups of Gender, Race, and Nation. Advancing to the new era of education necessitates consistent analysis and revisions in educational materials, training courses, teachers' educations, and teaching and learning trends (Smith, 2024). This study reminded us that without considering all groups in the visual aspects of EFL textbooks, setting for success in different aspects of human social life might not be possible.

One of the limitations of this research was the focus on one textbook which impeded concentration on other textbooks in Iran, either in English or in other subjects. Another limitation of this research was the focus on just the visual aspects of the textbook thus, this study could not check the contents noted in the textbook. Since this study checked a limited scope of intersectionality in English textbooks, the finding of generalizability needs caution. Further, this study checked Iranian-published English textbooks thus this study failed to add possible comparisons and contrasts.

Suggestions for further research can focus on textbook analysis in terms of both content analysis and visual analysis to provide a comprehensive perspective of the textbook materials. In addition, scholars can examine if textbooks of other subjects (other than English) have considered intersectionality in their fields. Future studies can focus concentrate on comparative research between Iranian and other nations' published English textbooks to provide a more realistic view of Iranian textbooks.

The implications of this study are related to educational policy-makers, course designers, task developers, teacher trainers, and material developers. Considering the emotional aspects of education can pave the way for developing more peaceful, bright, and collaborative societies and countries. Moreover, investing in nurturing besides educating can facilitate international collaboration and scientific advancements.

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8. Declaration of conflict of interests

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

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10. References

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11. Appendix

Data classification and summarization of individuals' pictures in Vision 2

No	Picture ID	Lesson	Page	Gender	Race (American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, & White)	Nation	Activity in picture

Evaluating the Technological Proficiency of Iranian EFL Teachers in Alignment with TESOL Technology Standards

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluates the technological proficiency of Iranian EFL teachers in alignment with the TESOL Technology Standards, addressing both their familiarity and application of these standards in the unique Iranian context. Utilizing a mixed-method approach, 122 teachers completed a questionnaire to assess their knowledge of the TESOL standards, while 15 participants engaged in semi-structured interviews to discuss the applicability of these standards in Iran. Results show that while most teachers are proficient in basic technology use, they demonstrate moderate familiarity with advanced pedagogical applications such as professional collaboration and assessment using technology. The study also identifies challenges unique to Iran, including internet censorship, restricted access to online platforms, and inadequate infrastructure. These factors limit the full implementation of TESOL standards. Moreover, the study suggests that TESOL standards should be updated to reflect the growing importance of online teaching and AI integration. Recommendations are made to modify the standards to better suit local constraints, while emphasizing the need for institutional support and ongoing professional development. The findings contribute to improving technology integration in language teaching, particularly in contexts facing technological barriers.

KEYWORDS: TESOL technology standards; Technological proficiency; EFL teachers; Technology Inegration

1. Introduction

In the 21st century, technology has wrought profound changes across every facet of our lives, and second language education is no exception (Park & Son, 2020). The ubiquitous presence of technological devices in language learning environments has prompted educators to acknowledge that teaching and learning a second language without integrating technology is, at best, impractical and, at worst, impossible. As Nushi and Eqbali (2018) suggest, technology has catalyzed a transformation of traditional language classroom practices, ushering in new possibilities for both learners and instructors.

Key to the effective integration of technology in language classrooms is the proficiency of language teachers, who occupy pivotal roles as both primary users and facilitators of technological tools. These instructors must not only possess a deep understanding of their subject matter but also the capability to harness technology to its fullest potential. This entails

proficiency in both the technical intricacies of these tools and the pedagogical strategies necessary to effectively utilize them in an educational setting, a concept commonly referred to as Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) (Tafazoli & Meihami, 2023).Successful implementation hinges on the ability of language instructors to select the most suitable tools and applications for specific learning objectives, adapt and create digital resources that align with the curriculum, and engage students effectively (Güneş & Adnan, 2023). Additionally, they must skillfully address the diverse learning needs and preferences of their students while staying attuned to the ever-evolving technological landscape (Fütterer et al., 2023). Empowering language educators requires a holistic approach that combines technological proficiency, pedagogical expertise, adaptability to evolving tools, and a commitment to enhancing language learning through strategic technology integration. This approach equips instructors to create dynamic and effective learning experiences for students in the digital age (Li et al., 2022).

The TESOL Technology Standards, initially formulated by Healey et al. (2011), were designed explicitly to equip language teachers, among other stakeholders, with the knowledge and competencies needed for effective technology integration in their teaching environments. These standards offer a comprehensive framework of 14 standards, each supported by performance indicators, serving as evidence of their acquisition. The standards provide clear guidance for teachers on employing technology in a pedagogically effective manner, thereby enhancing the quality of instruction within their classrooms. This study focuses on the standards customized for teachers.

This research aims to evaluate the qualifications of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in private language institutes in Iran against the TESOL Technology Standards. Specifically, it seeks to gauge their familiarity with and adherence to these standards, considering the acknowledged benefits of technology in language education (Sun, 2022). The investigation intends to identify any gaps between the educational prerequisites for technology-integrated language instruction and the actual competencies of teachers. By scrutinizing instructors' qualifications, including their capacity to develop technology-adapted resources and proficiency in utilizing the latest technological advancements, the study also seeks to determine the adequacy of these qualifications for effective technology integration in classrooms.

Furthermore, the study explores the feasibility of implementing existing standards in Iranian language classes and assesses the need for potential adjustments or additions. Acknowledging the influence of local contextual factors on standards' adoption and effectiveness, the unique Iranian perspective is essential for evaluating the applicability and suggesting modifications where needed. Ultimately, the research aims to provide valuable insights into the current state of English language teaching in Iran, guiding future initiatives to enhance the qualifications of EFL instructors and elevate the overall quality of language education in the country.

2. Literature review

2.1. Harmonizing Language Education with Technology: A Symphony of Learning in the Digital Age

In today's digital age, the integration of technology in language classrooms has transformed the landscape of language education. The marriage of technology and language learning has ushered in a new era, one where traditional language classrooms without technology seem almost unimaginable. Technology has become an indispensable tool for both language learners and educators, revolutionizing the effectiveness and engagement of language instruction (Iberahim et al., 2023).

The digital revolution in language education offers learners an extensive array of resources and unparalleled exposure to the English language. Through technology, learners can seamlessly interact with native speakers on social media platforms, access a diverse range of instructional content on platforms like YouTube, and even immerse themselves in language experiences through video games. In summary, technology has become a catalyst for modern language education, providing learners and teachers alike with unparalleled flexibility, resources, and real-world connections that facilitate the language learning process (Gulmirakhon & Nozimakhon, 2023).

However, the success of technology in the classroom hinges on how it is leveraged by educators. Teachers, as primary users, play a pivotal role in harnessing technology to enhance learning and make it meaningful for their students. Proficient use of technology by teachers is of paramount significance. Effective training, provided by educational authorities, is the differentiating factor that empowers teachers to harness the full potential of technology (ElSayary, 2023).

Training programs are crucial in shaping the quality of future language educators. A proficient language teacher must excel not only in pre-service training but also undergo continuous guidance and evaluation from institute supervisors. Participation in ongoing educational workshops aimed at improving their English teaching skills is essential. In today's educational landscape, the integration of technology into the classroom is a critical facet of language instruction. Training programs must equip teachers with the requisite knowledge and skills to effectively employ various technological tools in their teaching practices, offering periodic workshops on contemporary strategies and methods for leveraging technology within the classroom (Basilotta-Gómez-Pablos et al., 2022).

The preparation of professional language teachers has long been a paramount concern for educational institutions. In response to this imperative, standards and frameworks have been meticulously devised to equip future educators with the necessary competencies. These standards encompass a spectrum of crucial topics, ranging from effective classroom management to the development of instructional materials, and, to some extent, the integration of technology in the learning environment.

Numerous frameworks serve as guiding beacons in the field of language teacher education, including the European Profile for Language Teacher Education (Kelly et al., 2004), the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Foreign Languages European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Foreign Languages short for EPOSTL (Newby et al., 2007), and ACTFL's Program Standards for the Preparation of Foreign Language Teachers (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 2013).

Despite the recognized significance of technology in teacher training, it is concerning that many programs have overlooked this crucial dimension. This gap poses a challenge to fully realizing the potential of technology in language education and underscores the need for a concerted effort to address this oversight (Arnold & Ducate, 2015). Key frameworks and organizations play a pivotal role in shaping language teacher education and incorporating technology into language instruction. The European Profile for Language Teacher Education (EPLTE) and the standards set by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) are foundational in this regard. Specific attention is also given to technology standards, such as the Technology Standards for Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), a relatively recent addition to language education methodologies (Hubbard, 2008).

These standards, often articulated as goals, delineate the educational potential of computer use in language teaching and outline the necessary technical skills for educators (Lomicka & Lord, 2011). International organizations focused on teacher education, such as The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), have identified specific criteria and performance indicators related to educational technology for teachers. These criteria serve as essential guidelines to be implemented in the educational process, reflecting the evolving landscape of language education (Healey et al., 2011).

2.2. TESOL technology standards

Healey et al, (2011) introduced the TESOL Technology Standards, a significant milestone in offering comprehensive guidance to teachers on the effective integration of technology into language teaching and learning. These standards were meticulously designed to serve as a valuable resource for teachers, learners, teacher-educators, and administrators, equipping them with the essential skills and competencies required to seamlessly incorporate technology into language classrooms. The TESOL Technology Standards not only provide a clear roadmap but also function as a structured framework for shaping professional development endeavors and pedagogical strategies aimed at enhancing technology integration in language education.

One of the key goals of the TESOL Technology Standards is to equip language teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively use digital tools and resources in their instruction. This includes utilizing technology to differentiate instruction, foster critical thinking and creativity, promote learner autonomy, and encourage collaboration among learners and with experts and native speakers. Additionally, the TESOL Technology Standards highlight the importance of creating inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments, promoting the responsible and ethical use of technology, and engaging in ongoing professional development related to technology-enhanced language teaching. In order to effectively integrate technology into language classrooms, Sun (2022) suggests that language teachers must possess certain necessary standards and be able to perform specific activities with technology. A total of 14 standards, organized under four main goals for language teachers, have been identified and are outlined below.

Standard 1: language teachers demonstrate knowledge and skills in basic technological concepts and operational competence, meeting or exceeding TESOL Technology Standards for students in whatever situation they teach.

Standard 2: language teachers demonstrate an understanding of a wide range of technology supports for language learning and options for using them in a given setting.

Standard 3: language teachers actively strive to expand their skill and knowledge base to evaluate, adopt, and adapt emerging technologies throughout their careers.

Standard 4: language teachers use technology in socially and culturally appropriate, legal, and ethical ways.

Standard 5: language teachers identify and evaluate technological resources and environments for suitability to their teaching context.

Standard 6: language teachers coherently integrate technology into their pedagogical approaches.

Standard 7: language teachers design and manage language learning activities and tasks using technology appropriately to meet curricular goals and objectives.

Standard 8: language teachers use relevant research findings to inform the planning of language learning activities and tasks that involve technology.

Standard 9: language teachers evaluate and implement relevant technology to aid in effective learner assessment.

Standard 10: language teachers use technological resources to collect and analyze information in order to enhance language instruction and learning.

Standard 11: language teachers evaluate the effectiveness of specific student uses of technology to enhance teaching and learning.

Standard 12: language teachers use communication technologies to maintain effective contact and collaboration with peers, students, administration, and other stakeholders.

Standard 13: language teachers regularly reflect on the intersection of professional practice and technological developments so that they can make informed decisions regarding the use of technology to support language learning and communication.

Standard 14: language teachers apply technology to improve efficiency in preparing for class, grading, and maintaining records.

2.3. Research questions:

This study is centered around three primary research questions, aiming to provide comprehensive insights into the alignment of TESOL Technology Standards within the practices of Iranian EFL teachers and to assess their perceived sufficiency in Iranian English language classes.

1. To what extent do Iranian EFL teachers implement the TESOL Technology Standards proposed by Healey et al. (2011) in their instructional practices?

2. What is the prevailing attitude among Iranian EFL teachers regarding the applicability of TESOL Technology Standards in the context of English language classes in Iran?

3. Do EFL teachers in Iran consider the existing TESOL Technology Standards adequate, or do they perceive a need for the addition or elimination of specific standards to better align with the unique characteristics of Iranian English language education?

These research questions serve as the foundation for exploring the current state of technology integration among EFL teachers in Iran, shedding light on both their practices and perspectives concerning the TESOL Technology Standards.

3. Methodology

3.1. Design

To evaluate the knowledge and competencies of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Iran in alignment with the TESOL Technology Standards, and to delve into EFL teachers' perceptions and experiences regarding the utilization of these standards in Iranian English language classes—evaluating their sufficiency or the need for additions or eliminations—a mixed-method research design was implemented. This methodological approach was chosen to facilitate a comprehensive exploration of participants' experiences and perspectives. Emphasizing both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, this design aims to yield nuanced insights, enriching our understanding of the research questions at the core of this study.

3.2. Participants

In this study, the selection of EFL teachers was carried out through a convenience, non-probability sampling technique, which is based on the availability and accessibility of participants (Pace, 2021). The study's sample consisted of 122 EFL teachers, all of whom possessed a minimum of two years of experience in teaching General English courses at various levels, spanning from beginners to advanced, in private language institutes throughout Iran. While it is acknowledged that convenience sampling may not offer a comprehensive representation of all EFL teachers in Iran, it was a deliberate choice that allowed for a focused and in-depth examination of the knowledge and competencies of those teachers who were readily available and willing to participate in the study.

The second group had 15 English teachers who taught general English classes at different levels, from beginner to advanced. Each of these teachers had gathered 4 to 8 years of teaching experience at different institutes. Their inclusion in the study was based on a convenience sampling approach, a non-probability sampling technique where participants voluntarily

agreed to take part. Subsequently, each teacher was provided with the TESOL Technology Standards and familiarized themselves with the content. They were then interviewed regarding the practicality of these standards in Iranian language classes, specifically exploring potential additions or eliminations.

3.3. Instruments

Ary et al. (2002) highlight the usefulness of questionnaires as a valuable tool for gathering quantitative data in research. In line with their recommendation, a questionnaire was chosen as the primary data collection method for the first group of participants in this study. The questionnaire used in this research was thoughtfully designed to provide a structured approach to gathering information.

The questionnaire was carefully designed, based on the 14 TESOL Technology Standards performance indicators introduced by Healey et al. (2011). These indicators are widely recognized as a thorough guide for effectively using technology in language education. The questionnaire, adapted from Hubbard's (2011) work, aimed to fully explore EFL teachers' knowledge and understanding of the TESOL Technology Standards. It assessed not only the teachers' theoretical understanding of these standards but also how they applied them in their daily teaching. The goal was to find out how much technology EFL teachers used in their teaching methods, what specific technologies they used, and how they perceived the impact of these technologies on their students' learning outcomes.

The questionnaire consists of 65 questions divided into four goals based on the TESOL Technology Standards for English teachers who integrate technology into their classrooms. Each goal comprises several performance indicators, and participants are required to select one option from "Well," "Okay," "Somewhat", and "Not at all" to indicate their proficiency in relation to each statement. Additionally, participants have the opportunity to provide comments for each sentence (The questionnaire is provided in Appendix A for further details). To enhance the reliability and validity of the data collected through the questionnaires, careful pre-testing and piloting were conducted before administering them to the study's participants. This ensured that the questions were clear, relevant, and effectively captured the necessary information.

The second group of participants in this study underwent interviews using a semi-structured approach. Specifically, 15 teachers who willingly participated in the research were introduced to the TESOL Technology Standards before the interview, with a specific focus on assessing their attitudes toward the use of these standards in English language classes and determining whether they perceived them to be sufficient.

The primary objective of these interviews was to gain a deeper understanding of the appropriateness of these standards in the Iranian context and to explore whether there is a perceived necessity to add or eliminate any standards based on the specific needs of the Iranian educational environment.

3.4. Data analysis

In this investigation, we utilized a questionnaire grounded in Hubbard's TESOL Technology standards and performance indicators developed in 2011. The primary objective was to evaluate the integration and performance of these standards within the context of Iran among a group of 122 participants. This analysis aims to provide valuable insights into the participants' perceptions and practices concerning the utilization of technology in TESOL.

The study involved 122 participants and used a questionnaire to explore technology use in EFL classrooms, following Hubbard's technology standards. Before analyzing the data, we cleaned it to fix missing values and dealt with any outliers to ensure reliable results. The findings were presented using various charts to make the data easier to understand and highlight clear patterns in the participants' responses.

In order to gather data from the second group of participants in this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted online via email and social networking sites. Participants' responses were recorded and saved for subsequent analysis. The collected data were analyzed using a thematic approach involving the categorization of codes and the generation of themes.

The coding process involved identifying patterns within the data by systematically organizing the interview responses into categories based on their frequencies and occurrences. This analytical technique enabled the researchers to identify emerging themes and recognize patterns within the data that were relevant to the research questions. Manual coding was employed to create themes, and the analysis was guided by the 14 TESOL Technology Standards indicators.

Thematic analysis was chosen as the most suitable method for this study due to its ability to capture detailed patterns and nuances within the data while also allowing for flexibility in the interpretation of findings. This approach facilitated a comprehensive exploration of the data and helped to ensure that the findings were grounded in the experiences and perspectives of the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Moreover, it allowed for a detailed examination of the research questions and the identification of key themes that could be used to inform future research and practice in the field of teacher training courses.

4. Results

In order to answer research question 1, we divided the analysis into four goals. Each goal has its own standards or indicators that show how well technology is used in teaching English. We will review each goal and analyze the teachers' responses.

The first goal focuses on the basic ability to use technology in teaching English and includes standards related to simple technology tasks. Based on the responses, we can conclude that Iranian teachers have a good level of familiarity with basic technology use in their English classes. The results are shown in Figure 2.
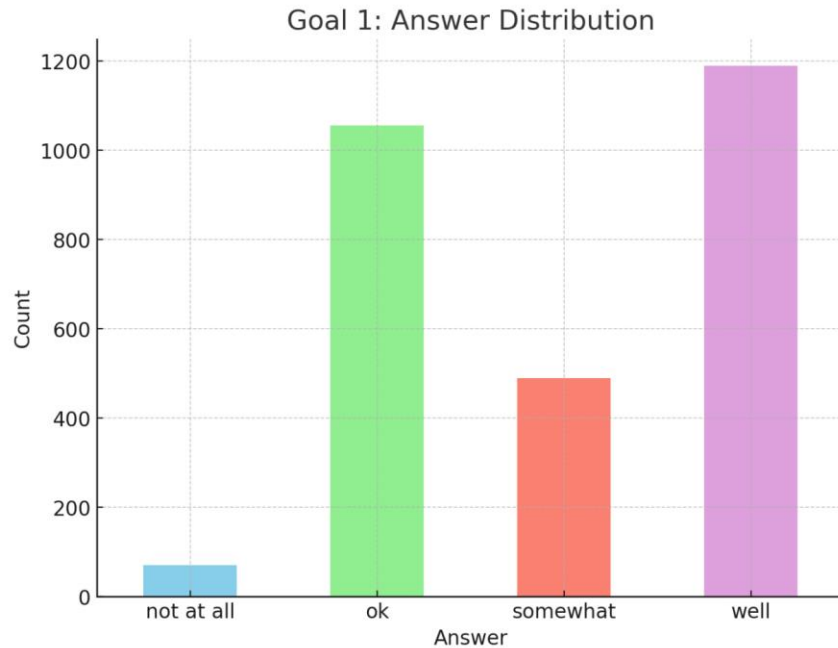
Figure 2. Presentation of responses for goal 1

The second goal focused on how teachers use technology to improve their instructional methods. The results, shown in Figure 2, indicate that teachers have an "OK" level of knowledge regarding the use of technology in teaching, meaning they have a moderate understanding but may not be fully proficient in integrating technology into their teaching methods.
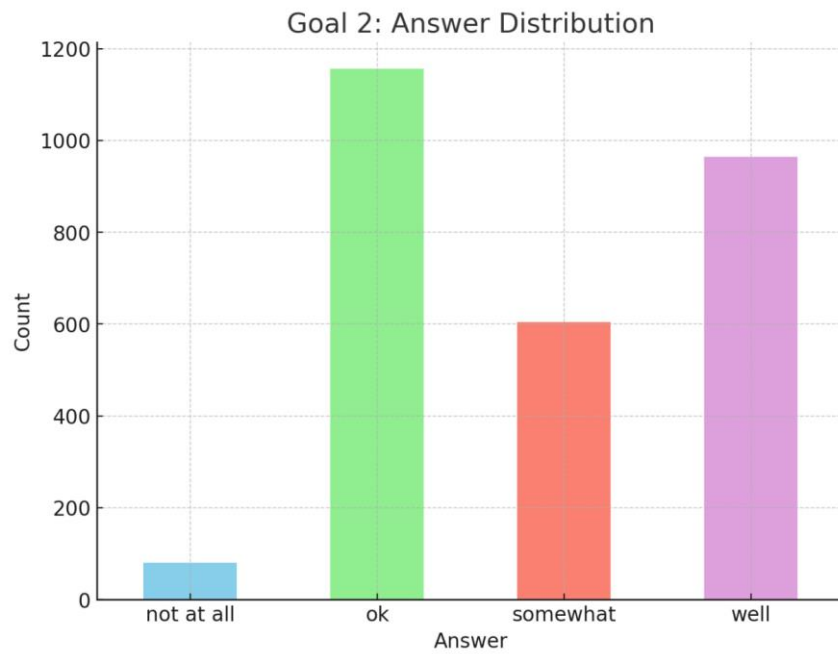
Figure 3. Presentation of responses for goal 2

Goal 3 focused on the professional use of technology, enhancing collaboration and interaction, and self-training to improve knowledge. As shown in Figure 4, participants have an "OK" level of knowledge, with the second most common response being "somewhat." This indicates that teachers' familiarity with using technology for professional purposes is at a mid-level, suggesting room for improvement in these areas.
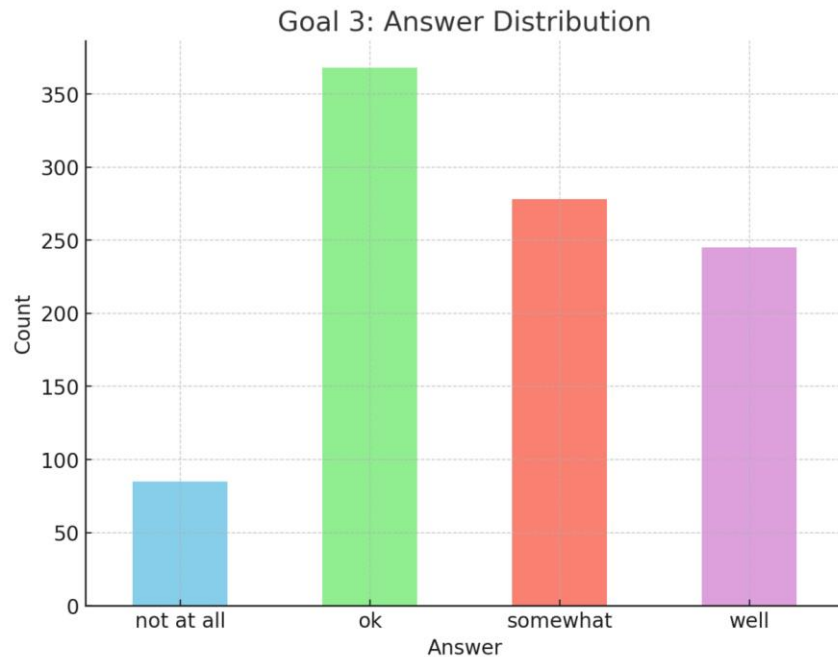
Figure 4. Presentation of responses for goal 3

Goal 4 mainly focused on the integration of technology in the evaluation process and providing feedback to students. According to the results presented in Figure 5, most participants have an "OK" level of knowledge regarding this issue, with the second most frequent response being "Well." This suggests that teachers have a generally good understanding of using technology for evaluation and feedback, with many demonstrating a solid level of competence in this area.
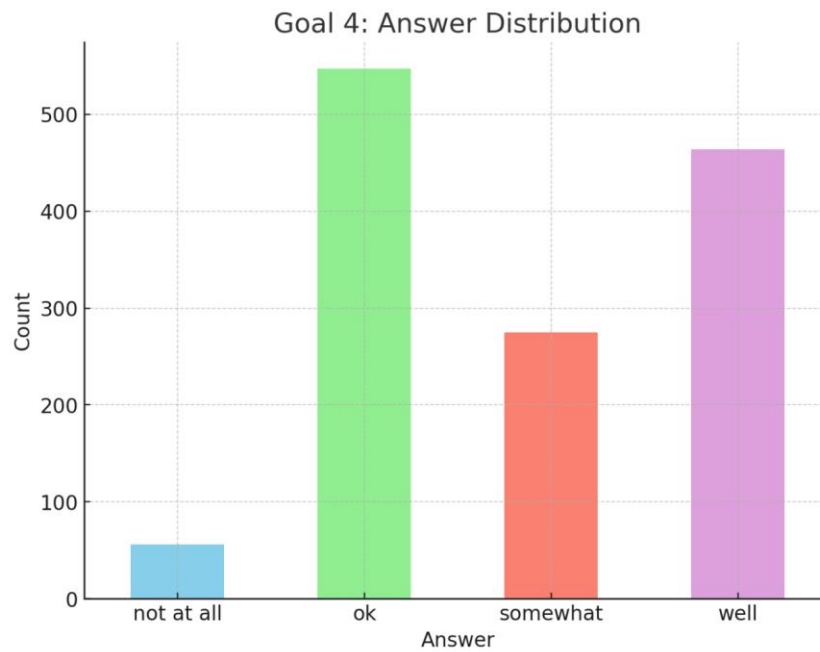
Figure 5. Presentation of responses for Goal 4

In exploring research question 2, we found that English teachers in Iran agree that educational technology standards are useful for teachers everywhere, Iran included. Teacher A points out that these standards are comprehensive, covering how technology can be used in language teaching. However, Iran presents unique challenges. There is significant variation across the country in terms of access to technology, support from authorities, and other factors, making each area distinct. Teacher B shares personal experiences of working in different settings, adapting to the resources available. This adaptability underscores a key finding: while the standards are solid, their application must be flexible to fit the varied Iranian contexts. Teacher C mentioned that when I want to share something with my students on international social media platforms like Telegram or WhatsApp, I need a good VPN or proxy for sharing files. Teacher D also said that if I use Instagram to teach idioms and vocabulary, I need a good VPN and internet connection to share content with my students.

The necessity for teachers to stay updated with technological advancements in education is another theme. Teacher E stresses the importance of keeping up with the latest trends, even if not all can be applied directly. Being informed allows teachers to integrate whatever technology they can, maximizing their resources. Teacher F mentioned that with the rapid development of technology, as a good teacher, I need to participate in the latest workshops and study new books to effectively integrate technology into my classes.

The conclusion drawn from the data is clear. Despite facing issues like internet censorship and limited resources, a dedicated language teacher in Iran is expected to be proactive. By continually updating their technological knowledge and being prepared to work within constraints, they can use technology effectively in their teaching, no matter the situation.

4.1. Adding or removing TESOL technology standards for English teachers in Iran

To address Question 3, we began by examining the standards identified for potential removal, based on the current situation and available resources in Iran. The findings are presented in Table 1, with a detailed explanation to follow. The codes gathered from data collection from teachers are represented in the chart and pertain to standards that are either recommended for removal or considered not applicable in the Iranian context.

Table 1. Standards for Potential Removal Based on the Situation in Iran

Standard 4: language teachers use technology in socially and culturally appropriate, legal, and ethical ways.	- Because of censorship and filtering, it is impossible to legally access some data in our country, leading us to sometimes use resources in ways that might be illegal.
	- In Iran, restrictions and sanctions prevent us from legally accessing websites and paying for downloads, so we often have to get materials through unofficial means.
Standard 5: language teachers identify and evaluate technological resources and environments for suitability to their teaching context.	- These standards cannot be applied because many social networking sites are blocked, making them difficult to use.
	- Using mobile phones is challenging in our country due to the filtering and restrictions on many websites and social networking sites.
	- Using mobile phones and social networking sites in class requires a fast and reliable internet connection, but in some areas or at certain times, the internet connection can be very poor.

Based on feedback from the participants, two standards are identified as least applicable in the Iranian context due to constraints faced by teachers in the country. Thirteen out of fifteen participants stated they encounter challenges such as internet filtering, restricted access to websites and social networking platforms, and difficulties in purchasing educational resources like books and CDs from reputable international websites. Consequently, teachers strive to continue their work despite these obstacles. Adhering to copyright and ethical guidelines in using international websites for educational purposes often equates to forgoing technology use altogether. Furthermore, utilizing cellphones and social networking sites for educational purposes requires overcoming filtering issues, which is a significant challenge for all teachers.

For research question 3, we will also address the inclusion of standards and performance indicators based on the perspectives of Iranian teachers. The standards derived from the most frequently mentioned codes by teachers will be presented in Table 2. Subsequently, these standards will be elaborated upon in detail:

Table 2. Standards Recommended for Inclusion Based on Iranian Context

Goal 1 standard 3: A proficient language teacher aiming to integrate technology in the classroom must possess the ability to conduct classes online and ensure these online sessions are of high quality.	• Following the COVID-19 pandemic, it has become essential for us to familiarize ourselves with online teaching methods.
	• I believe a new set of standards is necessary for online teaching.
	• Online teaching has become more prevalent than face-to-face instruction recently, necessitating my preparation as a modern teacher.
Goal 1 standard 3: A proficient language teacher looking to incorporate technology into their teaching must be knowledgeable about AI, particularly ChatGPT or other chatbots, and understand how to effectively utilize them in the classroom.	• The emergence of AI is a significant development that we must become familiar with and learn to use effectively in teaching.
	• Every teacher must explore how to employ AI to enhance their teaching, tailoring their approach to the specific context in which they work.
	• I am tasked with instructing my students on how to utilize AI to enhance their proficiency.

Goal 2 standard 1: A proficient language teacher must navigate challenges such as sanctions, internet filtering, restricted access to websites, and other limitations on resources.	• As an Iranian teacher, I face many challenges. At first, I felt discouraged, but later, I started looking for solutions. • I spend a lot of time trying to solve our tech problems. • I do my best to find and share online materials with my students and colleagues.
Goal 2 standard 3: A proficient language teacher looking to incorporate technology into their teaching must be able to motivate all students, including those who are not interested in technology or prefer not to use it in class.	• I teach many adult students who are resistant to using technology. As their teacher, it is my duty to encourage them to use technology to enhance their English proficiency. • In my view, it falls upon the teacher to not only motivate students to use technology but also to assist them in utilizing it as a tool for learning, beyond just entertainment.
Standard 17: A proficient language teacher looking to incorporate technology into their teaching should manage the extent to which technology is used. A good teacher does not rely solely on technology for instruction. Overdependence on technology can lead to a lack of effort from teachers, who must regulate their use of it.	• As a teacher who often uses technology, I sometimes feel it's taking over too much. I need to make sure it doesn't lower my teaching quality when it's not around. • Relying too much on anything is not good. A good language teacher should use just the right amount of technology and not let it control their teaching skills.

Table 2 highlights that Iranian teachers proposed two additional performance indicators for the first goal's third standard, which concentrates on developing skills and knowledge to evaluate, adopt, and adapt emerging technologies throughout their careers. The teaching profession encountered two significant shifts; the first and most crucial was triggered by the appearance of COVID-19, which significantly increased the demand for online classes and compelled all teachers to transition to online teaching. Consequently, we can deduce the importance of incorporating a performance indicator emphasizing that an effective teacher integrating technology into education must possess a fundamental understanding of online teaching methods and platforms. It is even proposed that online teaching might necessitate distinct standards specifically for online educators. Moreover, the rising popularity of AI, including the emergence of ChatGPT and chatbots in education, has required teachers to update their knowledge on using this new technological advancement. Teachers must understand how to address its challenges and teach students how to use it ethically and responsibly to enhance learning, rather than for dishonest purposes.

The subsequent performance indicator relates to the second goal's first standard, which is aimed at enhancing teachers' skills in identifying and evaluating the appropriateness of technological resources and environments for their specific teaching contexts. In Iran, teachers are confronted with challenges such as internet filtering, restrictions, limited access to international websites, and difficulties in purchasing materials or books from abroad. Consequently, they are required to adjust to these conditions and devise strategies to incorporate technology into their classrooms effectively. This new indicator emphasizes the necessity for teachers to be prepared for any technological limitations or unexpected malfunctions, and to develop backup plans for their classes. It advocates for maintaining the use of technology in teaching, despite facing challenges in accessing suitable technological resources.

The next additional performance indicator is related to the second goal's third standard, which focuses on the design and management of learning activities and tasks using technology appropriately to meet curricular goals and objectives. This indicator addresses situations where teachers encounter students who are indifferent or resistant to the use of technology in their learning. It becomes the responsibility of the teacher to support and encourage these students to engage with technology, highlighting the numerous advantages that technology can offer in their educational pursuits. Teachers are tasked with showing how technology can significantly enhance the learning experience and contribute to their academic achievements.

Ultimately, a new standard has been introduced to the list. The new standard emphasizes that teachers should use technology wisely in their teaching. It is important for a good teacher to be able to use technology in a way that does not interfere with their teaching abilities. This means that whether there are not enough technological tools or too many advanced ones, the quality of their teaching should not be affected. Teachers should see technology as something that helps them teach better, not something they rely on too much. Depending too heavily on technology can lead to teachers becoming less active

and more like helpers instead of being the main leaders in the classroom. The idea is for teachers to manage technology well in their teaching and to understand its role as a support, making sure it does not take over their primary role.

5. Discussion

The findings from this study are divided into two main components: quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative results indicate that EFL teachers in Iran possess a moderate familiarity with the TESOL Technology Standards, as reflected in the majority of average responses. This aligns with previous research, such as the studies by Mansouri Qadikolaei et al. (2024), which suggest that Iranian teachers have a generally acceptable level of technological awareness. However, our results, consistent with the findings of Momenanzadeh et al. (2023), reveal that a small portion of teachers remain unfamiliar with key technological standards, particularly in terms of integrating technology into pedagogical practices.

The survey responses confirm that Iranian EFL teachers demonstrate a solid understanding of the basic use of technology in their classrooms. This finding is in agreement with Kashanizadeh et al. (2023), who also reported a basic understanding of technology use among teachers in Iran. However, the results highlight a gap when it comes to applying technology for designing learning activities, assessing students, and developing professional technological knowledge. Studies like Taherkhani and Ghaleei (2024) also point out that Iranian EFL teachers are not fully proficient in using technology at a professional level in their classrooms.

5.1. Challenges specific to the Iranian context

The qualitative data revealed key challenges that affect the adoption and implementation of TESOL Technology Standards in Iran. Teachers pointed out that issues such as weak internet connectivity, internet filtering, and the need for reliable VPNs create significant barriers to the practical application of these standards. In many areas, stable internet access is limited, which hinders teachers from effectively using digital tools. This finding matches the study by Ghourchian (2024), which identified similar challenges related to sanctions and internet restrictions in Iran.

Given these challenges, teachers emphasized the need for adjustments to the TESOL Technology Standards. They suggested that while the standards themselves are relevant and useful, they must be adapted to the unique conditions in Iran. For example, the current standards assume unrestricted access to the internet and social media platforms, which is not possible in many Iranian regions. As a result, standards such as Standard 4 (ethical use of technology) and Standard 5 (identifying and evaluating technological resources and environments for suitability to their teaching context) may need to be modified to reflect these limitations. The authorities should also provide better infrastructure and support to enable teachers to use technology effectively (Stumbrienė et al., 2024).

5.2. Recommendations for updating TESOL technology standards

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of online teaching, which has not yet been fully addressed by the TESOL Technology Standards. As many educators have shifted to online instruction, it is crucial to introduce standards that encompass the ability to conduct high-quality online classes and develop online resources. The need for this shift is also supported by Al-Rashaida and Massouti (2024), who argue that modern language teachers must excel in both face-to-face and virtual learning environments.

Additionally, the rapid growth of artificial intelligence (AI) in education, particularly tools like ChatGPT, presents a new dimension for language teaching. As Solak (2024) suggests, AI has the potential to support language instruction significantly, but it also requires careful integration to avoid misuse. Teachers must be equipped with the skills to utilize AI tools effectively, and TESOL Technology Standards should be updated to reflect the growing importance of AI in education. Even if a teacher chooses not to use these tools in their classroom, they must still be familiar with AI as their students are increasingly relying on these technologies in their learning (Novawan et al., 2024).

Another important consideration raised by the data is the need for teachers to motivate students, particularly those who are less familiar or comfortable with technology. In line with the findings of David and Weinstein (2024), teachers must play an active role in encouraging students to adopt technology for learning. This is especially important for older students or those resistant to using digital tools in their education. Teachers need to highlight the advantages of technology in enhancing their language learning experience and guide them on how to use these tools effectively.

A final point raised by this study is the need for teachers to balance the use of technology in their classrooms. Technology should be viewed as a tool that enhances teaching, rather than something that replaces essential teaching skills. Al Shuraiaan et al. (2024) emphasize that teachers must learn to manage technology effectively, ensuring that it supports rather than dominates their instructional approach. This balance is critical for maintaining the quality of education, especially in situations where access to technology is limited.

In summary, while the TESOL Technology Standards are broadly applicable to the Iranian context, certain modifications are necessary to address the unique challenges faced by teachers in Iran. These challenges include limited internet access, website filtering, and restricted availability of international resources. It is essential that these standards be updated to incorporate recent technological advancements, such as online teaching and AI integration, to meet the evolving needs of modern educators.

6. Conclusion

The TESOL Technology standards, developed by Healey et al. (2011), were designed to assess English language teachers' knowledge and integration of technology in the classroom. These standards include various goals and performance indicators to evaluate teachers' technological expertise in specific areas of teaching. When analyzed in the Iranian context, it was found that these standards are applicable but require some adjustments due to the unique challenges faced in Iran. Factors such as weak internet connections, website filtering, and the need for reliable VPNs for teachers necessitate specific conditions for the effective implementation of these standards.

On the other hand, it is essential to update these standards to reflect the latest technological advancements and to reconsider some standards based on the unique challenges in Iran. For instance, standards that emphasize the legal and ethical use of online materials or require registration on specific websites can be difficult to follow in Iran. Teachers often prioritize access to materials and websites over following rules or ethical guidelines due to the need to find alternative ways to access these resources. Additionally, standards focusing on teachers' knowledge of using social networking sites and mobile applications may not be practical in Iran because of filtering issues. Some apps are not easily accessible, forcing teachers to find alternative methods for their use.

Additionally, it is necessary to re-evaluate these standards and introduce new ones to address emerging needs. For example, standards should include teachers' knowledge of online classes and platforms, given their increased popularity following the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, standards should cover how to use AI effectively in teaching English as a foreign language. It is also important to focus on motivating all types of learners, including those who are older or less comfortable with technology, to use technology properly in their learning. Ultimately, a good teacher must manage the use of technology in the classroom effectively and not rely on it too heavily. Teachers should maintain control over the classroom and ensure that technology supports, rather than dictates, their teaching choices.

This study focused only on teachers from private language institutes. Future research could expand to include teachers from public schools and universities to provide a broader perspective. Additionally, it is recommended to include learners in future studies to assess their satisfaction with how technology is used by teachers in the classroom. Understanding learners' experiences and perceptions could offer valuable insights into the effectiveness of technology integration in education.

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8. Appendix

A: Questionnaire

Goal (G) and Standard (S) Reference	Well	OK	Some-what	Not at all	Comments (as needed)
G1S1 I know how to perform basic functions (composing, printing, editing, playing, recording, transferring, etc.) with available digital devices in order to accomplish instructional and organizational goals					
G1S1 I know how to prepare instructional materials for students using basic technology tools.					
G1S1 I exercise appropriate caution when using online sources and when engaging in electronic communication.					
G1S2 I can identify appropriate technologies to support a range of instructional objectives.					
G1S2 I know how to use evaluation tools to analyze the appropriateness of specific technology options.					
G1S2 I know how to share information about available technology with colleagues.					
G1S2 I know how to use online technology as available to deliver instructional or support material.					
G1S2 I can locate and adapt a variety of digital resources.					
G1S3 I can utilize technology tools to expand upon a conventional activity.					
G1S3 I know how to keep up with information through a variety of sources (e.g., books, journals, mailing lists, conventions).					

G1S3 I participate in a relevant community of practice or know how to find one.

Goal (G) and Standard (S) Reference	Well	OK	Some-what	Not at all	Comments (as needed)
G1S3 I am able to explore the possibilities inherent in emerging technologies with a critical eye.					
G1S4 I am sensitive to the similarities and differences in communication conventions across cultures, communities, and contexts.					
G1S4 I am aware of my role as a model and demonstrate respect for others in my use of public and private information.					
G1S4 I know how to show awareness and understanding when approaching culturally sensitive topics and am able to offer students alternatives.					
G1S4 I understand and intend to conform to local legal requirements regarding the privacy of students' personal information.					
G1S4 I understand and intend to conform to local legal requirements regarding accessibility.					
G1S4 I respect legal requirements regarding fair use and copyright.					
G1S4 I am aware of local guidelines regarding the use of human subjects for research.					
G1S4 I am aware that electronic communication is not secure and private, and that in some localities, email may be subject to "open records" laws.					
G1S4 I know where and how to seek help in identifying and implementing solutions related to legal requirements.					
G1S4 I fully understand how to protect student privacy.					
G1S4 I recognize and respect student ownership of their work.					
G2S1 I know how to identify technological resources that conform to the limitations of my teaching environments.					
G2S1 I can identify appropriate technology environments (e.g., lab, one computer class, online, independent use) to meet specific learning/teaching goals.					
G2S1 I am able to evaluate technology environments for alignment with the goals of the class.					

Goal (G) and Standard (S) Reference	Well	OK	Some-what	Not at all	Comments (as needed)
G2S1 I am able to evaluate technological resources for alignment with the needs and abilities of the students.					
G2S2 I understand my own teaching styles.					
G2S2 I know how to review my personal pedagogical approaches to use technology to support current teaching styles.					
G2S2 I have a general understanding of the potential and limitations in technology.					
G2S2 I know how to embed technology into teaching rather than making it an add-on.					
G2S2 I am aware of ways to engage regularly in professional development related to technology use and plan to do so.					
G2S2 I can evaluate my use of technology in teaching.					
G2S3 I am familiar with a variety of technology-based options.					
G2S3 I am able to choose a technology environment that is aligned with the goals of the class.					

G2S3 I am able to choose technology that is aligned with needs and abilities of the students (e.g., language learning–focused software, productivity tools, content tools/resources).

G2S3 I am able to evaluate students' level of digital competence.

G2S3 I am able to help students understand how to use the technology to meet instructional goals.

G2S3 I am able to encourage students to think critically about their use of technology in an age-appropriate manner.

G2S4 I am familiar with suggestions from research for classroom practice using technology.

G2S4 I can effectively employ a variety of avenues for getting information about research related to technology use (e.g., communities of practice, conferences).

G2S4 I understand the temporal nature of research findings related to technology use (i.e., that technology changes over time, so older research may not be applicable to current settings).

Goal (G) and Standard (S) Reference	Well	OK	Some-what	Not at all	Comments (as needed)
G2S4 I am aware of multiple research sources and perspectives that inform technology use.					
G2S4 I am able to discern which findings about technology use are most appropriate for my situation.					
G2S4 I share relevant research findings about technology use with others.					
G2S4 I am able to identify the context and limitations of research about technology use so as not to apply findings inappropriately.					
G3S1 I am familiar with a variety of forms of assessment that employ technology.					
G3S1 I know how to employ appropriate digital record-keeping tools and techniques.					
G3S2 I am familiar with research-based principles regarding technology-enhanced assessment.					
G3S2 I know how to use technology-enhanced assessment results to plan instruction.					
G3S2 I know how to interpret computer-based test scores for stakeholders (e.g., TOEFL iBT and other standardized tests).					
G3S2 I know how to elicit student feedback to improve my use of technology.					
G3S3 I know appropriate procedures for evaluating student use of technology (rubrics, checklists, etc.)					
G3S3 I know how to elicit student feedback to improve their use of technology.					
G4S1 I know how to find and draw on resources (lesson plans and teaching ideas) that are posted online.					
G4S1 I know how to implement lesson plans obtained from other teachers via the Internet.					
G4S1 I am aware of online communities of language teachers and belong or plan to belong to one or more.					
G4S1 I share online contact information with students and peers.					
G4S2 I know how to select technology resources that promote appropriate language use.					

Goal (G) and Standard (S) Reference	Well	OK	Some-what	Not at all	Comments (as needed)
G4S2. I understand my options for professional development related to technology integration (e.g., conferences, journals, mailing lists, communities of practice)					
G4S2 I am aware of multiple sources and perspectives that inform technology use.					
G4S2 I am able to discern which technology uses are appropriate for my situation.					
G4S3 I use electronic resources effectively to locate additional materials for lesson planning and classroom use.					
G4S3 I understand various methods of providing electronic feedback on student work (e.g., email, insert comments).					
G4S3 I know how to use technology to collect, organize, and retrieve material and student data.					

The Effect of Teaching Vocabulary through Ilingo Application on EFL Learners' Vocabulary Learning and Vocabulary Learning Strategy Use

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effect of teaching vocabulary through Ilingo application on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' vocabulary learning and Vocabulary Learning Strategy (VLS) use. A total of 83 male intermediate EFL learners participated in this study. Quantitative data were collected through Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT), pre- and post-tests to measure vocabulary learning, and Vocabulary Learning Strategy Questionnaire (VLSQ). The participants were randomly assigned to an experimental group receiving vocabulary instruction through Ilingo application and a control group receiving conventional vocabulary instruction. The statistical analysis of the data revealed significant differences between the two groups in terms of vocabulary learning, with the application-based instruction group outperforming the conventional instruction group. Additionally, higher levels of vocabulary learning strategy utilization were observed for learners who learned vocabulary with Ilingo application. More specifically, statistically significant differences were observed for the deployment of *determination* and *memory* VLSs indicating a higher frequency of use in the experimental group. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the advantages of incorporating technology-driven language learning tools into the EFL classroom. The implications of this study are valuable for EFL educators and curriculum designers, providing evidence-based insights into effective pedagogical approaches in EFL contexts.

KEYWORDS: Ilingo application; Computer-assisted language learning; Mobile-assisted language learning; Vocabulary learning; Vocabulary learning strategies

1. Introduction

The advent of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) applications has not only expanded the horizons of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) but also has offered learners an unprecedented level of flexibility, particularly in terms of accessibility and portability of learning materials. Unlike CALL methods, which lacked this level of convenience, MALL empowers learners to engage with language learning resources on the go, adapting to their dynamic lifestyles and learning preferences.

The landscape of learning and teaching English has undergone a significant transformation in terms of methodologies, approaches, and techniques (Martin & Bolliger, 2018). Thanks to technological advancements, the traditional reliance on blackboards and textbooks for lesson delivery has become obsolete. The rapid integration of online education presents both opportunities and challenges for both students and educators. The constantly evolving and swiftly progressing realm of technology necessitates the incorporation of emerging technologies, such as mobile learning technologies, into the field of education. According to Jee (2011), as mobile technology advances, it provides second/foreign language learners and educators with increasingly expansive chances to engage in target language practice, irrespective of the place and time. The widespread availability of mobile applications has additionally presented the potential for tailoring learning experiences, enabling a learner to engage with the material at his/her preferred time and place (Khojah & Thoas, 2021). Furthermore, MALL software has the potential to be created, embraced, and customized according to the needs, skills, expertise, and learning preferences of the users.

Considering the contemporary demand for foreign language learning in our technology-driven world, scholars and teachers are actively exploring methods to incorporate the utilization of language applications into foreign language education. This integration applies to various contexts, including both classroom-based and independent learning. In line with this changing emphasis on language teaching methods, there has been a growing recognition of the significance of learning vocabulary during the process of learning another language. Ellis (1995) highlighted the significance of Language Learning Strategies (LLSs), particularly in the context of vocabulary development. Among these strategies, one distinct category is known as Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLSs). As a result, there has been a growing interest in recent decades in examining VLSs, which are specific techniques employed when undertaking the specific task of acquiring vocabulary in the target language (Fan, 2020).

The problem of inadequate vocabulary proficiency among EFL learners is emphasized by the observation that despite years of formal English instruction, many learners exhibit limited vocabulary knowledge and struggle to employ a diverse range of words in context (Lei et al., 2022). This problem raises questions about the effectiveness of the current vocabulary teaching techniques employed in EFL classrooms. While traditional approaches to vocabulary instruction, such as rote memorization and isolated word lists, have been the norm for decades, recent developments in language education suggest the potential benefits of more innovative and interactive approaches. One such approach gaining traction is the integration of vocabulary learning through mobile applications, which combine technology, contextualization, and learner autonomy to enhance vocabulary learning (Rafiq et al., 2022).

Nonetheless, the extent to which EFL learners benefit from vocabulary learning opportunities through technology remains uncertain. Consequently, learners may fail to engage with vocabulary learning in a meaningful and effective manner. According to Karami (2019), further investigation is required to explore the utilization of technology in educational settings. Although numerous studies exist in the current body of literature regarding vocabulary learning, persistent challenges still exist among EFL learners, particularly at the intermediate level. Many intermediate-level EFL learners struggle to attain the desired levels of vocabulary proficiency, which ultimately hampers their overall language competence. Therefore, there is a pressing need to investigate and address the challenges surrounding vocabulary development among intermediate-level EFL learners (Hasan et al., 2022). Hence, this study aims to assess the effect of teaching vocabulary through Ilingo application on intermediate EFL learners' vocabulary learning and utilization of VLSs.

2. Literature review

The inception of CALL marked a paradigm shift in language education. Early studies (Levy, 1997; Warschauer & Healey, 1998) explored the integration of software and computer programs to enhance language instruction. These investigations delved into the effectiveness of CALL in providing interactive exercises, multimedia resources, and self-paced learning opportunities. The findings contributed to understanding the potential benefits and challenges of incorporating technology into language classrooms. With the rise of the internet, online language platforms became prominent in language learning research. Platforms like Duolingo and Rosetta Stone attracted attention from researchers (Fan, 2023; Zhang et al., 2021), who sought to evaluate the impact of web-based language learning on proficiency levels, user engagement, and adaptability to individual learning needs. These studies provided valuable insights into the evolving landscape of technology in language education.

With the advent of technology, researchers have explored the integration of digital tools in vocabulary instruction. Studies (Chun & Plass, 1996; Stockwell, 2007) have examined the benefits of multimedia elements, interactive exercises, and adaptive feedback in enhancing vocabulary learning experiences. The efficacy of mobile applications in vocabulary development has been a focal point in recent literature (Stockwell & Liu, 2015). Since the advent of mobile devices like tablets and smartphones, various commercial applications have emerged to support vocabulary learning in different languages. These applications cover general language development (e.g., Duolingo), vocabulary storage (e.g., MyWordBook), and vocabulary retrieval (e.g., Quizlet). Teachers and researchers have also tried creating English vocabulary applications tailored to their specific contexts. For instance, Wu (2015) developed a Basic4Android application to help Chinese college students improve their English vocabulary, reporting that the app users performed significantly better than those in the control group. Similarly,

Wang et al. (2023) designed an Android app presenting 720 common English words to university students in Taiwan which provided more learning opportunities and encouraged daily learning for most students.

Mobile-assisted language learning applications, including *Memrise*, *Quizlet*, *Anki*, *WordUp*, *Stemup*, *Busuu*, *English Place*, *Bright*, *Babbel*, *Lela*, and *ELSA* have gained significant attention in recent years, offering learners innovative and flexible tools to enhance their vocabulary knowledge. *Memrise* employs a gamified approach to vocabulary learning, incorporating mnemonic techniques, multimedia elements, and spaced repetition. Research indicates that its engaging interface positively influences learners' motivation and retention (Wu, 2015). According to Wu (2015), studies suggest the need for further investigation into the long-term impact and transferability of vocabulary learned through *Memrise*. *Quizlet* offers a versatile platform for vocabulary learning through flashcards, games, and quizzes. Research highlights its adaptability to various learning styles and preferences (Waluyo & Bucol, 2021). However, concerns have been raised regarding the potential overreliance on rote memorization and the limited depth of understanding acquired through *Quizlet* (Waluyo & Bucol, 2021). *Anki* utilizes spaced repetition algorithms to optimize vocabulary retention. Studies indicate its effectiveness in promoting long-term memory retention (Nguyen, 2021). Nevertheless, challenges related to the learning curve and user interface have been identified, emphasizing the importance of user-friendly designs in optimizing learning experiences (Khoshsima & Khosravi, 2021). *WordUp* incorporates interactive video content to facilitate vocabulary acquisition in context. Preliminary research suggests that the contextualization of words in videos enhances comprehension and application (Maenza & Gajić, 2020). However, more comprehensive investigations are needed to assess the impact of *WordUp* on diverse learner populations and language proficiency levels.

The effect of mobile applications on vocabulary learning has been explored in various contexts (Başal et al., 2016; Rachels & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2018; Sato et al., 2020). The results of these investigations consistently indicate that the use of MALL programs can markedly enhance learners' vocabulary proficiency and improve their oral communication skills. For instance, Başal et al. (2016) conducted a four-week experiment utilizing *MICASE* to assess the efficacy of a specific mobile application in teaching idioms to EFL learners. The outcomes demonstrated a significant positive impact on learners' vocabulary knowledge, particularly in the application of targeted idioms during foreign language speaking activities.

Rachels and Rockinson-Szapkiw (2018) investigated the impact of MALL software on the vocabulary attainment of elementary Spanish learners. The *Duolingo* Software was employed to teach the experimental group, while the control group received vocabulary instruction through conventional methods. The treatment period lasted for 12 weeks, during which a teacher-made vocabulary achievement test was administered as both a pre- and post-test. The inferential statistics revealed statistically significant differences between the two groups, indicating greater progress and improvement in the experimental group.

Sato et al. (2020) explored the impact of *Quizlet* on the vocabulary development of Japanese undergraduate students. The study involved 94 intermediate undergraduate students, divided into experimental and control groups. The control group was tasked with memorizing expressions along with their corresponding Japanese translations from a paper-based list, to be done outside the classroom. Meanwhile, the experimental group received three weeks of vocabulary instruction through MALL software. Both groups took a teacher-made fill-in-the-blank vocabulary pre- and post-test. The results revealed statistically significant differences in favor of the experimental group on the post-test, leading the researchers to recommend the use of MALL applications for enhancing vocabulary instruction among EFL undergraduate students.

Ahmad et al. (2017) conducted a case study focusing on six migrant women learners who utilized the *ThinkEnglish!* application to enhance their vocabulary knowledge. The participants were required to attend a minimum of five non-MALL sessions, and three participants continued to attend a minimum of five MALL sessions. Pre- and post-session interviews were conducted, and thematic analysis was applied to the data. The findings led the researchers to conclude that MALL programs are potent and resilient tools, highly recommended for teaching and learning vocabulary. However, it's important to note that the study's limitations, specifically the small sample size, may have influenced the results.

On the contrary, Bowles (2017) investigated the impact of generic vocabulary software on enhancing the vocabulary knowledge of undergraduate university students. Data analysis, performed through ANOVA, aimed to compare the participants' language backgrounds and the number of quarters in the English program with their individual score differences on the post-tests. The results did not reveal any statistically significant differences between the scores of the experimental and control groups. These findings suggest that generic vocabulary applications may not have a significantly greater effect than conventional vocabulary teaching methods. However, the researchers propose that the absence of score differences could be attributed to various factors, including the need for longer vocabulary practice time, variations in practice time among participants, and potential limitations in the measurement tools used to assess vocabulary achievement.

Although the integration of MALL and VLS use has not received enough attention among researchers, MALL applications seem to possess the potential to harness the capability of technology in optimizing vocabulary learning by nurturing strategic learners. Among the few studies in this regard, Rahimi and Allahyari (2019) investigated the effect of multimedia-assisted vocabulary learning on EFL learners' vocabulary learning and VLS use. Data analysis confirmed that multimedia incorporation had a significant effect on learners' use of VLSs with a significantly higher frequency of cognitive and memory

strategies. However, the intervention did not lead to a significant difference in the deployment of determination and metacognitive strategies. Kim and Bae (2020) investigated how a digital English learning environment could affect students' learning strategy use. A significant use of compensation strategies followed by memory and metacognitive strategies was reported. Gao and Shen (2020) conducted a study to explore learning strategies deployed by a group of EFL learners in a mobile-assisted learning environment. They reported significant differences in learners' deployment of a particular set of learning strategies indicating variations both in frequency and type from those employed in conventional teacher-led classrooms. The most frequent strategies were found to be metacognitive and commitment control strategies with metacognitive strategies being ahead of commitment control strategies. More recently, Yusoff and Mohd Said (2024) aimed to study the frequency and type of learning strategies used by learners in computer-assisted online classes. Memory strategies were reported to have the highest frequency and affective strategies showed the lowest frequency. Furthermore, a significant relationship between language learning strategy deployment and success in learning English was reported.

The current body of literature exhibits several notable gaps that warrant further investigation in the context of the proposed research. Firstly, a distinct dearth exists in comprehensive studies specifically scrutinizing the efficacy of the *Ilingo* application as a tool for teaching vocabulary within the Iranian EFL milieu. Moreover, a significant lacuna is identified in the literature regarding the focus on intermediate EFL learners. The existing studies predominantly lean towards either novice or advanced proficiency levels, leaving an evident gap in understanding how intermediate learners, a critical demographic, navigate and derive benefits from vocabulary instruction through applications such as *Ilingo*. The literature has yet to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the integration of *Ilingo* may influence learners' vocabulary development and their strategic approaches to vocabulary learning. This study aims to explore the effect of teaching vocabulary through *Ilingo* application on vocabulary development and VLS use of EFL learners. In so doing, the following research questions have been proposed.

1. Does teaching vocabulary through Ilingo application have any significant effect on intermediate EFL learners' vocabulary learning?

2. Does teaching vocabulary through Ilingo application make any significant difference in the frequency and type of vocabulary learning strategy use?

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The participants of this study were selected from a pool of 100 intermediate-level EFL learners in Safir Language Institute in Isfahan, Iran. The participants were recruited through a purposive sampling method to ensure that they met the specific criteria necessary for this research. Those participants who have had any prior experience with vocabulary learning using MALL software were excluded. For this reason, 17 students were excluded from the original sample, and the number of participants decreased to 83. The participants were between the ages of 16 and 21, with an average age of 18. All participants were required to have access to smartphones or tablets compatible with the *Ilingo* application, as this was the primary tool for vocabulary instruction in the study. It should be mentioned that the participants were students majoring in various fields, including Civil Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Computer Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Nursing, Psychology, Education, Veterinary Medicine, and Sports Sciences, which represented a diverse academic background. All participants were at the intermediate level of English proficiency, as determined by the Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT) and had a minimum of 5 years of formal English language learning experience.

It is worth mentioning that prior to the intervention, the participants were provided with informed consent forms outlining the purpose of the study, the data collection procedures, and their rights as participants. They were given the opportunity to ask questions and were required to provide written consent to participate voluntarily in the research.

3.2. Instrument

The research instruments utilized in this investigation encompass the OQPT version 2, the Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT), the Vocabulary Learning Strategies Questionnaire (VLSQ), and the *Ilingo* mobile application.

3.2.1. Oxford quick placement test

The OQPT version 2 comprises two sections, each with increasing difficulty. The initial segment encompasses 40 items, requiring test-takers to select the best-fitting word to fill in the blanks. Only if participants complete the initial segment without problems, they proceed to the second segment. The first segment typically takes around 15 to 20 minutes. The subsequent segment comprises 20 items, encompassing both cloze tests and multiple-choice grammar exercises. This segment usually takes around 15 to 25 minutes to finish.

3.2.2. Vocabulary levels test

The VLT (Schmitt et al., 2001) assesses the extent of learners' vocabulary across four word-frequency categories. Each category comprises 30 items, totaling 120 items. The test-takers are required to select the best-fitting word to match the words with their definitions. This test employs a multiple matching format, where test takers are tasked with matching a set of definitions with specific target words. Given the study's context within a Persian setting, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the VLT was determined prior to the actual study to be .91, indicating a high level of internal consistency reliability.

3.2.3. Vocabulary learning strategy questionnaire

The evaluation of learners' application of VLSs was conducted through the utilization of the VLSQ. The VLSQ originally developed and validated by Schmitt (1997), has also undergone additional validation within the Iranian context by Boroushaki and Lee-Luan (2016). The questionnaire items were designed in accordance with the taxonomy of LLSs, introduced by Oxford (1990). The VLSQ delves into a range of strategies commonly employed by EFL learners for vocabulary learning. It comprises a total of 41 items categorized into five sections. The VLSQ employs a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, with participants providing single answers to each item, with options including 'always (5 points),' 'often (4 points),' 'sometimes (3 points),' 'seldom (2 points),' and 'never (1 point).'

The first section of the questionnaire, comprising 7 items, assesses the extent to which learners employ determination strategies. The second section, consisting of 5 items, evaluates the degree to which learners utilize social strategies. These first two sections collectively constitute the discovery subgroup of VLSs. The third section encompasses 17 items, focusing on strategies within the memory category. The fourth section encompasses 7 items that pertain to cognitive strategies, while the fifth section incorporates 5 items that pertain to metacognitive strategies. These subsequent five sections constitute the consolidation subgroup of VLSs.

Given the study's context within a Persian setting, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the VLSQ was determined prior to the actual study to be .83, indicating a high level of internal consistency reliability.

3.3. Materials

3.3.1. Ilingo Application

Ilingo is a popular language-learning app and platform that offers a gamified and interactive approach to learning English. Founded in 2018, *Ilingo* has gained significant recognition and a large user base due to its accessibility and effectiveness. Some key features and characteristics of *Ilingo* app include gamified learning, free to use, structured learning path, audio pronunciation, and adaptive learning. Furthermore, it covers various language skills, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

Lessons are broken down into bite-sized exercises that cover specific language topics and skills. These exercises include translation, multiple-choice questions, and speaking exercises to help learners build a well-rounded language proficiency. *Ilingo* uses an adaptive algorithm to personalize the learning experience. The difficulty of exercises and lessons can adjust based on the user's performance and progress. Users can practice and review what they've learned through daily challenges, progress quizzes, and the "Strengthen Skills" feature, which revisits previously learned materials to reinforce retention. *Ilingo* features audio recordings by native speakers to help learners with pronunciation and listening comprehension.

3.3.2. English vocabulary in use: intermediate

The *English Vocabulary in Use* series edited by Redman (2017) and published by Cambridge University Press, stands as a highly acclaimed collection of books. These resources are designed to facilitate vocabulary learning, proficiency, and accuracy for English learners at all proficiency levels. They are user-friendly and contain explanations, examples, study tips, follow-up tasks and an easy-to-use answer key that allow learners to practice and reinforce their vocabulary skills independently.

Learners have the flexibility to choose between American English and British English, making it an excellent resource for both self-study and classroom instruction. *English Vocabulary in Use* books include a variety of exercises, including gap-filling, matching, and multiple-choice questions. These exercises allow learners to practice what they have learned and check their understanding.

3.4. Data collection procedure

To ensure the homogeneity of the participants, the OQPT version 2 was administered to all participants at the outset of the study. Therefore, 83 participants who scored within the specified intermediate range (i.e., 25 to 35) were eligible to participate in the study. Then the participants were randomly assigned to an experimental group (N=41), who utilized the *Ilingo* mobile application for vocabulary instruction, and a control group (N=42), who relied on the *English Vocabulary in Use: Intermediate* textbook for vocabulary learning.

Prior to the intervention, all participants took the VLT to assess their initial vocabulary proficiency levels. In addition, they completed the VLSQ to measure their vocabulary learning strategy use.

The experimental group received vocabulary instruction using the *Ilingo* mobile application. The intervention encompassed 25 sessions and each session was meticulously planned. During regular class sessions, the researchers utilized the application to introduce new vocabulary, reinforce concepts, and engage learners in interactive exercises. Each session began with a brief overview of the targeted vocabulary, followed by interactive exercises on *Ilingo*. The application facilitated personalized learning experiences, allowing learners to progress at their own pace. The researchers provided guidance and support, ensuring that learners navigated the application effectively.

To reinforce vocabulary learning beyond the confines of the classroom, learners in the experimental group were assigned homework tasks utilizing *Ilingo*. These assignments varied in nature, encompassing activities such as vocabulary quizzes, interactive games, and multimedia exercises. The intention was to extend the learning experience, encouraging learners to independently explore the application's features and consolidate their understanding of the introduced vocabulary.

Conversely, the control group relied on the conventional medium of the *English Vocabulary in Use: Intermediate* textbook for their vocabulary learning. Their instruction, delivered through regular 90-minute sessions twice a week over the course of the semester, represented a conventional classroom approach. The researchers adhered to the predetermined lesson plans, introducing new vocabulary through structured exercises and contextual examples. Each session was meticulously designed to cover specific thematic units. Learners were asked to complete the exercises, activities, and comprehension tasks of the textbook at home.

This design allowed for a comparative analysis of the effectiveness of technology-assisted instruction against conventional classroom methods. Like the experimental group, they also met twice a week for 90-minute sessions over the course of the semester. At the end of the 13-week intervention, both groups were administered the VLT and VLSQ again. This comprehensive post-intervention assessment facilitated a thorough evaluation of the effect of the instructional methods on participants' vocabulary learning development and VLS use.

4. Results and discussion

Before conducting the statistical tests, the data collected from both the pre- and post-test on vocabulary were examined to ensure that the distribution followed a normal pattern. The results of this examination can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Test of Normality for the Pre- and Post-Test on VLT

	Group	Kolmogorov-Smirnov		
		t	df	Sig.
Pre-test	Experimental	.105	41	.200*
	Control	.108	42	.200*
Post-test	Experimental	.099	41	.200*
	Control	.100	42	.200*

P>.05*

According to the data in Table 1, the p values for the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for pre- and post-test scores of both groups were higher than .01, affirming the normal distribution of pre- and post-test scores on vocabulary knowledge. With the normality assumption established, an independent-samples t-test was conducted on the pre-test scores on VLT to assess whether participants exhibited homogeneity in their knowledge of vocabulary before the treatment. Table 2 presents the results.

Table 2. Independent-Samples T-test on Pre-Test Scores on VLT

Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Difference	t	Sig.
Experimental	54.31	10.612	-2.130	-.849	.398
Control	56.44	12.201			

P>.01*

According to the results reported in table 2 and using a significance level of α = .01, the p value (t = -.849, p = .398) indicates that there is no significant difference concerning vocabulary knowledge at the beginning of the study. Consequently, it can be inferred that the two groups exhibited homogeneity in this regard.

To examine the effect of the treatment on EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge, another independent-samples t-test was conducted on the post-test scores on the VLT. Table 3 depicts the results.

Table 3. Independent-Samples T-test on Post-Test Scores on VLT

Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Difference	t	Sig.
Experimental	72.68	10.48	-11.111	-5.029	.001*
Control	61.57	9.63			

P>.01*

As indicated in Table 3, with a significance level set at α = .01, statistically significant differences were observed (t = -5.029, p = .001 < .01) in the post-test performance on the VLT indicating the outperformance of the experimental group in their vocabulary learning after formal instruction and practice with *Ilingo* application.

This study also aimed to analyze and compare the frequency distribution of VLS sub-categories between the two groups. Before conducting the statistical analyses, a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was run to check the normality of the distribution for the collected data from the pre- and post-test on the VLSQ. The outcomes of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Test of Normality for the Pre-Test and Post-Test on VLSs

	Group	Kolmogorov-Smirnov		
		t	df	Sig.
Pre-test	Experimental	.180	41	.001
	Control	.183	42	.002
Post-test	Experimental	.188	16	<.001
	Control	.206	16	<.001

P>.05*

As indicated in Table 4, the results suggest that the pre- and post-test scores on VLSs did not follow a normal distribution, as the significance levels of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test were below .01. Consequently, non-parametric measures were adopted after the normality assumption could not be established. To assess the homogeneity of the participants in terms of VLS use before the treatment, a Chi-squared test was conducted on the pre-test scores of the VLSQ. The outcomes of this test are detailed in Table 5.

Table 5. The Results of Chi-Square Test on Pre-Test Scores on VLSs

Strategies	Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	X²	df	Sig.
Determination	Experimental	3.54	.413	10.220	13	.676
	Control	3.64	.591			
Social	Experimental	2.98	.677	13.825	15	.539
	Control	3.05	.736			
Memory	Experimental	3.67	.208	22.663	15	.092
	Control	3.68	.162			
Cognitive	Experimental	3.63	.333	12.213	9	.271
	Control	3.45	.298			
Metacognitive	Experimental	3.45	.294	6.989	9	.638
	Control	3.42	.408			

P>.01*

As presented in Table 5, using a significance level of α=.01, the statistical outcomes reveal that there is no statistically significant difference in the use of determination, social, memory, cognitive, and metacognitive VLSs between the two groups. To assess the effect of teaching vocabulary through *Ilingo* application on EFL learners' VLS use, another Chi-square test was conducted on participants' post-test scores on the VLSQ. The detailed outcomes of this analysis are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. The Results of Chi-Square Test on Post-Test Scores on VLSs

Strategies	Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	X²	df	Sig.
Determination	Experimental	4.38	.435	51.067	17	<.001*
	Control	3.62	.358			
Social	Experimental	2.95	.359	10.761	8	.216
	Control	2.90	.356			
Memory	Experimental	4.06	.219	52.800	19	<.001*
	Control	3.65	.189			
Cognitive	Experimental	3.53	.283	16.578	12	.166
	Control	3.57	.418			
Metacognitive	Experimental	4.13	.375	8.001	9	.534
	Control	4.01	.417			

P>.01*

As depicted in Table 6, utilizing a significance level of α=.01, the outcomes of the Pearson's Chi-square test on post-test scores revealed noteworthy findings. Specifically, statistically significant differences were observed for the utilization of *determination* and *memory* VLSs indicating a higher frequency of use of these strategies in the experimental group. However, the results of the Pearson's Chi-square test on post-test scores did not indicate statistically significant differences for the use of *social*, *cognitive,* and *metacognitive* VLSs between the two groups.

5. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of teaching vocabulary through *Ilingo* application on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' vocabulary learning and vocabulary learning strategy use. According to the results, *Ilingo* application significantly developed learners' vocabulary knowledge. The significant difference in post-test performance between the two groups highlights the potential of *Ilingo* application as an effective tool for vocabulary learning. The substantial improvement observed in the experimental group can be attributed to the interactive and engaging nature of *Ilingo* application. This application allows learners to access a variety of multimedia resources, practice vocabulary in real-world contexts, and receive immediate feedback, which is known to enhance learning outcomes. The flexibility and accessibility of MALL may also have contributed to the experimental group's success, as it allows learners to engage with the material at their own pace and convenience.

The obtained results align with previous research suggesting that technology-assisted learning can be a powerful complement to conventional teaching methods. For instance, Lei et al. (2022) asserted that students who received MALL instruction using *Duolingo* demonstrated significantly improved post-test scores in vocabulary retention. The results of the current study also align with Ellis (1995), Burston (2014), and Liu (2016), all of whom substantiating the favorable effect of mobile-integrated language learning on cultivating positive learning outcomes. The findings of this study are well-supported because mobile devices likely facilitate the collaborative activities among the participants, both inside and outside the classroom. This suggests that mobile applications offer numerous advantages for engaging learners in autonomous activities, making vocabulary tasks more self-paced and enjoyable. Consistent with these findings, Lu (2008) asserts that MALL encourages interaction among learners, promotes the integration of natural communication needs with language learning, and enhances the retention of language learning skills.

Similar results were also reported in the studies conducted by Xodabande and Boroughani (2023), Xodabande et al., (2022). Xodabande and Boroughani (2023) undertook a comprehensive 24-session experimental study involving 37 Iranian EFL learners. The research centered on the utilization of the *WordUp* application, with the aim of enhancing vocabulary retention. The outcomes of the study revealed noteworthy positive effects of *WordUp* instruction on learners' overall vocabulary knowledge. Furthermore, in their prior work (Xodabande et al., 2022), the researchers observed a notable shift in the learning outcomes when moving from conventional classrooms to MALL instruction. This transition was reported to increase learners' vocabulary knowledge. Moreover, Xodabande et al. (2022) emphasized that the contribution of MALL applications could provide authentic vocabulary practice.

Consistent findings have also been reported in studies conducted by Wu (2015), Berns et al. (2016), Ashiyan and Salehi (2016), and Başal et al. (2016). For instance, Wu's (2015) study revealed that the experimental group, which underwent

MALL instruction using the *Word Learning CET6* program outperformed the control group. In Berns et al.'s (2016) research, learners in the treatment group utilized the self-study English learning application *Guess It! Language Trainer* for vocabulary practice. The results indicated that the participants of the treatment group exhibited significantly better performance on the vocabulary post-test. Additionally, Ashiyan and Salehi's (2016) study demonstrated notable improvements in vocabulary knowledge within the treatment group from pre-test to post-test, with their scores significantly surpassing those in the control group. Furthermore, Basal et al. (2016) incorporated *WhatsApp* for vocabulary practice, and their findings revealed that individuals who engaged with the software achieved significantly higher post-test scores compared to those who received conventional vocabulary instruction.

In the same line, Ahmad et al. (2017) emphasized the effectiveness of the *ThinkEnglish* App as a superior method for vocabulary learning compared to conventional classroom instruction. Bowles (2017) confirmed the superiority of apps like the *Academic Vocabulary App* over commercially available generic apps such as *Vocabulary and Spelling City* in addressing the specific academic English vocabulary learning needs of graduate students.

Guaqueta and Garcés (2018) argued for the synergistic use of apps like *Duolingo* and *Kahoot* in combination with conventional classroom practices to enhance vocabulary development. These contemporary studies collectively underline the efficacy of mobile applications in advancing vocabulary knowledge of learners.

Concerning the second research question of the study, the findings of the present study revealed a statistically significant difference in the utilization of determination VLSs between the experimental and control groups. This underscores the potential efficacy of targeted interventions aimed at enhancing determination-related VLSs in educational contexts. The observed increase in post-test scores suggests that employing *Ilingo* application can positively influence the use of determination VLSs.

Determination VLSs encompass the techniques learners employ to set goals and plan their learning endeavors. In the context of vocabulary development, learners establish specific learning goals, often targeting a predefined number of words within a given timeframe. They meticulously devise systematic plans for vocabulary learning, efficiently allocating their time and resources (Fan, 2020). Moreover, the higher frequency of the determination VLSs deployed in the experimental group using *Ilingo* software illuminates the role of technology in fostering goal-setting and strategic planning in language learning. These strategies involve various tactics such as checking the part of speech of newly learned words, guessing meaning, forming visual or auditory associations, and utilizing dictionaries. The noteworthy outcome regarding the higher frequency of determination strategies might be attributed to the visual aids integrated into the application. These visual aids assist learners in associating meanings with shapes and forms, a feature not commonly emphasized in conventional vocabulary courses. The incorporation of visual aids in the application represents a departure from conventional methods and underscores the potential benefits of multimedia resources in vocabulary instruction.

Another noteworthy result emerged in the domain of memory VLSs, where a significant difference was identified. This implies that interventions targeting memory-related VLSs yielded substantial improvements in post-test scores. Memory strategies encompass practices like repetition, mnemonics, and imagery. One potential explanation could be the manner in which these memory strategies were implemented and emphasized in the instructional interventions. The effectiveness of memory-related VLSs might be influenced by the frequency, variety, and context in which these strategies were introduced and practiced. For example, the MALL intervention might have incorporated multimedia elements that enhanced the visual and auditory aspects of mnemonics and imagery, making these strategies more memorable and impactful for learners. Moreover, individual learner preferences and cognitive styles could have influenced the effectiveness of memory-related VLSs. Some learners may naturally gravitate towards mnemonic devices, finding them particularly effective, while others might favor repetition or imagery (Fan, 2020). The results may reflect the diverse ways in which learners engage with and benefit from these memory strategies.

The obtained results with regard to the significant higher frequency of memory strategies are in line with Rahimi and Allahyari (2020), Kim and Bae (2020), and Yusoff and Mohd Said (2024) who reported a higher deployment of memory strategies as the result of computer-assisted vocabulary learning. However, the findings contrast with Gao and Shan (2020) who reported metacognitive and commitment control strategies as the most frequent ones in a mobile-assisted learning environment. In addition, the higher frequency of determination strategies reported in this research contrasts with the findings of Rahimi and Allahyari (2020) reporting that the multimedia-supported vocabulary instruction did not have any significant effect on the use of determination strategies.

It is worth mentioning that the duration and intensity of exposure to memory-related VLSs in each instructional setting could be a contributing factor. The experimental group using the MALL intervention may have had more opportunities for consistent and varied practice with memory strategies due to the interactive and adaptive nature of the digital platform. On the other hand, the conventional classroom setting may have offered a more structured but potentially less flexible approach to memory strategy practice.

Moreover, while the significant difference in memory VLSs is a valuable finding, exploring the nuances of how these strategies were implemented, individual learner factors, and the motivational aspects of the interventions can provide a more comprehensive understanding. Future research might delve deeper into the specific elements that enhance the effectiveness of memory-related VLSs in different instructional contexts, guiding educators towards more tailored and impactful vocabulary instruction methods.

There is ample evidence suggesting that MALL applications serve as effective tools for enhancing learners' vocabulary learning and nurturing strategic learners. However, further research is needed to explore the long-term effects of MALL and to investigate the specific mechanisms through which it enhances vocabulary knowledge. Additionally, future studies could examine the transferability of these findings to other language learning contexts and different language skills. However, it is important to acknowledge that this study has certain limitations. The sample size, for instance, could be expanded to improve the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, future research may explore the long-term effects of MALL software on language learning autonomy and investigate the specific aspects of the software that contribute most to learners' autonomy development.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has shed light on the significant effect of integrating MALL, specifically *Ilingo* application, on the vocabulary development and strategy use of Iranian intermediate EFL learners. The interactive and engaging nature of MALL, coupled with its flexibility and accessibility, provides learners with opportunities to engage with multimedia resources, practice vocabulary in real-world contexts, and receive immediate feedback, contributing to more effective language acquisition.

The practical implications of this study are significant for language educators and institutions. Integrating MALL software into language learning programs can provide a valuable tool for fostering more self-directed and motivated language learners. However, acknowledging the limitations of the study, including the sample size and the need for further exploration of long-term effects of MALL, a comprehensive understanding of the potential benefits and challenges associated with technology-assisted autonomy development seems crucial.

It is recommended that future research expands the sample size to enhance generalizability, explores the sustained impact of MALL software on language learning autonomy over an extended period, and delves into the specific features of the software that contribute most to autonomy development. This will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how technology can be optimally integrated into language education to empower strategic learners and promote autonomy in their language learning journey.

This study has also provided valuable insights into the impact of *Ilingo* application on the frequency and type of VLS use among Iranian intermediate EFL learners. The results indicated significant distinctions in the frequency and distribution of VLSs between the two groups. The findings of this study highlight the potential efficacy of *Ilingo* in influencing the utilization of determination-related VLSs. The observed increase in the post-test scores for determination strategies suggests that technology-assisted interventions can positively impact learners' goal-setting and strategic planning in the context of vocabulary learning. Notably, the incorporation of visual aids in *Ilingo*, including pictorial descriptions and linguistic information, presents a departure from conventional methods and emphasizes the potential benefits of multimedia resources in vocabulary instruction. The study also highlights the need for a better understanding of the interplay between MALL interventions and the use of social and cognitive VLSs. While no statistically significant differences were identified for these strategies, the exploration prompts a reflection on the design and implementation of language courses, suggesting that a combination of conventional and technological resources may offer a more comprehensive and effective approach to vocabulary instruction.

The observed higher use of metacognitive VLSs in both the conventional classroom and MALL intervention groups raises intriguing questions about the nature of instructional methods and learner autonomy. The autonomy afforded to participants in the MALL intervention may have contributed to a heightened sense of responsibility for their academic achievements, influencing their engagement with metacognitive strategies. The conventional classroom, with its explicit guidance and structured activities, might have fostered an environment that naturally promoted metacognitive engagement. Furthermore, the significant difference identified in memory-related VLSs suggests the potential impact of instructional design and support on the effectiveness of these strategies. The manner in which memory strategies are implemented, the variety of approaches offered, and the individual learner factors could all play a role in the observed distinctions.

While this study adds valuable insights to the existing body of knowledge on VLSs in vocabulary learning, it is essential to recognize its limitations. Future research could explore the specific elements and dynamics of MALL interventions and conventional classrooms that contribute to the use of VLSs. Additionally, investigating individual learner preferences and cognitive styles, as well as the motivational aspects of these interventions, can provide a more comprehensive understanding of how to optimize instructional approaches for enhanced vocabulary learning outcomes.

In summary, the findings of this study contribute to the ongoing discourse on effective vocabulary instruction by highlighting the potential of MALL software in influencing the frequency and types of VLSs employed by language learners. The refined exploration of determination, social, cognitive, metacognitive, and memory-related strategies offer educators with valuable insights into how technology-assisted language learning can be harnessed to promote a diverse and effective array of vocabulary learning strategies among EFL learners.

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Impact of Synthesizing Critical Thinking Dispositional Features and Action Learning Approach on Enhancing Iranian EFL Learners' Argumentative Writing Development

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ABSTRACT

With the advancement of new teaching methods and approaches in foreign language teaching and learning, critical thinking has gained popularity in modern language education. This quasi-experimental study evaluated the possible impact of synthesizing critical thinking dispositional features and action learning on the Iranian intermediate EFL students' argumentative composition improvement skills. From the 400 EFL learners at Islamic Azad University, Kurdistan branch, one hundred and fifty mingled intermediate-level EFL university learners were chosen based on their scores received from the OQPT and equally distributed into three experimental and two control groups. All participants were given two standard writing tests during the pre and post-treatment phases, followed by CCTST principles. In EG1, the researcher taught argumentative writing based on critical thinking dispositional features; in EG2, he taught argumentative writing based on the principles of action learning approach; and in EG3, he taught argumentative writing by synthesizing critical thinking dispositional features and the principles of action learning approach. Two control groups received conventional writing instruction: one group consisted of only males (EG1), and the other only females (EG2). The study's results revealed that while the participants in both The EGs and CGs elicited a statistically important development in the posttests, those in the three EGs all outperformed those in the CGs. In the order of significance, critical thinking dispositional features, then action learning approach and lastly synthesizing critical thinking dispositional features and action learning approach had a meaningful impact on improving the argumentative essay writing skills of Iranian intermediate EFL students.

KEYWORDS: Action learning; Argumentative writing; California Critical Thinking Skills Test (CCTST); Critical thinking dispositional features; Iranian EFL learners;

1. Introduction

A stage in a learner's academic life is defined by two significant objectives; one by entering university and receiving higher education and then completion of their academic education. At this stage, they should be able to (a) gain competency about their study field or academic content, as well as the significant level, (b) critically evaluate and assess about what they have

taught and studied and other subjects or challenges they encounter in daily life (Schafersman, 1991). While most learners regularly achieve the first objective, they struggle with the second one, which is their educational weak point (Halpern, 2014; Bailin et al., 1999).

Even though having critical thinking dispositional features in the academic considered as the output of university graduation, students who study English major have to achieve this "academic objective" (Siegel, 1985). In and out of the academic context, EFL students devote considerable amount of time studying the English language and practicing English language in natural contexts. As a result, while practicing English in the academic context or in the natural contexts, they cannot simply memorize or rehearse the language without evaluating their contents critically.

One of the important and crucial yet difficult skills in the educational process is developing writing skills, particularly in language learning. According to Okasha and Hamdi (2014), writing challenges can result from a lack of adequate approaches that impede learners from accessing knowledge they already have. Another aspect that affects students' writing is their attitude toward English writing. According to Phinney (1991), L2 writers experience more negative attitudes and fear than when writing in their language. As Peng (2011) stated, students frequently feel inept when writing in a foreign language. The EFL students may find it challenging to write in a conventional classroom due to feelings of fear, uneasiness, or incompetence (Hwang et al., 2017). They may experience anxiety in writing when looking for proper expressions and hunting for ideas (Yang, 2016). In addition, they have few opportunities to improve their language abilities in a conventional school setting (Hwang et al., 2017; Lin et al., 2018). As a result, researchers have suggested that giving EFL students more opportunities to practice writing is the key to enhancing their writing skills (Lin et al., 2018).

The majority of Iranian EFL students, like other learners around the world, have problems with writing. The leading causes of this challenge appear to be a lack of focus on productive abilities on the one hand and poor instruction quality on the other (Shokrpour & Fallahzadeh, 2007). Because writing is considered a product dependent on other language and organizational skills, any deficiencies in those areas may hurt writing. Nonconventional but empirically proved writing strategies like strengthen their critical thinking dispositional features could help learners improve their writing and attitudes toward writing. Strategies based on a knowledge of how the mind works can assist reduce cognitive load and, as a result, make writing easier (Mayer, 2002). The introduction of new technologies into education results in developing novel models of teaching and learning in an interactive and engaging learning environment. From a methodological standpoint, critical thinking can be viewed as a manifestation of innovative culture, which has the potential to achieve competitive advantages across the educational spectrum, particularly in an EFL context (Plachkov, 2013).

The need for developing argumentative writing among Iranian EFL learners through critical thinking dispositional features and action learning has become one of the most important goals of the Iranian EFL teaching context (Fahim & Eslamdoost, 2014). Effective and well-organized argumentative writing is believed to be a product of familiarity with critical thinking dispositional features as well as an analytical task where a synthesis of multiple skills is implemented via practicing action learning with cooperative learning. Success in writing skill demands the development of complex level of thinking and reasoning skills. Discussions, arguments, and challenge activities in the manner of action learning are crucial for the formation of critical thinking among EFL learners, Freely and Steinberg (2000). Unfortunately, there has been little researches done in the Iranian EFL setting to demonstrate the effectiveness of using critical thinking dispositional features and action learning approaches for promoting argumentative essay writing among Iranian EFL learners, since the concentration of English language pedagogy in Iranian EFL contexts has traditionally been on training EFL learners to be proficient in language skills. According to Khorasani and Farimani (2010), traditional methods of instruction are persisted to be employed in a foreign English language teaching setting like Iran; in other words, students perceive their instructors as a mere source of information while instructors perceive their pupils as pure receivers of knowledge, much like a black box, disregarding critical concepts such as developing analytical thinking among EFL learners and practicing on students' autonomy. In addition to the difficulties stated above, teaching materials remain deficient in critical thinking skills as an academic goal. This focus invariably leads to a disdain for a more important goal of language teaching, which is to think and behave thoughtfully, and as a consequence, they will be unable to be successful teachers after graduation, regardless their good exam results. When our students are intently participating in the course of learning, they may instantly experience the benefits and downsides of their course materials, assuring that classrooms are no longer a place of error and trial for them in the future.

Fostering learners' critical thinking in academic institutions is often regarded as the most important difficulty facing modern education in an era of mass information. Nowadays, whether people turn on the radio or television, or utilize social media, they are exposed to information. When courses are finished, most people are unaware that they have acquired a great quantity of information that has the potential to become an ideology without evaluating its trustworthiness. As college learners are not excluded, colleges must educate learners to evaluate and assess the material they encounter on a regular basis. Universities, on the other hand, are often far beyond this objective. Pithers and Soden (2010) determined the paucity of substantial distinction in the reasoning skills of graduate and undergraduate students after conducting a study. This indicated that the universities involved in the research did not adequately develop their students' critical thinking abilities.

Action learning is a means of integrating thought and practice. Education entails action... Given that action learning argues that we may best conquer any unknown task by collaborating with others who have a similar goal, its developers should be built and released collaboratively by people who intend to benefit from them. Continuous learning requires an open, inquiring mind, the capacity to listen, question, and examine ideas. Through the use of action learning approaches and strategies as an independent variable in this study, EFL learners were able to bring together diverse writing strategies and materials within the same contexts in order to practice the topic, deliberate the opinions, and analyze their comprehension in a credulous, and encouraging context, and thus develop a critical thinking-based model as the dependent variable, the results of which could be derived from the action learning procedures.

Considering the critical thinking dispositional features and its significant role in enhancing EFL students to "investigate, confront, and insist explanations and rationalizations for what is learned" (Siegel, 1985, p3), this study aimed to probe the possible outcomes of synthesizing critical thinking dispositional features and action learning on Iranian EFL students' argumentative composition development.

Developing writing abilities is critical not just for academic success, but also for career success (Geiser & Studley, 2001). If learners do not acquire proper writing abilities in an educational setting, they may be unable to explain ideas, dispute positions, and examine diverse perspectives—all of which are necessary skills for persuasive communication with classmates, colleagues, coworkers, and the larger community.

Argumentative writing has always been a difficult subject for EFL and ESL students to master. Second language learners must invest significant effort in comprehending the most critical components of argumentative writing, including hook, blueprints, supporting phrases, and conclusions. EFL/ESL students must use a variety of different writing methods in order to write correctly. Previous research conducted in Iran indicated that Iranian EFL learners have significant difficulties in comprehending and applying English writing abilities (Rezaei & Jafari, 2014). Hashemi et al. (2010) concentrated on Iran's educational system. They stated that under such educational system, learners' minds are seen as a repository of knowledge and information, rather than as a space for creativity and thought. They criticized the system in this regard. Thus, the findings indicated that critical thinking instruction for Iranian EFL students is required and should be examined.

The value of this study may be derived from the attempts to highlight the qualities of the critical thinking dispositional features and action learning strategies for teaching argumentative writing in the Iranian context. The current study might provide substantial evidence of critical thinking dispositional features impact on learners' argumentative writing development. Furthermore, the study's results could be particularly significant for English language teaching in Iran. It could also be reflected in other proficiency levels by identifying and analyzing the effect of the critical thinking dispositional features and action learning approach on EFL learners' argumentative writing development and attitudes toward writing. In addition, as critical thinking dispositional features and action learning, can open up new avenues for the advancement of English language teaching, enabling the implementation of the concept of lifelong learning and the customizing of the learning process. Additionally, it creates new options for educational advancement and personalization of the learning process. Mastering critical thinking abilities cannot replace teachers, but it can significantly increase educational quality when used in conjunction with established conventional approaches. Critical thinking dispositional features integration into foreign language education was increased by public demands and expectations for the modernization of the learning process. Therefore, the study could expand the strategies available to EFL instructors in the Iranian EFL settings.

2. Literature review

Dewey (1933, p.118) described thinking critically as "the agile, continuous, and complete examination of an idea or alleged field of study taking into consideration premises that sustain it and the subsequent deductions that it leads to." Recently, critical thinking has been defined as "purposeful, self-regulating thinking that leads in perception, analysis, and deduction, as well as a description of the evidentiary, intellectual, disciplinary, purposeful, or environmental components that underpin that decision." (Facione, 1990, p.2). Halpern (1996, p. 5) described critical thinking as "intentional, reasoned, and goal-directed reasoning — the kind of thinking that occurs when problems are solved, inferences are made, probability is calculated, and judgments are made." It is regarded to be a critical aspect in enabling people to reach their full capacity (Meyers,1986) and is one of most defining qualities of twenty-first-century success (Huitt,1998).

Paul (1994) classified two types of critical thinking: weak and strong. As he asserts, inadequate critical thinking abilities are indicative of course contents rote memorization. While, the other type form of this concept considers the thinking and logical abilities that are really used and exercised by learners. Additionally, Paul (1985) describes critical thinking as "competency in pose and answer analytical, synthesis, and evaluative questions" (p. 37). Similarly, Brookfield (1987) argues that critical thinking encompasses two related processes: "characterizing and disputing hypothesis, as well as envisioning and investigating alternatives" (p.229).

Samanhudi (2011) examined learners' analytical reasoning in their essay composition at Indonesian public universities. He adopted a case study research design that included two methods of data collecting, namely the documenting of

students' writings and an interview. After that, the data were examined using Critical Thinking (CT) and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) theories, which were confirmed by triangulating technique. Two conclusions were made in relation to the research questions. To begin, despite their capacity to demonstrate critical thinking in their writing, students' texts demonstrated a less nuanced and clear verbalization of their critical thinking. Second, as demonstrated by the interview data, students' incompetence happened as a result of their insufficient understanding of the problem and their inability to use analytical reasoning in their composition. The study's results imply that students need further assistance in order to improve their control of some critical thinking aspects and thereby enhance their critical thinking abilities, particularly their ability to debate, to express thoughts and stances openly and thoughtfully.

Sham (2016) investigated how critical thinking might be used to educate and acquire writing skills. The researcher randomly assigned individuals to one of two groups: control or experimental. Only individuals in the experimental group were given critical thinking abilities. It was discovered that instructing participants in critical thinking abilities had a decisive influence on their writing performance. Additionally, the participants benefited from developing their critical thinking abilities.

Indah (2017) investigated the link between the analytical thinking, composition competence, and subject formality among Indonesian EFL students. The study determined that an unmistakable association existed among the trainees' critical thinking and composition abilities. Additionally, the resulted proved a direct relationship between their critical thinking and the formality of the topic.

Zhang (2018) reported the influence of internet materials on the positive progress of EFL writers' critical thinking skills. The investigation was directed by functional systemic linguistics (SFL). By exploratory evaluation of instructor-learner discussions, student interviews, and student composition records, his case studies showed that after a course of intense engagement to SFL-based online materials in an EFL composition setting at a Chinese university, EFL authors were able to improve critical thinking skills related to the development of competent educational composition, despite encountering and overcoming obstacles. They adapted to the online materials-focused in classroom by teacher intervention and their own attempts, as evidenced by their use of SFL-based categorizations suggested by online materials to assess and assess the coordination between language characteristics and the subject of valued texts and to regulate the content of their own academic writing.

Palavan (2020) investigated the attitudes and beliefs of prospective teachers and their own critical thinking tendencies. In that one group pretest-posttest design investigation was conducted using sampling on purpose. 26 male and 31 female preservice instructors volunteered for the study, for a total of 57 participants. The quantitative data was gathered by the California Critical Thinking Disposition Scale, and for the qualitative data collection the semi-structured interviews were conducted. Students' pre-test scores on critical thinking dispositional features and their scores on the sub-scales of analytical, inviting, intellectual curiosity, and systematicity indicated moderate attitudes in these sub-scales, while their scores on the sub-scales of self-confidence and truth-seeking indicated low attitudes in those sub-dimensions. With the exception of self-confidence and truth-seeking, where learners' results rose from moderate to high, participants' post-test results for critical thinking dispositional features were comparable to their pre-test levels, indicating a moderate dispositional feature.

Luna et al. (2020) in a distant learning university's virtual training program for producing integrative and well-structured arguments. 68 undergraduate EFL students participated in the pre-post study, which used a control group design. The treatment includes detailed teaching through educational videos and practice activities with prompt feedback, all of which were conducted with the use of freely available internet resources (e.g., Moodle). The study's findings indicated that following treatment, participants' written outputs improved in terms of organization, number of counter-arguments, and degree of combination of the various views. However, those items with a medium or maximum level of integration remained scarce. These findings demonstrated how online training in argumentative writing may be successfully utilized in academic contexts.

Hoorijani et al. (2022) conducted research to explore the perspective of EFL teachers and learners on the impact of critical thinking disposition on improving EFL learners' argumentative writing. The results of their study indicated that both EFL professors and students have practical perspectives toward English language teaching and learning. However, they also revealed that possessing a positive attitude towards a foreign language did not necessarily lead to improvement in English proficiency

Hoorijani and Heidari Tabrizi (2023) in their study, proved the positive role of critical thinking disposition on Iranian EFL learners' argumentative writing skill, thus based on the findings of the above-mentioned study, they tried to investigate these improvements from a gender-based view; in other words, they investigated whether there was any significant difference between male and female Iranian EFL learners receiving the treatment and whether having a critical thinking disposition was related to gender-based differences.

A review of the related studies indicated the effectiveness of the critical thinking dispositional features and action learning on the intermediate EFL learners' writing development. It highlights the mediating act of action learning approach in the EFL learning context. unfortunately, fewer studies investigated the effective role of critical thinking dispositional features

on developing EFL learners' argumentative writing. To fill this gap this research specifically addresses the following research questions:

RSQ1: Does using critical thinking dispositional features and an action learning approach have any significant effect on enhancing Iranian EFL learners' argumentative writing skills?

RSQ2: If the answer is positive, which approach is more effective in enhancing Iranian EFL learners' argumentative writing skills? The conventional teaching approach, critical thinking, action learning, or synthesizing critical thinking dispositional features and action learning?

3. Methodology

In this section, a comprehensive presentation of the design and context, the participants, instruments, data collection procedure, and data analysis procedure of the study are provided.

3.1. Research design and study context

In order to investigate the first question, quantitative approaches were required due to the nature of the study. Relationships were examined and analyzed using quantitative research due to their capacity to permit objective empirical analysis of observable objects. The quasi-experimental design was utilized in the present article to determine the effects of the independent variables (critical thinking dispositional features, action learning) on the dependent variable (argumentative writing), in article writing courses, using innovative vs. conventional teaching strategies began in January 2022 and ended in June 2022.at the Islamic Azad University-Kurdistan branch in Kurdistan, Iran.

3.2. Participants of the study

The research sample was chosen out of a population of 400 sophomore BA learners who are all studying at Islamic Azad University, Kurdistan branch in the majors of English language translation, English language literature, and TEFL. A hundred fifty EFL learners were selected out of these 400 EFL learners based on their received scores from the Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT). Then, 150 EFL learners randomly assigned technique were assigned to two homogeneous groups, namely control (n=73) and experimental groups (n=77). Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the participants in this study.

Table 1. Demographic background of the participants

No. of Learners	150 intermediates
Gender	109 Females & 41 Males
Language	Kurdish, Persian
Major	TEFL, Translation, English Literature
Academic Years	2021-2022

Before conducting the study, the intents and processes of the research were clarified to the participants to get their consensus to cooperate in the research. The researcher also adhered to the ethical guidelines provided by the selected Islamic Azad University. In addition, participants' personal information was also kept confidential to protect their privacy.

3.3. Research tools

To collect high-quality data, the following instruments were used to collect the required data:

3.3.1. Oxford quick placement test (OQPT)

Before starting the procedure of data collection, the researcher used OQPT, as a general placement test for the participants of the study. This test, which was designed by the Cambridge University, covers 60 questions, and has two sections: the first section, covers 40 questions and the second section, has 20 items. The OQPT reliability index was estimated as 0.89; as a result, the researcher was assured that it played an effective research tool in the current study

3.3.2. California critical thinking skills test (CCTST)

The CCTST offers the researchers an accurate tool for measuring the fundamental thinking abilities that are thought to be necessary for active reasoning over what to believe or act in daily life. The thinking abilities of test-takers are evaluated in the CCTST. The CCTST questions and sentences vary in their degree of difficulty and level of detail. The CCTST- version 2000 typically has two-time formats, timed which allocate 45 minutes to complete in timed settings, and untimed. The total score for the California Critical Thinking Skills Test is 34. The researcher used this CCTST as a rubric to evaluate the Iranian EFL learners writing development.

As mentioned above this test has 34 questions, which assesses five classifications of critical thinking skill; these categories are analysis (9 sentences), evaluation (14 sentences), inference (11 sentences), deductive reasoning (16 sentences), and inductive reasoning (14 sentences). The CCTST reliability is reported to be .78 to .80 using Cronbach alpha (Facione, 1990). Khodamorady et al (2006) translated this test into Persian and described an acceptable construct validity scale. They have reported the reliability of .62 for the whole test, .71 for analysis, .77 for evaluation, .77 for inference, .71 for deductive reasoning, and .71 for inductive reasoning, respectively.

3.3.3. Writing section of the IELTS practice test used as the pretest and posttest

A pre-writing test was used to assess EFL learners' writing skills, a standardized writing test which was chosen from the NTC TOEFL (2021). This task assesses the ability of individuals to present a clear, relevant, well-organized argument, provide evidence or examples to back up their ideas, and use language correctly. Accordingly, in the writing pretest, learners were asked to discuss the following subject and give their own opinion in the essay task: *"Many people welcome the opening of shopping areas near their homes. On the other hand, some people were strongly opposed to the construction of such facilities. If the opening of a large shopping center in your neighborhood were announced, would you support or oppose its construction?"* (Appendix A). They were expected to offer reasons for and against their positions, as well as a conclusion at the end. Learners were required to write at least 250 words in 40 minutes.

Reliability and validity are critical factors of the quality of a test result. As mentioned before, the researcher selected a topic from the NTC TOEFL (2021), which ensures the reliability and validity of test scores by following to established standards and procedures for the development and implementation of educational assessments.

3.3.4. Writing posttest

A post-test was utilized to assess the progress of learners' argumentative writing skills and the possible treatment impacts on learners' writing abilities. Post-test was a standardized writing examination comparable to IELTS Task 2 in which students were required to analyze the following statement:

"We all have favorite activities that we enjoy. Write an essay convincing reader to try the activity that you enjoy most" which was selected from the NTC TOEFL (2021). (Appendix B). They were required to include justifications for and against their decisions, as well as a conclusion. Learners were expected to write at least 250 words in 40 minutes. The post-test aimed to see whether critical thinking dispositional features and action learning approach impacted the learners' argumentative writing or not.

4. Data collection

At the beginning of performing the study, the investigator obtained approval from the educational board of the institution. The research population was then briefed about the study and told that their cooperation was entirely voluntary and that they may withdraw at any moment without consequence. To achieve the objectives, the study was split into 16-session sections: pre-test administration, treatment administration, and post-test administration. These areas will be covered in further detail in the subsequent sections.

4.1. Pretest administration

Before the main study, the OQPT and writing exam were administered to measure the efficiency and writing skills of the learners. The writing pretest was a standard argumentative essay similar to TOEFL written by all participants and scored based on CCTST checklists. The participants (n=150) were divided into two groups (EG 77, CG 73 Students) having met the homogeneity criterion by their OQPT scores. Thus, the researcher had three experimental groups he himself taught. In one group he taught argumentative writing based on critical thinking dispositional features; in the second group, he taught argumentative writing based on the principles of action learning approach; and in the third group he taught argumentative writing by synthesizing of critical thinking dispositional features and the principles of action learning approach. There were also two control groups in this study: one group consisted of only males, and the other only females.

4.2. Treatment process

The treatment process started after the OQPT and then participants were distributed randomly into five groups, as the experimental group (three groups) and the control group (two groups).

As mentioned earlier, the researcher used the Oxford quick placement test to distinguish their level of language proficiency and knowledge, then he selected the top 150 EFL learners among those 400 EFL learners who scored higher on the OQPT test as the study's sample size and then placed them into two groups namely control and experimental groups in 5 classes, two control groups, and three experimental groups. The important point which should be mentioned about the treatment of groups was that, the researcher acted as a teacher in both groups via online teaching (Due to the Covid-19 pandemic all classes had to be conducted online). He wanted to directly observe the changing processes in experimental groups in comparison with control groups who followed the conventional method of teaching.

To address research question one, which was: do synthesizing critical thinking dispositional features and action learning approach have any important influence on enhancing Iranian EFL learners' argumentative writing skill? One important point that should be mentioned here was that the focus of it was on the changes the experimental group experienced, without concentrating on the control group. As it was clear from this research question, the research had two independent and one dependent variable, he had to synthesize critical thinking dispositional features and action learning first, then assess their effects on EFL learners' argumentative writing. In doing so he characterized three important basic components of critical thinking dispositional features which were willingness, sensitivity, and ability, which he aimed to assess at the end of the treatment, how? By applying the principles of California critical thinking skills test via employing action learning strategies which is defined according to the World Institute for Action Learning (WIAL) as a process that entails a small group of people tackling real-world issues, taking action, and growing as individuals, a team, and an organization. It assists businesses in developing innovative, adaptable, and effective solutions for resolving critical issues.

Figure 1. WIAL solution spheres for action learning

So based on the aims of critical thinking dispositional features (CCTST) and action learning approaches the researcher collected the research data, which elaborated in the pre-test phase of the data collection for the research question number one, the researcher had to employ two research tools; the California Critical Thinking Skills Test (CCTST) and Marquardt model's component of action learning approaches The idea behind this action learning model was that a learner could comprehend knowledge by working with other classmates or team members in a social setting to find a solution to a problem.

At the onset of the course, the topics of writing were chosen from NTC TOEFL (2021) and given to both groups in the study. The selected topic for descriptive and argumentative modes were, respectively, as follows: *"Many people welcome the opening of shopping areas near their homes. On the other hand, some people are strongly opposed to the construction of such facilities. If the opening of a large shopping center in your neighborhood were announced, would you support or oppose its construction?* Use specific reasons and details to support your answer". the researcher asked both groups of the study to write an argumentative essay about the topic as a pre-test, and told them it should not be more than 250 words. Selecting this topic had two main important reasons; first, pinpointing male and female EFL learners' attitude toward that topic at the beginning of the study which was investigated in the further sections of the study, and the second reason was to creating a

challenging context for brainstorming their ideas and later analyzing the effectiveness of using critical thinking dispositional features and action learning approach on enhancing argumentative writing development.

After he took the pre-test from both groups which was argumentative writing, the researcher scored both groups' argumentative writing by The Holistic Critical Thinking Scoring Rubric - HCTSR based on the CCTST elements. After finishing the first step, which was giving a pre-test to both groups, and scoring their argumentative writing, the treatment was started in which the main source which was taught to both groups was "Bailey, Edward P., and Philip A. Powell; The Practical Writer with Readings". In the experimental group, the teacher designed a lesson plan based on the principles of CCTST (form A) and action learning to investigate the enhancing effect of synthesizing the critical thinking dispositional features and action learning as independent variables, on argumentative essay writing development and gender-based development as a dependent variable. In doing so the researcher who acted as a teacher employed the critical thinking infusion approach to the teaching of critical thinking through action learning (Marquardt model's component of action learning). In doing so he developed these critical thinking skills by embedding them in the teaching of the learning material, therefore he felt a need to design a lesson plan for teaching the content material so he designed a lesson plan based on Ennis' critical thinking taxonomy and "Bailey, Edward P. and Philip A. Powell, The Practical Writer with Readings" in the foundations of action learning approach based on Marquardt model for teaching it into the experimental group.

The first chapter of the content material started with "The One-Paragraph Essay (Stage I)". This chapter of the book acted as the warm-up for the EFL learners, as we all know the one-paragraph essay was an essay in miniature, so the researcher devoted the first 45 minutes of the class to topic selection, in doing so, first, he explained one of the social problems as "a problem'. Since an important key assumption of action learning is that our learners learn optimally when they engage in some kind of activity that they can reflect on and learn from. The challenge provides meaningful, relevant work for the group and establishes a mechanism for experimenting with stored information. Then, after a short introduction in a collaborative way designed to maximize problem-solving and learning, the instructor separated EFL learners into groups, or sets, of 5-10 persons, and gave them the chance to discuss pertinent facts about the particular topic. Action learning approaches problems by first clarifying the nature of the problem, then reflecting on and identifying possible solutions, and finally acting; thus, after talking about the issue in the group, the teacher asked them to volunteer to discuss their perspectives on the issue, and the other groups in the class listened to the group members' representative ideas. After presenting the groups' ideas they discussed the claims and justified their ideas, one of the important points of the discussion was to defend their ideas by logical reasoning since their final product was a coherent and cohesive argumentative essay.

Following their discussion and exchange of ideas, the instructor invited them to choose a theme for the challenge. After they selected a topic for that specific problem, the argumentation stage began; group members discussed practical solutions to the topic, determined the ideas' strengths and weaknesses, and verbally introduced supporting details and ideas about the topic and topic sentence. The objective of introducing the problem-solving ideas was to emphasize the importance of action learning, which stated a valuable principle. By creatively resolving challenges throughout the decide-on-an-answer or solution phase of critical thinking, action learning groups have developed tactics and answers that primarily assist them in generating ideas for their argumentative writing. The final step in the critical thinking taxonomy was to enable learners to make judgments about their final product, specifically the conclusion section of their writing; thus, the teacher served as an action learning coach in this final step, connecting the principles and critical thinking dispositional features to action learning. Cognitivism emphasized the role of intentionality on optimizing education in this regard. The action learning coach's role was to guide groups through the process of analysis on their listening style, reframing the situation, analyzing assumptions, and producing learning via questions.

After the researcher finished the 16 sessions of the treatment phase, for the assessment of its results, he took an argumentative writing post-test from both the control and experimental group, about the topic *"We all have favorite activities that we enjoy. write an essay affecting the reader to try the activity that you enjoy most",* as a post-test, and told them it should not be more than 250 words. As mentioned earlier choosing this topic had a main important to creating a challenging context for brainstorming the learners' ideas and later analyzing the effectiveness of using critical thinking dispositional features and action learning approach on enhancing their argumentative writing. After taking the post-test from both groups, the researcher scored both groups' argumentative writing by the principles of CCTST (appendix C). After scoring the EFL learners' argumentative writing, in order to measure EFL learners' critical thinking skill development, the researcher gave the CCTST (form B). After finishing this post-test in both groups, and scoring their argumentative writing, the researcher was ready to present the first research questions' data.

In the control group of the study, the researcher asked the teachers to follow their normal routine of the teaching, so they followed their normal lesson plan based on the curriculum.

Question number two in some ways were similar to question number one of the study, but they had an important difference, in question number one the researcher focused his attention and data collection procedure on the experimental group without considering the control group and its conventional context of teaching since in experimental group the teaching context was a synthesize of critical thinking dispositional features and action learning but in question number two the focus of the

researcher was on conventional teaching strategies and its effect on EFL learners' argumentative writing development in comparison with the effect of having a critical thinking dispositional features..

Just like question number one, as mentioned earlier the researcher himself presented the material to the experimental groups, so in doing so he tried to play a cautious role in controlling extraneous variables like sources of contamination, contaminative variables, and extraneous variables, grouping issues, people issues, measuring issues, environmental issues. At the beginning of the study, the researcher told the EFL learners of the study, n= 150, control group=73, experimental group= 77 to write an argumentative composition about the same topic of question number one ''*Many people welcome the opening of shopping areas near their homes. On the other hand, some people were strongly opposed to the construction of such facilities. If the opening of a large shopping center in your neighborhood were announced, would you support or oppose its construction?* Use specific reasons and details to support your answer''. as a pre-test, and reminded them, that it should not be more than 300 words, and again the CCTST (form A) was given to these EFL learners to complete. It should be mentioned that selecting this topic had the main important reasons to create a challenging context for brainstorming their ideas and later analyzing the effectiveness of using critical thinking dispositional features and action learning approach on argumentative writing improvement of EFL learners.

After taking the pre-test from the EFL learners, the researcher who was the teacher of the experimental group n=77 and also who was teaching in the conventional context n=73 who studying in six EFL classes scored their argumentative writing by the CCTST principles. Having done the first step, which was taking a pre-test in the control group and experimental group who were going to be taught in a conventional teaching approach, and scoring their argumentative writing, the treatment phase for this research question was started.

In the treatment phase for research question number two, just like the question number one, the main source which was taught to the control groups was "Bailey, Edward P. and Philip A. Powell; The Practical Writer with Readings", the teacher who taught it based on the conventional method of teaching, which was hold 2 hours a week, and following the prescribed lesson plan. In doing so the teacher (researcher himself) who employed the conventional teaching approach, who just followed the formal routines of teaching, who came to the class and taught the book based the prescribed lesson plan of the book. One point should be mentioned; the teacher pinpointed in his mind that he should be cautious to follow the conventional routine of the teaching.

The "The Practical Writer with Readings" which was the main source of the teaching and data collection for this study, has four sections, as the dominant fashion of conventional teaching strategies, the researcher who acted as the teacher taught all these four sections himself as the omniscient and the EFL learners played as the role of passive learners who come to the class to learn the taught material and memorize it and deliver their learning in the next session.

The first chapter of the book starts with "The One-Paragraph Essay (Stage I)". As the researcher mentioned earlier this chapter of the book acted as the warm-up for the experimental group, but in a conventional teaching approach all the chapters were taught in a same manner. The one-paragraph essay was an essay in miniature, so based on the conventional teaching approach before starting the session he had selected the topic in advanced then he devoted the whole 90 minutes of the class to teaching the material based on that topic as the example for the EFL learners, in doing so, first he clarified the pre-determined topic for the EFL learners. Then after a brief introduction in a conventional manner then starting to teach the content material. After finishing the lesson, the teacher asked the students to write an article as a homework for the next session of the class.

After the treatment phase was finished which was lasted until the end of the educational term (16 sessions), again the researcher or namely the teacher asked EFL learners to write an argumentative essay about the topic *"We all have favorite activities that we enjoy. Write an essay convincing reader to try the activity that you enjoy most"*, as a post-test as a post-test, and again asked them it should not be more than 300 words. As mentioned earlier choosing this topic had two main important reasons; one identifying male and female EFL learners' attitude toward this topic at the beginning of the study which was investigated in the further sections of the study, and the second reason was to creating a challenging context for brainstorming their ideas and later analyzing the effectiveness of using critical thinking dispositional features and action learning approach on enhancing argumentative writing. After taking the post-test from the EFL learners, the researcher scored their argumentative writing by the Holistic Critical Thinking Scoring Rubric – HCTSR, then the researcher scored the EFL learners argumentative writing, in order to measure EFL learners' critical thinking skill development, the researcher gave the CCTST (form A). After finishing this post-test in both groups, and scoring their argumentative writing, the researcher was ready to present the second research question data.

5. Data analysis procedure

As mentioned earlier this study investigated two questions, in this section analysis procedure of the collected data for research questions was presented as follows:

As stated in the data collection procedure, for research question number one, the researcher had to employ one research instrument for the data collection procedure; first, he gave the EFL learners an argumentative writing topic, then evaluate it by the California Critical Thinking Skills Test(CCTST) principles, by using this principles he wanted to know that whether synthesizing critical thinking dispositional features and action learning could improve Iranian EFL learners argumentative writing or not, since he CCTST was intended to measure test takers' ability to display the critical thinking abilities necessary for success in educational or professional contexts.

In question number one first the researcher studied the effect of two independent variables namely; critical thinking dispositional features and action learning approach on argumentative writing development, in doing so he used the t-test which was a statistical test that was used to compare the mean scores s of two groups. It was frequently used in theory testing to ascertain if a procedure or treatment had an impact on the community of interest or whether two groups are distinct.

For the purposes of analyzing the CCTST-related data, it should be noted that CCTST total scores ranging from 0 to 7 do not provide evidence of critical thinking. Scores between 8 and 12 are deemed Weak; scores between 13 and 18 are considered Moderate; while scores between 19 and 24 are considered Strong. Superiority is defined as a score of 25 or above, and the researcher interprets the obtained data based on these numerical values.

As mentioned earlier research question number two in some ways were similar to question number one of the study, but they have an important difference, in question number one the researcher focused his attention and data collection procedure on the experimental group without considering the control group and its conventional context of teaching, since in experimental group the teaching context was a synthesize of critical thinking dispositional features and action learning but in question number two the focus of the researcher was on conventional teaching strategies and its effect on EFL learners' argumentative writing development.

Again, for analysis of the related data the researcher used t-test to compare the two contexts of learning namely; conventional and researcher-based lesson plan.

6. Results

6.1. Checking the assumption of normality

The expectations supporting such tests (such as the normality assumption) required to be verified before performing parametric tests like the t test, ANCOVA, and two-way ANCOVA. As a consequence, Table 2 below provides the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test outcomes for each test employed in this study:

The researcher examined the *p* values under the Sig. column of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (and/or the Shapiro-Wilk's test) to see if the normality assumption is met for the writing pretests and posttests of the male and female L2 learners in the EG and CG, as well as for the CT disposition scores of the male and female learners in the experimental group. Because a *p* value larger than the significance level of .05 indicates no violation of the assumption of normality, it could be concluded that the distributions for all the pretests and posttests used in this study enjoyed normality. In addition to the assumption of normality, the assumptions of linearity, homogeneity of the regression slopes, and homogeneity of variances were checked for the ANCOVA test run in the current study, and no violations of these assumptions were assured as well. All the other assumptions of *t* test and two-way ANOVA had also been met.

6.2. Results of pre-test and post-test

In order to test the first hypothesis of the study, the argumentative writing pretest and posttest scores of the EFL students in the experimental groups are summarized in table 2:

Table 2. Results of descriptive statistics comparing the writing pretest and post-test scores of the EGS and CGS

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
	Paired Samples Statistics				
Pair 1	EG1 Pretest	14.1923	26	1.67527	.32855
	EG1 Posttest	18.3077	26	1.28707	.25241
Pair 2	EG2 Pretest	13.3077	26	1.87924	.36855
	EG2 Posttest	17.8462	26	1.48168	.29058
Pair 3	EG3 Pretest	14.0700	25	1.76115	.35223
	EG3 Posttest	17.6500	25	1.30304	.26061
Pair 4	Cont G Pretest	13.2534	73	1.69686	.19860

	Cont G Posttest	14.0788	73	1.64247	.19224
Pair 5	EGs combination Prestest	13.8539	77	1.79471	.20453
	EGs combination Posttest	17.9383	77	1.37120	.15626

As table 2 shows, a statistically significant difference was found between the mean scores of pre and post-tests of each group whether experimental or control. In order to determine whether the difference between the mean scores of the pre- and post-tests of each group was statistically significant or not, the researcher ran five paired-samples t tests. Table 3 summarizes the results:

Table 3. Results of paired-samples t test comparing the writing pretest and posttest scores of the EGs and CGs.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="10" style="text-align:center">Paired Samples Test</th></tr>
<tr><th></th><th></th><th colspan="6">Paired Differences</th><th></th><th></th><th></th></tr>
<tr><th></th><th></th><th rowspan="2">Mean</th><th rowspan="2">Std. Deviation</th><th rowspan="2">Std. Error Mean</th><th colspan="2">95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th><th rowspan="2">t</th><th rowspan="2">df</th><th rowspan="2">Sig. (2-tailed)</th></tr>
<tr><th>Lower</th><th>Upper</th></tr>
<tr><td>Pair 1</td><td>EG1 Pretest - EG1 Posttest</td><td>-4.11538</td><td>1.89899</td><td>.37242</td><td>-4.88240</td><td>-3.34837</td><td>-11.050</td><td>25</td><td>.000</td></tr>
<tr><td>Pair 2</td><td>EG2 Pretest - EG2 Posttest</td><td>-4.53846</td><td>1.48441</td><td>.29112</td><td>-5.13803</td><td>-3.93890</td><td>-15.590</td><td>25</td><td>.000</td></tr>
<tr><td>Pair 3</td><td>EG3 Pretest - EG3 Posttest</td><td>-3.58000</td><td>1.33213</td><td>.26643</td><td>-4.12988</td><td>-3.03012</td><td>-13.437</td><td>24</td><td>.000</td></tr>
<tr><td>Pair 4</td><td>Cont G Pretest - Cont G Posttest</td><td>-.82534</td><td>.55853</td><td>.06537</td><td>-.95566</td><td>-.69503</td><td>-12.626</td><td>72</td><td>.000</td></tr>
<tr><td>Pair 5</td><td>EGs combination Prestest - EGs combination Posttest</td><td>-4.08442</td><td>1.62049</td><td>.18467</td><td>-4.45222</td><td>-3.71661</td><td>-22.117</td><td>76</td><td>.000</td></tr>
</table>

The significant data presented in Table 3 is the P value of the Sig. (2-tailed) column. The p value had to be examined with the significance level (i.e., .05) to determine whether the regarded dissimilarity of the pretest and posttest results had been numerically important or not. A p value lower than.05 represents a statistically important variation between the two stated measured scores, while a p value above the.05 implies no numerical important deviation. Because the p value beneath the Sig. (2-tailed) row in Table 4.3 was smaller than the significance level, it could be concluded that the variation between the writing pretest and posttest of each EGs and CGs was of statistical significance.

6.3. Argumentative writing development: EGS vs. CGS

Two-way ANCOVA, a statistical test that could account for potential pre-existing differences between the two groups and compare their posttest scores appropriately, was used to test the second hypothesis of the study and determine whether there is a significant difference between the writing posttest scores of the students in the EGs and CGs. The outcomes of the descriptive statistics used in this ANCOVA analysis are displayed in Table.4:

Table 4. Descriptive statistics for writing posttest scores of the EGs and CGs

<table>
<tr><th colspan="5" style="text-align:center">Descriptive Statistics</th></tr>
<tr><th colspan="5" style="text-align:center">Dependent Variable: Posttest</th></tr>
<tr><th>Group</th><th>Gender</th><th>Mean</th><th>Std. Deviation</th><th>N</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Exp G1</td><td>Male</td><td>17.9167</td><td>1.39194</td><td>9</td></tr>
<tr><td>Female</td><td>18.5147</td><td>1.21986</td><td>17</td></tr>
<tr><td>Total</td><td>18.3077</td><td>1.28707</td><td>26</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Exp G 2</td><td>Male</td><td>17.4167</td><td>1.43069</td><td>9</td></tr>
<tr><td>Female</td><td>18.0735</td><td>1.49939</td><td>17</td></tr>
<tr><td>Total</td><td>17.8462</td><td>1.48168</td><td>26</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Exp G3</td><td>Male</td><td>17.2778</td><td>1.18219</td><td>9</td></tr>
<tr><td>Female</td><td>17.8594</td><td>1.35698</td><td>16</td></tr>
<tr><td>Total</td><td>17.6500</td><td>1.30304</td><td>25</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">cont G</td><td>Male</td><td>14.3919</td><td>1.66515</td><td>37</td></tr>
<tr><td>Female</td><td>13.7569</td><td>1.57717</td><td>36</td></tr>
<tr><td>Total</td><td>14.0788</td><td>1.64247</td><td>73</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Total</td><td>Male</td><td>15.7187</td><td>2.17968</td><td>64</td></tr>
<tr><td>Female</td><td>16.3140</td><td>2.61899</td><td>86</td></tr>
<tr><td>Total</td><td>16.0600</td><td>2.45132</td><td>150</td></tr>
</table>

The writing posttest mean score of the EGs, Critical thinking group (M=18.30), action learning group (M=17.84), and synthesizing critical thinking and action learning group (M=17.65) was found to be greater than the writing posttest mean score of the CG learners (M=16.06).

To find out which of these EGs significantly outperformed the other groups in terms of their writing posttest, a two-way ANCOVA was run. The results are illustrated in Table 5 to be consulted:

Table 5. Two-way ANCOVA for the writing post-test scores of the EGs and CGs

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Posttest

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	781.152[a]	12	65.096	78.104	.000	.872
Intercept	171.780	1	171.780	206.107	.000	.601
Group	70.658	3	23.553	28.259	.000	.382
Gender	.299	1	.299	.358	.551	.003
Pretest	68.145	1	68.145	81.763	.000	.374
Group * Pretest	36.275	3	12.092	14.508	.000	.241
Gender * Pretest	.543	1	.543	.651	.421	.005
Group * Gender * Pretest	.712	3	.237	.285	.836	.006
Error	114.183	137	.833			
Total	39583.875	150				
Corrected Total	895.335	149				

a. R Squared = .872 (Adjusted R Squared = .861)

In Table 5, to find the relevant p-value, if you look at the row labeled Groups in the leftmost column, and read across this row, under the Sig. column, you can see the p-value, which should be compared with the alpha level of significance (i.e., .05). This p-value turned out to be smaller than the alpha level of significance (.000 < .05), which indicates that the difference between the learners in EGs (M = 17.93) and CGs (M = 16.01) on the writing post-test reached statistical significance. Differently put, teaching synthesizing critical thinking dispositional features and action learning approach was found to be significantly more effective than the conventional approach so far as the L2 writing of Iranian EFL learners was concerned.

7. Discussion

Because hypotheses one and two focused on the effects of synthesizing critical thinking dispositional features and action learning approach on the development of EFL learners' argumentative writing skills, both are considered together in this section. To test these two hypotheses, a paired-sample t-test was performed on the argumentative writing pretest and posttest scores of the learners in the experimental group. The statistical analysis of the results revealed that their improvement was significant, indicating that synthesizing critical thinking disposition and action learning approach had a positive influence on enhancing Iranian EFL learners' argumentative writing. In addition, one-way ANCOVA was conducted to determine if there was an important disparity between the writing post-test scores of the learners in the EG and CG. The result pointed to the fact that synthesizing critical thinking disposition and action learning approach was found to be significantly efficient than the conventional approach as far as the L2 writing of Iranian EFL learners was under research. Therefore, the first two null hypotheses were safely rejected.

Argumentative writing is believed to be a higher form of analytical thinking in addition to a problem-solving practice where a mixture of different but related skills gathered via practicing action learning and cooperative learning. Writing proficiently necessitates gaining higher order level of thinking and reasoning skills. Freely and Steinberg (2000) underlined the importance of conversations, arguments, and problem-solving exercises in the form of action learning for enhancing critical thinking among students. Through the use of action learning approaches and critical thinking dispositional features as independent variables in this study, EFL learners were able to bring together diverse writing strategies and materials within the same contexts in order to work through challenges, opinion sharing, and question viewpoints in a psychologically safe , cooperative context, and thus develop a critical thinking-based model as the dependent variable, the results of which could be derived from the action learning procedures (Hashemi et al., 2010).

Improving learners' critical thinking skills is one of the important techniques for enhancing L2 learners' writing abilities. (Mohammadzadeh Mohammadabadi et al., 2013). Writing can undoubtedly be regarded a thinking process that requires authors

to use a variety of tactics in order to establish a certain structure for legitimate purposes such as writing official letters, analyzing a particular circumstance, and summarizing teachings. Critical thinkers are analytical, critical, and systematic in their approach to problem solving, and they know that there may be hurdles and challenges to overcome (Sieglová, 2017). These characteristics when combined with action learning approaches lead to the improvement of argumentative writing.

Ruebling (2007) argued that action learning helps learners learn how to learn, which involves coping with real-world challenges in the specific context. Strength of action learning was related to the team-work phase: stating and addressing their viewpoints toward the process, and learning to manage criticism: Being on an equal level and recognized for their efforts, as well as getting feedback and reflecting ideas off each other, all contribute to expanding learning and facilitating growth particularly in relation to argumentative writing improvement. According to Revans (1982, pp.626-7), action learning is a sophisticated intellectual, emotional, or physical process that demands its students accomplish planned change in their observable behavior in the issue field through responsible engagement in a genuine, difficult, and stressful situation which are the features of argumentative writing.

The findings of this study are in line with most of the pertinent previous research. Sham (2016) investigated how critical thinking might be used to educate and acquire writing skills. The researcher randomly assigned individuals to one of two groups: control or experimental. Only individuals in the experimental group were given critical thinking abilities. It was discovered that instructing participants in critical thinking abilities had a decisive influence on their writing performance. Additionally, the participants benefited from developing their critical thinking abilities.

8.   Conclusion and implications

The current research was conducted with the aim of investigating the impact of synthesizing critical thinking dispositional features and action learning on Iranian EFL learners' argumentative writing. It is concluded that (a) synthesizing critical thinking dispositional features and action learning approach had a direct and positive influence on enhancing Iranian EFL learners' argumentative composition and essay, and (b) there was an expressive disparity between the argumentative writing development of the learners exposed to the synthesis of critical thinking dispositional features and action learning approach with the ones who experienced conventional instruction

Argumentative writing requires criticality; it's not enough to just describe or summarize the evidence, the writer also needs to analyze and evaluate information and use it to build his own arguments. This is where he shows his own thoughts based on the evidence available, so critical writing is really important for higher grades. Synthesis of critical thinking dispositional features and action learning motivates eagerness, develop inspiration, boosts problem-solving competency, fosters independence, and is considered a life-long skill, not just learning.

It is hoped that the findings of this study deliver beneficial consequences for EFL instructors, learners, materials developers, and syllabus designers. Critical thinking is a combination of abilities and dispositions that, when used properly, enhances the possibility of developing a reasonable response to a quandary or a good result to an issue (Dwyer et al., 2015). Suppose learners master the principles of critical thinking. In that case, they will apply careful intuition, test the impossible, seek hardship, build substitutes, use an approach, see Consider other points of view and try to be equitable.

9.   Acknowledgments

10. Funding

11. Data availability

The datasets generated and analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

12. Ethics declarations

12.1. Ethical approval

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

12.2. Informed consent

The written consent letters were obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

12.3. Conflict of interest

The present study was part of the doctoral dissertation of the second author. On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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Native-Speakerism in Favor of Target Culture: Fairclough's Practical Reasoning Framework

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ABSTRACT

This study employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to interrogate the discourse of native-speakerism prevalent in English Language Teaching (ELT). It analyzes a research article that advocates for the superiority of Native English-Speaking Teachers (NESTs) over Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers (NNESTs). By applying Fairclough and Fairclough's (2012) practical reasoning framework, the research reconstructs the article's argumentative structure and critically examines its underlying assumptions and values. The analysis reveals that the article's promotion of NESTs is underpinned by a pervasive native-speakerism ideology. This ideology constructs a hierarchical relationship between native and non-native speakers, privileging Western culture and language over others. The article's discourse naturalizes this hierarchy, obscuring its socially constructed nature and its role in perpetuating linguistic inequality. By focusing on the supposed innate superiority of NESTs, the article overlooks the complex interplay of factors influencing effective teaching, including pedagogical expertise, cultural competence, and learner needs. The research concludes by emphasizing the detrimental impact of native-speakerism on ELT. It underscores the need to challenge and dismantle this ideology in favor of a more inclusive and equitable approach to teacher education and professional development. By recognizing the linguistic diversity of the world and valuing the expertise of NNESTs, the field can move towards a more just and effective practice.

KEYWORDS: Native-speakerism; Critical discourse analysis; English language teaching; Practical reasoning; Ideology

1. Introduction

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a qualitative approach used to examine how discourses construct, justify, and perpetuate social inequality (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Like discourse analysis (DA), CDA highlights the role of language as a tool of power in shaping social and psychological dynamics (Willig, 2014). It views language not merely as a communication tool but as an instrument of power that influences perception, thought, and behavior. CDA investigates discourses related to power abuse, injustice, and inequality, aiming to uncover hidden or implicit power relations (Van Dijk, 1993; Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

Everyday prejudice and oppression are reinforced by a culture of racism, propagated through political and media discourses controlled by elite groups (Van Dijk, 2007). A central focus of CDA is the use and abuse of language for exercising socio-political power. Widdowson (2007) argues that CDA is an analytical method for identifying ideological bias in texts, challenging ideologies that legitimize the power, control, and dominance of ruling systems. By doing so, CDA critically examines the assumptions and ideas underpinning the status quo.

"Native-speakerism" refers to the belief that native-speaker teachers embody a 'Western culture' that serves as the model for both English language teaching methodologies and ideals (Holliday, 2005; Medgyes, 1994; Liu, 1998; Jenkins, 2000; McKay, 2002). This concept influences various professional aspects, including employment policies and language instruction. A significant issue within native-speakerism is the 'othering' of students and colleagues from non-English-speaking regions, based on essentialist cultural stereotypes. This is particularly evident when students feel uneasy with the active, collaborative, and self-directed 'learner-centered' teaching methods often promoted as superior in Western contexts. Native-speakerist attitudes are problematic as they impose negative and restrictive labels on non-native cultures, describing them as 'dependent', 'hierarchical', 'collectivist', 'reticent', 'indirect', 'passive', 'docile', 'lacking self-esteem', 'reluctant to challenge authority', 'easily dominated', 'undemocratic', or 'traditional', ultimately portraying them as uncritical and unthinking (Holliday, 2005; Pennycook, 2002; Kubota, 2001).

A variety of foundational works in critical discourse analysis and argumentation theory have examined deliberative argumentation. Fairclough and Fairclough (2012) argue that a comprehensive understanding of deliberative argumentation necessitates consideration of practical arguments, which encompass narratives, explanations, and frames. They highlight the crucial role of value pluralism in practical arguments, noting that evaluations of current situations and subsequent claims or proposals are influenced by diverse values—often held by the same individual—and varying hierarchies of these values. Practical reasoning, they assert, is a form of conductive reasoning, where conclusions are derived from different value-based assessments of a situation, independent of the claim itself. This form of argumentation involves weighing pros and cons according to the individual's value hierarchy to reach a conclusion. Their model of practical reasoning integrates circumstantial premises (fact selection and description) with normative premises (values or obligations) to formulate an action claim that aligns with the individual's concerns (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012).

1.1. Statement of the problem

The notion of 'non-native English-speaking teachers' (NNESTs) in English Language Teaching (ELT) has often been framed similarly to that of non-native speakers at large. In the context of language acquisition research, the idealized "native" speaker is frequently placed above the stereotyped "non-native" speaker, who is perceived as a flawed communicator with limited abilities (Firth & Wagner, 1997). This creates a competence dichotomy, casting the non-native speaker or teacher as inferior or less proficient compared to native speakers (see Valdes, 1998, on 'near-native' proficiency).

As a global language, English holds a prominent position in today's world. Phillipson (1992) argues that the expansion of English worldwide is repressive, as it not only supplants other languages but also imposes its cognitive frameworks on learners. These frameworks may represent ideologies that Westerners use to legitimize their culture and propagate their ideas. This phenomenon is often termed English linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992; Rajasekhar, 2012).

Lowe and Kiczkowiak (2016) describe native speakerism as a construct that divides individuals into "us" and "them," positioning "non-native speaker" teachers and students as culturally inferior and necessitating training in "correct" Western teaching methods. This paradigm results in a preference for Western language teaching methodologies over local educational practices. A prominent consequence of native speakerism is the discrimination against teachers identified as 'non-native speakers'. Moreover, it influences the dissemination of teaching methodologies to different contexts, often sidelining the valuable expertise of local educators (Kumaravadivelu, 2012). The research argues that native speakerism sustains Western dominance in language education.

2. Literature review

2.1. Native-speakerism

Within English language teaching (ELT), the prevalent ideology of native-speakerism posits that native-speaker teachers embody a 'Western culture' from which both the English language and its instructional methods are derived (Holliday, 2005). This ideology is evident in practices and beliefs that favor the perspectives, institutions, and teaching approaches of Western native speakers. Holliday (2005) defines native-speakerism as an ideology where the viewpoints of Western ELT institutions and their native speaker representatives are prioritized over others. Research indicates that 'native speaker' status can be associated with ethnicity (Kubota & Lin, 2006) and nationality (Singh, 1998), suggesting that it is a socially constructed term encompassing not only linguistic proficiency but also various political, social, and cultural attributes (Davies, 2003). Native-speakerism impacts many facets of professional life, including hiring practices and language instruction. A significant issue is

the 'othering' of students and colleagues from non-English-speaking Western countries through essentialist cultural stereotypes, particularly when students are uncomfortable with active, collaborative, and learner-centered teaching techniques promoted as superior in the English-speaking West. Such perspectives are problematic as they negatively stereotype non-native speaker cultures as 'dependent,' 'hierarchical,' 'collectivist,' 'reticent,' 'indirect,' 'passive,' 'docile,' 'lacking self-esteem,' 'reluctant to challenge authority,' 'easily dominated,' 'undemocratic,' or 'traditional,' thus labeling them as uncritical and unthinking (Holliday, 2005; Pennycook, 2002; Kubota, 2001).

Despite claims that such descriptions stem from professional observation, their ideological and biased nature becomes evident when they appear frequently and indiscriminately in various English Language Teaching (ELT) writings, literature, and training, irrespective of the specific 'culture' being portrayed (Kubota, 2001; Holliday, 2005). Consequently, these descriptions construct an imagined, problematic Other, contrasting with the uncomplicated Self of the 'native speaker.' Alongside Phillipson's (1992) theory of 'Linguistic Imperialism,' native-speakerism is informed by critical applied linguistics research, which argues that organizations like the British Council have contributed to a neocolonial agenda, promoting Western interests through English language education and the dissemination of Western educational technologies.

Native-speakerism, as noted by Pennycook (1994), surpasses a simplistic deterministic view that confines human relationships to the realm of political economy. The clearest indication of native-speakerism is the bias against non-native English speakers. Clark and Paran (2007) highlight that 'non-native speaker' teachers face hiring discrimination, while Houghton and Rivers (2013) show that this ideology can also commodify 'native speaker' teachers. Furthermore, the reliance on cultural stereotypes in English Language Teaching (ELT) materials and training can shape students' perceptions.

Various terms are employed to characterize students from non-Western backgrounds, including "dependent," "hierarchical," "collectivist," "reticent," "indirect," "passive," "docile," "lacking self-esteem," "reluctant to challenge authority," "easily dominated," "undemocratic," or "traditional" (Rivers, 2006: 385–6). Canagarajah (1999: 108) suggests that behaviors exhibited by non-Western students and teachers are often rooted in ancient ethno-religious traditions, which exemplifies orientalist 'othering' as described by Said (1979).

2.2. CDA

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) encompasses various theories and methodologies aimed at analyzing discourse and social interactions. Van Dijk (2001) notes that CDA seeks to enhance our comprehension of significant social issues through discourse analysis. Fairclough describes it as the study of "linguistic and semiotic aspects of social processes and problems" (p. 368).

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) investigates the linguistic sources of power, dominance, inequality, and bias in both written and spoken texts. It critically evaluates how these linguistic sources are upheld and perpetuated within particular social, political, and historical contexts (Van Djik, 1998). CDA is a method of discourse analysis that systematically explores the relationship between discursive practices, events, and texts, and the broader social and cultural structures, relations, and processes that are often obscure in terms of causality and determination. This approach aims to uncover how these practices, events, and texts both result from and ideologically influence power relations and power struggles. The lack of transparency in the relationship between discourse and society may contribute to the consolidation of power and hegemony (Fairclough, 1993).

The aim of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is to uncover the links between discourse and practice that can be understood by humans. Originating in the 1970s from critical linguistics, CDA was significantly shaped by two influential books: "Language and Control" by Fowler et al. (1979) and "Language and Ideology" by Hodge and Kress (1979). The field was formally established at the University of East Anglia by Fairclough, who introduced the term CDA in his 1989 book, "Language and Power." European-style CDA uniquely combines systemic functional linguistics with critical social theory. Central concepts such as power, ideology, and discourse, which are integral to CDA, have roots in the works of philosophers and social theorists like Adorno, Horkheimer, Bakhtin, Foucault, and Kristeva. CDA has been practiced globally and has evolved into various traditions, including dialectical-relational, sociocognitive, discourse-historical, critical metaphor, Foucauldian, ethnographic, narrative-based, and interventionist approaches. According to Wodak and Meyer (2009), common features among these approaches include an interest in real language use in natural settings, a focus on texts and communicative events, the analysis of action and interaction, the consideration of nonverbal communication, and the examination of the social and cognitive aspects of interaction, along with the context of language use.

Due to its interdisciplinary focus on language, power, and ideology, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) became relevant in educational research. During the 1970s, scholars from fields such as sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, sociology, and cultural studies explored various methodologies to examine the social and textual dynamics within educational settings. CDA played a pivotal role in merging social theory with linguistic analysis, thus unifying these diverse efforts. Prominent education researchers, including Collins (1986), Gee (1990), Heath (1983), and Street (1985), have highlighted the ideological dimensions of educational practices and the socio-historical and political contexts influencing their development. Gee's (1990) publication, "Social Linguistics and Literacies," marked the introduction of CDA into educational research.

2.3. Objectives and significance of the study

Due to globalization, English has gained greater prevalence, elevating the significance of English language instruction. In recent years, the field of English language teaching (ELT) has observed a rise in the number of native English speakers as instructors. However, there exists a persistent bias in ELT favoring native English-speaking teachers, often perceived as ideal, while non-native English-speaking teachers are frequently undervalued. This paper aims to explore the concept of native-speakerism within ELT by analyzing a study that supports the use of native speakers, consequently marginalizing local educators.

The aim of this research is to offer non-native English-speaking teachers substantial opportunities to recognize that well-qualified and trained non-native English-speaking teachers (non-NESTs) can significantly contribute to English language teaching, drawing on their own experiences as learners and their professional training and teaching experience. By fostering an understanding among students and policy makers that both native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) and non-NESTs possess distinct strengths and weaknesses, this study may help alter perceptions within the field of language teaching. For non-NESTs to cultivate a positive self-perception and address the racial bias present in the English Language Teaching (ELT) profession, it is crucial to challenge prevailing negative stereotypes and acknowledge their unique advantages as English teachers compared to NESTs. As supported by Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (1999), non-NESTs can attain the competencies of "international English professionals" through self-reflection and critical action, irrespective of their race or accent.

3. Methodology

3.1. Sampling procedure

The researcher employed purposeful sampling to select 14 articles from eight journals focused on the issue of native-speakerism. This method allowed for the intentional selection of articles and their arguments for the study.

It is worth mentioning that prior to the intervention, the participants were provided with informed consent forms outlining the purpose of the study, the data collection procedures, and their rights as participants. They were given the opportunity to ask questions and were required to provide written consent to participate voluntarily in the research.

3.2. Object of analysis & nature of the object analysis

The chosen text for analysis is titled "The Effect of Native English-Speaking Teachers on the Language Acquisition of EFL Learners" by Mofareh Alqahtani, published in 2019 by the International Journal of Innovation in Research and Educational Sciences (IJIRES).

The first step involves presenting the content, aiming to identify the primary normative claims and the various reasons supporting them. Each sentence in the text has been numbered in square brackets for easier reference during analysis and evaluation. Texts of this nature can be examined by pinpointing practical arguments, such as action claims, goals, circumstances, and values that support the suggested actions. The argument can then be assessed by posing critical questions. Selected sections of Mofareh Alqahtani's original text, "The Effect of Native English-Speaking Teachers on the Language Acquisition of EFL Learners," will be presented first, followed by a reconstruction of the argument's structure.

(…) [1] While the invaluable experience of the native English-speaking teacher remains largely limited to private schools and educational institutions to date, it is held that such expertise would be of equal learner benefit within the public education sector (…)

[2] English language proficiency is no longer a merely desirable addition, but rather a social and professional prerequisite then, the prevailing issue of low EFL student achievement has become something of an obsession for Arab education stake-holders. [3] In light of this, the use of a native English-speaking teacher in tandem with a local teacher is now deemed necessary to properly develop the language competencies and skills of learners studying English as a Second Language (…).

[4] While it is self-evident that such teachers have the advantage of expertise in their mother-tongue, the majority are also highly qualified and accredited professionals, as certified by TEFT (Teaching English as a Second Language) and/or the TKT (Cambridge Test of English Teaching Knowledge). [5] In addition to undergoing specialized teacher training and the accumulation of practical experience, such teachers also demonstrate a knowledge ability and openness to contemporary pedagogies and teaching aids. [6] In short, the native English-speaking teacher outperforms the domestic teacher because he operates within his mother-tongue while the local teacher toils in his second foreign language. [7] Thus, the present study proposes a wide variation in favor of the native English-speaker teacher.

[8] Since they now maintain that the pressurized English learning process cannot be properly completed without specialist expertise, many Arab educational institutions seek the assistance of native English-speaking teachers as a means to instruct non-native counterparts in their teaching philosophies and strategies (…) .

[9] The fundamental research problem rests in determining the effectiveness of using the native English-speaking teacher (NEST) rather than a non-native teacher (NNEST) as a means to ascertain whether this fulfils the aim of elevating the low standard of student attainment in English language skills (…) .

[10] The participants comprised 5 NESTs and 5 NNESTs in addition to 30 students enrolled in the first level at King Khaled Military Academy. [11] Fifteen of the students were taught by NESTs and 15 by NNESTs. [12] The student age range was 19 to 20 years old.

(…) [13] The teaching of English as the second language (ESL) as a vital means of keeping stride with current global developments. [14] Although the English language is now the accepted leader of contemporary communication and knowledge, there is a dearth of studies which address its impact on local and/or regional environments.

(…) [15] The results confirmed that NESTs performed better for the reasons previously outlined in this research. [16] The study also revealed that NEST EFL methodologies and teaching strategies more closely align with the needs and requirements of contemporary students. [17] While the current research results may not be currently generalizable to all educational institutions or ESL students, they nonetheless provide valuable insights into the general presentation of English teaching methods which assist students to assimilate better English language skills. (…) [18] In fact, the results of the study clearly indicated the NEST approach to be a highly effective and positive method of teaching English as a foreign /second language.

[19] A breakdown of the research results confirmed that 75% to 95% of students were satisfied with NEST teaching as compared to 5% to 25% who reported dissatisfaction (…).

(…) [20] Students taught by NESTs are clearly conscious of peers who have been taught by NNESTs due to the local teacher's use of idiomatic language to deliver the course and the use of traditional teaching methods. [21] It is further evident that the NEST frequently encourages students to practice English language through direct communication with the teacher while the NNEST tends to resort to the local language when students are struggling or supports memorization rather than practice inside or outside classrooms.

[22] As expected, the results confirmed that students graduating from private schools which employ NESTs exceeded the language learning performance of their local school counterparts. [23] Other than positive attitudes toward the levels of student linguistic attainment of foreign school graduates, such correlation values further reveal a number of variables which determine the process of success as follows:

[24] A native English speaker with a very strong command of English language, cumulative classroom experience and training, and authentic pronunciation, ensure the NEST is the preferred choice of EFL/ESL teacher.

[25] It is evident that language teachers who speak the mother-tongue reflect the desires and needs of today's students. [26] It is critical to consider student attitudes and expectations regarding the provision of authentic and highly-qualified teaching since satisfied and motivated learners arguably assimilate improved grammar, pronunciation, reading, writing, and other language skills, in a more timely and effective way through the contemporary teaching strategies used by NESTs.

[27] Finally, the interview phase of the study confirms that the NEST approach is best suited to the mentality of the student. [28] This interesting finding is yoked to advanced NEST teaching methods which are supported by intensive training and a distinct style that takes account of students' abilities and needs in terms of grammar, pronunciation, reading and writing, as well as the application of straightforward methods which students find easy to follow. [29] While it is conceded that NNEST teaching method is accessible to students who share the same mother-tongue as the teacher, NESTs also tend to employ realistic teaching methods to convey the frameworks of the English language, and apply various forms of modern technology to assist students to assimilate accurate language skills.

[30] To date, the practice of appointing native English-speaking teachers remains delimited to private educational institutions, but may gradually extend into the public sector in the near future.

[31] *NEST - Merits:* A high degree of competence and teaching expertise due of specialist training.

[32] Adopts modern teaching methods and strategies which enable the independent learner to derive knowledge and information without constant teacher intervention.

[33] Correct use of the mother-tongue affords learner opportunities to practice English with a specialized teacher.

[34] Has the advantage of original mother-tongue pronunciation which improves student accuracy of utterance.

[35] Understands the meanings and connotations of word-use in multiple contexts.

[36] Comparative analysis between the native English-speaking teacher and the nonnative English-speaking teacher clearly demonstrates that each has advantages and disadvantages. [37] The principal advantages of the NEST are the ability to speak the English mother-tongue with fluency, confidence, and excellent pronunciation, and enabling learners to acquire living language skills through listening and communication. [38] Moreover it is evident that practicing English with native speakers fosters an authentic and realistic use of vocabulary, a thorough understanding of the culture accompanying the language, a more genuine accent, and accurate pronunciation.

[39] The study confirms that the contribution of the native English-speaking teachers in stimulating EFL learners by applying appropriate and enjoyable methodologies in terms of style, language strategies, and components, is both skillful and extremely effective. [40] One of the most significant results revealed that NESTs motivate students to better understand and engage with the English language. [41] Moreover, there is a positive shift in student opinion in terms of communication with the native English-speaking teacher. [42] This suggests that attitudes towards the target language may be considered a meaningful barometer of teacher performance and learner achievement. [43] As expected, the findings also confirmed that private schools students currently enjoy significantly better learning outcomes in English than their counterparts in the public education sector.

[44] In light of overall findings, the following actions are recommended:

[45] Greater reliance on qualified native English-speaking teachers within the English language teaching process.

[46] The status of native English-speaking teachers should align with the needs of students according to the goals and objectives required (…).

[47] Critics of [Using] (…) Native-speaker teachers [maintain that] native English-speaking teachers cannot secure the desired learning results to the wide variation of social factors which pose challenges to 'foreign' teachers, such as student inability to understand the language of instruction, teacher difficulty in engaging with the prevailing educative customs and content, and regional linguistic and socio-cultural barriers.

[48] Adoption of technological educative means in all its forms in order to motivate both the native English-speaking teacher and student to perform at their best.

[49] Provision of a working environment which enables teachers to perform their duties professionally and effectively.

[50] Greater promotion of the English language and emphasis on its value, not only a mandatory school subject, but as a prerequisite for ongoing social and professional life.

The way arguments are used to justify actions has been widely debated across various disciplines, including logic and moral philosophy. Aristotle's concept of practical reasoning is particularly contentious in philosophical discussions (Millgram 2001). This is because rational deliberation about goals (or reasoning towards an end, as described by Aristotle in Nicomachean Ethic, sencompasses diverse interpretations of what makes an argument rational and what makes one argument superior to another (Temkin, 2012).

In argumentation theory, deliberation, as discussed by Richardson (1997), is essential for justifying decisions. Reconstructing and evaluating the implicit premises of practical arguments is crucial for effective deliberative argumentation.

To identify the origins of deep disagreements (Muir 1993; Fairclough and Fairclough 2012; Fairclough 2013), it is essential to represent and formalize both the explicit and implicit aspects of practical arguments. Atkinson et al. (2006) developed interaction protocols for dialogues regarding proposed AI actions, building on Perelman's (1968) exploration and resolution of opinion conflicts. In fields like political science, critical discourse analysis, argumentation, and education, the analysis of deliberative argumentation structures and the evaluation of practical arguments have gained importance. Since democratic decisions rely on argumentation and must be justified through it, deliberative argumentation is viewed as fundamental to democracy in political science (Elster 1998). One key goal of argumentation in this context is to transform preferences.
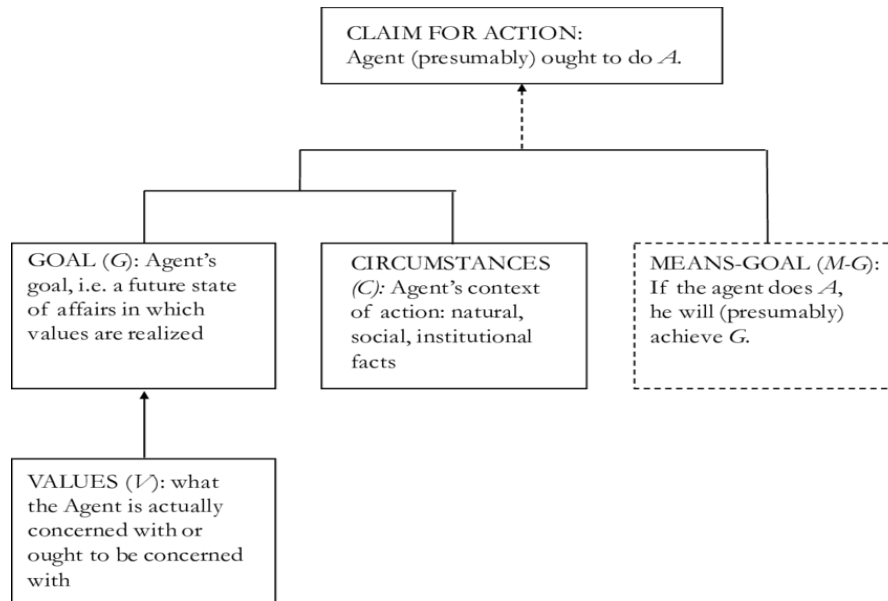
3.3. Analysis

Fairclough and Fairclough's (2012) framework outlines an argument structure consisting of circumstantial premises, goal premises, value premises, and a claim for action. These components collectively form an argument, defined as a collection of statements where some (premises) support another (claim). In positivist research, the value premise, which influences the goal and the context of action, is often implicit. The goal represents the desired future state that the arguer aims to achieve. The circumstantial premise, addressing the current problematic state of affairs, is typically presented in the introduction and sometimes reiterated in the conclusion. The claim, which is the proposed action, serves as the means to reach the specified goals and is linked by a means-end premise that is presumptive.

Fairclough and Fairclough (2012) propose a model of practical argumentation where circumstantial premises (which encompass the selection and depiction of facts) are integrated with normative premises (such as values or obligations). This integration generates claims for action that align with the agent's concerns.

The abstract model of practical argument is represented as shown in Fig. 1 (Fairclough & Fairclough 2012).


Figure 1. Fairclough & Fairclough (2012) model of practical argumentation

The analysis of practical arguments emphasizes the significance of values. Values influence the evaluation of a desired future state or proposal and the means to achieve it. They also play a pivotal role in selecting and describing relevant circumstances (Fairclough & Fairclough 2012,). Consequently, the depiction of a situation and its attributes is shaped by the values being upheld.

This framework aims to assess the soundness of practical arguments and their justifications, focusing on the reasons provided by speakers to endorse a particular course of action. It considers practical arguments as deriving from argumentative inferences grounded in goals and values, which inform choices and recommendations. This approach necessitates identifying what is good or preferable and understanding what exemplifies a particular preference or value.

Reconstructing the argument is a crucial part of the analysis phase in Fairclough and Fairclough's (2012) framework. By applying this framework, the argument was reconstructed after examining the article:
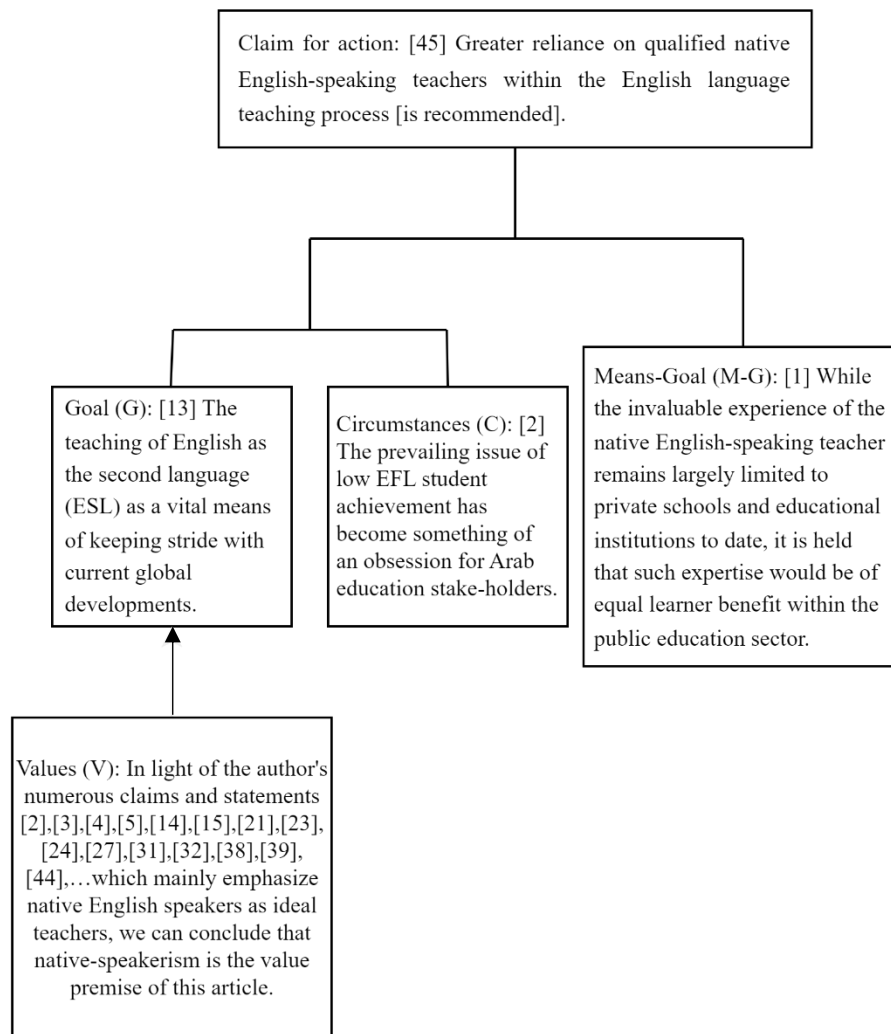
3.3.1. Claim

"Greater reliance on qualified native English-speaking teachers within the English language teaching process" [is recommended].

3.3.2. Circumstantial premise

[2] the prevailing issue of low EFL student achievement has become something of an obsession for Arab education stake-holders.

3.3.3. Means-end premise

[1] While the invaluable experience of the native English-speaking teacher remains largely limited to private schools and educational institutions to date, it is held that such expertise would be of equal learner benefit within the public education sector.

3.3.4. Goal premise

[13] The teaching of English as the second language (ESL) as a vital means of keeping stride with current global developments.

3.3.5. Value premise

In light of the author's numerous claims and statements [3], [4], [5], [6], [15], [22], [24], [25], [28], [31], [32],[37],[38],[43], …which mainly emphasize native English speakers as ideal teachers, we can conclude that native-speakerism is the value premise of this article.

3.4. Evaluation

3.4.1. Critical questions for normative critique (NC)

In alignment with the three approaches through which criticism or evaluation is performed during a critical discussion, we employ three corresponding sets of critical questions. The subsequent step involves a dialectical assessment of the text's arguments, utilizing critical questions directed at the premises, the argument as a whole, and the claim. This method allows us to execute criticism by posing these three predefined sets of critical questions (CQs). These sets include the following:

(a) Critical questions that challenge the rational acceptability of the premises (or their truth).

(b) Critical questions that can defeat the argument.

(c) Critical questions that can rebut the claim. (Fairclough and Fairclough 2012, 45).

3.4.2. CQs that challenge the rational acceptability of the premises (or their truth)

3.4.2.1. Circumstantial premise

Is the situation presented in a logically acceptable manner?

The conditions are outlined to favor a specific course of action over another. The choice of relevant facts and the evaluative language employed to describe these facts inherently guide towards a predetermined conclusion. For example, Alqahtani highlights that the issue of low EFL student achievement has become a significant concern for Arab education stakeholders. This argument seems to suggest that local teachers are ineffective and that only native speakers can be successful in the classroom. Thus, the context of action is not described in a dialectical manner.

3.4.2.2. Goal premise and Means-end premise

Should the arguer have taken into account additional objectives, including the legitimate goals of others, thereby broadening the deliberative context beyond mere instrumental purposes? (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012, p. 341). How strongly is the goal aligned with the agent's values? Will the proposed action truly accomplish the intended goal? (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012, p. 61). What alternative actions, aside from the proposed one, that could also achieve the goal, should be considered? (Other-Means Question)

The goal and means-end premise can also be challenged. The goals of action are "The teaching of English as the second language (ESL) as a vital means of keeping stride with current global developments" and to have proficient English speakers. And the means-end is "While the invaluable experience of the native English-speaking teacher remains largely limited to private schools and educational institutions to date, it is held that such expertise would be of equal learner benefit within the public education sector."

The effectiveness of teachers is predominantly influenced by their proficiency rather than their accent. In the case of non-native-speaking teachers, stakeholders such as parents, principals, and policymakers often neglect the advantage that these teachers may share a common language with their students. Due to their own experience with language acquisition, non-native teachers can elucidate concepts, vocabulary, complex structures, and semantics in both languages. Typically, non-native speakers engage in more rigorous study of English grammar and mechanics compared to native speakers. While native speakers may intuitively understand grammar rules, non-native teachers are better equipped to explain these rules clearly, aiding students in fully comprehending and retaining the information.

3.4.3. CQs that can defeat the argument

These challenge the inference from the premises to the conclusion and can indicate that the argument is invalid. Examples of these CQs include the following.

CQ: Is there any other action [or means] that is better than the one proposed in the claim to achieve the goal and thus makes the proposed action unnecessary? (if yes, the conclusion no longer follows from the premises and as such is invalid.)

The demand for English language teachers remains high globally as educational institutions and businesses strive to hire skilled and effective instructors. A pertinent question in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) is whether the native or non-native status of a teacher significantly impacts their employability. The clarity of the teacher's pronunciation and the effectiveness of communication are crucial factors, suggesting that a teacher's accent does not substantially affect students' language acquisition. Notably, non-native English-speaking (NNES) teachers currently constitute around 80% of the ELT workforce (Richardson, 2016). Favoring native English speakers (NES) over NNES teachers is both impractical and undesirable. If all recruiters were to exclusively hire NES teachers, believing them to be the only qualified candidates, the demand for English teachers would far exceed the available supply.

3.4.4. CQs that can rebut the claim

The primary concern is with the outcomes of actions, specifically those outcomes that contradict the action's intended objectives or other goals that the agent should support, such as the valid aims of other agents. According to Fairclough and Fairclough (2012), these are the most significant issues from the perspective of the rationality of action.

Does the proposed action counteract its intended goal, thereby producing adverse effects? Additionally, does it conflict with other goals the agent is or should be dedicated to, including the valid goals of other agents? Furthermore, does the action negatively impact human well-being or the legitimate aims of agents and other acknowledged public concerns? (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012)

Teachers who use English as a second language should not face marginalization due to their linguistic backgrounds; instead, their multilingual skills should be appreciated. Multilingualism provides not only cognitive benefits but also enhances morphosyntactic understanding, metalinguistic awareness, creativity, problem-solving abilities, and memory retention. Multilingual teachers are often more adept at comprehending and explaining the structure of the target language, aiding their students in understanding how the language functions. These teachers draw on both theoretical knowledge from their training and practical insights from their own language-learning experiences.

3.4.5. Critical questions for explanatory critique (EC)

Do the beliefs and concerns driving the argument primarily benefit the dominant party? (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012, p. 100:2; Fairclough & Fairclough, 2018, p. 14:2).

How do the beliefs and concerns linked to the interests of specific social groups become widely accepted? (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012, p. 100:2).

How do these particular yet universalized beliefs and concerns negatively impact human well-being and various aspects of social life, especially power relations on an international level? (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012, p. 100:2).

What changes in current institutional arrangements are necessary, such as devolving more powers to local authorities to strengthen local democracy?

Native-speakerism undermines both the English Language Teaching (ELT) profession and prevailing views on English and its associated cultures. Labeling teachers as 'non-native speakers' reflects a deep-seated skepticism about their cultural contributions and carries implications of cultural inadequacy based on non-Western biases. Additionally, this concept devalues 'native speaker' teachers, reducing them to mere commodities in a market fixated on the ideal of the 'native speaker.' While 'non-native speaker' might be a neutral term in the context of other languages, its application to English carries a negative connotation due to its entanglement with global power dynamics, rendering it a term with neo-racist undertones.

In the realm of teaching practices, the ideology of native speakerism can exacerbate challenges for non-native speaker teachers (NNSTs), leading to reduced classroom favor, diminished self-confidence, and negative perceptions of other English varieties. Regarding employment practices, existing literature indicates that numerous institutions and recruitment agencies prefer hiring native speaker teachers (NSTs) and provide them with higher salaries compared to NNSTs, despite many NSTs lacking formal English teaching certifications. This preference may be linked to inequitable hiring policies, double standards, and underlying biases and discrimination.

4. Conclusion

Based on existing research and our own observations, native-speakerism remains deeply entrenched in English Language Teaching (ELT). There is a clear link between privilege and marginalization in TESOL methodologies, practices, and recruitment for ELT professionals. Despite the criticism from many Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers (NNESTs), ELT practices in various settings still lack the professional recognition for NNESTs. As long as monolingualism prevails in ELT, bilingualism or multilingualism will not be valued, resulting in the continued dominance of Native English-Speaking Teachers

(NESTs). This paper advocates for challenging the native-speakerism ideology that reinforces distinctions between the Self and the Other in the ELT domain (Fang, 2018). ELT policies and practices should embrace multilingualism rather than adhere to a monolingual standard. Addressing native-speakerism is challenging, as many ELT practitioners remain unaware of or misunderstand English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) theory.

The prevalent dichotomy of 'native English speaker teachers' (NEST) versus 'non-native English speaker teachers' (NNEST) has been criticized for its oversimplified approach in linking teaching practices directly to language proficiency. This problematic perspective has led the US TESOL organization to issue two 'position statements' (TESOL 1999, 2006) rejecting such divisive classifications. Consequently, the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) is shifting towards a more inclusive 'both/and discourse' (i.e., incorporating both NESTs and NNESTs) that recognizes and values the diverse strengths and limitations of both types of educators in various teaching contexts (Matsuda & Matsuda 2001). This broader perspective promotes collaboration and mutual support, offering learners a richer educational experience that is contextually and socially relevant (Mahboob, op. cit.). On a micro level, this approach enhances learners' access to diverse sociolinguistic and intercultural resources (McKay, op. cit.). On a macro level, it contributes to fostering a professional environment that embraces diversity throughout the field (Selvi, 2009).

5. Implications

This study has significant implications for both policy and theory. Education practices and policies that emphasize native-speakerism bolster the preference for native English among students, parents, and policymakers, adversely impacting their perceptions of localized English varieties. This trend endangers the linguistic and cultural diversity of regional non-native English variants and their sustainability, as well as the identities of non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs). The application of native-speaker ideology in English language teaching policies and practices has been problematic. Therefore, a frequently recommended solution is to adopt a localized model that is more linguistically, culturally, and politically relevant to the local context of students and teachers than a native speaker model.

Native speakerism arises from the historical and ongoing cultural dominance of English-speaking Western countries, coupled with discrimination against nations both within and outside the Expanding Circle. Additionally, native speakerism is based on the traditional belief that native English speakers inherently own the language and embody a superior educational culture. It is imperative for ELT researchers and educators to continue challenging and debunking these outdated and persistent chauvinistic ideologies. Addressing the persistence of native speakerism in global ELT and recognizing the diverse sociolinguistic and sociocultural dynamics brought about by globalization will foster a more ethical, democratic, and harmonious environment for ELT learners.

6. Limitations of the study

Some limitations of this study should be considered. Firstly, the analysis is based solely on a single article from the Saudi Arabian context. Secondly, the study employs only Fairclough and Fairclough's (2012) framework for discourse analysis. Other analytical approaches could be applied to examine the discourse comprehensively.

7. Future directions

To gain a deeper insight into native-speakerism, it is essential to undertake more qualitative studies examining its impact on individual teachers. Such research will help elucidate the intricacies of this ideology in the educational field and equip us to address it effectively. This can be achieved by evaluating additional studies through various theoretical frameworks to more effectively reveal the consequences of native-speakerism.

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Is ChatGPT a Cure all? Demystifying the Impact of Using ChatGPT on EFL Learners' Writing Skill

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the current study was to demystify the impact of using ChatGPT on English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' writing skill. To this end, 45 EFL male and female students from two language schools participated in this study, selected via convenience sampling from 67 learners based on a placement test. The participants were divided into three groups. In the first experimental group the students practiced writing using ChatGPT, while in the second experimental group, they received writing instructions using ChatGPT and teacher input, and in the third, the participants followed the conventional method was utilized. Before and after the treatment, the participants were subjected to pre and posttest. Finally, the performance of the three groups was compared via one-way ANOVA. In addition, 10 EFL learners from both experimental groups were selected voluntarily to take part in the interview and the qualitative data were analyzed based on the theme-based analysis. The findings revealed that the second experimental group outperformed the first experimental and the control groups, revealing the efficiency of the instruction via ChatGPT along with teacher input. The result of the interview showed that while the EFL students generally hold a favorable view of ChatGPT, they expressed concerns about the use of the artificial intelligence (AI) tool. In addition, they lack the necessary skills to effectively employ it to help them write. This deficiency could be a significant obstacle to the implementation of technology in their EFL writing.

KEYWORDS: Artificial intelligence; EFL learners; CALL; ChatGPT; Writing skill

1. Introduction

An increasing amount of research has acknowledged the significance of writing skills for EFL students (Hasanah & Fatimah, 2020; Rovikasari & Supriyadi, 2020). Writing is a language skill that is intricately connected with the other facets of a language (Fitria, 2021). An EFL writer must be well-versed in selecting the right structure, language, writing mechanics, vocabulary, and more prior to commencing the writing process (Lutai & Besarab, 2020). On top of that, thoughts, words, and sentences in a piece of writing come from the author's essential abilities including his own creativity uniqueness, cognitive, and metacognitive abilities (Farahian & Ebadi, 2023). As such EFL writing has turned out to be a demanding task for EFL learners (Nguyen & Suwannabubpha, 2021) and one of the challenges is inaccurate grammar (Ahmed, 2019); therefore, they need assistance in the writing process.

In recent decades, there has been a great deal of propensity toward using computers for language teaching and learning. However, according to Beatty (2003), with the advent of technological advancement in the multimedia era especially computing

and the Internet, the significant status of computers in language instruction has turned out to be undeniable. Regarding English language teaching (ELT), several high-end software packages have been employed to meet the needs of EFL learners (Jahanban-Isfahlan, et al., 2017). In fact, technology has significantly changed the way people learn. Thanks to technology, students may now access a wealth of material online. With this access, students may no longer depend only on textbooks, increasing the accessibility and inclusivity of information. AI tools are becoming more and more popular these days over the past few decades, this technology has grown, better yet, nowadays, a wide variety of robots or AI in all shapes and sizes are used in various programs and applications. Among the many AI technologies that are available, ChatGPT is one of the most widely used ones that may be employed in writing classes. It has been said that ChatGPT is a simple application that can assist students by reviewing their writing for spelling grammar and punctuation as well as writing mistakes (Khazaie et al, 2013).

Additionally, ChatGPT offers thorough and helpful feedback with corrections and suggestions to improve the writing's clarity, precision, effectiveness, readability, and impact with a high evaluation speed and accuracy rate (Grammarly, 2020). Using AI for error correction can be a very effective way to provide EFL students with personalized language, immediate feedback, and engaging and interactive learning experience (Polakova & Ivenz ,2014; Slamet, 2024). They are available 24/7 and can be accessed from anywhere with an internet connection, making them a convenient tool for learners who may not have access to traditional learning resources. AI tools have the potential to enhance learning experience for students and provide a valuable tool for educators looking to innovate and improve their teaching methods. In general, feedback plays a crucial part in the process of teaching and learning English to EFL students since it enhances students' skills and boosts their motivation (Cao et al., 2022).

The incorporation of ChatGPT in foreign language education (FLE) has been a significant focus of recent research, as evidenced by several studies (Hakiki et al., 2023; Jagdishbhai & Thakkar, 2023; Katar et al., 2023; Li, 2024). ChatGPT serves as an effective tool for FLE, allowing students to engage with it based on their English proficiency level and receive immediate feedback on grammar, punctuation, vocabulary, and more. Additionally, ChatGPT aids in text comprehension, offering summarization or simplification and providing explanations, examples, additional learning resources, exercises, and more. It also functions as a translation tool, capable of translating to or from English (Wang et al., 2020). On the other hand, the literature (e.g., Moghadam, 2023) shows that in the era of AI's influence and expansion, the university education system in Iran is at a crossroads, with the best-case scenario being evolution and the worst-case scenario being collapse. The actions and intentions of stakeholders such as policymakers, administrators, faculty, students, researchers, and non-academic employees will determine which scenario becomes a reality. Currently, there is no national or university plan in place to take advantage of AI's capabilities and address its potential threats. As a result, the Iranian university system is currently focused on maintaining the status quo, which may not be sustainable without a plan to transition to a more desirable situation. In addition, there is a scarcity of research especially in the EFL context exploring the possible uses of GenAI in settings like Iran, which faces numerous challenges in its education system (Tafazoli, 2024). This highlights a significant gap in our understanding of how to use new technologies to address important educational needs. Most current studies concentrate on incorporating GenAI in settings with ample infrastructure, technology access, and educational resources. Consequently, this study seeks to address existing gaps in the literature by examining the impact of ChatGPT on the writing skills of EFL learners and gathering EFL students' perceptions of ChatGPT's potential for enhancing their writing. This investigation seeks to reveal distinctive insights and practices that could have wider implications for language education across the globe. By exploring how ChatGPT affects EFL writing abilities and their perceived worth, this research can provide useful lessons and strategies that could be tailored and implemented in various educational contexts worldwide. Moreover, by evaluating the impact of ChatGPT on language learning experiences, this study intends to enhance the ongoing conversation about the role of AI technologies in influencing the future of EFL writing skill.

2. Literature review

Integrating computer technology and Internet-based syllabi in teaching may be of great importance. According to Hayati (2005), the benefits of using computers in language learning include improving grammar, structure, and intonation, giving learners freedom, testing learners' knowledge, self-evaluation, and more contact with language in different situations.

Computer-assisted language learning (CALL) began in the 1950s and 1960s, mostly in the USA. Pioneers such as Suppes, Kemeny/Kurtz, and Bitzer were among the first to utilize a computer as part of the learning process. Bitzer was one of the first to recognize the significance of graphics and sound in the teaching process. As such, CALL was designed to increase learners' success and teachers' quality at all levels. Recently, development has been fast and technology has been considered as a supplementary teaching material.

As noted by Meskill and Mossop (1997), computers promote learning by creating an engaging environment and boosting motivation. They can assist shy learners who may fear making errors in a traditional classroom. Computers serve as valuable online resources, which is advantageous in language acquisition and can accommodate learners with varying skill levels. Furthermore, the capacity to provide immediate feedback is another advantage of CALL. However, CALL is not without its shortcomings. Dizon and Gayed (2021) suggest that self-access programs can sometimes leave learners feeling excessively

independent, potentially leading to feelings of being overwhelmed by the vast amount of information and resources available. Alternatively, if classroom techniques are simply translated to an online format, students may experience an overload of guidance from the computer. It is important to avoid relying on flashy multimedia techniques, while still considering relevant theories on language acquisition. However, this does not imply that multimedia should be disregarded altogether. Some researchers, such as Meskill and Mossop (1997), argue that effective multimedia applications can enhance learning outcomes. With such a perspective AI intelligence was widely used in EFL learning and teaching.

With the explosion of data resources, advancements in computing power, and generational shifts in data transmission, AI has entered its third wave since Jacobsen and Lock (2005) introduced the concept of "intelligence" in the 1950s. This comprehensive and rapid development of AI brings forth numerous possibilities and approaches that have transformed the world. One of the most noticeable aspects of this transformation is the implementation of AI-based technologies such as machine vision, data mining, text analysis, and speech recognition in real-world applications across various settings (Dwivedi, et al., 2023). Consequently, the evolution of machine learning, neural networks, and deep learning is occurring within the realm of language learning, similar to its impact in other domains (Patty, 2024).

Education benefits from AI technology, which analyzes individual student data to offer personalized instruction, customizing feedback, and learning materials according to each student's unique needs and preferences. This tailored approach is particularly beneficial for special education students who need individualized teaching (Alenizi et al., 2023). Furthermore, AI technology can deliver instant feedback and assistance that provide immediate responses to student assignments and encourage interactive learning experiences. This technology helps teachers save time, allowing them to focus on more advanced instructional tasks (Chen et al., 2022).

One of these emerging technologies is ChatGPT. ChatGPT refers to an advanced chatbot that uses OpenAI's GPT-3 technology. It has been improved with different types of training methods. Reinforcement learning is a method where the machine learns by trying things out in its environment to get the most rewards while exploring different options on its own (Ram & Verma, 2023). ChatGPT can talk with users naturally and fluently. The language model uses a network that learns from a lot of data to create different connections. This helps ChatGPT generate text that sounds like human language. It can answer follow-up questions, admit when it is wrong, correct false claims, and turn down inappropriate requests (Muller & Gregoric, 2017). ChatGPT can also create different types of writing, essays, jokes, and poems. With constant feedback from users, ChatGPT can get better at doing similar tasks. ChatGPT cannot 'understand' the text it creates or the meaning behind the information. This often leads to answers that sound reasonable but are actually wrong or make no sense. It seems like you might have entered a reference or a code. Researchers have raised worries about how accurate the information from ChatGPT is (Graham, 2022). There have been instances where ChatGPT created made-up content when it did not have enough information and even invented fake sources (Rudolph et al., 2022). Experts noted that even though AI tools seem good at putting words together, they actually just learn how words are related to each other instead of really understanding what the words mean. In simple terms, ChatGPT is a modern tool that creates text and does not browse the Internet for current information.

In a study, Al-Jarf (2004) explored how online learning and traditional learning affected the writing skills of EFL students. He discovered that using online lessons alongside regular classes greatly helps improve writing structure. The study looked at how teaching tools and online learning affect education. The results showed that there is an important link between how well students learn and online teaching. The experimental group outperformed the control group.

Rahimi and Yadollahi (2011) studied perceptions of learning English with computers that improved their writing skill. A survey was used to find out how students perceive learning languages with computers. The study found that Iranian female students had a positive opinion about using computers for learning.

In another study involving Turkish university students learning and their use of AI tools, Han and Sari (2022) found that the group that was provided with both automated feedback and teacher feedback improved more than the group that only received feedback from the teacher. Likewise, in a study by Dizon and Gayed (2021), Japanese EFL students who used the mobile version of Grammarly saw improvements in their grammar and vocabulary. However, their sentence structure and speaking flow did not change much.

Wilkens (2020) studied two Chinese university students who used AI for four weeks. The study found that the students appreciated getting feedback that pointed out mistakes in their first language. They were able to use this feedback to find their own errors. Based on the results people who create AI should improve their resources, offer more choices, and give the option to use L1 or just L2. Harvey-Scholes (2018) also supported the idea that allowing students to correct their own work is effective since it helps them learn even when the teacher is not around.

Jiang and Yu (2022) studied how a group of EFL students experienced automated feedback on their writing. They highlighted the importance of helping students understand how to use the feedback and resources effectively. They discovered that specific error advice was more helpful than general feedback.

Wambsganss et al. (2022) investigated the use of AI for writing that offers automatic feedback to EFL learners. They did not see much difference in the writing improvements between the group that got automated feedback and the group that got regular feedback. However, the group that received prompts to compare themselves to others produced better quality writing with stronger arguments.

Concerning the utilization of AI in improving language skills, previous studies (Abdullayeva & Musayeva, 2023; Ausat et al., 2023; Johnson et al., 2019; Shidiq, 2023; Xue & Wang, 2022; Yusriadi et al., 2023) confirmed the efficacy of ChatGPT as an AI tool on language skills. However, there is currently a dearth of empirical data regarding ChatGPT's effect on students' writing skill (Su et al. in 2023). In addition, the teacher feedback along with ChatGPT, as well as the opinion of EFL students regarding the use of ChatGPT for error correction has not been investigated in a single study yet. Therefore, the present study examined the impact of using ChatGPT, an AI-powered chatbot, on the writing skills of EFL learners, and investigated the perception of Iranian EFL students about the implementation of ChatGPT for writing error correction. As such, the following research questions were proposed in line with the purpose of the study:

RQ1. Compared to the control group (the conventional teacher feedback) and the first experimental group (teacher feedback plus using ChatGPT), does the implementation of ChatGPT alone improve EFL students` performance in writing in English?

RQ2. What is the perception of EFL students of using ChatGPT to correct their errors?

3. Methodology

3.1. Design

To answer the research questions, the current study used a mixed design to profit from the two integrations. The following figure presents the design of the study.
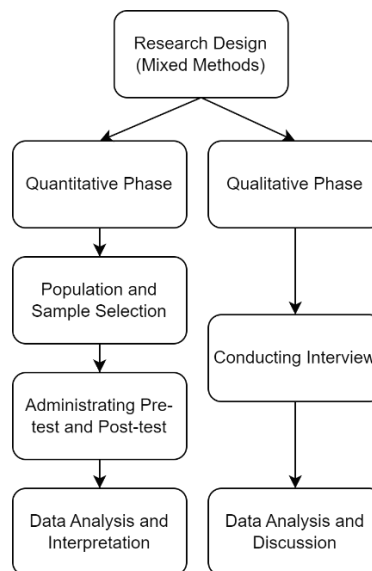
Figure 1. The design of the study

3.2. Participants

To perform the study, 45 EFL male and female students from two reputable language schools in Kermanshah, Iran participated in this study, selected via convenience sampling from 67 learners based on a placement test. As part of their syllabus, the students were taught the elements of paragraph writing and some basic types of paragraphs such as narrative. The age range of the participants was 16 to 28. Due to the nature of the study, which necessitated the participants' familiarity with technological tools, it was decided to select the participants from intermediate levels. The participants were divided into three groups. In the first experimental group they practiced using ChatGPT, while in the second experimental group, they received writing instructions using ChatGPT and the teacher's input, and in the third, participants followed the teacher's instructions. The participants were assured of the confidentiality of their responses and that their identities would remain anonymous. It should

be noted that 10 participants participated in the interview.

3.3. Instruments

3.3.1. Oxford placement test

To assess the English language proficiency of the participants, the current study utilized a general training version of the Oxford Placement Test (OPT). The OPT is recognized as a valid and reliable assessment tool and serves as an efficient means of categorizing participants, which is utilized in the initial stage of participant selection for English language studies (Zolfaghari, 2023).

3.3.2. Writing pre-test and post-test

To assess the extent of plagiarism and overlapping content among master's theses, a corpus comprising 43 Translation theses and 46 TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) theses were downloaded from the Irandoc database and subjected to analysis using plagiarism detection software. Specifically, the iThenticate tool was utilized to quantify the degree of plagiarized material present within these academic works.

3.3.3. Interview

For the qualitative aspect of the study, a semi-structured interview was administered because it allowed the participants to be heard in their own voices and open-ended questioning helped the researcher gain a richer understanding of participants' perceptions and knowledge. The interview has five items. It should be noted here that to ensure the validity, the items were reviewed by three language experts (Appendix B).

3.4. Procedure

To conduct the study, first, 67 male and female Iranian EFL students from a language institute in Kermanshah, Iran, were chosen based on the convenience sampling. They then took the OPT. Regarding the OPT results, 45 EFL learners were selected, and divided into three equal groups. Before the treatments, the writing pretest was administered to three groups. In the first week, an instructor introduced the course structure, narrative writing, and course materials. Following a brief segment of a film, the students were tasked with writing a narrative paragraph which lasted for 15 minutes. From weeks 2 to 12, the students participated in narrative writing instruction and completed three narrative writing assignments in class under the supervision of the teacher.

As for the participants of the first, second and the third experimental groups, they also had one-hour training on using ChatGBT. Additionally, the students were taught various ChatGPT prompts to seek suggestions and make edits to enhance the clarity, grammar, and overall coherence of their written work. The treatment took twelve sessions. At the last session, the writing posttest was conducted.

More specifically, in the first experimental group, the participants received treatment using ChatGPT. In this group, ChatGPT was utilized as a tool to give feedback on their drafts including grammar, vocabulary, organization, coherence, sentence structure, and the overall coherence and organization of their writing. In addition, ChatGPT generated writing exercises that the students could complete to practice writing skill. Finally, ChatGPT was used to provide language input by recommending some extra paragraph writing exercises and notes.

Additionally, The second experimental group was instructed with ChatGPT along with teacher input. The only difference between this group and the first experimental group was that the participants not only received feedback from ChatGPT but were also provided by the teacher's feedback on their writing errors. In contrast, the control group was taught only via the teacher's instructions. In this group, participants were initially required to revise the texts based on the feedback they received from ChatGPT. If there were any ambiguity or points suggested by the AI tool they did not accept or understand they handed their drafts to the teacher to be checked.

The control group participated in regular writing sessions, completed designated writing assignments, and received feedback from their teacher. Unlike the experimental group, the control group did not benefit from AI-assisted insights from ChatGPT. They relied on feedback from the teacher, who offered guidance based on her teaching experience. Participants in the control group engaged in various writing exercises and activities that encompassed a combination of classroom tasks and topics of interest, similar to what the experimental group encountered. These activities aimed to address different aspects of writing, including grammar, vocabulary, organization, coherence, and sentence structure. The teacher provided personalized feedback on writing assignments, pointing out areas for improvement and suggesting ways to enhance their work. Feedback

for those in the control group was given solely during the teacher-led writing sessions, which were held regularly to ensure continuous support and input.

Finally, 10 EFL learners from both experimental groups were selected voluntarily to take part in the interview. Each interview lasted 15 minutes, conducted whether online via Skype app or face to face. The data obtained from the the interviews were then gathered and subjected for analysis.

3.5. Data analysis

The gathered data were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. In fact, after encoding the data collected through writing pretest and posttest scores as well as the interview, the data were entered into SPSS version 22 for data analysis. Based on the research questions, for the quantitative data, in order to present descriptive statistics, means, minimums, maximums, and standard deviations of each variable and the corresponding sub-factors were computed. To this end, the performance of the three groups was compared via one-way ANOVA. The qualitative data were analyzed based on the theme-based analysis.

4. Results

The assumptions underlying the use of parametric statistical tests like ANOVA include the normality of distribution, the homogeneity of variances, the requirement for at least interval-level variables, and the independence of measurements. To evaluate the first assumption, we calculated the kurtosis and skewness values along with their respective z-scores for the groups.

Concerning the writing abilities of the groups, the skewness z-score was Z skewness = -0.116, while the kurtosis z-score was Z kurtosis = 0.722, suggesting that a value exceeding 1.80 is significant at $p < .05$. Therefore, none of the z-scores surpassed 1.80, indicating that the scores follow a normal distribution. Additionally, Levene's test was conducted to assess the second assumption, which pertains to the homogeneity of variances. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Levene's test results

	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Based on Mean	.081	1	44	.732
Based on Median	.072	1	44	.722
Based on Median and with adjusted df	.073	1	43.02	.734
Based on trimmed mean	.084	1	45	.728

Based on Table 1, Levene's test indicates a non-significant outcome at $p \leq .05$. Therefore, it can be inferred that the variances across the groups are not significantly different and are roughly equal, indicating that the assumption of homogeneity of variances is met. Since the key assumptions for the parametric test are satisfied, a one-way ANOVA—being a parametric test—can be performed.

As stated, to have a homogeneous sample of the participants, OPT was run and analyzed. The descriptive statistics of the OPT results are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the OPT

	N	Min	Max	M	SD
OPT	67	44	56	47	1.725
Valid N	67				

Based on Table 2, the mean and standard deviation of OPT scores were 47 and 1.725, respectively. Based on the OPT results, those who scored from 46 to 55 were selected and administered as an intermediate level of proficiency learners. Accordingly, 45 out of 67 Iranian EFL learners were selected and divided into three equal ($n=15$) groups, as two experimental and one control group.

The first research question investigated the effect of the ChatGPT on the writing performance of Iranian EFL students. To find out the difference among the three groups of the study, their performance in the pretest and posttest was compared via One-way ANOVA. The results are shown in the following Table.

Table 3. The ANOVA results of writing pretest

Source of Variance	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Between Groups	515.43	2	260.72		
Within Groups	203.66	43	4.83	8.402	.003
Total	715.09	45			

Based on the results of ANOVA, since p>0.05, (F=58.19), there is no significant difference among the three groups concerning their writing performance in the pretest. Then, the groups were compared after the instruction in the writing posttest. Table 4 illustrates the results.

Table 4. ANOVA results of writing posttest

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	106.133	2	132.067	8.402	.003
Within Groups	520.850	43	90.962		
Total	606.983	45			

As indicated in Table 4, the results show that F (2,45) = 8.402, and p < .05 which signifies a significant difference in writing posttest scores among the three groups. Nonetheless, a primary limitation of ANOVA is that it does not offer insights into where the variance originates or its specific location (Cresswell, 2014). In fact, a post-hoc test was followed to make multiple comparisons between the three groups to identify which of them appeared more effective. Therefore, in order to determine the location of the difference, a post-hoc Tukey HSD test was conducted. Table 5 illustrates the results.

Table 5. Tukey HSD of three groups

(I)	(J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	95% Confidence Interval Upper Bound
1	2	-2.900*	.947	.009	-5.18	-.62
	3	-3.000*	.947	.007	-5.28	-.72
2	1	2.900*	.947	.009	.62	5.18
	3	-.100	.947	.994	-2.38	2.18
3	1	3.000*	.947	.007	.72	5.28
	2	.100	.947	.994	-2.18	2.38

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.
(1)= First Experimental Group
(2)= Second Experimental Group
(3)= Control Group

As presented in Table 5, the difference was found between the control group and the first experimental group since p=.009. Moreover, the results showed the difference between the first experimental group and the second experimental group due to the fact that p=.007. Accordingly, it is argued that the second experimental group outperformed the first experimental and the control groups, revealing the efficiency of the instruction via ChatGPT along with teacher input.

The second research question explored the perception of EFL students of using ChatGPT to correct their errors. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis. Boyatzis (1998) defines thematic analysis as a method utilized in qualitative research to identify patterns and themes within a specific context, which entails systematically examining various phenomena to reveal categories and themes. The codes were categorized into two primary themes: positive and negative. Table 6 illustrates the three themes that emerged from the data's thematic analysis.

Table 6. Results of the interview

Categories	Themes	Example
EFL Learners' Perceptions before Using ChatGPT	a. Usefulness and availability of ChatGPT	"ChatGPT is good for practicing my writing skill since I can use it anytime from my PC"
Positive Perceptions	a. Time and Place Saving b. Ease to Work with c. Administration in Educational system d. Enjoyment and a new experience e. Providing Feedback	"I think ChatGPT is useful to save time for correcting English language errors by providing appropriate feedback. Without the tool, I do not know which part of the sentence is ungrammatical so I become confused."
Negative Perceptions	a. Technical Problems b. Easy to Cheat c. inability to use ChatGPT	1. "ChatGPT is effective and convenient for learning English, particularly for me, as it offers tips and tricks that have enhanced my English skills. However, a serious problem was logging in." 2. "Although this AI tool has simplified many tasks, it has also spread plageriasm. You can easily write any essay in a very short period of time using it". 3. "I think that I need a lot of time and help to be able to use this tool".

According to Table 6, EFL students believed that ChatGPT was available for most of the learners. Furthermore, almost all participants had a positive view toward integrating ChatGPT in language teaching. An interviewee reported that

I did not think that AI could help me so much in learning a second language. It is very interesting that with the help of this tool, I can improve my writing.

They also appeared to be pleased with how ChatGPT assisted them in generating ideas and provided targeted information on the topic, allowing them to work independently. As one EFL learner highlighted,

The best aspect of ChatGPT is its ability to provide the information you request. You can request details to any level you wish. This has minimized the amount of time we spend thinking to gather ideas and information.

They also perceived that ChatGPT is useful for practicing different skills, especially writing. This means that the ChatGPT gave learners the chance to practice language on their own otherwise they may not be able to do that under normal circumstances. This was echoed in one interviewee's report:

I thought that someone should help me to learn to write in English. But now I see that I can improve without getting help from others or teachers.

However, one serious problem with the ChatGPT activities was logging in. As one interviewee stated,

Since you need a VPN for ChatGPT you have a great problem. I have personally problem with all types of VPNs and that is very disappointing.

Another interviewee noted that ChatGPT might result in diminished motivation to engage in thinking and an increased reliance on machines. She reported that

Sometimes I think that instead of writing a text, I should ask ChatGPT to do it for me. It is really tempting. I often worry that relying too much on AI could prevent me from writing independently. What if I end up not wanting to write by myself?

Another concern that was surprisingly expressed by 9 interviewees was that they do not possess the essential skills to utilize ChatGPT effectively to assist them in writing. An interviewee commented that

I think that it is not possible for me to learn to work with it [ChatGPT] with just a few training sessions and I need the help of a teacher.

Another EFL student said that

I presumed that with some prompts and direction, I could utilize ChatGPT to create content related to the course but now I think that it needs time, patience, practice, and training.

5. Discussion

This study was set up to explore the effect of ChatGPT on the EFL learners' writing performance. In addition, it investigated the Iranian EFL learners' perceptions of ChatGPT and its effect on correcting errors. The findings revealed that the ChatGPT combined with teacher feedback had a significantly positive effect on the EFL learners' writing performance. The results also showed that Iranian EFL learners favored ChatGPT, especially for time saving, ease to work with, administration in the educational system, enjoyment, and providing feedback.

Although no research has investigated the impact of combined teacher and ChatGBT on EFL learners' writing skill, the results of the present study are in line with a number of previous studies on the efficacy of ChatGPT in language teaching. Polakova and Ivenz (2014) explored the effectiveness of ChatGPT feedback in promoting the writing skills of EFL students. As reported, there was a significant improvement in various aspects of the participants' writing. The current results may also mirror the findings reported by Al-Mansour and Al-Shorma (2012), which suggest that incorporating ChatGPT resources with the traditional teaching method positively impacts student achievement. Furthermore, this outcome aligns with the conclusion drawn by Al-Jarf (2022), who discovered that using ChatGPT as an adjunct in conventional classrooms significantly influences writing structure. The findings of the current study align with those reported by Zaki (2023), who explored the impact of ChatGPT on the performance of Jordanian EFL students in English. In her research, the students in the experimental groups completed tasks utilizing dynamic animated illustrations through ChatGPT. In contrast, the control group received training with printed materials. Her results indicated that significant statistical differences existed between the control and experimental groups. ChatGPT should be based on various individual cognitive styles.

The qualitative section of the study revealed that students have a positive outlook on utilizing ChatGPTs for educational purposes, perceiving them as beneficial tools for language acquisition. Nonetheless, they stressed that ChatGPT should be regarded as a supplementary resource rather than a primary educational instrument. There were also apprehensions regarding the creation of language learning-oriented ChatGPTs due to the intricacies involved in mimicking language learning processes. When outlining the attributes, they would prefer in ChatGPTs intended for educational use, students highlighted the importance of having both collaborative and competitive features, especially for those in higher education. They expect ChatGPT to be engaging and pertinent to their learning experiences. Most participants explicitly stated or suggested that the objectives of ChatGPTs utilized for learning ought to be closely aligned with the learning outcomes of their curriculum, as indicated in earlier research (Estriegana et al., 2019).

It should be noted here that most of the particpants in the interview mentioned the quality of the ChatGPT design to be motivating for the students, and make them engaged in class ativities.

The interview results are also consistent with those of Burston (2021) when he noted that "students perceived that ChatGPT use would make learning English easier" (p. 33). More specifically, those authors found "the greatest number of students mentioned enjoyment and motivation as potential advantages to using ChatGPTs in English-language learning" (Burston, 2021, p. 34). The findings also fit well with the findings of Alkamel and Alwagieh (2024) that revealed a positive view of Yemeni EFL learners towards using ChatGPT.

The results also align with the findings of the previous studies conducted on the ChatGPT. For example, Dizon and Gayed (2021) utilized a questionnaire using open-ended questions and discovered that a key theme from participants concerning the use of ChatGPT for educational purposes was 'fun'. They identified that enjoyment was a significant factor influencing the repeated use of ChatGPT and engaging with it in learning. It's reasonable for them to view enjoyment, pleasure, and fun derived from ChatGPT as crucial elements in determining its adoption for educational use. One of the main advantages of ChatGPT was the opportunity it offered teachers to design, implement, and reflect on the execution of a lesson that incorporated technology within a real classroom setting.

Additionally, based on the results of the interview the EFL learners reported some major concerns regarding the use of ChatGPT for improving writing. As they noted, technical problems, the possibility of providing the chance to cheat, and students' inability to use ChatGPT were the major pitfalls. This aligns with various studies conducted in this regard (e.g., Rudolph et al., 2023; van Dis et al., 2023). As Barrot (2023) notes, ChatGPT enables students to finish a writing task with minimal effort. Furthermore, as echoed in the literature, students' dependence on ChatGPT may compromise some crucial writing pedagogical objectives, such as encouraging creativity, cultivating critical thinking, and improving students' ability to put down their ideas with precision (Yanning, 2017). Khoso et al. (2023) have also outlined the common worries that students have regarding the use of ChatGPT, which encompass distractions and excessive dependence, the reliability of information, ethical considerations and issues of plagiarism, as well as concerns about privacy and security.

6. Conclusion

The present study aimed to explore how using ChatGPT's feedback combined with teacher feedback as a tool that affects the writing skills of EFL students. This could be one of the earliest practical studies looking into the impact of combined teacher and ChatGPT feedback on EFL students' academic writing abilities. The study, conducted as a mixed methods intervention, yielded results that were in line with the expectations. The notably positive influence, combined with students' favorable perception, could offer new insight into the existing literature on ChatGPT and other Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE) tools. The study's findings contribute to the AWE literature, particularly regarding the application of generative AI. They support and advance the understanding of feedback as a dialogic tool and ChatGPT as a constructive feedback mechanism that can be integrated into EFL writing classes considering that students have access to portable devices and the Internet. However, it should be noted that while AI tools such as ChatGPT may present assistance and immediate feedback currently they may not fully substitute human teachers' expertise (Golonka et al., 2014); therefore, human supervision is regarded to be crucial for maintaining the accuracy and integrity of produced content (Huang et al., 2023).

An important fact that should be mentioned is that individuals, particularly young people in Iran, are highly interested in utilizing technology. Furthermore, one of the most important objectives of the Iranian Ministry of Education has been to equip schools with computer-based tools and to facilitate effective work for both teachers and students in technologically advanced learning environments (Dashtestani & Hojatpanah, 2020). Nevertheless, without appropriate planning and training for the implementation of ChatGPT, the integration of such technologies in EFL classrooms may not have the desired impact. In addition, EFL teachers' attitude and their ability to use the tool in the classroom is of utmost importance as Mahapatra (2024) put it.

As Polakova and Ivenz (2024) argue, while ChatGPT provides exceptional opportunities for customized learning, educators should be cautious about potential drawbacks, such as depending too much on automated feedback and the possibility of plagiarism. Similar concerns about the incorporation of AI are articulated in the literature (e.g., Dai & Liu, 2024), emphasizing the importance of using AI in a balanced manner and maintaining human oversight to uphold academic honesty. This alignment with existing research reinforces the notion that while AI tools like ChatGPT can be extremely advantageous, they should not entirely replace human feedback or the collaborative elements of traditional learning settings.

There are implications based on the results. The findings indicate that EFL writing instructors should consider integrating ChatGPT into their teaching methods. By integrating AI feedback cycles and turning writing tasks into games, teachers can promote students' motivation and engagement in writing. This method can help boost students' self-efficacy through immediate, useful feedback. Using ChatGPT in group projects and peer review sessions can also encourage collaborative writing, as students can refine their drafts with AI-generated feedback before discussing them with peers. In AI-assisted courses, teachers should complement ChatGPT's feedback with personalized learning environment. A student-centered approach, with personalized learning paths and customizable feedback, can more effectively address individual writing challenges. By implementing these approaches, teachers can utilize ChatGPT's potential to improve students' writing skills while promoting a fair and ethical learning environment.

Like any research, the present study has its limitations, having been carried out within a specific context and with a small participant pool, which constrains the generalizability of the results. The dependence on self-reported data via questionnaires and interviews may lead to bias, as participants' answers could be swayed by social desirability and other influences. Moreover, the questionnaire could be enhanced by adding more items to reflect a wider array of students' experiences and preferences. The interview sample was minimal, comprising only ten participants from the ChatGPT group. To develop a more thorough understanding, additional analysis should be performed to investigate the feedback students obtained from both ChatGPT and another writing course, addressing aspects like grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure. Future research could also examine the impact of ChatGPT on EFL students' writing fluency, complexity, and accuracy, offering a deeper insight into its distinct advantages or drawbacks in this context.

Moreover, since the intervention took only eight sessions further studies can use a longer intervention period to examine ChatGPT's effects. Another interesting area could be the effect of ChatGPT on various writing genres.

7. References

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8. Appendix A

Writing Pretest and Posttest

(Allotted Time: 30 Minutes)

Dear Participant,

Please write 150-200 words for each topic.

  a. **My Family**

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  b. **Historical Places of Iran**

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  c. **Your Favorite vacation**

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9. Appendix B

Semi-structured Interview

1. You have used ChatGPT to revise your texts. Tell us your experience with that.
2. How did you find working with ChatGPT? How did you feel?
3. How useful did you find ChatGPT? How did it help you?
4. Did you have any problems using ChatGPT? What are they?

University of Birjand

Applied Linguistics Inquiry

Unveiling Plagiarism Practices in Iranian English Language Students' Theses

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ABSTRACT

The present study sought to investigate the prevalence of plagiarism in graduate theses submitted by Iranian students. To this end, a corpus comprising 43 Master's theses in Translation Studies and 46 Master's theses in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) was analyzed utilizing the iThenticate plagiarism detection software. The content of the theses was scrutinized to identify instances of plagiarism, defined as the verbatim reproduction or paraphrasing of passages from published sources without proper citation. The findings revealed several cases where students had paraphrased entire excerpts from books or journal articles without providing adequate citations. Furthermore, the data showed a higher incidence of plagiarism in Translation Studies theses relative to TEFL theses, with Chapter 2 exhibiting the most pronounced discrepancies. Although the degree of overlap between source texts and student work was substantially greater in TEFL theses, the extent of plagiarism, as defined by the verbatim reproduction of copyrighted material, was more prevalent in Translation Studies theses. A chi-square test corroborated the presence of a statistically significant difference between the frequencies of plagiarism in the two disciplines under examination.

KEYWORDS: Plagiarism; Graduate theses; iThenticate; English language students

1. Introduction

Academic dishonesty is characterized as conduct that violates the rules and policies of an institution, resulting in a lack of honesty and integrity to gain an unfair advantage on assessments (Hasri et al., 2022). This encompasses a range of unethical behaviour, including plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, breaching examination protocols, cheating during tests, and impersonating another individual to take an exam (Hasri et al., 2022). Expanding the scope, the Anadolu University Scientific Ethics Committee (2003) regards any intentional act or negligence that compromises the replicability, validity, and reliability of research as falling under the umbrella of academic dishonesty (as cited in Akbulut et al., 2008).

Maintaining academic integrity is a fundamental pillar of the educational process that must be upheld by all members of the scholastic community to cultivate an environment conducive to meaningful learning, growth, and achievement (Hasri et al., 2022). Miller et al. (2011), too, posit that the responsibility for upholding academic integrity extends beyond just faculty

members, defining it as collective ownership through the attitudes, beliefs, and actions of individual students, cohorts, and instructors alike, all working in concert to promote a climate of integrity across the entire academic sphere.

As the most vivid example of academic dishonesty, plagiarism is an ongoing issue in academic settings which poses a severe threat, since mounting evidence suggests a worrisome rise in such an unethical practice (e.g. Fatemi & Saito, 2020). Plagiarism is conceived of as an "intellectual theft, no less a moral offense than the theft of a car, money, or jewels would be. While intellectual theft is less tangible than other theft forms and other species of academic dishonesty, it is nonetheless genuine" (Peters, 2003, p.624). In academic settings, plagiarism not only erodes the integrity and prestige associated with the degrees awarded to students but also impedes the development of critical thinking and research skills among students.

According to Childers and Bruton (2015), most research on plagiarism has been confined to cases involving large strips of texts directly copied and pasted from sources without proper attribution. This narrow focus on the most obvious form of plagiarism, which both students and faculty can easily identify, is understandable. Unreferenced copying and pasting represent the most quantifiable, controllable, and attributable type of plagiaristic behaviour. However, Childers and Bruton (2015) assert that many other forms of plagiarism exist that are far more nuanced and complex. They conclude that research relying on ambiguous definitions fails to capture glaring cases and assumes students have a sufficient grasp of the term's scope.

In addition, while plagiarism among higher education students has become a widespread and significant concern for academics globally (Amiri & Razmjoo, 2016), the bulk of existing research relies heavily on self-reported data from students, primarily examining their perceptions of plagiarism (e.g., Anaman & Agyei, 2021; Farooq & Sulotana, 2022; Gullifer & Tyson, 2010; Power, 2009). For example, previous studies showed that the transition to remote education necessitated by the COVID-19 crisis has weakened the traditional stigmas surrounding cheating in educational settings (Navidinia et al., 2024; Navidinia & Zarei, 2023). However, there is a dearth of research specifically investigating the prevalence of plagiarism within defended theses.

The present study seeks to quantify the degree of plagiarism and overlapping content among students' theses. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no studies have attempted to measure plagiarism rates within master's theses in Iran. A thorough analysis of the content of defended theses helps to gain a more holistic understanding of the extent of plagiarism in academic theses. An analysis of such kind provides educators and researchers with insights into the underlying drives of plagiarism and helps them develop targeted interventions to promote academic integrity. In light of this gap, this study investigates the prevalence of plagiarism among Translation Studies theses and Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) theses at Iranian universities. Accordingly, this study is motivated by the following research question:

To what extent do master's theses conducted in TEFL and Translation Studies reflect plagiarism?

2. Literature review

2.1. Plagiarism: types, contributing factors, motives

Plagiarism has emerged as a significant problem for educators, particularly at the tertiary level. Accounts of plagiarism in diverse academic disciplines indicate a high prevalence of plagiarism (from 22% to 25.65%) (Hopp & Speil, 2020; Shang, 2019) among students and a rise in it over the last decades (Briggs, et al., 2013). Numerous studies have documented instances of students' works that contain copied words of others without acknowledging their original sources (e.g., Babaii & Nejadghanbar, 2017). Although copying the words of others is the prototypical form of plagiarism, it is not the only type. Prior research (Brandt, 2002; Howard, 2002; Wilhoit, 1994) provides evidence of different types of plagiarism including stealing material from others and appropriating them as their own, buying papers, submitting others' work with or without their knowledge, dropping quotations marks when copying sections of materials even when the reference is included, and paraphrasing materials without supplying references.

Plagiarism is carried out either intentionally as a deliberate act designed to deceive people, or unintentionally and accidentally when a student fails to supply proper referencing or documentation (Park, 2003). When performed intentionally, students may view their dishonest act of plagiarism as permissible under certain circumstances, for example, when they are under social or financial pressures (Waltzer & Dahl, 2020), or when they are overwhelmed with high workloads (Ehrich, et al., 2016). Deliberate acts of plagiarism can also occur as a result of personal risk tolerance and as a reaction toward the competitive environment in which students are embedded (Hopp & Speil, 2020). Unintentional plagiarism, on the other hand, occurs due to unnecessary quoting, incorrect paraphrasing practices where some words are replaced with their synonyms but the structure is kept intact, as well as students' lack of familiarity with referencing rules (Vij, et al., 2009).

A multitude of factors are considered to play a part in the prevalence of plagiarism including students' divergent perspectives of what constitutes plagiarism, the seriousness of its various forms, and the way to cope with this misconduct) (Glendinning, 2014). Additionally, the advancement of online tools has accelerated the prevalence of these behaviours due to the ease of access and affordability of original work available on the World Wide Web (Daoud et al., 2019). De Lima et al.

(2021) also describe plagiarism as a product of the interplay between a set of individual and contextual factors. They suggest that plagiarism tends to increase when students are engaged in other forms of academic dishonest behaviours, experience hardship in academic settings, have lenient attitudes toward plagiarism, and when a culture of plagiarism is accepted by their peers.

2.2. Detecting plagiarism

While the internet has paved the ground for conducting plagiarism at copy-and-paste ease, it has also set the foundation for plagiarism detection with a plethora of software tools available that make identifying correspondences between students' work and existing online content on the World Wide Web easy. According to Kunschak (2018), deploying anti-plagiarism software facilitates identifying both intentional and unintentional uses of others' work, exploring problems, and preventing future instances of academic dishonesty.

As the most widely-used anti-plagiarism tool (Batane, 2010), Turnitin software has been extensively studied in academia. It functions by reporting the degree of similarity between the submitted papers and the existing documents in its database (Davis & Carroll, 2009). In a survey study, 98% of students reported that they found Turnitin useful to avoid plagiarism (Walker, 2010). In addition to impeding intentional plagiarism, Turnitin is supposed to prevent unintentional plagiarism by making students aware that their papers will be checked against the database hence, motivating students to double-check their papers before submitting (Kraemer, 2008; Shang, 2019).

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

To determine the degree of plagiarism in master's theses, we employed a content analysis approach and utilized plagiarism detection software. Consequently, a collection of theses underwent analysis using the iThenticate software to quantify the extent of plagiarized material.

3.2. Corpus

To investigate the prevalence of plagiarism in Iranian theses, a corpus comprising TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) and Translation theses from various universities across Iran was downloaded from the Irandoc database and analyzed using iThenticate. The corpus consisted of 43 Translation theses and 46 TEFL theses. The theses were selected from academic institutions such as the University of Esfahan, Chabahar, Zabol, Mazandaran, Yazd, Tabriz, Kerman, Kashan, Shahrekord, Alzahra, Shiraz, Guilan, and Urmia, ensuring a diverse representation of academic work from different regions of Iran. The selection process aimed to encompass a wide range of topics and research methodologies to provide a comprehensive understanding of the extent of plagiarism in Iranian theses.

3.3. Instrumentation and material

iThenticate: iThenticate is a web-based tool that scans millions of current research papers and web pages, comparing the text in uploaded documents against this vast database to identify matching content. It is the preferred plagiarism detection software utilized by leading researchers, publishers, and academics worldwide. The user-friendly submission process compares submitted work for similarity against the world's most esteemed published literature, ensuring that academic reputations are safeguarded. Journal editors, publishers, and thesis examiners frequently leverage iThenticate or comparable software to identify and prevent instances of plagiarism and self-plagiarism. By incorporating iThenticate into their workflow, researchers can proactively identify and address potential areas of concern during the writing process itself.

In this study, iThenticate was employed to examine the theses for any potential occurrences of plagiarism. The output generated a comprehensive report highlighting similarities between the submitted document and existing sources, including percentages of matching text and specific excerpts of copied information. The report utilized color-coded highlights to indicate the degree of similarity and the location of the matched text within the document. This facilitated a thorough review process, enabling the identification and resolution of any potential plagiarism issues or improper citation practices before final submission.

3.4. Data collection and analysis

To assess the extent of plagiarism and overlapping content among master's theses, a corpus comprising 43 Translation theses and 46 TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) theses were downloaded from the Irandoc database and subjected to analysis using plagiarism detection software. Specifically, the iThenticate tool was utilized to quantify the degree of plagiarized material present within these academic works.

4. Results

An analysis was conducted to identify instances of plagiarism in master's theses using the iThenticate tool. The examination revealed that the percentage of overlapping text, which could indicate potential plagiarism, ranged from 14% to an alarming 99%. The average overlap across all these stood at 50.24%, with a standard deviation of 19.00%.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the percentage of overlap in students' theses

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Thesis	89	14.00	99.00	50.24	19.00
Valid N (listwise)	89				

Table 2 presents data on the frequency of theses containing overlap, which refers to verbatim text from other sources that were properly cited. Additionally, it showcases the number of theses exhibiting plagiarism, where word-for-word copying from books or journals occurred without appropriate acknowledgment.

Table 2. Frequency of overlap and plagiarism in theses

	Copying verbatim from other research works using quotation marks and page number	Copying word for word from a book or journal without acknowledgement
Plagiarism	65	24

To further investigate the frequency of overlap in Translation and TEFL theses separately, the iThenticate tool was employed to analyze the translation theses. The findings revealed that the percentage of overlapping text in these theses ranged from 14% to 56%. The average overlap for translation theses was 35.18%.

4.1. Overlap in translation theses

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the percentage of overlap in translation students' theses

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Percentage	43	14.00	56.00	35.18	10.71
Valid N (listwise)	43				

Table 4 presents the frequency of theses containing overlap, which refers to the verbatim inclusion of text from other research works, appropriately cited using quotation marks and page numbers. Additionally, it showcases the number of theses exhibiting plagiarism, where direct copying from books or journals occurred without proper acknowledgment or attribution.

Table 4. Frequency of overlap and plagiarism in translation theses

	Copying verbatim from other research works using quotation marks and page number	Copying word for word from a book or journal without acknowledgement
Plagiarism	30	13

The content analysis revealed that the majority of graduate students demonstrated an awareness of plagiarism by mentioning the author's name, using quotation marks, and including the corresponding page numbers. However, the excessive use of direct quotations exceeded the acceptable standards, resulting in a high percentage of overlapping text.

4.2. Plagiarism in translation theses

Among 43 translation theses, thirteen theses contained instances of plagiarism. Table 5 illustrates the occurrence of plagiarism across the five chapters of thirteen translation theses. Upon examining the data, it becomes evident that Chapter 2 exhibits the highest frequency of plagiarism (N= 169) among all the theses, indicating that this chapter may be a common area where

plagiarism tends to occur in translation theses. For instance, in Thesis 12, Chapter 2 contained 18 instances of plagiarism, which is the highest frequency among all the chapters within that particular thesis. This pattern suggests that Chapter 2 typically has the highest prevalence of plagiarism in the majority of the analyzed theses, while Chapters 3 and 5 have the least, with only 5 instances recorded.

Table 5. The frequency of plagiarism in the five chapters of translation theses

	Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapter 4	Chapter 5
Thesis 1	3	9	--	3	--
Thesis 2	6	9	1	2	--
Thesis 3	5	14	--	5	1
Thesis 4	3	15	--	1	--
Thesis 5	7	13	--	1	1
Thesis 6	10	16	--	3	--
Thesis 7	4	21	2	5	1
Thesis 8	5	8	--	4	--
Thesis 9	4	9	1	--	--
Thesis 10	7	13	--	2	--
Thesis 11	5	14	--	2	--
Thesis 12	8	18	1	2	1
Thesis 13	3	10	--	1	1
Total	70	169	5	31	5

4.3. Overlap in TEFL Theses

To investigate the frequency of overlap in TEFL students' theses, the iThenticate tool was employed to identify instances of overlapping text in 46 M.A. TEFL theses obtained from the Irandoc database. The analysis revealed that the percentage of overlapping content ranged from 30% to an alarming 99%. The average overlap across all TEFL theses stood at 64.32%, with a standard deviation of 13.41.

Table 6. Descriptive statistics of the frequency of overlap in TEFL students' theses

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Teaching	46	30.00	99.00	64.32	13.41
Valid N (listwise)	46				

Table 7 presents the frequency of theses containing overlap, which refers to the verbatim inclusion of text from other research works, appropriately cited using quotation marks and page numbers. Additionally, it showcases the number of theses exhibiting plagiarism, where direct copying from books or journals occurred without proper acknowledgment or attribution.

Table 7. Frequency of overlap and plagiarism in TEFL Theses

	Copying verbatim from other research works using quotation marks and page number	Copying word for word from a book or journal without acknowledgement
Plagiarism	35	11

The content analysis findings revealed that while most graduate students demonstrated an understanding of plagiarism by acknowledging the original author, using quotation marks, and providing page numbers when incorporating external sources, a significant portion of students exceeded the recommended guidelines for direct quotations, resulting in a substantial amount of overlapping text.

4.4. Plagiarism in TEFL theses

Among 46 TEFL theses, eleven theses contained instances of plagiarism. Table 8 illustrates the frequency of plagiarism instances across the five chapters of the TEFL theses. It is evident that Chapter 2 exhibits the highest number of plagiarism occurrences, with 87 instances, followed by Chapter 1 with 39 instances, Chapter 5 with 30 instances, Chapter 4 with 22 instances, and Chapter 3 with 20 instances. The total instances of plagiarism across all chapters are also provided at the bottom of the table, indicating 39 instances in Chapter 1, 87 instances in Chapter 2, 20 instances in Chapter 3, 22 instances in Chapter 4, and 30 instances in Chapter 5. The results revealed a higher frequency of plagiarism in Translation theses compared to TEFL theses, with Chapter 2 being particularly problematic.

Table 8. Frequency of plagiarism in the five chapters of TEFL theses

	Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapter 4	Chapter 5
Thesis 1	2	4	--	--	--
Thesis 2	1	6	6	7	5
Thesis 3	1	2	--	--	--
Thesis 4	4	7	2	2	3
Thesis 5	6	11	2	2	4
Thesis 6	4	10	3	3	2
Thesis 7	4	8	2	--	2
Thesis 8	3	5	--	1	2
Thesis 9	5	9	3	4	3
Thesis 10	3	12	1	2	5
Thesis 11	6	13	1	1	3
Total	39	87	20	22	30

4.5. Plagiarism in translation and TEFL theses

As indicated in Table 9, the results showed that while the amount of overlapping text was significantly higher in TEFL theses, the frequency of plagiarism was higher in Translation theses. This finding suggests that TEFL students were more conscious of plagiarism and made efforts to include the names of the scholars in their theses, albeit with excessive direct quotations.

Table 9. Frequency of plagiarism in the five chapters of TEFL and translation theses

	Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapter 4	Chapter 5	Total
TEFL Theses	39	87	20	22	30	198
TraionTranslation Theses	70	169	5	31	5	280

Table 10 presents the frequencies of plagiarism in both Translation and TEFL theses.

Table 10. Frequency of plagiarism in TEFL and translation theses

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Translation	280	239.0	41.0
TEFL	198	239.0	-41.0
Total	478		

As shown in table 11, the results revealed a statistically significant difference in the frequency of plagiarism between Translation theses and TEFL theses ($p = 0.00$, $p < 0.05$).

Table 11. Chi-square test

Chi-Square	Df	Asymp. Sig.

14.067ª	1	.00

5. Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the frequency of plagiarism among Translation Studies theses and TEFL theses from universities in Iran. The results demonstrated that while there were instances where students acknowledged plagiarism by citing the author, using quotation marks, and providing page numbers, there were also several cases of students paraphrasing entire passages from books or journals without giving proper credit. The findings revealed that translation theses exhibited more instances of plagiarism compared to TEFL theses, particularly in Chapter 2. Despite the significantly higher degree of overlap in TEFL theses, the frequency of plagiarism was higher in translation theses, suggesting that TEFL students were more conscious of citing the names of scholars in their theses. The results of the chi-square test also indicated a statistically significant difference between the frequencies of plagiarism in Translation theses compared to TEFL theses.

The results indicated that in both translation and TEFL theses, there were instances where students avoided plagiarism by citing the author's name, using quotation marks, and providing the page number. However, there were also cases of plagiarism where students copied the work of other scholars verbatim without proper citation, quotation marks, or paraphrasing. These findings are consistent with Higgins et al. (2016), who discovered that 82% of the papers from countries where English was not an official language had unacceptable amounts of copied content.

The findings also revealed a higher frequency of plagiarism in Translation theses compared to TEFL theses, particularly in Chapter 2. This higher frequency in Translation theses, especially in Chapter 2, suggests that there may be a greater temptation or tendency for translation students to engage in plagiarism. On the other hand, the lower incidence of plagiarism in TEFL theses, despite a higher amount of overlap, indicates that TEFL students may have a better awareness of academic integrity and a greater tendency to properly cite sources.

This result underscores the importance of providing explicit education and support for students in understanding and adhering to academic integrity standards within their specific fields of study. By recognizing these discipline-specific differences, educators and institutions can tailor their efforts to prevent plagiarism and promote ethical writing practices effectively within different academic programs.

Students copied word-for-word from books or journals without acknowledgment. They could have avoided plagiarism by completely paraphrasing what other scholars have published or by making references to those scholars and including page numbers after direct quotations. Students can avoid verbatim copying without acknowledgment by practicing effective note-taking techniques, which involve summarizing and paraphrasing information rather than directly copying sentences or paragraphs.

Additionally, plagiarism can be prevented if students understand and apply proper citation and referencing practices, use style guides, or seek guidance from their instructors when in doubt. Utilizing plagiarism detection tools to check their work before submission can also help students identify any unintentional instances of direct copying and ensure they properly acknowledge the sources. Ultimately, fostering a culture of academic integrity and ethical writing within educational institutions can help prevent direct copying without acknowledgment, as students will be more aware of the consequences and the importance of original work.

6. Conclusion

The issue of plagiarism has become a significant concern for most institutions of higher education, threatening the foundations and principles upon which these institutions were established. Studies conducted by various higher education institutions across the globe have focused on the detrimental nature of plagiarism, intending to curb or reduce it to provide a conducive and favorable environment for teaching and learning (Ford & Hughes, 2012). However, the literature and findings of this study indicate that students' understanding or perceptions of what constitutes plagiarism are very limited. While the majority of students understand plagiarism, they do not fully appreciate its depth, breadth, and scope. This creates a situation where they sometimes engage in plagiarism because they do not perceive such acts as constituting plagiarism. Educational programs must emphasize the various avenues where students can enhance their knowledge of plagiarism. In this way, students would be proactive in seeking knowledge about plagiarism to improve their research and writing skills. Therefore, to curb or reduce plagiarism, lecturers and university authorities must prioritize educating and orienting students on the constituents of plagiarism.

The findings of the present study highlight the necessity for collaborative efforts among higher education institutions and relevant stakeholders to establish clear standards, guidelines, and training programs on plagiarism, thereby elevating the standards of education, academic writing, and publications across the higher education landscape. This demands that academic and scientific writing development training for students should be given top priority by Iranian higher education institutions. In addition to principles of academic writing, topics covering how to avoid plagiarism and maintain academic integrity, such

as proper referencing, quoting, and paraphrasing, as well as what constitutes plagiarism, should be covered. Students should also take English writing classes to increase their confidence in communicating ideas in a second language. Universities must understand that this kind of instruction should be included from the moment a student enrols in a master's degree program. This basic instruction must be paired with real-world tasks to encourage and reinforce the application of learning. Educators, mentors, and peers should be equipped with the knowledge to educate students about plagiarism, fostering a deeper comprehension of the issue. It is also recommended to develop and implement measures to monitor and assess progress in addressing plagiarism, thereby providing a proactive approach to addressing the issue. Universities should organize literacy programs specifically focused on plagiarism, ensuring that students are well-versed in the various forms and manifestations of plagiarism. Additionally, integrating plagiarism education as a dedicated course unit within university curricula can serve as a proactive measure to mitigate instances of plagiarism.

This study had certain limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, the corpus of the study was limited in size. Additionally, the translation and TEFL theses analyzed were not from the same educational institutions. Different institutions may have varying policies, guidelines, and rules regarding plagiarism, which could potentially contribute to the observed higher frequency of plagiarism in translation theses. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies address this issue by selecting a larger corpus for analysis from the same institutions to ensure consistency in policies and guidelines. Furthermore, uncovering students' perceptions and knowledge of plagiarism is another area that future researchers can explore to gain deeper insights into this topic. By investigating students' understanding and awareness of plagiarism, more targeted and effective strategies can be developed to mitigate its occurrence in academic work.

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The Effect of Language Proficiency and Question Type on Children's Response Accuracy

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study was to examine the accuracy with which young children respond to different types of questions. Additionally, the study explored whether the children's language development affects their response accuracy. They study was conducted in two kindergartens in Neyshabur, Iran, and the sample consisted of 25 Persian-speaking young children aged 3 to 6 years, who participated in the study by listening to a short story and answering 24 questions of varying types. The analysis of the results revealed that children's language proficiency significantly influenced the accuracy of their responses, with more proficient children providing more accurate answers. Further analysis of the results showed that children provided the most accurate answers to yes/no questions. Forced-choice questions elicited more accurate responses than open-ended questions. These findings suggest that children's limited language proficiency and their restricted memory span may constrain the reliability of their responses to certain types of questions.

KEYWORDS: Language proficiency; Question type; Response accuracy; Suggestibility; Young children

1. Introduction

Recent research in the field of language development has highlighted a growing interest in the role of questions in children's lives. Many of these questions and answers occur in everyday interactions, through which children become acquainted with various vocabulary and grammatical structures, develop critical thinking skills, analyze available information, and utilize memory to formulate and respond to questions. These interactions also help children learn how to effectively communicate with others within different contexts. Numerous studies have been conducted to explore the use of questions in settings involving children, including medical (von Baeyer et al., 2009), forensic (Ceci et al., 2007), developmental (Fritzley & Lee, 2003), and educational contexts (Brubacher et al., 2016).

Research has also focused on the impact of different types of questions on children's responses. For example, studies have examined yes/no questions (Fritzley et al., 2013; Imhoff & Baker-Ward, 1999; Mehrani & Peterson, 2017a), open-ended questions (Kulkofsky & Klemfuss, 2008), tag questions (Mehrani, 2011; Rudy & Goodman, 1991), and forced-choice questions (Andrews et al., 2015). However, researchers have yet to determine which question formats yield the most accurate responses.

In addition to question type, language proficiency is another crucial factor that can influence a child's answers. Language proficiency is defined as an individual's ability to use language for specific purposes (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). It encompasses a child's capacity to apply their sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic knowledge to fulfill various language functions (Mehrani, 2011). While substantial research exists on how children's age and cognitive development affect response accuracy, there is a noticeable gap in the literature regarding the role of language proficiency and its impact on the accuracy of children's responses.

Addressing these gaps, the present study aims to enhance our understanding of the factors that influence young children's answers to questions. Specifically, this research seeks to identify which types of questions elicit the most accurate responses and to determine whether children's language proficiency affects their responses to adult questions.

2. Literature review

2.1. Question types and accuracy of responses

The accuracy of children's responses is crucial, particularly in contexts where correct answers are vital, such as forensic, medical, educational, or developmental settings. In these contexts, research studies serve various purposes: in education, questions are employed for evaluation (Brubacher et al., 2016); in developmental experiments, they function as data collection tools (Fritzley & Lee, 2003); in medical settings, they are used to assess children's pain (von Baeyer et al., 2009); and in forensic contexts, questions are central to investigative interviews (Ceci et al., 2007). Given the significance of questions, developmental researchers introduced the term "suggestibility," defined as "the tendency to report false information provided by another individual" (Kulkofsky & Klemfuss, 2008, p. 1442). More generally, suggestibility refers to the extent to which post-event information can alter an individual's memory.

Recognizing the importance of questions across various contexts, numerous studies (Ceci et al., 2007; Hünefeldt et al., 2009; Imhoff & Baker-ward, 1999; Mehrani & Peterson, 2015; 2016; Rudy & Goodman, 1991) have been conducted to identify the most effective question types for interviews. These studies have examined open-ended questions (Aldridge & Wood, 1998; Andrews et al., 2015; Lamb et al., 2003), yes/no questions (Behzadnia & Mehrani, 2020; Mehrani & Peterson, 2016; 2017a; Okanda & Itakura, 2007), tag questions (Behzadnia & Mehrani, 2017; Greenstock & Pipe, 1996; Rudy & Goodman, 1991), and forced-choice questions (Behzadnia & Mehrani, 2018; Fritzley et al., 2009; Peterson & Grant, 2001; Mehrani & Peterson, 2015; 2017b). The findings from these studies have informed the development of interview protocols for different contexts. For example, drawing on the literature, Lamb et al. (2018) proposed a model for conducting interviews in forensic settings.

The first type of question extensively studied by scholars is the open-ended question. Andrews et al. (2015) and Lamb et al. (2003) analyzed trial transcripts from the United States and the United Kingdom in which children testified about sexual abuse. These researchers identified two common types of open-ended questions: "invitations," where interviewers prompt children to tell a story (e.g., "Tell us what happened."), and "directives/cued invitations," which focus on information previously mentioned by the child (e.g., "Where were you when THAT happened?"). Their research concluded that invitation questions are more likely to elicit accurate information from children than directive/cued invitations. Consequently, interviewers are advised to prioritize invitation questions over directive ones. A common finding across studies is that both types of open-ended questions are more likely to yield accurate information than yes/no or forced-choice questions. However, some researchers, like Aldridge and Wood (1998), have argued that due to young children's linguistic immaturity, reticence, and memory limitations, open-ended questions may not be appropriate in interrogations. Given the inconsistent findings associated with open-ended questions, some researchers have recommended yes/no questions instead.

Regarding yes/no questions, researchers have proposed various hypotheses. Okanda and Itakura (2007) suggested that children exhibit an "affirmation bias" in response to yes/no questions, tending to answer "yes" to questions about both familiar and unfamiliar objects. Another hypothesis, the "compliance tendency/acquaintance tendency" (Behzadnia & Mehrani, 2020; Mehrani & Peterson, 2016), posits that children's responses often conform to the format of yes/no questions—if asked a negative question, they are likely to respond negatively, and if asked a positive question, their response is more likely to be positive. Further confounding issues come from the study by Mehrani (2011) who found that children are more influenced by negative question formats, leading to more "no" biases. However, Behzadnia and Mehrani (2020) observed that children exhibit a higher degree of compliance with positive yes/no questions. These complexities make interviewers hesitant to use yes/no questions when interviewing young children.

Although significant findings have emerged regarding open-ended and yes/no questions, there remains ongoing debate about which question format yields the most accurate responses. Proponents of open-ended questions argue that yes/no questions provide insufficient information (Behzadnia & Mehrani, 2020) and are more suggestive than open-ended questions (Ceci et al., 2007). Conversely, some researchers advocate for yes/no questions, citing children's cognitive limitations as a

reason they may struggle to respond accurately to open-ended questions. This uncertainty has led researchers to explore other types of questions in interviews.

One such type, closely related to yes/no questions, is the tag question—a declarative statement turned into a question by adding an interrogative fragment. Rudy and Goodman (1991) found that negative tag questions (e.g., "It's not a book, is it?") are particularly difficult for children to understand. Further research by Behzadnia and Mehrani (2017) suggested that due to the linguistic complexity of tag questions, children exhibit a stronger "yes-bias" in their answers. However, this study only examined positive tag questions (e.g., "It's a book, isn't it?"). According to Mehrani's (2011) findings on compliance tendency, children are likely to answer positively due to this tendency. Greenstock and Pipe (1996) also noted that younger children are more influenced by tag questions than older children, highlighting the linguistic complexity of these questions and prompting researchers to study another question type: forced-choice questions.

Forced-choice questions offer a series of options, one of which is the correct answer (e.g., "Do you like oranges, apples, or bananas?"). Although these questions can include multiple options or even be open-ended (e.g., "Do you like oranges, apples, or something else?"), most studies have focused on questions with only two options. Research on forced-choice questions has yielded contradictory results. On one hand, Behzadnia and Mehrani (2018), Fritzley et al. (2009), and Mehrani and Peterson (2015; 2017b) provided empirical evidence of a "recency tendency" in children's responses to forced-choice questions. For example, Mehrani and Peterson (2015) conducted two experiments: in the first, children were shown an animated film and were asked 16 questions, with the correct answer being the first option in eight questions and the second option in the other eight. In the second experiment, the order of options was reversed, but children consistently showed a strong preference for the second option, regardless of the correct answer. On the other hand, Peterson and Grant (2001) found that children answered questions correctly regardless of whether the first or second option was correct, showing no recency tendency. Given the limited research on forced-choice questions, the existence of a recency tendency remains inconclusive.

Despite years of research on different question types, many hypotheses and speculations remain unproven. Researchers continue to seek solutions to these challenges, aiming to determine how questions can be used in interviews to elicit accurate information from children.

2.2. Language proficiency and accuracy of responses

The next significant area of research concerns children's language proficiency and its potential impact on the accuracy of their responses. Language proficiency refers to an individual's ability to use language accurately to convey meaning, both in comprehension and production. A child's proficiency in a language is closely related to their sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic development. From a psycholinguistic perspective, to understand and respond to a question, a child must first decode the message and then, based on pragmatics and their existing schemata, formulate an answer. From a sociolinguistic perspective, the child must consider factors such as the relationship between the people involved and the purpose of the conversation, which influences the communicative goal of the questions (Mehrani, 2011). The extent to which children effectively utilize these bodies of knowledge reflects their level of linguistic proficiency.

Despite the importance of language proficiency, its role—along with age—has not been independently examined in developmental studies. Existing research has primarily considered age as a key determinant in children's responses to questions (Ceci et al., 2007; Fritzley et al., 2013; Imhoff & Baker-Ward, 1999). For example, Imhoff and Baker-Ward (1999) and Fritzley et al. (2013) found that younger children are more sensitive to question complexity and, as a result, are more suggestible in their answers. Conversely, Ceci and colleagues (2007) reported that, under certain circumstances, older children may be more suggestible than younger ones, as older children have accumulated more knowledge and attempt to align their responses with what they perceive as meaningful. The issue arises from the fact that children within the same age group can have varying levels of proficiency, leading to differences in how they respond to questions.

To the best of our knowledge, previous research has not adequately addressed children's language proficiency in their first language. However, studies on second language acquisition indicate that language proficiency significantly influences the accuracy of speakers' responses (Kim et al., 2016; Yan et al., 2015). For instance, in a systematic review, Yan and colleagues (2015) reported that more proficient speakers are better able to utilize their implicit knowledge of language, having internalized more vocabulary and syntactic structures than less proficient speakers. Less proficient speakers, on the other hand, struggle to use the implicit grammatical knowledge they possess. They often cannot repeat longer and more complex sentences, relying instead on rote repetition. Consequently, when less proficient speakers repeat a sentence mechanically, it is evident that they do not fully comprehend it, resulting in inaccurate responses. In contrast, more proficient speakers repeat sentences with awareness, making their responses more reliable.

Although extensive research has been conducted on the types of questions that elicit the most accurate responses, no conclusive outcomes have been reached. Additionally, as noted earlier, there is a scarcity of research examining the potential effect of children's language proficiency on their response accuracy. Another limitation of the existing literature is that the majority of studies have been conducted on English-speaking children, with only a few studies conducted in other linguistic

contexts. Thus, the findings cannot be generalized to other contexts where different languages are spoken. This study was specifically designed to investigate how children's language proficiency and the types of questions they are asked affect the accuracy of their answers in a Persian-speaking context.

This study aimed to address two research questions. First, we examined whether the type of question (i.e., yes-no, forced-choice, and open-ended questions) affects the responses of 3- to 6-year-old children to adult questions. As noted by Ceci et al. (2007) and Behzadnia and Mehrani (2017), because closed-ended questions are more suggestive, we predicted that children would produce the most accurate answers to open-ended questions, followed by forced-choice and yes/no questions. Second, we investigated whether language proficiency influences the responses of 3- to 6-year-old children. Due to the limited literature on the effect of language proficiency on children's response accuracy, we refrained from making a specific prediction. However, based on research on second language acquisition, we hypothesized that language proficiency might have an impact.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

This study involved 25 children recruited from two kindergartens in Neyshabur, Iran. The participants included one three-year-old child (a boy, aged 42 months), four four-year-olds (2 boys and 2 girls, age range = 48-57 months, M = 54.5 months, SD = 4.35), seven five-year-olds (2 boys and 5 girls, age range = 60-71 months, M = 64.85 months, SD = 4.91), and thirteen six-year-olds (8 boys and 5 girls, age range = 73-79 months, M = 75.84 months, SD = 2.19). All participants were from middle-class families and were monolingual Persian speakers. Written consent was obtained from the kindergarten staff and the children's custodians for their participation in the study. Additionally, oral consent was obtained from each child prior to their involvement in the study.

3.2. Instruments

3.2.1. Language proficiency test

A Persian Elicited Imitation Test (EIT), developed by Mehrani (2017), was used to assess the children's language proficiency levels. This test evaluates proficiency by asking children to repeat 40 sentences exactly as they hear them from the interviewer. The sentences increase in complexity in terms of morpho-syntactic features. To complete this test, participants must first understand and decode the sentence they hear, then recall it from memory, and finally reconstruct it using the grammar they have internalized. The test uses a 5-point scaling rubric to assess children's language abilities. The test's inter-rater reliability has been reported as 0.85, and it has shown satisfactory results concerning validity (Mehrani, 2017).

3.2.2. Short story

A short story was used in the study to serve as a basis for different types of questions. The story, which was about the birthday party of a character named Mr. Bear, involved seven different jungle animals as party participants. The story was 566 words long and was narrated to each child over 180-220 seconds by the second researcher. Additionally, 11 illustrated pictorial aids were shown to each child while they listened to the story. On average, it took the narrator 17-22 seconds to tell the story while progressing through each picture. These pictures were used to maintain the children's engagement during the storytelling process.

Efforts were made to ensure consistency in narration for all participants. Special attention was given to the speed of narration, the number of words and sentences, and the grammatical complexity of the sentences. To further ensure consistency, the storytelling process was recorded for all children.

3.2.3. Interview question

Before the experiment, the researchers designed several questions that included: a) eight yes/no questions, with four requiring a "yes" answer and four requiring a "no" answer; b) eight forced-choice questions, where the correct answer for four was the first choice and for the other four was the second choice. These forced-choice questions were designed to examine the children's potential "recency tendency"; and c) eight open-ended questions that required children to provide a complete answer (see Table 1). The researchers created six different answer sheets to counterbalance the order of the questions, and each child was randomly assigned to one of the six answer sheets.

Table 1. Instances of interview questions

Question type	Persian questions	English translation	Answers
Yes/no	آقا خرسه امروز ناراحت نبود؟	Wasn't Mr. Bear sad today?	No, he wasn't.
Open/ended	خانم سگه تو جشن چیکار می کرد؟	What was Mrs. Dog doing in the party?	She was sleeping.
Forced-choice	تولد کی بود، آقا خرسه یا آقا اردکه؟	Whose birthday was it, Mr. Bear's or Mr. Duck's?	Mr. Bear's.

3.3. Procedures

Before conducting the experiment, a pilot study was conducted with five children from different age groups to assess the comprehensibility of the story and the interview questions. Based on the findings of the pilot study, two out of seven characters were removed from the story, certain unclear sections were paraphrased, and six interview questions were revised. Additionally, the interviewer spent several days in the children's kindergartens, engaging in play to establish a friendly rapport with them. A quiet room free from distractions was designated for the interviews in each kindergarten.

The experiment was conducted in a single session for each child. Before starting the experiment, the interviewer engaged each child in conversation about their day to establish initial rapport. Following this, each child's language proficiency was assessed using the Persian EIT test. The interviewer then narrated the story to each child individually, showing them corresponding pictures to maintain their engagement. After a few minutes, each child was asked 24 questions, and their responses were audio-recorded for subsequent analysis.

3.4. Scoring

To evaluate the effect of different question types on children's response accuracy, we implemented various scoring methods. For yes/no and forced-choice questions, each correct answer was awarded a score of +1, while incorrect responses received a score of 0. Regarding open-ended questions, half of the questions required the respondents to name only one item (e.g., "What was Mrs. Dog doing at the party?" Answer: "She was sleeping."). For these questions, correct answers were assigned a score of +1, and incorrect answers received a score of 0.

For the remaining open-ended questions, the child was expected to name multiple items (e.g., "Who were Mr. Bear's friends?" Answer: "Mr. Duck, Mrs. Dog, Little Duck, Mrs. Sheep, Mr. Horse."). For these questions, if the child correctly identified more than half of the items, they received a score of +1; otherwise, they received a score of 0.

4. Results

An analysis was conducted to identify instances of plagiarism in master's theses using the iThenticate tool. The examination revealed that the percentage of overlapping text, which could indicate potential plagiarism, ranged from 14% to an alarming 99%. The average overlap across all these stood at 50.24%, with a standard deviation of 19.00%.

Children's language proficiency was assessed using an elicited imitation test (Mehrani, 2017). Based on the results, the 3- to 6-year-old participants were divided into two groups: 12 high-proficient children and 13 low-proficient children. Descriptive statistics, as presented in Table 2, indicated that proficiency level appeared to influence the accuracy of children's responses to different types of questions. Specifically, high-proficiency children scored higher on yes/no questions (M = 7.16, SD = 0.93) and forced-choice questions (M = 7.16, SD = 1.26) but had lower scores on open-ended questions (M = 6.00, SD = 1.12). Similarly, low-proficiency children scored highest on yes/no questions (M = 6.69, SD = 1.25), followed by forced-choice questions (M = 6.15, SD = 1.81), with the lowest scores on open-ended questions (M = 4.76, SD = 1.69). Further analysis revealed that 64% of open-ended questions, 82% of forced-choice questions, and 86% of yes/no questions were answered correctly. It is noteworthy that for open-ended questions, 14% of the responses were incomplete, 6% of the children responded with "I don't know," and 16% provided incorrect answers.

Table 2. Children's mean question scores across proficiency levels

Question type	High proficiency	Low proficiency
Open-ended	6.000	4.769
Forced-choice	7.167	6.154
Yes/No	7.167	6.692

To examine the effect of language proficiency and different question formats on children's response accuracy, a 2 (proficiency level: high and low) × 3 (question format: yes/no, forced-choice, open-ended) mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted. The results revealed a significant main effect of question type, $F(2, 23) = 11.35$, $p < .001$, indicating that both high-proficiency and low-proficiency children responded differently to open-ended, forced-choice, and yes/no questions. Additionally, a significant effect of proficiency level was found, $F(1, 23) = 5.42$, $p = .029$, suggesting that proficiency level influences children's responses.

To further explore the effect of proficiency level on responses to each question type, a one-way ANOVA was performed on children's responses to the three question types. The analysis indicated a significant main effect for open-ended questions, $F(1, 23) = 4.50$, $p = .045$. However, the effects for forced-choice questions, $F(1, 23) = 2.56$, $p = .123$, and yes/no questions, $F(1, 23) = 1.13$, $p = .298$, were not significant. These findings suggest that high- and low-proficiency children respond differently to open-ended questions, but not to forced-choice or yes/no questions.

To determine whether children exhibited a recency bias in their responses to forced-choice questions, a one-sample t-test was conducted. The results indicated a significant recency bias, $t(24) = 2.32$, $p = .029$, showing that children were more likely to select the most recently presented option in forced-choice questions.

Finally, to assess whether age is associated with children's language proficiency, a Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated between these two variables. The analysis revealed no significant correlation, $r(23) = .56$, $p = .562$, indicating that age is not necessarily related to an increase in language proficiency, and that language proficiency does not necessarily increase with age.

5. Discussion

The present study examined the impact of different types of questions—open-ended, yes/no, and forced-choice—on preschoolers' responses to adult questions. Additionally, we explored the relationship between language proficiency and the accuracy of children's responses. The findings revealed that proficiency level significantly affects children's answers. Specifically, children with higher language proficiency provided more accurate responses, whereas those with lower proficiency performed less effectively. Moreover, the study indicated that question format influences response accuracy: children answered yes/no questions more accurately, while their responses to open-ended questions were less precise.

Previous research has generally assumed that language proficiency increases with age (Behzadnia & Mehrani, 2020; Ceci et al., 2007; Fritzley et al., 2013; Hünefeldt et al., 2009; Mehrani & Peterson, 2016). For example, Mehrani and Peterson (2016) suggested that younger children are more suggestible and exhibit stronger biases in their answers due to underdeveloped cognitive and verbal skills and limited memory capacity. As a result, their language comprehension and production are less effective compared to older children. Fritzley et al. (2013) proposed that younger children struggle with yes/no questions due to their incomplete cognitive and verbal development. Our results align with these findings, demonstrating that children with higher language proficiency provide more accurate responses to questions than those with lower proficiency.

Our results regarding proficiency are consistent with the studies by Bruck and Melnyk (2004) and Keller-Cohen (1981). Bruck and Melnyk hypothesized that children with advanced language skills are more resistant to suggestibility. Keller-Cohen (1981) argued that children decode the meaning of a sentence and then encode it based on their existing knowledge. These findings support the "regeneration hypothesis" proposed by Potter and Lombardi (1990), which posits that sentences are regenerated by activating their conceptual representation from long-term memory and using recently activated words. As children's language skills (both comprehension and production) develop, they accumulate more knowledge about their environment, allowing them to generate or regenerate sentences based on their understanding. In contrast, children with less developed language skills may lack sufficient knowledge to accurately comprehend and produce stimuli, leading to less accurate sentence repetition.

The findings of this study regarding question type contrast with those of Ceci et al. (2007), Andrews et al. (2015), and Lamb et al. (2003), which suggested that children are more likely to change their answers in response to closed-ended questions and answer open-ended questions more accurately. However, our results are consistent with the studies by Aldridge and Wood (1998) and Bruck and Ceci (1999), who recommended using more yes/no questions than open-ended questions. Our findings support Aldridge and Wood's (1998) assertion that open-ended questions can be challenging for children due to their less developed cognitive and language skills.

6. Conclusion

While it has been previously assumed that children's responses to different question formats are influenced by their age, this study introduces a new variable: language proficiency. This research utilized three primary question types commonly used in interviews—open-ended, yes/no, and forced-choice—to determine which format is most likely to elicit the most accurate

responses. The findings from this study have potential applications in various contexts, including forensic, medical, and educational settings, where accurate responses from children are critical.

The present study represents a significant advancement in our understanding of suggestibility. However, it is limited by its small sample size of monolingual participants. Future research should include a larger and more diverse group of children, encompassing various cultures and bilingual/multilingual backgrounds. Additionally, since positive and negative yes/no questions are formulated identically in Persian (Mehrani & Peterson, 2016), this study focused exclusively on this language. Future studies could explore the effects of different question formats across other languages and additional variables. Moreover, incorporating alternative methods for engaging children, such as role-play, story narration, or coloring activities, may provide further insights into the factors influencing children's suggestibility beyond question type and language proficiency.

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The Predicative Role of Metacognitive Awareness in Teachers' Cognition on Noticing Concept

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ABSTRACT

Teachers' cognition, as an important entity in determining the level of efficient teaching, has been the target of recent studies. Metacognitive awareness is also claimed to be the manifestation of the underlining cognition. Therefore, this study took a new move in the area of teacher cognition research. It integrated teaching experience, one of the main factors of cognitive/metacognitive building blocks, in language noticing. It also managed to perceive the relation between teachers' cognition and metacognitive awareness, taking experience into account. For this, at first, NCI (Noticing Concept Inventory) was given to 60 experienced and novice teachers, then the same teachers took teacher metacognitive awareness Inventory (MALT). The independent t-test confirmed the role of teaching experience in conceptualizing noticing; In the next statistical step, Pearson Correlation Coefficient and Multiple Regression Analysis detected the relation between teachers' cognitive status and metacognitive awareness. Experienced teachers were found to be more metacognitively aware hence holding up higher level of noticing cognition. In the final step, the ANOVA pertained the procedural knowledge, as a metacognitive component, actively involved in the teachers' noticing cognition. Findings illustrated the key role of teaching experience in forming and modifying teachers' cognition on noticing which will be directly manifested upon the level of metacognitive awareness.

KEYWORDS: Metacognitive awareness; NCI; Noticing; Teacher cognition; Teaching experience

1. Introduction

1.1. Noticing hypothesis

One of the main impressive arguments of using consciousness in learning is noticing. There are several proposals regarding the conceptualization of this term that may face conflict because noticing is not a monolithic concept (Jung, 2009).

Noticing is born out of the overarching term 'attention' in language learning; Schmidt (1990, 1995, 2001) states that noticing is the process through which input becomes intake hence is absolutely central in language learning. He argues that to notice an item, attention and awareness on the part of the learner is necessary. In fact, it is claimed that without noticing no learning happens (Schmidt, 1990). Robinson (2003) defines Schmidt's noticing as what is detected and then activated through the allocation of attention and task demand that can change the extent and type of attention to the item. Tomlin and Villa (1994) underline three different concepts to cover noticing. They propose alerting, orientation and detection as three various factors in noticing. As Robinson (2003) states, of the three functions of attention, detection is parallel to noticing in Schmidt's (1990) terminology which means noticing enhances awareness, necessary for learning. Cohen (1996) gives a reconciliation of the

previously proposed definitions of noticing. He states that noticing occurs prior to encoding in long term memory where detection happens in line with rehearsal in short term memory. However, according to Robinson (1995) "noticing can be identified with what is both detected and then further activated following the allocation of attentional resources from a central executive" (p. 297). Therefore, it shows a clear consensus upon noticing as an attentional function occurring in short term memory that can be encoded in long term memory.

The present study investigated the place of conscious attention to language forms following what Schmidt (1990) claims as "subliminal language learning is impossible, and that intake is what learners consciously notice" (p. 149).

Classrooms are highly dynamic, constantly changing, and characterized by multi-directed interactions among multiple persons and events. Therefore, teachers should develop the ability to create and act upon supportive learning opportunities in the moment (Eilam & Poyas, 2006). In this case, teachers' planning for gaining the most of teaching is an essential step in language teaching. Then, noticing can come into two related concepts including teachers' noticing vision as a mediator in the classroom and as a noticing provider to grasp learners' most attention to the elements of the target language to be taught.

The first issue embraces sociological aspect of teaching which monitors learning by noticing the interactional aspect of teaching and learning to enhance an ecological enterprise. From the second perspective, teachers' role to raise learners' language awareness and turn their attention to the intended parts to be learnt is of utmost importance and is the center of this study.

Place of noticing in language teaching, from the second perspective, shows that first of all, teachers are the individuals who will decide what the learners need to focus on. This act of planning and decision making is highly likely manifested in the teacher's ideology of what they do as teaching methodology.

Teachers' perception of noticing concept in their practicum would gain insight into several other unanswered questions in language teaching field. It can provide teachers the clues to recognize the importance of "respect the learners' internal syllabus" (Ellis, 2008) before/while planning a lesson and can provide the answer to the question of whether learning content and setting should be concentrated more. It also can end to the debate over usability of the tasks designed to receive the most conscious attention to the target form by students.

This very essential step to teaching purposefully would enlighten teachers to shape cognition on noticing and develop their knowledge about the underlining aspects as well as practical benefits it brings to the classroom. Borrowing the term noticing from second language learning and expanding it to the realm of language teaching can open up new horizons in teacher cognition and teacher development services even the methodologies and the designed materials to boost noticing and enhance the language leaning outcomes.

1.2. Teacher cognition

As a developing research field, teacher cognition research in second language education is characterized through a range of different terms, including BAK (beliefs, assumptions and knowledge, (Woods, 1996), beliefs (Basturkmen et al., 2004), pedagogic principles (Breen et al., 2001), pedagogical knowledge (Gatbonton, 2000; Mullock, 2006), practical knowledge (Meijer et al., 1999), and personal practical knowledge (Golombek, 1998). Based on this diversity, as Golombek (2009) argues, "given the fact that researchers were writing almost simultaneously, borrowing terminologies from general education to legitimate this line of research within L2 teacher education scholarship" (p. 158).

Commonly cognition is thought of as thinking or mental processing of information. Borg (2003) defines teacher's cognition in terms of "unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching" (p. 81). The cognitive approach to teach is under sever influence of many other factors such as context, previous learning and teaching experience (Borg, 2003, 2012), culture, interest in the career, level of education and self-reflection on teaching practices.

Teachers do what they know or believe, then their practice should naturally be a reflection of what they actually have gained through learning and teaching experience (Borg, 2011). In Borg (2015), teacher's cognition takes a broader scope accounting for what teachers know, believe and think about all aspects of their profession not just what they actualize in the classroom.

1.3. Metacognitive awareness

To act upon the knowledge and belief in teaching, teachers are in need of the ability to recognize and structure proper way of reflecting on what they do in response to their cognitive understanding. In other words, being aware of self-realization is necessary in successful teaching. Although metacognition has been defined for decades, but there is still no agreed-upon concept for it (Hacker et al., 1998). Flavell (1999) as the pioneer to define metacognition, describes it as "one's knowledge concerning one's own cognitive processes and products or anything related to them, e.g. the learning relevant properties of information or data" (p.232).

In line with Flavell (1999), metacognition endures self-reflection and appraisal. Therefore, teacher's metacognition may mean thinking about one's knowledge and belief. Efklides (2001) describes metacognition as being one's knowledge of their cognition, context, task, goal and anything to do with the way they know. In other words, metacognitive awareness arms teachers to learn from what they do, to shed light on their experience as a learner and a teacher.

Therefore, in this study, it is tried to discover the role of experience in developing and reflecting on teacher cognition embracing metacognitive awareness as a mediator tool to predict the type and extent of change and development in forming and using teachers' cognitive repertoire. To do so, the following questions were developed and answered through the research.

1. Is there any difference in conceptualizing noticing between experienced and novice teachers?

2. Is there any correlation between teachers' metacognitive awareness and the perceived concept of noticing in teaching/practicing language form?

3. What are the predictors of noticing in metacognitive awareness components?

2. Methodology

2.1. Participants

This study purported to find out the role of teaching experience in noticing conceptualization; it also strived to detect any possible correlation between teachers' noticing cognition and their level of metacognitive awareness, besides, metacognitive components were studies to figure out whether they could predict teachers' noticing cognition.

Therefore, 60 teachers (30 experienced and 30 novice) participated in the study. They were aged 23 to 48 and the only dividing factor to put them in two separate groups was the number of teaching years. According to Tsui (2005), teachers with more than five years of experience were grouped as experienced. They were teaching in private language schools in Ahvaz, Iran.

2.2. Instrument

NCI (Noticing Concept Inventory) which was developed in the study of Zargaran et al. (2020) was used to find the difference that teaching experience might create in perceiving the concept of noting among teachers. The questionnaire could help the researcher to find the place of teaching difference in conceptualizing noticing among two groups of experienced and novice teachers. It consisted of 51 questions on the 5 Likert scale from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). The inventory covered seven constructs of 1) Pedagogical effect, 2) Learners' characteristics, 3) Type of input, 4) Skill type, 5) Task type, 6) Time and 7) Measurement.

Another factor which can affect the use of noticing in the classroom by teachers depends on the presence and the level of teachers' metacognitive awareness. It means, teachers' metacognition helps them to shape and activate their beliefs in teaching.

An instrument that could quantitatively diagnose the effect and connection between this concept and noticing was the teacher metacognitive awareness Inventory (MAIT). This questionnaire is developed by Balcikanli (2011) which was based on Schraw and Dennison's (1994) metacognitive awareness inventory (MAI). This inventory assessed teachers' metacognition according to six metacognitive constructs namely, declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge, conditional knowledge, planning, monitoring and evaluating. It has 24 questions on the 5 Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree which 1 equal to strongly disagree and 5 to strongly agree. The original reliability of the inventory was 0.85. However, Cronbach Alpha was used once more in the present study context and yielded the reliability of the questionnaire at 0.79.

2.3. Data analysis procedure

First NCI was distributed to 60 experienced and novice teachers to find and locate any differences between two groups of experienced and novice teachers in conceptualizing noticing concept in language teaching through running a Levene's t-test.

The inventory was distributed through three methods of electronic and self-administration with the presence of the researcher and self-administration without the presence of the researcher. In all the methods a cover letter was attached to the questionnaire explaining the purpose of the inventory and the average time required to do the questions. The administrators, in the method of self-administration without the researcher presence, were justified about any possible questions that participants might have asked and the researcher's absence could not bring about any problems in the process of data collection.

Then using the Metacognitive Awareness Inventory for Teachers (MAIT) could find any connection and prediction of using noticing in the classroom. Before using the inventory, it was tested for its reliability in the present research context;

after confirming the satisfactory result it was distributed to all 60 teachers who took the noticing questionnaire to find out any possible relation between teachers' metacognitive awareness when they use noticing in the classroom. To do this Pearson Correlation Coefficient was tallied. Finally, the researcher could predict the level of metacognitive awareness in teachers' decision on using noticing in their practicum by running Regression Analysis.

3. Results

As for the first research question of the study concerning the significant difference in conceptualizing noticing between experienced and novice teachers, the researcher, having distributed NCI to 60 participants, ran Independent Sample t-test to compare the two groups. The maximum score one could obtain on the inventory was 255 and the minimum score was 51 since the inventory consisted of 51 items in 5-likert scale.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Experienced and Novice Teachers

	Teaching experience	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Scores from NCI	novice teachers	30	139.500	14.66	2.67
	experienced teachers	30	177.83	20.06	3.66

Using Descriptive statistics, the means and standard deviations of the scores obtained from novice teachers were: M= 139.50; SD= 14.66, and the means and standard deviations of the scores obtained from experiences teachers were: M= 177.83; SD= 20.06

Table 2. Independent Samples Test for Experienced and Novice Teachers

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
										95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference		Lower	Lower
Scores from NCI	Equal variances assumed	.82	.36	-8.4	58	.000	-38.33	4.53		-47.41	-29.25
	Equal variances not assumed			-8.4	53.0	.000	-38.33	4.53		-47.43	-29.23

Independent sample t-test offered two lines as displayed by Table 2 With reference to the Table, since the significant value was larger than .05, therefore, the first line was followed which referred to equal variances assumed. That is to say, since in this table, the significant value was .36 which was larger than .05; the first line was used to report findings. To discover if there was a significant difference between the two groups, the researcher referred to the column labeled Sig. (2-tailed). Since the Sig. (2-tailed) value was less than .05 which was .00, then there was a significant difference in the mean scores on the dependent variable for each of the two groups.

To determine the effect size between the two groups, the researcher used eta squared, and calculated it manually, using the formula for eta squared: t2 / t2 + (N1 + N2-2). As Table 4.2 shows, in this study the t value was -8.4. Therefore: (8.4)2 / (8.4)2 + (30 +30-2) = 70.56/128.56= 0.54. Following the guidelines proposed by Cohen (1996), the effect size of .54 is large. The guidelines (proposed by Cohen, 1996) for interpreting this value are: .01=small effect, .06=moderate effect, .14=large effect. That is, the significant difference between novice and experienced teachers was large. Experienced teachers had a much better noticing conceptualization.

As for the third research question of the study regarding the significant relationship between teachers' metacognitive awareness and the perceived concept of noticing in teaching/practicing language form, the researcher performed Pearson Correlation Coefficient. To obtain the data for metacognitive awareness, the researcher used the relevant questionnaire that

consists of 24 items on 5-likert scale. Therefore, the maximum score one could obtain on this questionnaire was 120 and the minimum score was 24. As of the perceived concept of noticing in teaching, data were already gathered from NCI. The maximum score one could obtain on the inventory was 255 and the minimum score was 51 since the inventory consisted of 51 items in 5-likert scale.

Before running the formula, the researcher, first, examined the assumptions of normality for the scores. She analyzed the scatter-plots to give a better idea of the nature of the relationship between the variables.

Figure 1. Scatterplot for Metacognitive Awareness and Concept of Noticing
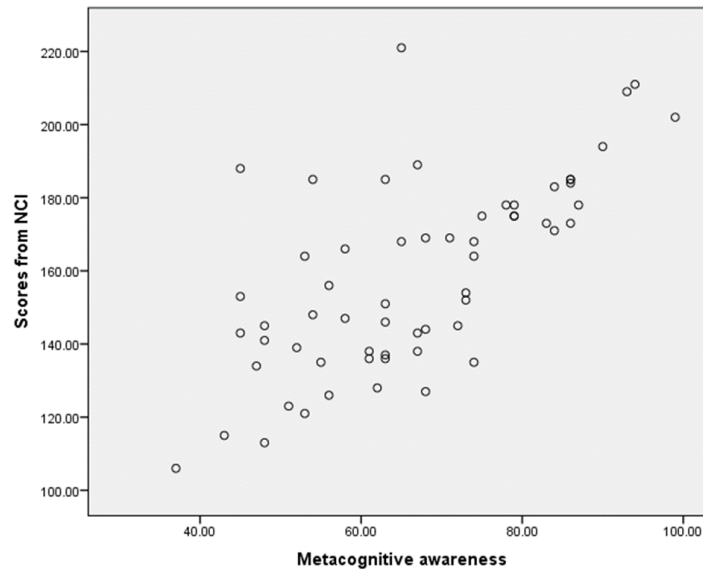
As indicated by figure 1, the scatter-plot showed that the relationship was positive since if we drew a line through the points, the direction would be rather from lower left to upper right

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for metacognitive awareness and concept of noticing

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Stat.	Stat.	Stat.	Stat.	Stat.	Stat.	Std. Error	Stat.	Std. Error
Meta Cognitive Awearness	60	37.00	99.00	66.65	14.76	.15	.30	-.76	.60
Scores from NCI	60	106.00	221.00	158.66	26.02	.19	.30	-.53	.60
Valid N (listwise)	60								

Moreover, the researcher performed the preliminary analysis to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality (i.e., skewness and kurtosis which were between +2 and _2 for the variable). Table 3 shows the means and standard deviations of the scores for metacognitive awareness (M= 66.65; SD=14.76) and concept of noticing (M= 158.66, SD=26.02).

Table 4. Correlations between metacognitive awareness and concept of noticing

		Scores from NCI	Metacognitive Awareness
Scores from NCI	Pearson Correlation	1	.677**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	-	.000
	N	60	60
Metacognitive Awareness	Pearson Correlation	.677**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	-
	N	60	60

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

After performing the preliminary analysis to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, the results obtained from Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient showed the relationship between scores of metacognitive awareness and scores of noticing concept for the teachers. There was a large, positive correlation between the two variables [r=.67, n=60, p<.05], with higher scores on metacognitive awareness was associated with higher scores on concept of noticing, based on the guideline proposed by Cohen (1996):

r=.10 to .29 or r=−.10 to .29 small

r=.30 to .49 or r=−.30 to .49 medium

r=.50 to 1.0 or r=−.50 to 1.0 large

The last research question of the study dealt with the predictors of noticing in metacognitive awareness components entailing declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge, conditional knowledge, planning, monitoring and evaluation. The researcher performed Multiple Regression and the results obtained from the statistical analyses are reported as follows:

The researcher initially checked the following assumptions: Multicollinearity: This refers to the relationship among the independent variables. Multicollinearity exists when the independent variables are highly correlated (r=.9 and above). The correlations between the variables in the model were provided in Table 5 labeled Correlations below. The independent variables showed at least some relationship with the dependent variables (above .3 preferably).

Table 5. Correlation between noticing and metacognitive components

		Scores from noticing
Declarative Knowledge	Pearson Correlation	.471**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	60
Procedural Knowledge	Pearson Correlation	.745**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	60
Conditional Knowledge	Pearson Correlation	.337**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.008
	N	60
Planning	Pearson Correlation	.336**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004
	N	60
Monitoring Knowledge	Pearson Correlation	.490**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	60
Evaluation	Pearson Correlation	.378**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003
	N	60

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

The results were presented in Table 5 as labeled Coefficients. Two values were given: Tolerance and VIF. Tolerance is an indicator of how much of the variability of the specified independent variables is not explained by the other independent variables in the model and is calculated using the formula 1–R2 for each variable. If this value is very small (less than .10), it indicates that the multiple correlation with other variables is high, suggesting the possibility of multi-collinearity (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). The other value given is the VIF (Variance inflation factor), which is just the inverse of the Tolerance value (1 divided by Tolerance). VIF values above 10 would be a concern here, indicating multi-collinearity.

The researcher used cut-off points for determining the presence of multi-collinearity (tolerance value of less than .10, or a VIF value of above 10). In this study, the tolerance value for each independent variable were not less than .10; therefore, there was no violation of the multi-collinearity assumption. This was also supported by the VIF value, which were well below the cut-off of 10. Therefore, there was no violation.

These assumptions were checked by analyzing the Normal Probability Plot of the regression standardized residuals (figure 2) that was accounted as part of the analysis. In the Normal Probability Plot the points should lie in a reasonably straight diagonal line from bottom left to top right, as displayed in figure 2. This would suggest no major deviations from normality.

Figure 2. Normal probability plot of the regression standardized residuals
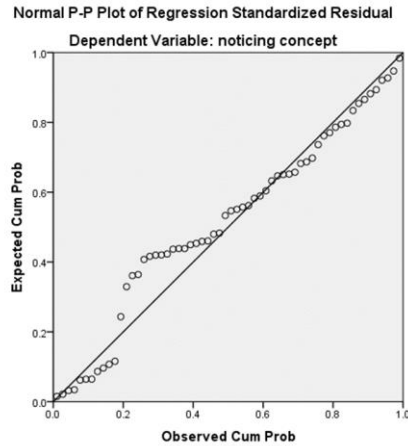
The next step was to check Outliers, Homoscedasticity, and Independence of Residuals. Outliers were also checked by inspecting the Mahalanobis distances. To identify which cases were outliers, the researcher determined the critical chi-square value, using the number of independent variables as the degrees of freedom.

Table 6. Residual Statistics

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Pridicted Value	119.48	203.09	158.66	20.67	60
Std. Predicted Value	-1.8	2.14	.00	1.00	60
Standard Error of Predicted Value	2.85	15.20	5.34	1.97	60
Adjusted Predicted Value	117.27	193.54	157.49	19.75	60
Residual	36.06	35.74	.00	15.80	60
Std. Residual	2.16	2.14	.00	.94	60
Stu d. Residual	-2.20	2.20	.02	1.00	60
Deleted Residual	-37.42	46.72	1.16	18.50	60
Stu d. Deleted Reisdual	-2.28	2.29	.02	1.02	60
Mah al. Distance	.74	18.03	5.90	6.74	60
Cook's Distance	.00	.93	.03	12	60
Centered Leverage Value	.01	.81	.10	11	60

a.   Dependent Value: Noticing Concept

The number of independent variables in this study was six and using Tabachnick and Fidell's (2001) guidelines, the critical value in this case should not exceed 22.46 and as indicated in Table 4.19 'Labeled Residuals Statisticsa' it was 18.03. Therefore, there was no violation.

Then, the researcher checked the value given under the heading R Square in Table 6, Labeled Model Summary box. This indicated how much of the variance in the dependent variable (scores on noticing concept) was explained by the model (which included the variables of declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge, conditional knowledge, planning, monitoring and evaluation).

Table 7. Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.794[a]	.631	.589	16.67

a.   Predictors: (Constant), Evaluation, Monitoring Knowledge, Procedural Knowledge, Planning, Declarative Knowledge, Conditional Knowledge

b.   Dependent Variable: Noticing concept

As displayed by table 7, in this case the value was .631. Expressed as a percentage (multiply by 100, by shifting the decimal point two places to the right), it implies that the model (which included scores on declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge, conditional knowledge, planning, monitoring and evaluation components) explained 63.1 percent of the variance in noticing concept.

To assess the statistical significance of the results, it was necessary to look in Table 3.8 labeled ANOVA. This tested the hypothesis that multiple R in the population equals zero (0).

Table 8. ANOVA[a]

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	25215.31	6	4202.55	15.11	.000[b]
Residual	14740.02	53	278.11	-	-
Total	39955.33	59	-	-	-

a. Dependent Variable: Noticing Concept
b. Predictors: (Constant), Evaluation, Monitoring Knowledge, Procedural Knowledge, Planning, Declarative Knowledge, Conditional Knowledge

The model reached statistical significance (F=15.11, Sig = .00, this really means p<.05).

Table 9. Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
Constant	-205.20	42.64	-	-4.81	.00	-	-
Procedural Knowledge	15.81	2.48	.63	6.36	.00	.70	1.42
Monitoring Knowledge	3.35	2.51	.14	1.33	.18	.63	1.57
Declarative Knowledge	-.05	1.73	-.00	-.03	.97	.56	1.76
Conditional Knowledge	1.37	5.58	.07	.24	.80	.17	9.29
Planning	3.23	1.83	.16	1.76	.08	.75	1.33
Evaluation	.26	5.36	.01	.05	.96	.17	9.90

As shown in Table 9, to know which of the variables included in the model contributed to the prediction of the dependent variable, the researcher checked the column labeled Beta under Standardized Coefficients in the output box labeled Coefficients. *Comparing* the contribution of each independent variable, the researcher referred to the beta values. Looking down the Beta column, she found that the largest beta coefficient was 6.36, which was for procedural knowledge. This means that this variable made the strongest unique contribution to explaining the dependent variable, when the variance explained by all other variables in the model was controlled. The Beta value for other variable was not significant since the Sig value for each of them was more than .05 so that it made no significant contribution to the prediction of the dependent variable. Therefore, the best predictor of the scores of noticing concept was procedural knowledge.

4. Discussion

4.1. Teaching experience and teachers' cognition on noticing concept

To answer the first question, experienced and novice teachers were examined in terms of conceptualizing noticing based on the data generated from the inventory. The results revealed a significant difference between experienced and new teachers which means experienced teachers endowed a wider cognitive realization of the noticing concept. Consequently, teaching experience could be taken as the main point of difference in the teachers. This major factor would certainly modify or activate the cognitive and contextual awareness and turn teachers' attention from the mutual transmission of theoretical knowledge to their calculated steps in teaching practices. To be more precise, teaching experience can act as a mediator between two types of knowledge, declarative and procedural, to bridge in theoretical understanding of the noticing concept to practical performance in the classroom setting.

As Borg (2003, 2009) asserts teachers' performance is undoubtedly in the effect of teachers' cognition which includes teaching experience as one of its main constructive features. Another benefit that teaching experience can create for teachers is practical awareness of the teaching context, different learning styles and more importantly, developing effective teaching styles. Thus, teachers with more experience are believed to be more critical to teaching. In other words, what teaching experience does is to make changes, modify or create related factors so that teachers' theoretical and practical repertoire will result in distinguishing beliefs and teaching methodologies. As Richards (2011) explains, experience can develop pedagogical reasoning skills, that is how teachers can make use of teaching experience to cope with unplanned situations in teaching.

According to the presented Experience Model of Noticing Perception in language teaching (Zargaran et al., 2021), experienced teachers act differently because of teaching experience effects. In this case, the cognitive repertoire of teachers induces experience as an influential factor that can modify and change decisions in teaching and even develop theories out of practices. Teachers usually use their practical experience to devise new teaching theories to make a bilateral relationship between declarative and procedural knowledge.

In this respect, Phipps and Borg (2009) give a range of interactively connected components underlining teacher cognition including learning experience, academic education, teaching experience, reacting against the new setting, changes in doing teaching and instructional practices. All of these factors are highly under the influence of bidirectional interaction of experience and changes in beliefs. It means, teaching experience is responsible for the creation and modification of teachers' beliefs and thoughts in teaching in general and, according to the present study, in using noticing to teach language form in particular.

Therefore, teaching experience can be identified as a crucial factor in determining the type and scope of teachers' cognition and how it can develop and modify the beliefs and thoughts on the noticing concept in teaching language form. In other words, experienced teachers have developed more precise cognition on understanding and actualizing the concept of noticing in teaching language form.

Teaching experience has been strictly defined as the number of teaching years (Tsui, 2005); however, it underlines many other factors which can be promoted through teaching development programmes and in-service education. Therefore, knowing this can help teacher educators to think of new methods of teacher awareness and teaching experience-enhancing programmes. It can be a great assistance to teachers, especially newly hired ones, because teacher cognition and teaching experience have a bi-lateral relation and both affect one another.

4.2. Teachers' level of metacognitive awareness in determining their noticing cognition

To answer the next two research questions, a Pearson Correlation Coefficient was conducted; the result showed a correlation between teachers' cognition and the level of metacognitive awareness. Metacognitive awareness includes both knowledge of strategies and the knowledge of how and when to use them (Griffith & Ruan, 2005), that is teachers' cognition will be activated through metacognitive awareness. To make it clear, noticing cognition is the knowledge, beliefs and thoughts on language noticing while metacognition empowers teachers to gain understanding and regulate the checking of the knowledge and understanding through making all of these cognitive elements conscious (Tei & Stewart, 1985). Based on this, metacognition is the manifestation of cognition consisting of "knowledge and regulative skills that are used to control one's cognition" (Schraw, 1998, p.116). Metacognition can improve if the knowledge of cognition is increased (Schraw, 1998); in the case of the present study, experienced teachers with broader cognitive knowledge were found to be at a higher metacognitive level. Teaching experience fosters the amount and power of cognitive knowledge hence increasing metacognitive awareness. The result of the present study is in line with Schulman (1986) and Pintrich (1990) stating that experienced teachers are able to think ahead, plan and evaluate their plans and instructions which helps them metacognitively reflect on their thinking and performance.

This finding revealed that experienced teachers are endowed with more capability of metacognitive awareness that is assumed to be the key factor to be able to take control of their teaching practice. In other words, the mature cognition on the use of noticing through gaining experience in teaching can be in congruence with teachers' ability to plan and self-regulate their teaching; besides, they can reflect on their actions which will end up in more experience. Therefore, metacognitive awareness and teachers' cognition of noticing concept are in a mutual relation.

The researcher also strived to find the predicators of noticing concept in metacognitive awareness. In other words, which metacognitive components could predict the teachers' knowledge and thoughts on noticing. The AVOVA detected the predicator as the procedural knowledge component of metacognition. Teachers' awareness of practical cognitive knowledge, teaching strategies, to implicate noticing in their teaching practice made them more academically conscious to realize the noticing concept. Procedural knowledge allows cognitive processes to emerge (Flavell, 1987) hence the knowledge of using particular tasks, strategies and the time of their application are major elements of controlling the knowledge of noticing. Knowing how to take benefits from noticing in language teaching increases the sense of teachers' automaticity (Pressley et al., 1987) and pedagogical understanding (Zohar, 2006) of the noticing concept. To put it another way, experiential knowledge of

teachers enhances the possibility of using procedural knowledge and profiling it as a part of their planning and deciding upon what and how to teach generally and to use noticing in teaching language form particularly in the resent study. According to Armour-Thomes (1986), teachers should be aware of their decisions and be prepared to modify the pre-planned instruction, in this case, teaching experience increases the metacognitive awareness through making the decision making a conscious process.

When teachers are aware of strategies they use, they can reflect on their teaching performance and can regulate the activities they use to control teaching hence increasing the utility of various strategies (Schraw, 1998). In the present study, metacognitive awareness, in terms of procedural knowledge, could impact teachers' understanding and the decision to use noticing.

This study showed that gaining experience not only did increase the quality of teachers' cognitive conceptualization of noticing, but it also did maximize the occurrence of guided noticing in their teaching practice. Accordingly, teaching experience involves the increase in the capacity of teachers' cognition hence taking more constructivist approach to deal with teaching barriers. Consequently, it is reflected back onto teachers' conscious awareness of their teaching acts.

Furthermore, the more experienced teachers are, the more their cognitive conceptualization of noticing is predictable; it also means the teachers with higher level of teaching experience show a remarkable association with a higher quality of procedural knowledge, a major element of metacognitive awareness at the stage of instruction. In other words, novice teachers' lack of metacognitive awareness resulted in less use of cognitive power to conceptualize noticing hence weaker practice in terms of noticing in teaching language forms.

The findings especially in the first phase of the study, where the conceptual features of language noticing were discovered, can enrich the teacher development programs particularly pre-service courses to make a transformative approach to enhance teachers' awareness on language noticing. The next practical implication is in the area of material design; there is a need to implicate the results of this study to increase the level of language noticing.

5. Conclusion

The major investigated point in this research study was teaching experience that came to be a substantially influencing element of teacher cognition. Teaching experience, here the number of teaching years, is at play when forming teachers' cognition and gives teachers a practical demand on how to act and reflect on their teaching practice. Interestingly, teaching experience took the cornerstone of differences in both theoretical and practical manifestations of teachers' cognition on what constitutes noticing and how it can be applied in the classroom.

It was also discovered that procedural knowledge as metacognitive awareness factor can predict the level of noticing perceived by language teachers. The main implications dragged out of the findings are first targeted to curriculum designers who can plan a more active, cognitively-oriented role for teachers. This can be possible if language teaching curriculum designers look for setting an actual context for teachers to experience cognitive perception of noticing or devise more practical syllabi to allow teachers to experience noticing in their teaching.

Another explorative point of the present study was how the theoretical and practical decisions come into conflict in the actual context of classroom. Therefore, the congruence between what and how of teaching as well as the drift between theory and practice can reach its minimum level if teachers are able to make a balance between theory and practice; it can occur by training teachers on critical thinking and practicing a reflective approach to teacher pedagogy.

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Review of Informal Contact with English: A Case Study of Italian Postgraduate Students (2020) by Maria Pavesi and Elisa Ghia. Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 176 pp., ISBN: 978-884675936-8.

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With the explosive expansion of digital content in the present media landscape where almost every aspect of our lives is intertwined with the online interconnected spaces, extramural English—otherwise known as informal learning of English—has gained remarkable popularity among the youth, most notably the digital native generation or the tech-savvy. Informal learning of English in general, and extramural English in particular, occur outside of classroom settings—be it online and in real life—through learner-initiated activities. Notable examples of such activities include, among other things, watching films and TV shows, listening to songs, or playing video games (Sundqvist, 2024). Indeed, (online) informal learning of English, as Lee and Lee (2021) and Jurkovič (2019) note, consists of self-directed activities in digital settings, often driven by personal interests and undertaken independently, without teacher supervision. Typically, users engage in these activities without the explicit intention of improving their L2 skills. On this ground, the legitimacy of researching informal contact with English is rooted in a confluence of various factors, including contemporary communication practices, the evolving nature of language learning and the proliferation of free and user-friendly online resources and technologies worldwide.

Extramural English is a young, albeit flourishing and vibrant area of enquiry within language education (Rød & Calafato, 2023) as attested by ample research, highlighting various advantages. These encompass not only psychological benefits like increased self-efficacy (Zadorozhnyy & Lee, in press) and reduced negative affective states (Uztosun & Kök, 2024) but also language and intercultural gains (Arndt & Woore, 2018; Lai et al., 2022; Rezai et al., in press).

Maria Pavesi and Elisa Ghia's book provides a much-needed study of extramural English in the Italian setting and showcases learners' out-of-class English language activities in an Italian university, offering a nuanced understanding of their informal English learning experiences outside the classroom. Our enthusiasm for reading this publication is undeniable, as it aligns well with our previous work in the Iranian context (Ameri & Ghodrati, 2019). As such, it deserves a thorough and critical review. *Informal Contact with English* is structured in seven interconnected chapters with an introduction and appendix. Indeed,

the initial chapters lay the groundwork for the study, introducing related concepts, presenting a theoretical foundation, and surveying the relevant empirical literature. Subsequent chapters detail the research method and present empirical data, providing concrete evidence to support the arguments presented earlier.

The introduction of this volume acts as a standalone section—not as a chapter. It discusses the informal learning and use of English worldwide and outlines the research questions and objectives of the study before giving a brief overview of what readers can expect from the chapters. In more detail, **Chapter 1** navigates the theoretical views, holding that English is now the dominant language of international communication in this globalized world where such factors as travel, work mobility, migration, and internet communication have a vital role. Therefore, English now interacts with national and local languages on various socio-linguistic levels, shaping the modern linguistic landscape. The authors then maintain that a shift towards informal and naturalistic exposure to English is occurring in Italy, mainly motivated by the increasing access to the language through media and technological tools, which highlights the evolving nature of multilingualism and language learning. The chapter then opens a discussion surrounding context in language learning, including linguistic co-text, physical settings, geographical areas, previous knowledge, social roles, attitudes, and online communication—all crucial factors facilitating spontaneous access to learning L2 English. This prompts the authors to argue that a dramatic change has now taken place in language acquisition, which "is now defined by the vast and diversified availability of L2 input outside institutional settings, via the media, globalisation, travelling and migrations" (p. 28). One notable consequence of this transition is the increasing dominance of informal L2 acquisition facilitated by exposure to audiovisual materials, especially English TV shows and films. This chapter ends with a critical discussion of the importance of English as a global language and the issue of linguistic inequality, where some countries have limited access to English; therefore, their people may struggle to master it.

What **Chapter 2** aims to accomplish is an overview of the current literature on informal language learning. The chapter begins by discussing the concept of language learning beyond the classroom walls, questioning the traditional view that language learning primarily occurs within a classroom and underscoring the importance of activities and interactions beyond formal education. This is followed by presenting various concepts and labels, such as extramural English and language learning beyond the classroom, which have been used to describe this approach to L2. Given that the book adopts the term informal language learning, the authors felt it necessary to clearly define the concept and make a distinction between incidental and intentional learning, where informal learning is primarily associated with incidental learning. They maintain that when learners are immersed in media, they become emotionally receptive to the language input they receive, which can facilitate incidental learning and L2 acquisition. The authors then challenge the assumption that the informality of the learning context necessarily equates to the informality of the language (i.e., spoken or colloquial) learners may acquire. In this context, the language of media can be informal, formal, or even colloquial. Following this, the focus of the chapter shifts to media input and L2 acquisition in the upcoming sections.

The authors delve into the discussion of media input, specifically subtitles, in the context of L2 acquisition. They explore how media input, such as subtitled audiovisual content, can aid in comprehension-based L2 acquisition and informal language learning. They also present the benefits of different types of subtitling and offer evidence supporting the idea that exposure to subtitled content in naturalistic settings can contribute to language learning. In informal contexts, learners access English for information, entertainment and socializing, which can trigger incidental acquisition. Several theories back up the authors' argument and discussion, including the input hypothesis by Krashen (1989), which emphasizes the importance of frequency and exposure to language in the acquisition process. The volume then cites several large-scale studies that investigated the impact of media input on language skills, including receptive and productive skills. It then turns our attention to the benefits of subtitled audiovisual texts in assisting the development of various skills in a foreign language, including listening comprehension, vocabulary and syntax. This chapter finally concludes with some arguments concerning incidental learning through exposure to subtitled content and how different types of subtitles, such as interlingual, bimodal, and reversed subtitles, can positively affect language learning in different ways.

Chapter 3 covers the research questions that guided the project and details the methods employed to answer these queries. Having elaborated on the research questions, the authors initially describe the questionnaire development and validation, where 83 questions in three sections measured students' attitudes and experiences on the types, sources, extent, reasons, and preferences for informal contact with English. This is followed by the description of the participants of the study; 305 first-year Italian students majoring in various disciplines at the University of Pavia. The data were gathered during regular lectures at the university to encourage participation and minimize bias towards motivated students. The final section of the chapter is devoted to research (de)limitations. The Italian version of the questionnaire is also available in the appendix of the book.

The study was based on two core questions and each is answered in the **Chapters 4** and **5**, and the most interesting sections in this book are included in these chapters. More specifically, **Chapter 4** presents the data analysis for the first question, which examined the extent of exposure to English among Italian university students in informal, out-of-the-classroom situations, identifying the main sources of this exposure and exploring patterns of behavior among the respondents. The overall results suggest that most students access English through web pages, songs, social media networks, YouTube, and films/TV series, respectively. For example, a majority of students (71%) watch English films and TV series, with a preference for TV

series, and do so frequently, with many watching them for at least an hour per week. YouTube is an even more popular resource, with over 75% of students using it in English, although the exposure time is generally shorter, with most using it for less than thirty minutes at each time. Another interesting result reveals that opportunities for authentic language practices and interactions in English outside of the classroom are limited for many students. In fact, most students (54%) do not have direct contact with English-speaking partners, and even among those who do, only a small percentage (13%) interact regularly. Further analysis of the data indicates that high-exposure subjects are characterized by frequent access to English input. They engage with various English resources on a weekly basis, spending at least thirty minutes per session on each source and they are mostly language specialists in English, and have had a study-abroad experience. Low-exposure subjects, on the other hand, have little or no exposure to English input, and are primarily enrolled in technology and hard science majors. They have a lower self-assessed proficiency level in English and have not had a study-abroad experience. The majority of students, however, fall into the moderate-exposure category, showing varying patterns of English exposure.

Chapter 5 offers a comprehensive analysis of participants' exposure to English through audiovisual materials, including their preference for subtitled content, viewing modes, and genres. Students' views regarding the learning benefits of audiovisual content and their exposure to other foreign languages through similar media are scrutinized in this chapter. The authors report that a majority of students watch English films and TV series. Specifically, most students watch films and TV-series in both their original and dubbed versions, but there is a slightly higher preference for watching TV-series in their original language due to various reasons, especially language learning. When it comes to subtitling, the majority of students prefer to watch content with subtitles, with a slight preference for same-language (English) subtitles. The main benefits of same-language subtitles are improved understanding, visual reinforcement of spoken language and vocabulary acquisition. Also, only a small percentage of students prefer to watch without subtitles. These respondents found subtitles distracting, too quick or lengthy, or poorly transcribed. Additionally, only 25% of students watch films and TV programs in other foreign languages, with English being the most accessed foreign language. Finally, the majority of students believe that their L2 competence has improved due to watching subtitled films and TV series in English, with most mentioned improvements in listening skills and vocabulary knowledge.

Chapter 6 proceeds to engage in a critical and insightful comparison of the findings with the behavior of students in other European countries. The comparative analysis indicates that Italian students and their peers in France and Germany share common ground in their media consumption habits. They all prioritize receptive activities, such as watching TV series and films, listening to songs, and browsing the internet. The chapter further explores the features of audiovisual language, particularly in films and TV shows, which may contribute to L2 acquisition in non-instructional settings. The authors point out that informal English input can provide opportunities for incidental language acquisition, particularly in the context of English for specific purposes. This kind of exposure, especially to specialized language use in authentic contexts, helps learners hone their language skills and multiliteracies in a more spontaneous and natural way. What is particularly interesting in the upcoming section of the chapter is the authors' argument about how the traditional distinction between English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL) has become more blurred. This is because students are shifting from being just learners to becoming actual users of the language in their everyday lives. However, given that the previous chapter's results indicated that students are consuming English content rather than producing it, signaling their productive skills are less frequently put into practice, this claim may be somewhat less convincing. Pavesi and Ghia argue that the identity of English learners is multifaceted and context-dependent. They might see themselves both as learners aiming for near-native competence and as users simply engaging in practical communication in diverse, multilingual environments.

Chapter 7 is fairly brief and concludes the volume with some final thoughts by emphasizing that the increasing informal contact with English is a complex and dynamic issue that demands thorough further investigation to understand its implications for language learning, identity, and communication.

Overall, this volume is a timely read for teachers, students, and researchers. The book mirrors the complexity of English language use and learning in informal settings. Although the book arguably serves as a solid introduction to the essential elements of informal English learning, there is room for improvement and refinement. First, the conceptual side of the book could be enhanced by conducting a more in-depth examination of the input hypothesis, multimedia learning theory, working memory theory, or dual-coding theory. Incorporating insights from these related theories presents a comprehensive understanding of the cognitive processes involved in L2 learning. Additionally, the research could benefit from analyzing individual differences in terms of motivation, grit, and self-efficacy (e.g., Azari Noughabi & Ghasemi, in press; Liu et al., 2024). The widespread adoption of advanced language models (e.g., GPT or Gemini) among youth is transforming extramural English learning activities, demanding scholarly attention (Liu & Ma, 2024; Liu et al., in press). Cross-cultural studies of extramural English learning activities within several cultures and settings can yield valuable insight into how different socio-cultural contexts influence language acquisition. These studies can unravel patterns and strategies that learners from diverse backgrounds employ to enhance their English proficiency outside formal education. As a closure for this review, we are of the view that the volume certainly remains an informative and ideal read for seasoned scholars and young researchers.

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