



L1 Use as a Component of Classroom Management in L2 Teaching: A Qualitative Study on Iranian EFL Teachers' Cognition

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore Iranian teachers' cognition of L1 use in L2 teaching as a component of classroom management, in EFL classes at private language schools in Iran. The study comprised 12 in-service teachers, and the sample size was decided based upon data saturation. The instrument employed in this research was a semi-structured interview, designed to elicit the participating teachers' cognition. The interviews were audio-recorded and were subsequently transcribed. Thematic analysis of the data demonstrated that the teachers believed the extent and frequency of L1 use should be balanced based on the objectives of L2 lessons, so that classes could be smoothly managed and learners could be sufficiently exposed to L2. Besides, the participants held that for effective classroom management, teachers should use L1 judiciously and selectively. In addition, they accentuated the significance of attention to learners' English language proficiency level, psychological factors, and educational needs in this respect. Moreover, they were aware of the potential role of L1 use with regard to classroom management strategies, such as establishing rapport, maintaining discipline, and managing time. Overall, the participants were cognizant of using L1 in L2 teaching as a classroom management component. This inquiry provides implications for supervisors of language schools, language teachers, and language teacher educators.

KEYWORDS: classroom management, language schools, teacher cognition, first language, teacher education

1. Introduction

First language (L1), also called mother tongue or home language, refers to the language that individuals have acquired as children at home (Harmer, 2012). It can be considered a resource in foreign language classes since it has the potential to be integrated into the lesson plan, and it can be used intentionally and reasonably in order to maximize L2 learning (Shin et al., 2020). Besides, using L1 in L2 classes can have various functions; e.g., teaching vocabulary (Bozorgian & Fallahpour, 2020; Navidinia et al., 2018), teaching grammar (Bozorgian & Fallahpour, 2020; Navidinia et al., 2020), checking learners' comprehension (Bozorgian & Fallahpour, 2020), encouraging learners (Bozorgian & Fallahpour, 2020), and answering learners' questions (Bozorgian & Fallahpour, 2020). These functions can aid in creating a more effective L2 learning experience for EFL learners.

From the perspective of managing a classroom, utilizing L1 is considered a component of classroom management in L2 instruction (Brown & Lee, 2015; Harmer, 2007; 2012), specifically when teacher's L1 is the same as her/his learners (Harmer, 2007). This can occur in foreign language contexts, such as the EFL context of Iran. First language use can also help in building

rapport with learners (Harmer, 2012; Mohamadi et al., 2023), and rapport development can be in service of efficient classroom management (Brown & Lee, 2015; Harmer, 2012). However, there has been a debate in language schools in the EFL setting of Iran over the utilization of L1 (Yaqubi & Pouromid, 2013). The question of whether or not to permit the utilization of L1 in language classes is discussed in Teacher Training Courses, and there are teacher trainers who discourage its use.

In this context, there are language schools that prohibit L1 use by teachers in their classes, while other language schools give more freedom to teachers in this respect (Yaqubi & Pouromid, 2013). Nonetheless, investigating the degree of success in language teaching/learning at language schools with different approaches towards L1 use was not the focus of this study. Rather, the present study aimed to investigate EFL teachers' cognition of L1 use as a component of classroom management in private language schools. Teachers' cognition of L1 use as a component of classroom management in L2 teaching is of vital importance, because their practice in this regard can be shaped by their cognition (Borg, 2006). However, very few studies focused on L1 use from teachers' perspective, particularly in Iran (Miri et al., 2017; Mohamadi et al., 2023; Rabani et al., 2014). Therefore, the aim of the present study was to find out about and shed light on the reality of L1 use for managing classes in this context from the teachers' perspective, by addressing the following research question:

What are EFL teachers' cognitions of L1 use as a component of classroom management in L2 teaching, in private language schools in Iran?

2. Literature Review

Research on teacher cognition seeks to explore and describe teachers' beliefs, thoughts, emotions, and knowledge (Borg, 2019). Teacher cognition is a key concept in teacher education (Borg, 2006). Borg (2010) offers six main themes in teacher education and recognizes teacher cognition as the first theme. In the field of language teacher education, teachers are recognized as 'active participants' of a community who are considered as both dynamic learners as well as dynamic agents of teaching, constantly developing their cognitions in their teaching contexts (Li, 2020). In fact, language teacher education considers teachers as active decision-makers whose professional practice is affected by their cognition (Borg, 2011; Soodmand Afshar et al., 2025) and affects the language learning that occurs in their classrooms (Borg, 2019). Language teachers' cognitions can influence what they do in their classrooms and what they do, in turn, affects learners' language learning (Borg & Sanchez, 2020). According to Borg (2006), "teachers have cognitions about all aspects of their work" (p. 41), and their cognitions can shape how they learn and how they teach (Borg, 2010). Buchanan and Timmis (2019) hold that teachers' cognitions can impact their classroom management ability directly and effectively. This is a pivotal aspect of their professional practice. Likewise, Rinda and Indrastana (2020) believe that successful teaching requires teachers to have strong classroom management skills, and these skills are influenced by their cognitions.

According to Macías (2018), in foreign language contexts, very few research studies have concentrated on first language use as a component of classroom management. Algazo (2023) explored teachers' cognitions concerning the functions of L1 use in EFL classes. Instruments of this qualitative study were classroom observation and interview. Participants of the study were seven Jordanian teachers whose teaching experience ranged from 6 to 23 years (five females and two males). Setting of the study was a city in the north of Jordan where Arabic was spoken as L1. Through thematic analysis of the data, six functions were identified as functions of L1 use in EFL classes in educational context of Jordan: overcoming teaching challenges (challenges regarding teachers' lack of knowledge about some topics and challenges with respect to checking learners' comprehension of lessons), improving learners' motivation (in teacher-learner interactions and in learner-learner interactions), giving instructions, explaining metalinguistic information (grammar, pronunciation, punctuation, and culture), translating (words, phrases, and proverbs), avoiding L2 vocabulary items that sound taboo in L1 (to decrease potential misunderstandings and to avoid learners skipping such words out of shyness). The participants also believed that these functions facilitated language teaching/learning process.

Rabbidge (2017) studied the factors that influenced instructors' cognition about the utilization of L1 in EFL classes in South Korea. Semi-structured interview was utilized as the instrument of the study. Participants of the study were five South Korean teachers. Based on the results of the study, the researcher expressed that teacher training programs, colleagues, learners, and teacher identity were among the factors that could affect teachers' cognition about L1 utilization in EFL classes. Al-Amir (2017) inspected teachers' cognition of L1 utilization in EFL classes in Saudi Arabia. Participants of the study were thirty-one female teachers whose native language was Arabic. A questionnaire was administered to the participants and the results indicated that most of the participants were in favor of using L1 in their classes. The findings also showed that there was no correlation between the participants' English language proficiency and their cognition of L1 use. Debreli's (2016) qualitative study focused on teachers' cognition of L1 use in EFL classes in Northern Cyprus, by using semi-structured interview as the instrument of the study. Participants of this study were fifty-four Turkish Cypriots who had at least three years of experience in teaching. Analysis of the interview data indicated that although the participants had to follow an English-only policy in their classes, they reported the utilization of L1 in their classes for reasons such as defining new words and interacting in the classroom.

Miri et al. (2017) concentrated on teachers' cognition about the utilization of L1 in Iran's EFL context. They explored the effects of a teacher education program on the participants' cognitions and practices. The teacher education program had a critical approach, and the settings of the study were language schools in Iran. Participants of the study, who were ten teachers, took part in semi-structured interview sessions and stimulated recall sessions which were held before and after the teacher education program. In addition, two sessions of each participant's classes were recorded. The data underwent qualitative analysis. Findings of the study showed that before the teacher education program, the participants had negative attitudes toward the use

of L1 in their classes and rarely used it in their classes. Nevertheless, the participants' cognitions were reshaped, they expressed more positive attitudes towards the utilization of L1 in their classes, and they also displayed a tendency to utilize L1 in their classes, after taking part in the teacher education program. Rabani et al.'s (2014) quantitative study investigated the cognitions of thirty EFL teachers. The participating teachers were administered a questionnaire. The concentration of the questionnaire was on teachers' cognitions about the utilization of L1 for teaching reading comprehension in EFL classes in Iran. Findings indicated that the participants believed in the usefulness of using L1 while teaching reading comprehension in their classes. In addition, they believed that using L1 enhances the learners' engagement and increases their comprehension of the reading passages. By reviewing previous studies, it was indicated that teachers' cognitions of L1 use as a component of classroom management in L2 teaching have received scant attention in the EFL context of Iran.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

Borg (2019) holds that, in general, a qualitative research design is the most appropriate choice for exploring teachers' cognition. It is a logical choice since according to Dörnyei (2007) and Friedman (2012), qualitative research is concerned with participants' opinions, views, and thoughts. Hence, qualitative research design was chosen to conduct the present study. It was selected on account of the purposes which were sought to be achieved by this research, because according to Dörnyei (2007), "qualitative research is concerned with subjective opinions, experiences, and feelings of individuals, and thus the explicit goal of the research is to explore the participants' views of the situation being studied" (p. 38). According to Mackey and Gass (2016), the most commonly used qualitative data collection methods include (p. 219): ethnographies, case studies, interviews, observational techniques, and diaries/journals. Among these qualitative data collection methods, interviews were utilized in the present study.

3.2. Participants

The present study involved twelve in-service teachers, all of whom were engaged in instructing adult learners of EFL in face-to-face classes at private language schools in Iran. The participating group comprised five females and seven males. Teaching experience among the participants ranged from five to ten years ($M = 6.7$ years), and their ages ranged from 24 to 39 years ($M = 28.9$ years). All the participants had completed a Teacher Training Course prior to the commencement of their teaching careers. The size of the sample was determined based upon the principle of data saturation, whereby additional data collection ceased when no new themes emerged. Language schools were selected using convenience sampling, while the participants were chosen through purposeful sampling to ensure relevance to the research objectives. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from them. Besides, for the purposes of anonymity and identification, each participant was assigned a number (e.g., T1, T2, T3, T4, etc.). Data collection involved the administration of a demographic questionnaire followed by individual interviews. Notably, the first language of the participants was congruent with that of their learners.

3.3. Instrument

This study utilized a semi-structured one-on-one face-to-face interview as its instrument to gather data from the participants about their cognition of L1 use in L2 classrooms as a component of classroom management. A total of twelve interview sessions were held, with each participant being interviewed for approximately an hour. These individual interview sessions were held in English. A flexible guide, including interview questions, was developed for the purpose of this study, based on the literature pertaining to the incorporation of L1 use in L2 instruction. The interview guide questions were inspected by a professional teacher trainer with a Ph.D. in applied linguistics and more than 20 years of experience in training EFL instructors at the university level. To refine the interview guide's clarity and applicability, it was piloted with three EFL teachers in order to find ambiguities and potential issues. This was followed by revisions informed by the piloting. While the guide supplied a framework for the interviews, the participants were actively prompted and urged to expand upon their answers and provide thorough explanations. This approach facilitated the collection of rich, in-depth qualitative data. The interview guide included the following main questions:

- In your opinion, should EFL teachers use L1 in their classes? Why/why not?
- In your opinion, what are the main reasons for using L1 by EFL teachers in their classes?
- In what specific situations or activities do you think using L1 is helpful in EFL classes?
- In your opinion, should EFL teachers let learners use L1 in their classes? Why/why not?
- What potential drawbacks or challenges do you see regarding L1 use in EFL classes?
- In your opinion, how can using or not using L1 relate to EFL classroom management?

3.4. Procedure

At the beginning of the study, the participating teachers were informed about the objective and procedure of the research, and their consent was obtained. After completing the demographic questionnaire, the participants were interviewed individually. The interviews were recorded in audio format and were subsequently transcribed.

3.5. Data Analysis

The process of thematically analyzing the data involved an iterative inductive data-driven process. It included initial reading and reflection, followed by rereading and reconsideration of the data. This was succeeded by coding, re-coding, and the identification of emergent themes, ultimately culminating in the interpretation of these themes (Creswell, 2014). Dörnyei (2007) similarly conceptualizes the process of thematic analysis as a sequence that encompasses transcription, coding, re-coding, thematic exploration, and interpretation. Throughout this process, meticulous inspection of the data was conducted to identify and interpret patterns and themes.

4. Results

Seven main themes, including various sub-themes, were identified through data analysis. These themes are substantiated and elucidated through representative excerpts derived from the interviews. The selected excerpts, drawn from the entirety of the twelve individual interviews, constitute the most illustrative examples for each theme. These excerpts were chosen from among the instances that exemplified each sub-theme and theme.

4.1. Theme 1: To Use L1 or Not to Use L1

In the context of EFL teaching in Iran, participants of the study believed that L1 use should be incorporated into English language classes as long as it is used judiciously to accomplish certain purposes, when there is a logical reason for using it. They added that L1 should be used when it could facilitate learners' understanding and learning. Moreover, they held that there has been a shift in the attitude towards L1 utilization in teaching EFL. They highlighted the importance of considering the role of L1 utilization in L2 instruction and the need for teachers to make informed decisions about when and how to incorporate L1 use into their instructional practices.

T9: I think L1 can be used and should be used. I can't find any reasons to forbid it in classes. If we use it reasonably for achieving specific goals, then of course it should be used at times.

T2: Some years ago, teachers weren't allowed to use L1 at all, you know, but nowadays I guess they're allowing teachers to use L1, to help students understand better. We should use it when it's needed, I mean when there's a logic behind using it.

T1: At first, I teach students in English and then if I see that they don't understand, I use L1 to teach them.

However, they added that teachers should avoid translating all sentences and texts that exist in ELT course-books being taught, since the focus of language classes in language schools should be on fluent language use. Further, they held that translation, which should be considered an independent skill, might hinder teaching/learning language use.

T5: Well, I agree that L1 use can be a part of our classes, but if we look at using it as translating every passage or every sentence for students, I'm totally against it, because translation is a special skill that's learned at university. But here in language school, we're supposed to teach them English language and its use. I think they won't be able to fluently use English language if we translate all the sentences and texts for them.

4.1.1. Sub-Theme 1-1: Amount of L1 Which Is Used Should Be Controlled

The participants foregrounded the significance of using target language in EFL classes as much as possible in order to prevent over-reliance on L1. They believed that the utilization of L1 in L2 instruction should be done cautiously and selectively.

T5: If my own use of L1 does not have limitations, if I speak L1 when it's not necessary, my students will also give themselves a sort of allowance to use L1 freely and easily. I experienced such a problem as a teacher. The result was terrible.

Further, they were concerned that excessive use of L1 could reduce learners' exposure to English language, and would create a dependency on L1 which could make it difficult for learners to use L2 exclusively, as learners might become overly reliant on L1 and might not put in sufficient effort to use L2, if L1 was used too frequently.

T7: I think when teacher uses L1 a lot and too much, it makes STUDENTS lazy. I mean they may get this impression that if you don't know something in English, there is another option that's a piece of cake. You can say it in L1 and it's OK. They say when teacher uses it, so I can use it too.

4.1.2. Sub-Theme 1-2: L1 Use Should Be Considered the Last Resort

The participants repeatedly stated that they essentially tried to avoid using L1, unless they had to use it due to circumstances or

flow of lessons. They held that using L1 was the last resort, and could be seen as a strategy to facilitate comprehension in order to ensure that learners understood the material. Moreover, they mentioned that teachers should strike a balance between using L1 as a tool for comprehension and promoting the use of target language. They added that EFL teachers should create an environment in which L2 is the primary language of instruction and communication. They believed that teachers should carefully consider when and how to use L1 in the classroom in order to maximize its benefits and minimize its drawbacks.

T3: *I teach first in English. I try my best to help students understand without using L1. But if I see that they don't get it, then I MUST use L1 as my final solution. If they don't get it, they become confused, and they may get everything incorrectly till the end of that lesson. I think ONLY at this point it should be used, because it's necessary to help them understand.*

4.1.3.Sub-Theme 1-3: L1 Use May Cause Misunderstandings

The participants expressed concerns about the misunderstandings that L1 use might cause in their classes. They posited that most of their learners expected to be taught mainly in the target language. The participants were also worried that using L1 may negatively impact learners' perceptions of their teacher's knowledge and ability to teach the target language. Besides, they were mindful of the potential problems that L1 use might cause in their classes, e.g., learners' complaint.

T2: *You know, students PAY for their classes in language schools. Imagine when they come to class, they see their teacher speaks L1 more than what they've expected. They may think their teacher can't speak English very well, and so they lose their trust in their teacher's knowledge. They may complain to supervisor. It unfortunately happened to one of my workmates.*

4.1.4.Sub-Theme 1-4: Learners Should Also Have Permission to Use L1 Judiciously

The participants believed that sometimes learners should be given permission to use L1, and their English language proficiency level should be considered a determining factor in this respect. They held that by allowing L1 use in lower proficiency level classes, teachers could help reduce learners' anxiety and promote learners' understanding of L2, while by limiting L1 use in higher proficiency level classes, teachers could promote learners' use of L2 and help learners progress in their language learning. Since attention to learners' English language proficiency level is crucial regarding L1 utilization in L2 teaching, it is particularized as a separate theme (Theme 2).

T12: *I let students use L1, sometimes, like at the very beginning of class. You know, I may let them use it, because I want them to feel more comfortable at some specific times like that. Teacher must monitor and control, because students should know that they are not allowed to use it whenever they like. Of course in higher levels, I don't allow my students as much as I allow them in lower levels. In higher levels, if students use L1, um, most of the times I may stop them. But in lower levels, like starter and elementary, sometimes we should allow them to use it, because there are still a lot of things they don't know how to say in English. When I was a student, we had a teacher in elementary class who was too sensitive about using L1 by students. He stopped us by harshly shouting ONLY English, and I felt so bad.*

The participants added that teachers should have strategies to restrict their learners' use of L1; for instance, by constraining the number of times they are permitted to use L1, or obliging them to ask for teacher's permission each time they needed to use it. They emphasized that these restrictions intended to encourage EFL learners to use L2 more frequently.

T8: *I believe it's OK to let students use L1 once or twice each session, but not all the time, because, well, it may turn into a habit for them. I believe their teacher should tell this to them like a RULE, their teacher should tell them OK, once or twice in each session, if you really don't have any idea about what to say or what to do. Teacher should set this with them from the first session of the class.*

T4: *I always tell my students at the beginning of each term that if you have a question that you can't ask in English, and you need to ask it in L1, first you must ask for my permission for asking it using L1. I actually teach them to raise hand and ask.*

4.2. Theme 2: Attention to Learners' English Language Proficiency Level

The participants emphasized the importance of taking into account English language proficiency level of learners when deciding about the utilization of L1 in EFL classes. They maintained that the amount of L1 use should be adjusted according to the EFL learners' proficiency level, as beginners might need more L1 support to understand the target language, while intermediate and advanced learners might benefit more from exposure to the target language.

T3: *I believe the amount of L1 use in class depends on students' level. For starters, we must use L1 more often. But for intermediate students, naturally it's not used as much.*

4.2.1.Sub-Theme 2-1: Low-Proficiency Learners

Taking into consideration the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), they held that the utilization

of L1 in lower-level EFL classes such as A1 and A2 could be beneficial for learners' understanding and learning. Besides, they believed that using L1 could prevent learners' confusion, which could be considered a common problem in lower-level classes where learners would have limited proficiency in the target language.

T6: You know, in the lower-level classes, like A1 and A2 and maybe B1, sometimes L1 should be used. It helps them to understand better and learn better. Actually, in these levels, using L1 can prevent students' confusion.

4.2.2.Sub-Theme 2-2: High-Proficiency Learners

By referring to CEFR, they suggested that at B2 level (and above), L1 use should be minimized as higher-level EFL learners would have a better understanding of English language. They added that as learners progress in their language learning to higher levels of proficiency such as upper-intermediate and advanced, they should rely less on their L1 and more on the L2.

T11: When students go to B2, in my opinion, L1 should be used rarely. Because at higher level classes, students can understand English better and more.

4.3. Theme 3: Attention to Learners' Psychological Factors

The participants were aware of the importance of psychological factors concerning L1 use in L2 teaching.

4.3.1.Sub-Theme 3-1: Judicious L1 Use May Decrease Learners' Classroom Anxiety

They asserted that learners at low English language proficiency levels, might need to use L1 when they had a question or request that they could not express in English. Moreover, they averred that preventing learners from using L1 in such cases might cause them to feel stressed and anxious. They believed that judicious L1 use could reduce learners' classroom anxiety, and this could in turn lead to more effective language learning.

T2: Students, especially at lower levels, when they have a question or a request, they really need to use L1. I mean when they don't know how to say it in English, and it's an emergency for them, for example. Um, or when they ask me a question, and they don't understand my answer. So, the only thing is using L1. If I don't let them use it at emergencies, or if they don't get what I say, they may feel stressed and anxious, although they're adults. So, it should be used when it's really needed, to help them be more relaxed.

4.3.2.Sub-Theme 3-2: Excessive L1 Use May Decrease Learners' Motivation

The participants believed that using L1 by EFL teachers, without certain considerations, such as the amount of L1 which is used and the occasions in which it is used, may decrease learners' motivation for learning English language. They added that learners might feel as if they were not being challenged sufficiently. Besides, the participants emphasized that although L1 use could help learners understand difficult concepts, excessive L1 use could lead to lack of challenge, lack of interest, and lack of motivation.

T4: After all, it is an English class and I believe using L1 by teacher, without any limitations, doesn't make it interesting for students, it may demotivate them. A teacher who usually speaks English fluently can give them motivation, because she is actually a role model, it gives them hope that success in learning English is possible, because in the past she used to be a student herself and now she can speak fluently and she can also teach English. Our students care so much about speaking English fluently, so this has an influence on them.

4.3.3.Sub-Theme 3-3: Excessive L1 Use May Decrease Learners' Autonomy

The participants believed that excessive use of L1 might reduce learners' autonomy and responsibility for their own learning. They held that learners should be given opportunities to think and search in order to become autonomous learners.

T8: Well, for example, if I immediately give them L1 translation of EVERY word, they don't have the opportunity to think about it or find its meaning themselves. It may lower their autonomy, because it's like spoon-feeding them and making things too easy for them, especially when L1 is used. I think too much use of L1 may stop them from accepting their own responsibility for learning new language. They look at L1 as a help which is always present. I prefer that they don't be dependent on L1.

4.4. Theme 4: Attention to Learners' Educational Needs and Expectations

The participants accentuated the importance of needs analysis apropos of the utilization of L1 in EFL classes. They emphasized that the use of L1 in L2 teaching should be based on learners' needs and preferences. Their approach to L1 use in L2 teaching reflected a learner-centered and needs-based approach to language teaching.

T2: It very much depends on what students want and need. For example, in one of my elementary classes, students prefer to have the new grammar lessons only in L1. I have two other elementary classes in which students prefer to

know everything first in English, and if it's not clear to them, they ask me to say it in L1. You know, I'm their teacher, and students come to class to learn. If I teach something and they don't understand, so why am I teaching?

They also highlighted the importance of recognizing the differences among learners of each class concerning their needs and expectations. This indicated a critical aspect of learner-centeredness, that is, a focus on the fact that learners should be considered individuals with unique needs, aims, and preferences.

T9: *If they need something to be said in L1, then it's my duty as their teacher to do so. Of course I must not go too far in doing that because there are different students with different needs and wants in each class. I must have a BALANCE in each class to meet the expectations of each student to a logical extent.*

4.5. Theme 5: L1 Use for Teaching Language Sub-Skills

The participants believed that among the three language sub-skills (grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation), L1 can sometimes be utilized for teaching grammar and vocabulary, if the need arises.

4.5.1.Sub-Theme 5-1: L1 Use for Teaching Grammar

The participating teachers believed that L1 use should be considered vital when learners could not understand grammar concepts in English language, regardless of their English language proficiency level.

T7: *I sometimes teach in L1; for example, when I'm teaching a grammar part.*

T10: *For teaching grammar, L1 can sometimes be used. I think in grammar, if they can't understand it in English, we MUST explain it using L1 after that, whatever the students' level.*

The participants acknowledged that some grammatical structures could be complicated and difficult for learners to comprehend, even at higher English language proficiency levels. They suggested that L1 should be used to explain these complex structures to learners.

T9: *I think some grammar points are really complicated, and students can't digest them. And not just for lower levels, even in higher levels, some structures are complicated. So, I think we have to use L1 for teaching them to students. I'm saying this because I've experienced this with my own students.*

The participants also said that they used L1 when teaching grammar to lower-level learners, as they might not have sufficient English knowledge to understand the grammatical structures in English language.

T6: *I use L1 mostly when I'm teaching grammar to my A1 or A2 students.*

4.5.2.Sub-Theme 5-2: L1 Use for Teaching Vocabulary

The participants believed that L1 should sometimes be used to teach new vocabulary items, if other means, such as visual aids, would not help learners comprehend the meaning.

T12: *When I teach vocabulary, I try to use pictures and picture dictionaries as much as I can for lower levels. For higher levels, I try to explain the meaning of new words in English. But if there's a word that no picture and no explanation can make its meaning clear, of course I say it in L1.*

T4: *First, I teach new words in English. For example, I give them some example sentences, I use photos or objects, I act out or mime, I try to elicit the meaning from students, I ask them to guess the meaning from the sentence, sometimes I ask them to check the word themselves in a dictionary. After doing these things, they most probably get the meaning. But in the end, if NONE of these things can work, then I surely tell them the L1 meaning.*

They also emphasized that for teaching vocabulary, translation unit should not be sentence or paragraph, and propounded that it should be word or phrase. In addition, they asserted that teachers should warn their learners that a word-for-word equivalence between languages might not necessarily exist.

T11: *When I teach a new word, I explain the meaning of it to my students in English, and if they don't get it, then I may say the L1 translation of that word, but it's just a word, not a sentence, not a paragraph.*

4.6. Theme 6: L1 Use for Teaching Writing

The participants also believed that among the four language skills (speaking, listening, writing, and reading), L1 can occasionally be used for teaching writing when it is required.

T9: *To teach writing, there are special things that must be taught, such as paragraph construction, passage construction, coherence, cohesion, register, and so on. Some of these things are a bit difficult for students to understand. When I was passing TTC, the trainer who was in charge of telling us how to teach language skills said that if students don't understand English explanation of the necessary things for producing a writing, then clarification by using L1 is*

a good choice for teaching writing. I've followed this recommendation, and it's been useful, even for students at higher levels.

4.7. Theme 7: L1 Use for Management Strategies

The participants were cognizant of the applications that L1 use could directly have in connection with management strategies in an EFL classroom.

4.7.1.Sub-Theme 7-1: L1 Use for Managing Rapport

The participating teachers highlighted the importance of having a positive and friendly atmosphere in English language classes. They emphasized the role of rapport-building in creating a conducive learning environment. They also believed that humor and jokes in L1 could change the mood and lead to a more friendly atmosphere by creating and developing rapport.

T8: I believe language classes should have positive and friendly atmosphere, and students should be in a good mood to learn better. When I see that the atmosphere is not positive, um, or when the atmosphere is tense, I try to change my students' mood by saying a funny sentence in L1, or every now and then I use L1 to tell a joke to make them laugh, to change their mood so that they feel more friendly, you know, to change the atmosphere, so that we can communicate better, not just as teacher and students, I mean as human beings who share the same first language, and this shared language is actually like a bond.

4.7.2.Sub-Theme 7-2: L1 Use for Managing Discipline Problems

The participants held that L1 use could be potent in controlling situations where there was a discipline problem. They suggested that using L1 could be a beneficial tool for solving discipline problems quickly and effectively.

T3: There are moments in our classes that there's a problem. For example, a student misbehaves and it leads to problems. So, we need to control the situation before it turns into a serious issue, before our supervisor finds out about it. The best thing to do is talking to that trouble-maker in L1. In my experience, saying a few simple L1 sentences can help to solve such problems. Because it's their mother tongue; so, they understand it VERY well, and it's also emotionally more effective on them.

4.7.3.Sub-Theme 7-3: L1 Use for Managing Time

The participants acknowledged that time management could be challenging when trying to explain the meaning of every new vocabulary item in English or when attempting to utilize various techniques for teaching new vocabulary items without desirable results. They suggested that, when appropriate, providing learners with L1 equivalents of new vocabulary items in a selective manner could help them manage the time more effectively.

T5: Time management may become difficult for me, if I explain the meaning of every new word in English, or if I try every and each technique for teaching words without success. Instead, sometimes giving the L1 meaning of SOME of the new words can save a lot of class time, especially for words that have abstract meaning. I remember one of our trainers in TTC told us that it's suitable to use L1 for teaching them to save time.

4.7.4.Sub-Theme 7-4: L1 Use for Giving Instruction

The participants held that sometimes lower proficiency level learners might not understand instructions given in English; therefore, teachers should use L1 to give instructions if learners could not understand English instruction.

T12: Starter students may not understand what I say in English when I give them instruction for doing tasks. I mean explanation in English does not work. Then I have to speak L1 for giving instruction, if they don't understand it in English.

4.7.5.Sub-Theme 7-5: L1 Use During Warmers/Icebreakers of Lessons

They believed that when learners might be tired, stressed, or uncomfortable at the beginning of lessons, L1 could be used during warmers/icebreakers in order to break the ice and make learners feel less stressed and more comfortable. It should be noted that due to the role of L1 use for decreasing learners' classroom anxiety throughout EFL lessons, this matter is delineated separately in a more comprehensive manner in sub-theme 3-1.

T1: Sometimes, at the beginning of a class or a lesson, um, when I see that they're tired or they look uncomfortable or stressful, at first, I speak L1, and after that, I start speaking in English. I learned this from one of my English language teachers in the past. I think students feel more comfortable with me when I break the ice like this. Actually, we can use L1 as an icebreaker.

4.7.6. Sub-Theme 7-6: L1 Use for Decreasing Teacher Talking Time (TTT)

The participants postulated that when giving extra explanations in English (e.g., when re-explaining the meaning of new vocabulary items), their TTT would increase significantly, while using L1 in such cases could decrease their TTT. They believed that sometimes appropriate L1 use could be considered a means of reducing TTT. It should be mentioned that the concept of TTT is not the same as time management which is a general term.

T7: When I give too much explanations in English, for example, to teach new words, my TTT increases so much, while saying L1 meaning of that word can help me not talk too much. I think we should use L1 if, for example, eliciting the meaning from students and using images and illustrations and other ways don't work.

5. Discussion

The results of this inquiry indicated that the participating teachers believed in the judicious use of L1 for more effective classroom management in L2 teaching, which was in line with Shin et al. (2020). The participants of the present study asserted that such judicious use of L1 could facilitate learners' understanding and learning, and this could in turn help classroom management. Results of Algazo's (2023) study were also in accordance with this finding. Besides, the participants' belief in L1 potential to be used, if necessary, for teaching language sub-skills of grammar and vocabulary was in agreement with results of Bozorgian and Fallahpour (2020) and Algazo (2023). Similarly, results of Debreli's (2016) study indicated teachers' belief in using L1 for teaching new L2 vocabulary items. Furthermore, the participating teachers in the present research held that selective use of L1 could help teachers create and develop rapport with their learners, as spotlighted by Harmer (2012) and Mohamadi et al. (2023). In addition, the participating teachers maintained that L1 could be used to give instructions, which was similar to results of Algazo's (2023) study. As for L1 use for teaching language skills, while the participants of the present study asserted that L1 could be used to teach writing, findings of Rabani et al.'s (2014) study demonstrated that L1 could be used to teach reading. Although the participants of the present study emphasized that excessive L1 use might decrease EFL learners' motivation, findings of Algazo's (2023) research showed that L1 use could increase learners' motivation.

Moreover, the findings highlighted the potential role of various factors in shaping teachers' cognition regarding L1 utilization as a classroom management component in L2 teaching within this educational setting. These factors included language learning experience, pre-service training, teaching experience, colleagues' teaching experience, and EFL learners' expectations and needs. As demonstrated in the interview excerpts, T12 referred to her past experience as an EFL learner, when talking about learners' judicious use of L1 in EFL classes (Sub-theme 1-4). Another example of the impact of learning experience has been illustrated in an excerpt from the interview with T1, when he talked about his past experience of learning English in an EFL class, in connection with using L1 as an icebreaker (Sub-theme 7-5). He mentioned that he had learned this utilization of L1 from one of his EFL teachers in the past. An example of the impact of pre-service teacher training has been displayed in an interview excerpt with T9. He explained that he had been taught in Teacher Training Course that L1 could be used to teach writing (Theme 6). Likewise, T5 referred to what she had learned in Teacher Training Course about L1 use for time management (Sub-theme 7-3). This finding, concerning the influence of pre-service teacher education, is in line with Borg (2006), Miri et al. (2017), and Rabbidge (2017).

Besides, an example of the impact of teaching experience has been indicated in an excerpt from the interview with T5 when she talked about controlling the amount of L1 in EFL classes (Sub-theme 1-1). Another example of the influence of teaching experience has been demonstrated in an excerpt from the interview with T9 when he explained about L1 use for teaching grammar (Sub-theme 5-1). Similarly, T3 referred to her language teaching experience when she elucidated how to manage discipline problems in EFL classes by using L1 (Sub-theme 7-2). By the same token, Borg (2009) highlighted the influence of teaching experience on teachers' cognition. In addition, an example of the impact of colleagues' teaching experience has been shown in an excerpt from the interview with T2 when he described the misunderstanding that might happen as a result of L1 use, by referring to one of his colleagues teaching experience (Sub-theme 1-3). Likewise, Rabbidge (2017) accentuated the impact of colleagues on teachers' cognition of L1 utilization in EFL classes. Also, instances of the effect of EFL learners' needs and expectations have been manifested in the interviews. For example, there were references, made by T2 and T9, to learners' needs and preferences (Theme 4). In a similar way, results of Rabbidge's (2017) study displayed the effects of learners on teachers' cognition.

6. Conclusion

This qualitative research was an attempt to explore Iranian teachers' cognition of L1 utilization in L2 instruction as a component of classroom management in EFL classes of language schools. The participants in the setting of this study believed that the extent and frequency of L1 use should be carefully balanced with the overall goals and objectives of L2 instruction, ensuring that learners would be continually exposed to and challenged in the target language. They also emphasized that teachers should encourage learners to think in the target language and to avoid relying on L1 as much as possible, since this might hinder their language development and fluency. Moreover, the participating teachers held that in order to effectively manage EFL classes, teachers should use L1 sparingly, strategically, and judiciously; that is, L1 use should be considered the last resort. Besides, they were cognizant that teachers should pay attention to their learners' English language proficiency level, as low-proficiency learners might need more L1 use in EFL lessons. Moreover, the participants accentuated the significance of psychological factors concerning L1 use in L2 teaching. They believed that although judicious L1 use could decrease classroom anxiety, its excessive

use could decrease learners' motivation and autonomy. Furthermore, they foregrounded attention to learners' needs, wants, expectations, and preferences regarding the utilization of L1 in EFL classes. Additionally, they knew about the possibility of L1 use for teaching language sub-skills of grammar and vocabulary. As for main language skills, they believed in the possibility of L1 use for teaching writing. They were aware of the potential impact of using L1 on various management strategies. They asserted that L1 use could aid in establishing and maintaining rapport, solving discipline problems, managing time, giving instruction for tasks, breaking ice during warmer of lessons, and reducing TTT.

In conclusion, the findings demonstrated that the participants exhibited a well-developed conceptual understanding of L1 utilization in L2 instruction as a classroom management component within the context of EFL instruction at language schools. Also, the study's findings identified various factors, including language learning experience, pre-service teacher training, teaching experience, colleagues' teaching experience, and learners' expectations and needs, might shape teachers' conceptualization of L1 use as a classroom management component. This study has implications for supervisors of language schools in EFL contexts, EFL teachers, and language teacher educators. The study's results can inform language schools' supervisors about teachers' cognition, which can help them observe and evaluate teachers' classroom practice in a new light. Further, EFL teachers can gain insight into the appropriate use of L1 for classroom management by reviewing the study's findings. In addition, the study's findings can provide teacher educators with a foundation for designing enhanced pre-service and in-service teacher training programs aimed at refining teachers' cognition. It is essential to note a warning about the current research when considering the generalizability of the results. Consistent with Dörnyei's (2007) assertion regarding qualitative research, the conclusions drawn from this study, as with many qualitative inquiries, are contextually bound and may not be generalizable to other settings. However, as Dörnyei (2007) asserts, qualitative exploration is not oriented toward attaining generalizability. Moreover, Borg (2006) maintains that inquiry into teachers' cognition is fundamentally context-dependent.



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The Impact of the Application of Dialogic Teaching Rules on the Iranian High School ESL Learners' Speaking Ability

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ABSTRACT

Developing ESL learners' speaking skills who study in Iranian senior high schools poses significant challenges due to the domination of traditional grammar-focused methods. This study investigates the effect of dialogic teaching rules, based on Alexander's (2017) model, on the speaking skills of Iranian high school ESL learners. In a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest design, 43 Iranian twelfth-grade students were assigned to an experimental group (n=22) taught with dialogic rules and a control group (n=21) taught conventionally using Vision 2 and Vision 3 materials. Speaking fluency, accuracy, cohesion/coherence, and interactive skills were assessed (scored out of 25). Repeated measures ANOVA showed significant improvement in the experimental group's speaking performance as a whole ($F(1, 41) = 14.50, p < .001$) compared to the control group, with significant improvements in fluency and interactive skills. According to Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory, Communicative Language Teaching, Constructivism, and Bakhtin's Dialogism, these findings demonstrate that dialogic teaching enhances communicative competence. These results suggest that implementing dialogic teaching strategies can transform ESL classrooms by improving dynamic, learner-centered contexts in which oral interaction is prioritized.

KEYWORDS: dialogic teaching, speaking ability, ESL learners, Iranian high school, communicative competence, Alexander's model

1. Introduction

Regarded as one of the main key components of language learning, speaking is an ability that needs to be developed for ESL/EFL learners to create effective communication in various situations and contexts. Lazarton (2001) believes that oral communication is equal to knowing the whole language since speaking is the fundamental means of communication. Richards (2008) notes that mastering speaking skills is a priority for many learners, often serving as a measure of their confidence in language use. Speaking skills have always been considered a difficult skill out of the four major skills (Citra & Zaninil, 2021). They state that the importance of learning speaking skills has been the main concern of many researchers.

Despite its importance in language learning, speaking has been a challenging skill for learners to acquire. Different speaking characteristics, such as stress, rhythm, intonation, colloquial language, and reduced forms, as Brown (2001) states, could foster the difficulty of acquiring such a skill. Moreover, detrimental emotions like anxiety and fear experienced by learners during oral talks can also deteriorate the situation (Ansari, 2012). Apart from that, Yaqubi and Rashidi (2019) argue that speaking ability depends not only on linguistic elements like grammar and vocabulary but also on affective and pragmatic factors. Accuracy and fluency are other matters that may cause difficulty in speaking. As Thornbury (2007) states, since speaking occurs spontaneously in reality, an overlap occurs between planning and production. If planning is emphasized, production may be negatively affected, resulting in a loss of fluency. On the other hand, if a learner puts his/her focus on production, accuracy might suffer. Therefore, there needs to be a balance and a degree of automaticity between accuracy and fluency. Other factors that make

speaking skills a demanding one are what Shumin (1997) mentions as socially appropriate. He highlights the complexity of speaking in a second language, emphasizing that speaking skill is not just about linguistic accuracy, but also it is about using language that is socially appropriate. Thornbury (2007) also referred to these factors and further stated that monitoring oral communications in a second language requires sufficient knowledge of register, discourse, culture, genre, and speech acts.

In educational settings, teachers should apply activities and bear some features in mind that result in successful speaking skill acquisition. Derakhshan (2015) stated that for a successful practice in speaking, teachers should pay attention to learners' requirements and interests. They should apply activities in the classroom that stimulate learners to share their thoughts spontaneously and with confidence. Another feature of successful speaking practice is what Brown (2001) mentioned as even participation. He further adds that in a classroom context, all learners should get an equal chance to speak and explain themselves. Teachers should distribute contributions evenly, encourage less active learners to engage more in the activities, and ensure that all learners are involved equally.

Dialogic teaching, as conceptualized by Alexander (2017), offers a promising approach by promoting classroom talk to enhance engagement and learning. It is defined as any use of talk that comprises types of discussion to promote learners' learning and engagement processes (Resnick, 2018). Dialogic teaching, according to Alexander (2004), requires teachers to have a set of teaching methods and designs for fostering interaction and engaging in speaking. It also requires them to use various types of organizing interaction, such as teacher-classroom, learner-oriented small groups, and pair work. This concept, unlike traditional methods, emphasizes collective, reciprocal, and supportive interactions that encourage learners to state their ideas in collaboration with their peers (Alexander, 2017). Despite dialogic teaching's potential, it has remained an underexplored field in Iranian high-school contexts, where, according to Ghorbani (2011), oral skills are often neglected.

This study aims to address this research gap by studying the effects of dialogic teaching rules, derived from Alexander's (2017) model, on Iranian ESL senior high-school students. By examining various aspects of speaking skills such as fluency, accuracy, cohesion/coherence, and interactive skills, this study aims to find empirical evidence for improving communicative competence in the Iranian high-school context. There have been studies investigating the role of dialogic teaching on learners' participation and learning. However, there has been a lack of investigation in the context of Iranian high schools where communication in the target language is a matter of triviality (Ghorbani, 2011).

The use of a second language in the form of speaking can create anxiety and inhibition. According to Abdul Rahman and Maarof (2018), the feeling of embarrassment, fear, and anxiety can negatively affect learners' ability and intention to communicate well in pair and group work. This challenge is even worse in school contexts. There are different reasons why students are not able to communicate well in the English language after many years of education in school and college. For instance, Clifford (1987) states that teacher-student relations and emphasis on the structure of the second language are two main reasons that prohibit learners from communication practice. This study explores dialogic teaching as a potential solution to these issues. It aims to enhance speaking skills through the principles of dialogic teaching.

1.1. Objective and Significance of the Study

The primary objectives of the present study concentrate on understanding the impact of dialogic teaching rules on the speaking abilities of Iranian high-school students. It aims to find out how their speaking fluency, speaking accuracy, cohesion, coherence, and interactive skills change once they are exposed to dialogic teaching rules.

This study offers significant educational value for several reasons. First, since speaking skills are crucial for language learners, the present study aims to identify the effectiveness of teaching speaking. Second, since improving Iranian high-school students' speaking skills is a matter of concern, the findings of this study will provide valuable insights for teachers and educators to choose good strategies to foster communication among students. Third, the outcomes of this study can help educational policymakers incorporate good interactive and communicative teaching approaches into their educational curriculum. Finally, this study will enrich the body of literature about dialogism and fill the gap by providing empirical evidence on the effects of dialogic teaching rules on speaking abilities.

The current study will seek to find answers to the following questions:

(1) Is there a significant difference between learners who were taught considering dialogic teaching rules and learners who will be taught conventionally using Vision 3 teacher's book?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Oral Communication in the Iranian Context

Undoubtedly, effective oral communication in the target language is of great significance and the means of generating such communication is through speaking. Liubashenko and Kornieva (2019) define speaking as an ability upon which learners will be judged in various real-life contexts. Despite its significance, speaking skills are what the educational system in Iran fails to enable students with effective communication in the English language is the missing link in this system. The Iranian educational system often fails to equip students with proficient English-speaking skills, prioritizing grammar and translation instead (Dahmardeh, 2009; Ghorbani, 2011).

Studies have investigated the effects of various speaking tasks on Iranian learners' oral skills. Hajhosseiny (2012) conducted a research study investigating the effects of interaction strategies on the speaking skills of Iranian intermediate English learners. They concluded that the use of interaction strategies gives learners a great deal of awareness towards their development of speaking skills, which helps them perceive the spoken language and utilize it properly. In another study, Mohammadi and Ahmadi (2021) found that high school learners prefer to do tasks that foster their aural understanding and oral production in the classroom. Yaqubi and Rashidi (2019) conducted a research study about the effects of role-play techniques on learners' speaking development. He concluded that the use of role-play techniques derived from Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) positively affects learners' oral ability. All these studies signify how interested ESL learners are in the use of language communicatively. Soureshjani & Riahipour (2012) conducted a study that included 215 ESL learners and instructors in the Iranian school context. The research findings demonstrated that both learners and instructors had different reasons why speaking skills don't develop in the school context. Learners believed that the lack of appropriate equipment, classroom facilities, and the instruction of English instructors were among the reasons. On the other hand, instructors believed that the classroom atmosphere and the amount of time dedicated to speaking practices were among the factors negatively affecting speaking skills.

Further advancing the related studies, Abbasi (2025) examined how three types of task manipulation (oral reproduction, role-play, and group discussion) affect the fluency and accuracy of Iranian EFL learners' speech. Sixty learners were divided into three groups, each receiving one type of task over ten sessions. Results showed all tasks improved performance, but the group discussion group achieved the highest gains in fluency and accuracy. The findings support using targeted tasks in EFL contexts to enhance speaking skills. Dabiri and Pourhosein Gilakjani (2019) investigated the impact of pre-speaking activities on the oral performance of Iranian intermediate EFL learners. In their quasi-experimental design, 100 female learners aged 15–20 were divided into experimental and control groups. Post-test results indicated that the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group in speaking assessments, suggesting that pre-speaking activities effectively enhance learners' oral performance. The study concluded that incorporating pre-speaking tasks fosters learner engagement, builds confidence, and improves speaking skills in EFL contexts.

The problem of being able to communicate in the English language remains strong among Iranian ESL learners even after years of study in school and college. Soghady (2022) state that one reason that students are unable to communicate well is because of formal teaching, where grammar and translation are of utmost importance. A study by Afshar and Asakereh (2016) examined the speaking skill challenges faced by Iranian EFL freshmen and seniors. The research involved 238 students (138 freshmen and 100 seniors) and 30 instructors across four Iranian universities. Findings indicated that difficulties, such as fear of making mistakes, limited opportunities for speaking practice, and insufficient teaching facilities, were among the challenges students faced. Notably, there were no significant differences between freshmen and seniors in their perceptions of these challenges, suggesting that speaking skill issues persist throughout their academic journey. Therefore, there should be various types of practices and activities that cause positive changes in the communicative competence of Iranian ESL learners.

2.2. The Concept of Dialogic Teaching

Classroom discourse can be monologic (teacher-controlled) or dialogic (student-responsive). This specific discourse is often divided into two main types: 'monologic' and 'dialogic'. In the monologic type, the discourse pattern is often shaped, controlled, and performed by the teacher. On the other hand, the dialogic discourse pattern, as Bakhtin (1981) explains, is an instruction that gives students opportunities to respond, strengthen, and promote their various voices, values, and insights. One of the leading authors of dialogic teaching is Robin Alexander. He defines dialogic teaching as figuring out what learners have in mind, engaging with their ideas, and helping them to speak through creative tasks and activities (2008, p.62).

Dialogic teaching is distinct from traditional interactive regulations of teaching. It should not be perceived as casual conversations that occur in classrooms; rather, it refers to an interactive type of teaching throughout the whole curriculum. It is rooted in psychological and neurological aspects of learners' cognition, and it advocates discussion and dialogue (Alexander, 2017). According to Alexander (2017), discussion and dialogue cause significant effects on children's cognitive potential. They are forms of talk that stimulate children's thinking (Alexander, 2008). He further explains that discussion and dialogue give learners huge agency in structuring their knowledge and perception. They allow learners to progress in their thoughts and ideas about a specific topic.

Alexander (2017), brought up five basic principles of dialogic teaching as follows:

1. Collective: tasks are learned by teachers and learners together in groups rather than in isolation.
2. Reciprocal: Ideas, viewpoints, and perspectives are shared among teachers and learners, and they listen to each other.
3. Supportive: learners feel free to articulate their ideas, without any fear of shyness or embarrassment over incorrect responses. They help each other reach common ground.
4. Cumulative: teachers and learners create coherent lines of reflection and inquiry by building on their ideas.
5. Purposeful: dialogic teaching is facilitated with particular educational goals.

Alexander believed that the collaborative culture of the learners is rooted in the first three principles, which enhance the use of talk in learning. The last two principles, on the other hand, focus on the content of the talk.

2.3. Other Concepts of Dialogic Teaching

There have been a number of research studies conducted by contemporary authors focusing on dialogic teaching. In this section, some of these studies are discussed briefly.

2.3.1. Freire's Dialogic Teaching

Paulo Freire was the first author who coin the term dialogic teaching. He regarded dialogue as a way of learning and knowing. He believed that dialogue is a means of social transformation between teacher and learner, and it would raise awareness about societal relations on a large scale (Shor & Freire, 1987, p.13).

In comparison with Alexander's concept of dialogic teaching (2017), Freire's views have some common ground with Alexander's. Considering dialogue as an epistemological position (Freire & Macedo, 1995), it holds similarities with Alexander's principles of collective, reciprocal, and supportive. This epistemic position is attainable when teacher-students discuss the task together (collective principle), and share their ideas (reciprocal principle), without being afraid of making mistakes (supportive principle).

2.3.2. Dialogically Organized Instruction by Nystrand (1997)

Nystrand (1997) claimed that how language is treated within the context of teaching is more important than the form of utterance in language learning. That is, the teachers' roles in shaping a dialogic environment in the classroom is more essential. Therefore, he proposed the term 'dialogically organized instruction'. According to this concept, the questions and responses that teachers provide for their students demonstrate the roles that teachers play and the way they communicate with students. Through this, students' utterances get meaning, and a social organization is created between teachers and learners, which helps learners shape their learning and understanding.

To form a good learning and understanding environment, Nystrand (1997) proposes that the questions provided by teachers should have some specific features. These are authenticity, uptake, and the ability to promote high-level thinking. These questions will help learners gain more control over the construction of the responses they are going to provide, and ensure that learners' thinking is pivotal.

2.4. Recent Empirical Research Studies

Many research studies have investigated the effect of dialogic teaching on various settings, skills, and learners. Among those, several studies reflect that dialogic teaching prompts critical thinking (Hajhosseiny, 2012; Niknezhad et al., 2020). According to Sedlacek and Sedova (2017), dialogic teaching enhances learners' talk and reasoning. Liubashenko and Kornieva (2019), state that dialogic teaching boosts students' communicative competence, and Davies (2017) showed that dialogic teaching improves questioning abilities among learners. Davies (2017) demonstrated that the quality of questions posed by students in small-group dialogic discussions improves. Their analysis of audio and video recordings, along with interviews, revealed that teachers viewed these dialogues as useful for enhancing students' deeper thinking. Ramasamy and Zainal (2023) demonstrated that dialogic teaching in Malaysian secondary ESL classrooms increased student engagement and communicative confidence. Similarly, Sedlacek and Sedova (2017) examined the impact of a teacher development program on dialogic teaching practices. Eight teachers were video recorded before and after the program to observe changes in classroom discourse. The findings revealed that teachers' use of dialogic methods increased students' participation and enhanced the quality of student discussions in terms of reasoning, dialogue, and critical thinking.

Not only has dialogic teaching been shown as a successful approach to enhancing speaking ability, but it has also shown promising results in learners' writing abilities in various contexts. In a study conducted by Barjasteh and Niknezhad (2020), they found that since dialogic teaching has a positive impact on students' intellectual abilities, their writing turned to a more critical and creative type rather than descriptive and personal.

Researchers have shown interest in learners' productive skills and their receptive skills, known as listening and reading. Dialogic teaching, particularly, has been shown to enhance listening skills through interactive meaning-making (Huang, 2020; Ozcelik et al., 2020), listening comprehension and metacognitive awareness (Bozorgian & Alamdari, 2018), and cooperative production in conversations (Edwards-Groves & Davidson, 2020). Despite the common understanding of listening as a passive activity, Edwards-Groves and Davidson (2020) explored active listening within a dialogic context. Using a detailed Conversation Analysis (CA) approach, Kemmis et al. (2014) examined data from Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR) projects that involved 12 teachers who applied dialogic teaching strategies. They transcribed and analyzed video recordings to identify interactional features in whole-class discussions where students engaged in active listening. The study found that various responsive practices in dialogic discussions strengthened active listening.

The positive effects observed with listening can also be extended to reading skills. However, existing studies on the influence of dialogic teaching on students' reading skill development mainly focus on young children. A study by Suryati and Saukah (2017) examined the impact of dialogic reading strategies on the reading comprehension skills of forty primary school EFL students in Indonesia. The results showed that dialogic teaching created a more dynamic and engaging learning process,

which enhanced students' reading comprehension abilities. Therefore, dialogic reading strategies were a promising and effective approach for improving reading comprehension skills.

2.5. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory supports dialogic teaching by emphasizing social interaction in the zone of proximal development. According to Vygotsky, within the zone of proximal development, students can learn better using social communication with more knowledgeable people. Dialogic teaching is in line with this theory in that it creates an environment where students engage in meaningful dialogue, receive scaffolding from teachers and peers to perform speaking tasks they might not perform independently. This is where students' abilities in interactive language use are improved.

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach also supports the idea of using interaction in language learning. CLT emphasizes the use of language in real-life communicative contexts. Rote learning is not of priority in this context. The CLT principles can also be seen in Dialogic teaching rules. Dialogic rules create an environment where students use language to express their thoughts and emotions and discuss them in classes. When the language is used practically in the classes, students' participation in dynamic language use is strengthened, and they develop their interactive skills.

The Constructivist Theory is the third theory that the dialogic teaching rules take advantage of. According to this theory, knowledge construction is improved when interaction and dialogue are actively followed in the class. Students are regarded as active participants in their learning, and they construct knowledge through experiences and interactions. These principles can also be seen in dialogism, where active participation is fostered. This active involvement in the learning process enhances speaking skills and builds up critical thinking and a deep understanding of the language.

Finally, Bakhtin's (1981) Theory of Dialogism is a theory that prioritizes dialogue for the enhancement of speaking ability. This theory states that dialogue is constructed through language and meaning. Dialogic teaching is in line with this theory in that it encourages several perspectives and collaborative meaning-making. In a dialogic context, students experience new insights. Expressing thoughts will lead to in-depth understanding and better use of language.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The participants were 43 twelfth-grade high school students (aged 17-18) in Ardabil, Iran, enrolled in summer extracurricular English classes from June to August 2024. They were assigned to an experimental group ($n=22$; 12 females, 10 males) and a control group ($n=21$; 11 females, 10 males) based on prior Vision 2 proficiency scores (Vision 2 final exam, scored converted into a 100-point scale for analysis), ensuring homogeneity (experimental group: $M = 82.5$, $SD = 4.2$; control group: $M = 81.9$, $SD = 4.5$; $t(41) = 0.47$, $p = .64$). The experimental group had 22 students (12 females, 10 male), and the control group had 21 (11 females, 10 male). A power analysis ($\alpha = .05$, power = .80, effect size = .50) indicated a minimum sample of 34, suggesting the study was adequately powered despite its modest sample size.

3.2. Design of the Study

Both experimental and control groups took part in a language-learning program that took three months. Once the program had been completed, the participants' ability to pronounce words correctly was tested, and their scores were used as the research data. The participants of this study had already been divided into two homogeneous classes before conducting the research based on their overall performance. This means that the researcher would have had no control over the selection of students in each class. Therefore, the most appropriate design for this study would be quasi-experimental research. A pretest-posttest design was implemented to assess the groups' performance. The intervention sessions took three months, with both groups having two 90-minute classes twice a week.

3.3. Procedure

In this cross-sectional study that took 12 weeks during the summer of 2024, the participants received educational content from their eleventh and twelfth-grade English courses known as Vision 2 and Vision 3. In week 1, both groups completed a speaking pretest to establish baseline performance. The students' scores were calculated out of 25. This score is the combination of four speaking sub-divisions: fluency (speed, pausing; 7 points), accuracy (grammar, pronunciation; 7 points), cohesion/coherence (linking ideas; 6 points), and interactive skills (turn-taking, responsiveness; 5 points). Inter-rater reliability was high (Cohen's $\kappa = .87$) due to the evaluation of two raters. The control group followed conventional Vision 3 activities (e.g., reading aloud, grammar exercises, and teacher-centered Questions and answers), while the experimental group engaged in dialogic tasks based on Alexander's (2017) five principles: collective, reciprocal, supportive, cumulative, and purposeful. These tasks included group discussions in which students debated topics like cultural events to make sure reciprocal idea-sharing occurred. Pair work and Whole-class dialogues were other tasks in which students simulated real-life scenarios such as job interviews and discussed ideas to build cumulative understanding. The teacher in the experimental group implemented dialogic teaching through activities such

as open-ended questioning, creating a safe environment for free expression, and collaborative listening. Each session began with activities like a warm-up to reduce anxiety among students. 60 minutes of each session were dedicated to dialogic tasks.

In the final week, both groups completed a posttest speaking exam, the questions of which were identical to the pretest. Data were collected after each exam and analyzed to compare the differences between the groups' performance.

3.4. Instruments

The data required for analysis to provide an answer to the research question were acquired from speaking exams that both experimental and control groups' participants took. First, both groups went through a pre-test to examine their speaking ability before conducting the treatment. In the next step, the control group received traditional speaking tasks and methods, while the experimental group was taught the speaking ability using the dialogic teaching rules. Finally, the post-test was carried out to assess both groups' progress.

As stated earlier, the dialogic teaching rules to which the experimental group will be exposed will be derived from Alexander's (2017) five basic principles of dialogic teaching. These rules are as follows:

- (1) Teachers should contribute to task completion along with learners. This will make students not feel alone. (Collective)
- (2) Teachers and learners should share their ideas and listen carefully to each other. (Reciprocity)
- (3) Teachers should create an atmosphere inside their classroom that gives room to students to express their ideas freely without fear of shame. They should help students reach a common understanding. (Supportive)
- (4) Teachers should build a link between learners' ideas and make a coherent chain of their thoughts. (Purposeful)

3.5. Data Analysis

To analyze the data for providing an answer to the research question, first, the descriptive statistics were calculated. once the normality and the homogeneity of the two groups were ensured, a repeated measures ANOVA would be used to compare the means of the two groups. Finally, a post-hoc analysis was conducted on the experimental group's scores for each sub-skill to identify improvements in each of them.

4. Results

As stated above, both experimental and control groups took a pre-test and a post-test to determine the significance of the differences after they underwent treatments. The control group received a traditional method of teaching speaking treatment. On the other hand, the experimental group received a teaching treatment based on the dialogic teaching rules. Table 1 represents the descriptive statistics of the scores gained from both groups

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Mean Scores Within the Control Group and the Experimental Group Before and After the Treatment

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
Pretest-control	21	15.00	24.00	19.0000	.55205	2.52982
Posttest-control	21	13.00	25.00	19.2857	.71761	3.28851
Pretest-experimental	22	15.00	25.00	19.3636	.69177	3.24471
Posttest-experimental	22	19.00	25.00	22.5000	.45939	2.15473

Normality (Shapiro-Wilk, $p > .05$) and homogeneity of variance (Levene's test, $p > .05$) were confirmed. A repeated measures ANOVA assessed time (pre vs. post) and group (experimental vs. control) effects.

In this study, a repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to examine the differences and their significance between mean scores. Tables 2 and 3 represent the differences between the experimental and control groups' outcomes over time.

Table 2. Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	34509.887	1	34509.887	2622.923	.000	.985
Groups	68.771	1	68.771	5.227	.057	.114
Error	539.438	41	13.157			

Table 3. Tests of Within-Subjects Effects

	Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
time	Sphericity Assumed	62.911	1	62.911	20.896	.000	.338
	Greenhouse-Geisser	62.911	1.000	62.911	20.896	.000	.338
	Huynh-Feldt	62.911	1.000	62.911	20.896	.000	.338
	Lower-bound	62.911	1.000	62.911	20.896	.000	.338
time * Groups	Sphericity Assumed	43.655	1	43.655	14.500	.000	.261
	Greenhouse-Geisser	43.655	1.000	43.655	14.500	.000	.261
	Huynh-Feldt	43.655	1.000	43.655	14.500	.000	.261
	Lower-bound	43.655	1.000	43.655	14.500	.000	.261
Error(time)	Sphericity Assumed	123.438	41	3.011			
	Greenhouse-Geisser	123.438	41.000	3.011			
	Huynh-Feldt	123.438	41.000	3.011			
	Lower-bound	123.438	41.000	3.011			

According to Table 2, there was no significant main effect of groups, $F(1, 41) = 5.23$, $p = .057$, meaning no overall difference existed between groups. According to Table 3, there was a significant main effect of time, $F(1, 41) = 20.90$, $p < .001$, indicating overall speaking ability improved from pre- to post-test. The significant interaction effect (time * groups), $F(1, 41) = 14.50$, $p < .001$, showed the experimental group improved more than the control group.

Paired t-tests were conducted as post-hoc analysis on the experimental group's scores for each sub-skill. Table 4 represents the results as follows.

Table 4. Paired Sample T-Test

Sub-Skill	Pre-Test Mean (SD)	Post-Test Mean (SD)	t(21)	p	Cohen's d
Fluency (7 points)	5.10 (0.90)	6.20 (0.70)	4.12	<.001	0.88
Accuracy (7 points)	5.30 (0.85)	5.70 (0.80)	1.92	.07	0.41
Cohesion/Coherence (6 points)	4.60 (0.75)	5.00 (0.65)	2.01	.06	0.43
Interactive Skills (5 points)	4.00 (0.70)	4.60 (0.60)	3.89	.001	0.76

The experimental group showed significant gains in fluency ($p < .001$) and interactive skills ($p = .001$), with large effect sizes ($d = 0.88$ and 0.76 , respectively). Improvements in accuracy ($p = .07$) and cohesion/coherence ($p = .06$) were not significant, though small-to-medium effect sizes ($d = 0.41$ and 0.43) suggest modest gains.

5. Discussion

This study aimed to examine the impact of dialogic teaching rules, based on Alexander's (2017) model, on the speaking abilities of Iranian senior high-school ESL learners. These abilities focused on fluency, accuracy, cohesion, coherence, and interactive skills. This study was conducted in a context where traditional teaching styles were dominant, seeking responses to address the gap in communicative competence among Iranian senior high-school students through dialogic teaching as an alternative to traditional teaching methods. The findings of the present study provide evidence of dialogic teaching efficacy. However, it highlights challenges that require critical insights for ESL instruction and future research.

The results of the study indicate a positive impact of dialogic teaching rules on students' speaking ability, particularly in fluency ($p < .001$, $d = 0.88$) and interactive skills ($p = .001$, $d = 0.76$). The experimental group's post-test mean (22.50) was higher than the control group's (19.29) with significant fluency ($p < .001$) and interactive capacity ($p = .001$) improvements according to Table 4. These findings align with Alexander's (2008) claim that dialogic teaching enhances exploratory and expressive speech through collective and reciprocal interactions. In this study, since open-ended questioning and a non-judgmental atmosphere, which are referred to in Alexander's (2017) supportive principle, were emphasized, the speaking anxiety was reduced, which enabled students to prioritize fluency and interaction. The Sociocultural Theory proposed by Vygotsky (1978) provides the theoretical insight for these results, as dialogic tasks created a zone of proximal development where teacher and peer scaffolding gave room to students to express their ideas freely and confidently. Similarly, the concept of dialogism proposed by Bakhtin (1981) emphasizes the importance of collaborative meaning-making, which enables students to engage in group discussions dynamically. Recent studies that corroborate with the findings of the current study include Chow (2021), who found that dialogic teaching improved oral proficiency among young Chinese ESL learners, while Ramasamy and Zainal (2023) reported enhanced engagement in Malaysian ESL classrooms. Abbasi (2025) further examined how three types of task manipulation (oral reproduction, role-play, and group discussion) affect the fluency and accuracy of Iranian EFL learners' speech. The findings of Sedlacek and Sedova's (2017) study also revealed that teachers' use of dialogic methods increased students'

attendance and enhanced the quality of student discussions in terms of reasoning, dialogue, and critical thinking.

Despite the positive changes mentioned above, non-significant improvements in cohesion/coherence ($p = .06$, $d = 0.43$) and accuracy ($p = .07$, $d = 0.41$) revealed some limitations. The three-month intervention may have been too short to develop these complex linguistic skills, which require extensive practice and explicit instruction (Mercer & Howe, 2012). Thornbury (2007) notes that spontaneous dialogue often prioritizes fluency over precision, a trade-off evident in this study's design. Furthermore, Richards (2008) states that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which underpins dialogic teaching, prioritizes meaning over form, which potentially gives less importance to accuracy unless it is explicitly addressed. A research study conducted by Mohammadi and Ahmadi (2021) suggests that targeted feedback is a prerequisite for dialogic teaching to address grammatical accuracy, which did not make a significant difference in this study. Such results may also have cultural reasons. Iranian classroom culture, which prefers teacher-centered teaching, may have restricted students' room for fully embracing dialogic activities with open-ended co-working (Yaqubi & Rashidi, 2019). Additionally, affective factors like fear of mistakes, as highlighted by Soghady (2022), may have defeated accuracy development even if a favorable environment due to dialogic teaching was established.

On the contrary, Critics of dialogic teaching raise noticeable concerns about the implementation of dialogic teaching. Meyer (2010) states that in a dialogic environment, opportunities to speak are not equally shared among students, which results in marginalization of quieter peers. Some may dominate the conversations; others may be given less time to practice speaking. This problem was mitigated in the study conducted by Sedlacek and Sedova (2017) through structured tasks such as pair work and teacher intervention. However, Smith et al. (2006) found that dialogic teaching may not be effective in classrooms that are too crowded. This challenge can be seen in many Iranian schools where teachers struggle to provide an equitable opportunity for learners to participate. Haez and Delfani (2022) suggest that asynchronous Dynamic Assessment could address this issue as it may offer more effective support for developing speaking skills in over-crowded EFL classes. Bozorgian and Alamdari (2021) also propose the implementation of audio-recorded dialogic tasks to allow the teachers to review and provide feedback.

The findings of this study emphasize the role of dialogic teaching to transform ESL instruction by creating environments that are learner-friendly and dynamic. Future research is required to explore approaches combining dialogic tasks with explicit grammar instruction to improve accuracy and cohesion, as suggested by Bozorgian and Alamdari (2021).

6. Conclusion

This study identifies the learning strengths of dialogic teaching guidelines to enhance Iranian high school ESL students' speaking skills. Facilitating fluency and interactive competence, dialogic teaching promotes successful oral interaction, satisfying communicative competence goals. Even in small-sized classrooms, it offers a valuable alternative to typical practices. The findings of this study offer significant pedagogical implications for Iranian ESL teachers who wish to apply dialogic teaching to enhance students' speaking skills. It demonstrates Alexander's (2017) whole-class discussion and idea exchange principles. It creates a dynamic, interactive classroom atmosphere where students gain confidence in spontaneous communication through tasks like formal debates or peer storytelling in a supportive setting that reframes errors as learning opportunities. To address areas that made less progress, such as precision and cohesion/coherence, teachers can integrate brief, targeted feedback sessions to deal with grammatical or structural weaknesses without compromising interaction, prioritizing fluency and engagement over strict correctness to align with communicative objectives. This makes this approach viable for high school contexts despite time constraints or traditional grammar-oriented curricula. Furthermore, overcoming cultural barriers is critical, requiring teachers to foster a classroom culture that normalizes mistakes as part of learning, consistent with Bakhtin's (1981) dialogism emphasizing collective meaning-making, through confidence-building warm-up activities like storytelling or low-stakes discussions and explicit explanations of dialogic interaction benefits to shift students' attitudes toward oral tasks. Beyond the classroom, these findings advocate for curriculum and policy reforms, which urge policymakers to integrate dialogic teaching into Iran's national ESL curriculum to prioritize communicative competence over rote learning, adopting hybrid approaches that combine dialogic tasks with explicit grammar instruction, as suggested by Bozorgian and Alamdari (2021), to address all speaking sub-skills, while leveraging technology, such as online platforms explored by Haez and Delfani (2022), to extend dialogic interaction beyond class time for asynchronous practice and feedback. This would reinforce the need for a classroom culture that embraces errors as learning opportunities to transform language education. Practical strategies for teachers include incorporating systematic group discussions, role-play, and reflective feedback sessions to ensure student engagement and offset linguistic deficits. For example, teachers can include initiations like "Describe a cultural event" to start group discussion or assign students for role-play simulating actual situations.

Limitations are the small sample size ($N=43$), quasi-experimental nature, and short intervention duration, which might affect generalizability. Future studies need to investigate larger, randomized samples, longer interventions, and hybrid designs that combine dialogic and explicit instruction to maximize all speaking sub-skills.

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The Mediating Role of Teacher-Student Relationship in the Association between Emotion Regulation and Psychological Well-Being among Iranian EFL Teachers

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ABSTRACT

Teaching is a complex profession demanding strong emotional regulation and interpersonal relationship skills, which are critical to teachers' psychological well-being (PWB). Based on positive psychology as well as Compassion-Based Language Education (CBLE), this research intends to examine the mediational role of teacher-student relationship (TSR) in the relationship between emotion regulation (ER) and psychological well-being of Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers. Adopting SEM and with the help of established scales, the study searches for fresh insights about these core psychological processes to reveal the intricate associations between emotional regulation, relationships, and the psychological outcomes at work in the context of EFL instruction. A total of 243 Iranian EFL teachers were also randomly chosen based on the stratified random sampling technique with different professional experiences (that is, with different academic degrees and expertise). Broad experience and qualifications make our sample representative of Iranian EFL teachers and enhance the generalization of our findings. Stratification also helped in the coverage of aspects of age, education, and experience. Inter-variable correlations were strong, and TSR was a significant mediating variable, as indicated by the path coefficients. The direct effect of ER on TSR, indirect effect on PWB through TSR, and the total effect of ER on PWB were very significant according to AMOS 26 software. Notably, partial mediation was found where direct relationships of ER to PWB were still significant along indirect routes through TSR. This study offers unique avenues for future intervention efforts aimed at enhancing teacher well-being through relationship-oriented interventions.

KEYWORDS: EFL teachers, emotion regulation (ER), psychological well-being (PWB), teacher-student relationship (TSR)

1. Introduction

Teacher-student relationship (TSR) is crucial to impact academic achievement and PWB in EFL contexts. Studies show that positive interactions between teachers and students have the potential to significantly contribute to how well students perform academically, feel about themselves and are motivated (Jia et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2024). Also, the connections affect so much more than language development, they impact the emotional well-being of students. Children who feel close and supported by teachers are more likely to develop self-confidence, enthusiasm, and a positive disposition toward school (Chen, 2025; Zhang, 2023).

New research shows that social relationships play an important role in learning in school. Strong associations between positive TSR and important educational outcomes such as decreased student burnout, increased learning motivation, and better academic achievement have been reported in a number of studies (Luo & Derakhshan, 2024; Yuan, 2024). These connections are more than just teaching encounters; they are vital emotional highways that significantly shape who you are and who you become.

Despite a growing body of knowledge, serious deficiency exists in the extent of knowledge regarding the mechanisms through which the TSR works that mediate between ER and PWB. The main focus of the most recent studies are the affective and engagement components of TSR (Shakki, 2022; Yuan, 2024), teacher self-efficacy (Xiyun et al., 2022) and the dynamics of classroom interactions (Zheng, 2022). However, there is a significant dearth of evidence regarding the exact role of the TSR in the relation between ER and PWB of Iranian EFL teachers.

Given the focus of this study, the theoretical framework of this study is based on positive psychology (Seligman, 2018) that highlights well-being and strength-based development. This view moves attention away from deficits and toward positive emotions and a richer view of the individual. We then lensing it to the domain of Compassion-Based Language Education (Mercer, 2025), emphasizing the importance of emotion and PWB in L2 learning. The CBLE model promotes a learning environment that speaks to empathy, diversity, and relationships beyond a focus on grammar and vocabulary.

Regarding Mercer (2025), the CBLE framework emphasizes the role of a trusting and inclusive relationship between teachers and learners. Our study adds to knowledge of how supportive relationships can alleviate negative impact on teacher well-being because these relationships mediate between teacher ER and PWB. This study also contributes to under-researched areas such as teacher self-compassion and fills gaps in the literature by exploring factors that contribute to teacher-student interaction, thereby supporting the principal goal of CBLE in promoting compassionate learning environments that enhance long-term student achievement. In particular, we intend to explore the direct and indirect effects of ER strategies on PWB, probe the mediating mechanisms of TSR, and identify the intricate pathways by which emotional regulation, interpersonal relationships, and workplace psychological states are related in the EFL teaching context.

2. Literature Review

The teacher-student relationship (TSR) plays a pivotal role in shaping both academic outcomes and psychological well-being (PWB) within the EFL context. Numerous studies emphasize that supportive TSRs significantly enhance students' academic achievement, self-esteem, and motivation (Jia, 2025; Wang et al., 2024). Beyond mere academic performance, the quality of these relationships is closely linked to students' emotional health. Positive, trusting bonds between teachers and students have been correlated with greater self-confidence, higher engagement in learning, and a more affirmative attitude toward school (Chen et al., 2025; Zhang, 2023).

It is increasingly evident that the social fabric of a school environment—especially interpersonal relationships—strongly influences educational experiences. Empirical research consistently demonstrates that constructive TSRs are associated with reduced student burnout, elevated motivation, and improved academic outcomes (Luo & Derakhshan, 2024; Yuan, 2024). These effects reach beyond classroom exchanges, reflecting deep-seated psychological processes that are essential to both personal and professional growth.

Despite substantial research, important gaps persist regarding the intricate mechanisms underlying TSR—particularly its mediating function between emotional regulation (ER) and PWB. Existing literature has focused on the emotional and participatory aspects of TSR (Shakki, 2022; Yuan, 2024), teacher self-efficacy (Xiyun et al., 2022), and classroom interaction patterns (Zheng, 2022). Nevertheless, there remains a lack of comprehensive understanding about how TSR mediates the relationship between ER and PWB, especially among Iranian EFL teachers.

This research draws from the theoretical foundation of positive psychology (Seligman, 2018), which prioritizes the cultivation of individual strengths and well-being. The Compassion-Based Language Education (CBLE) model, as described by Mercer (2025), operationalizes this perspective by highlighting the essential role of empathy, cultural awareness, and supportive relationships in language learning. The CBLE framework underscores the significance of trust and rapport within teacher-learner dynamics. Rather than solely examining whether and how ER affects teacher well-being, this study explores how positive interpersonal relationships may buffer educators against negative outcomes and foster resilience.

Additionally, this investigation addresses less-explored domains such as teacher self-compassion, aiming to fill existing gaps in the literature by analyzing the determinants of effective teacher-student interaction. In doing so, it supports the CBLE vision for empathetic educational environments that contribute to sustained student achievement.

In summary, this study seeks to examine both the direct and indirect effects of ER strategies on PWB, clarify the mediating role of TSR, and elucidate the complex interplay among emotional management, interpersonal relationships, and psychological outcomes within the EFL teaching context.

2.1. Teacher-Student Relationship

Teacher-student relationship (TSR) is a singular learning factor with an enormous effect on both psychological well-being (PWB) and academic achievement indirectly by way of frequent instructional and emotional interactions in between. Different studies demonstrate that positive, respectful teacher-student relationships enhance students' motivation, engagement, and academic achievement (Mastrokouskou et al., 2025; Roorda et al., 2017; Spilt et al., 2011). These positive relationships also enable students to build self-esteem and experience reduced stress (Gehlbach et al., 2012; Lin et al., 2024; Longobardi et al., 2016). The proof is evident to everyone that the quality of TSR plays a pivotal role in students' academic and psychological growth.

Studies that have been more recent have also discovered that high-quality TSR has the potential to serve as protection against adversity and academic failure. For example, Ren et al. (2025) set out that strong student-teacher relationships negate the negative impacts of bullying on mathematics performance. Teachers' emotional intelligence also mediates TSR and reduced student burnout, as well as higher learning enjoyment (Li & Zhang, 2024). The classroom environment, which is closely interlinked with TSR, has been shown to significantly predict student performance (Luo & Derakhshan, 2024), and this recognizes how pivotal these relationships are to scholarly progress.

Well-being and motivation are also impacted by TSR. Zou et al. (2024) identified teachers' motivational styles as a key means of transferring intrinsic motivation, which suggests the potential to train teachers to build effective teacher-student relationships. Fang et al. (2024) argued that building close relationships can enhance resilience and motivation in students, triggering shifts towards strengthening these relationships.

Longobardi et al. (2024) identified the student-teacher relationship as a significant learning achievement mediator and referenced that positive relations can surmount prejudice and enhance achievement where teacher training facilitates it. Yuan (2024) demonstrated how robust student-teacher relations significantly influence motivation and attainment, especially in high school and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings. Together, these studies show firm evidence that teachers' relationship skills are most crucial in boosting students' intrinsic motivation and happiness and consequently highlight the importance of certain teacher training.

Following studies by Wang et al. (2024) and Su et al. (2024) confirm the positive effect of teacher-student relationships on the commitment, emotional lives, and willingness to transfer knowledge of students, particularly of pro-active students. The effect of TSR has also been investigated with respect to teachers themselves. Zhang (2023) suggested a negative correlation between job burnout and teachers' social-emotional competence, moderated by TSR. Xiyun et al. (2022) and Zheng (2022) referred to the fact that positive interpersonal behavior and teacher self-efficacy positively affect teacher and student well-being. Shakki (2022) emphasized that positive TSR supports student engagement, especially in language learning settings. Together, these studies highlight the two-way dynamic of TSR: supportive teacher behavior benefits students, which in turn supports teacher efficacy and well-being.

Besides short-term impacts on academics, Deng et al. (2018) indicated that TSR indirectly supports student performance by influencing self-efficacy, academic feelings, and motivation. Ma et al. (2018) pointed out that English competence enhances through positive teacher-student relationships that enhance self-efficacy and learning dispositions. Aldrup et al. (2018) indicated that positive interactions within the classroom are also essential to the psychological well-being of teachers, which is maintained through positive student relationships.

Despite all this enormous mass of research, there is still a critical gap regarding the mediating role of TSR on emotional regulation (ER) and psychological well-being (PWB) for Iranian EFL instructors. As a result of differential cultural and contextual nature of the Iranian EFL context, there is a need to examine the dynamics of TSR and their impact on teachers' well-being in this specific context. This research gap underscores the necessity of more specific studies on the emotional experiences of teachers in the Iranian EFL context.

2.2. Emotion Regulation

The concept of emotion regulation (ER) involves deliberate and automatic processes for coping with psychological experiences, where deliberate strategies of controlling affective responses (Gross, 2002). Scholars have elaborated extensively on its multifaceted role at the workplace and life. Evidence from recent studies suggests that ER significantly contributes to PWB and professional effectiveness of educators. Empirical studies indicate that strategic emotional regulation is able to alleviate work stress and develop psychological resilience in language teachers (Ma & Liu, 2024; Namaziandost et al., 2024). This demonstrates the potential broad applicability of ER as a work stressor buffer. According to Ma and Liu (2024), their final model highlights the interplay between emotional management and overall well-being in mitigating burnout among teachers and how positive emotional experiences may promote resilience.

Their guideline suggests that, in creating long-term support programs, teachers are to be empowered with effective ER strategies towards the overall creation of a healthier and more sustainable learning environment. In addition, Zhi and Derakhshan (2024) noted that interrelatedness of ER to building resilience with the development of PWB with self-efficacy playing an

important role as the mediating factor. The authors suggest that training for teachers to build up resilience and emotional abilities be instituted in order to enhance the general well-being and efficiency of teachers in the classroom. These investigations underscore the importance of ER not just as an individual skill, but as a fundamental aspect of systemic support for educators. Recent research has confirmed fine-grained strategies in ER like contextual accommodation, cognitive reinterpretation, and attentional modulation (Heydarnejad et al., 2021). These strategies result in higher-order interpersonal relationships and professional performance.

The model suggested by Ismail et al. (2023) illustrates the way ER, reflective teaching, self-efficacy, and identity influence teachers' PWB in its entirety, underlining the importance of emotion management and reflective practice. The authors suggest incorporating training programs on these elements into teacher education to promote overall well-being and professionalism. This suggests that ER is not a monolithic construct, but a set of adaptive strategies which can be tailored to unique situations and individual needs. More advanced studies by Derakhshan et al. (2023) highlight ER's central role in work engagement, highlighting its salience above psychological mechanisms acting at the individual level. The increasingly subtle understanding of ER still illuminates human adaptive capacity and professional achievement (Sutton et al., 2009). Moreover, Ma et al. (2018) emphasized the critical role played by robust TSR in the attainment of academic success via various mediating pathways. According to the authors, what matters is trying to maximize efforts at creating these relationships as they can lead to improved student education outcomes.

Based on these findings, ER stands as the basis of individual well-being and high-quality teaching practice and possesses strong associations with TSR and student achievement. Although previous studies have discussed ER and TSR in depth individually, there is still an important research gap to identify the exact mediating mechanisms that link these constructs in the context of EFL instruction. More specifically, how teachers' emotional regulation influence students' relationship and vice versa, and which influence their own psychological health. There is no macro-level framework within current literature that systematically investigates the mediation function of TSR dynamics for how ER strategies might interact with PWB factors for language teachers.

2.3. Psychological Well-Being

The concept of psychological well-being (PWB) is a broad concept suggesting the overall quality of life and contributions made by a person to society within the context of using all parts of personal and work experiences (Zakaria et al., 2021). In school environments, particularly language instruction, it suggests teachers' life satisfaction and job satisfaction in general (Zhang, 2023). This suggests the dual nature of PWB, including personal satisfaction and professional competence.

Ryff's (1989) initial model outlines PWB in terms of six highly correlated dimensions of self-acceptance, interpersonal relationships, personal autonomy, environmental mastery, existential purpose, and ongoing personal development. Empirical research indicates that high-PWB teachers are more effective in pedagogy, thereby facilitating better learning in students (Dagenais-Desmarais & Savoie, 2012).

Contemporary studies characterize workplace PWB in terms of subtle sub-scales of organizational integration and perceived professional recognition (Dagenais-Desmarais & Savoie, 2012). More recent studies have indicated robust correlations between PWB and its related constructs such as emotional intelligence and professional commitment (Cankir & Sahin, 2018; Joo et al., 2017). Owing primarily to greater academic interest, the construct remains vibrant and more studies are warranted, particularly in second language teaching environments. This indicates that PWB is a dynamic interaction of personality traits and environmental factors rather than a fixed state, and so is especially applicable to the challenging environment of language teaching. Bonjakhi et al. (2024) further posited that PWB plays a significant role in teachers' continuous professional development (T-CPD) since it bears a transformative influence on their ability to update subject matter knowledge and teaching skills effectively. The study indicates that PWB, together with other traits such as grit and organizational support, bears a predictive role in T-CPD via work motivation. This underscores the need to guarantee teachers' mental well-being and overall well-being to enhance quality in education and students' achievement.

In a parallel SEM analysis, Aldrup et al. (2018) highlighted a model that focuses on prioritizing the central position of the TSR in protecting the well-being of teachers from student misbehavior challenges. The authors recommend using steps to foster stronger relationships because that can increase the willingness of teachers to be resilient and satisfied at work. These researches highlight the reinforcing cycle between PWB, quality teaching, and facilitative relationships, arguing that interventions targeting any of these variables can be cascading. Past research on PWB among teaching environments indicates a prevailing research gap in the case of intricate mechanisms linking TSR, ER, and PWB specifically in EFL pedagogical contexts. Understanding these processes is crucial for the development of focused interventions aimed at maintaining the well-being of EFL instructors and improving instructional proficiency.

Current research provides no clear understanding of whether teacher-student relationships would mediate the intricate relationships between emotional management techniques and factors that affect teachers' PWB in EFL contexts. The primary aim of this study was to investigate TSR as a mediating factor on the relationship between ER and PWB factors among Iranian EFL teachers. By applying SEM analysis and using existing measures, the research was intended to contribute new knowledge regarding these vital psychological processes and ultimately inform insights to enhance educational practices and teacher support systems.

3. Methodology

Considering the above findings of the previous research, the current study attempts to address the following research questions and verify the proposed model (Figure 1), which has been formulated from the above theoretical background and literature review with the quantitative analytical approach.

The theoretical framework highlights the supreme mediating function of the TSR within the ER and PWB relationship in the EFL work environment concerning the above studies (Aldrup et al., 2018; Fang et al., 2024; Haghgooyan & Zal Ebadi, 2025; Ismail et al., 2023; Longobardi et al., 2024; Ma & Liu, 2024; Ma et al., 2018; Ren et al., 2025; Su et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2024; Zhi & Derakhshan, 2024; Zou et al., 2024). The nature of this interpersonal relationship influences an EFL teacher's work fit, well-being, feelings of competence, perceived recognition, and willingness to participate. (Fang et al., 2024; Longobardi et al., 2024; Su et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2024). ER is found to have a direct and indirect impact on these essential aspects of PWB (Ismail et al.; 2023; Ma & Liu, 2024; Zhi & Derakhshan, 2024), and TSR is mediating the indirect path (Aldrup et al., 2018; Zou et al., 2024).

This study employs positive psychology and CBLE because of their applicability, strengths-based, and holistic focus on compassionate relationships in EFL classrooms in guiding the focus on TSR's mediation role. This integrative framework emphasizes workplace well-being's complexity and TSR's key role in exacerbating or buffering the impact of ER on work experience and outcomes (Ma et al., 2018).

Research question 1: Are there significant positive correlations among teacher-student relationship (TSR), emotion regulation (ER), and psychological well-being (PWB)?

Research question 2: To what extent does the teacher-student relationship (TSR) mediate the relationship between emotion regulation (ER) and psychological well-being (PWB) among Iranian EFL teachers?

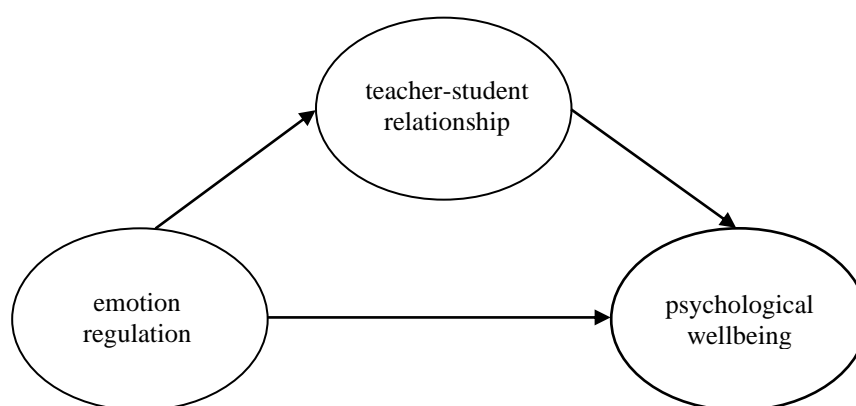


Figure 1.

The Proposed Model

3.1. Participants

The accessible population from which the participants were chosen was all Iranian EFL teachers working in public and private schools across Iran. Participants were selected from this available population via stratified random sampling. The participants to this study comprised 243 Iranian EFL teachers chosen based on stratified random sampling technique as a representative professional group. Stratification was done based on age, educational level, and teaching experience in years to allow for representation by these defining variables. A sample size of 243 was deemed adequate for SEM analysis, by recommendations suggesting a minimum of 10-20 participants per parameter estimated in the model (Kline, 2023). Given the complexity of our model, this sample size provides sufficient statistical power to determine significant relationships between these variables. The sample was female (61.32%), and their ages were mostly between 30-49 (70.3% combined). A Bachelor's degree was possessed by half of the sample (50.20%), followed by a Master's degree (45.26%), with a minor percentage (4.52%) possessing a doctoral qualification. Professional experience was balanced, with 40.74% of 11-20 years, 33.33% of 21-30 years, and 25.92% of 1-10 years. The majority were English language teachers (68.72%), and the majority of their activity took place in school settings (69.13%), focusing on teaching English, translation studies, and English literature. This broad representation ensures a solid and diversified research of the major actors, consistent with the professional profile of language education professionals.

Table 1.*The Participants' Demographic Information (N=243)*

Demographic factor	Range	Frequency	Percentage
Age	20-29	30 EFL teachers	12.3%
	30-39	74 EFL teachers	30.4 %
	40-49	97 EFL teachers	39.9 %
	50-59	42 EFL teachers	17.28 %
Gender	Male	94 EFL teachers	38.68 %
	Female	149 EFL teachers	61.32 %
Degree	B.A.	122 EFL teachers	50.20 %
	M.A.	110 EFL teachers	45.26 %
	Ph.D.	11 EFL teachers	4.52 %
Experience	1-10 years	63 EFL teachers	25.92 %
	11-20 years	99 EFL teachers	40.74 %
	21-30 years	81 EFL teachers	33.33 %
Major	Teaching English	167 EFL teachers	68.72 %
	Translation Studies	34 EFL teachers	13.99 %
	English Literature	42 EFL teachers	17.28 %
Workplace	School	168 EFL teachers	69.13 %
	Institute	32 EFL teachers	13.16 %
	Both	43 EFL teachers	17.71 %

3.2. Instruments

3.2.1. The Emotion Regulation (ER) Scale

To quantify the ER of the participants, the ER scale of Gross and John (2003) was employed. The 10-item ER scale is rated on a 7-point Likert scale with a response from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) (Table 2). It consists of two sub-scales: Cognitive Reappraisal and Expressive Suppression. The ER scale was validated in a substantial amount of research that established its capacity to quantify the complexity of emotion regulation strategies. The scale had satisfactory internal consistency as reflected in a Cronbach's alpha coefficient above the general consensus of 0.7. Besides, the scale design, discriminating easily between cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression, enables detailed assessment of participants' emotional regulation skills and hence serves as a valid instrument for measuring ER in EFL teachers (Azari Noughabi et al., 2022).

Table 2.*Illustration of the ER Scale*

Sub-scale	Sample item	Response scale
Cognitive Reappraisal	When I want to feel less negative emotion, I change the way I'm thinking about the situation.	1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree)
Expressive Suppression	I control my emotions by not expressing them.	1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree)
Expressive Suppression	When I am feeling negative emotions, I make sure not to show them.	1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree)

3.2.2. The Teacher-Student Relationship (TSR) Sub-Scale Taken from the Teacher Critical Pedagogy Scale (TCP)

We employed the 7-item TSR sub-scale of the Teacher Critical Pedagogy Scale (TCP) developed by Roohani and Haghparast (2020) to quantify Iranian EFL teachers' critical pedagogy in the current study. The 35 TCP items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (0 = disagree completely, 5 = agree completely) (Table 3). Though the entire scale has multiple components (philosophical orientation, program structure, curriculum and materials, teacher development, TSR, and evaluation), our particular interest lies in the TSR component, which is also critical to pedagogical dynamics. The validity of the TCP has been determined through content, face, and construct validity measures, and factor analysis using AMOS 26 software that indicated a good model fit. In addition, the scale was also found to be reliable on the scale since it had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient over the acceptable threshold of 0.7, hence being a reliable tool to assess the TSR in EFL environments (Roohani & Haghparast, 2020).

Table 3.*Illustration of the TSR Scale (Taken from the TCP Scale)*

Sample item	Response scale
I often try to learn new things from my students and share the responsibilities in the class.	0 (Completely Disagree) to 5 (Completely Agree)
In my class, I transmit knowledge and students receive knowledge.	0 (Completely Disagree) to 5 (Completely Agree)
In the process of language teaching and learning in the class, my students and I collaborate with each other to come to a conclusion when facing a problem.	0 (Completely Disagree) to 5 (Completely Agree)
In my class, I often do not allow all students to express their opinions on the topics, materials, methods, etc.	0 (Completely Disagree) to 5 (Completely Agree)
In my class, whenever possible, I let my students take the teacher's role.	0 (Completely Disagree) to 5 (Completely Agree)

3.2.3. The Psychological Well-Being (PWB) Scale

To assess the PWB of Iranian EFL teachers, the experimental version of the PWB scale developed by Dagenais-Desmarais and Savoie (2012) was administered. It includes 25 items rated on a 6-point scale with answers provided from 0 (disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). It assesses five significant dimensions: work interpersonal fit, work thriving, work perceived competence, work perceived recognition, and work desire for involvement. PWB scale has also shown high reliability and validity in measuring PWB among Iranian EFL teachers with a high internal consistency score ($\alpha = 0.95$) (Wang et al., 2022).

Table 4.*Illustration of the PWB Scale*

Sub-scale	Sample item	Response scale
Interpersonal Fit at Work	I value the people I work with.	0 (Completely Disagree) to 5 (Completely Agree)
Thriving at Work	I find my job exciting.	0 (Completely Disagree) to 5 (Completely Agree)
Feeling of Competency at Work	I know I am capable of doing my job.	0 (Completely Disagree) to 5 (Completely Agree)
Perceived Recognition at Work	I feel that my work is recognized.	0 (Completely Disagree) to 5 (Completely Agree)
Desire for Involvement at Work	I want to take initiative in my work.	0 (Completely Disagree) to 5 (Completely Agree)

3.3. Procedure

All Iranian EFL instructors in this study were informed about the aim of the assessment and provided electronic permission. The research employed four electronic questionnaires for demographic information, TSR, ER, and PWB. All instruments applied were carefully designed and translated to provide comprehensive knowledge in linguistic context. Clearance was obtained from the Ministry of Education in Sabzevar and Hakim Sabzevari University prior to commencing the study.

Questionnaires were created using Google Forms, with three primary instruments originally in English and augmented with Persian translations. Translation was done according to cross-cultural adaptation guidelines (Beaton et al., 2000), including forward translation by two independent translators, reconciliation of the translations, back-translation by a translator not exposed to the original English language version, and review by an expert committee to ensure semantic, idiomatic, and conceptual equivalence. 30 EFL teachers took part in a pilot study to validate the clarity and understandability of the translated questionnaires and lead to slight modifications before actual data collection. Participants were thoroughly explained the instruments and research objectives. More precisely, an opening page on Google Forms stipulated the study's aim, assured confidentiality and anonymity, and provided contact information of the researchers in case they require elucidation or questions. Participants were also informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without penalty. The questionnaire was to be filled in approximately 15 minutes, with data collection spanning a two-month duration from November 2024 to December 2024. A link was shared online for convenient participation by the 243 Iranian EFL teachers included in the study. To ensure high response rates, reminder emails to participants were dispatched two weeks after sending out the survey link for the first time. Technical assistance was also offered to assist participants in resolving any difficulties encountered during the process of completing the questionnaires. The strategy allowed for participant involvement, linguistic usability, and total data collection through an effective electronic survey process. Through the use of straightforward instructions and ease of use, the study maximized potential participant response and data quality.

3.4. Data Analysis

Following the data collection procedure, intensive statistical analysis was carried out. The descriptive statistics were run using SPSS software version 26 to obtain data regarding participants' demographic background, i.e., establishing the major factors such as age, gender, degree, experience, major, and work setting. This statistical procedure gave an impression of sample makeup, comprising underlying trends and demographic characteristics.

Then, extensive SEM Analysis was performed by utilizing AMOS 26 software and applying Maximum Likelihood Estimation (MLE) to test the hypothesis and to validate the research model developed. By utilizing this sophisticated statistical technique, extensive examination of interrelationship among variables was formed, demonstrating direct as well as indirect effects in the conceptual framework.

In comparison to Meyers et al. (2008) and Pallant (2020), the MLE method ensured methodological precision by offering fit indices of equal or higher than commonly accepted cut-offs for optimal model fit (e.g., p-value of chi-square > 0.05, Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) > 0.9, Normed Fit Index (NFI) > 0.9, Incremental Fit Index (IFI) > 0.9, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) > 0.9, and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) < 0.06). Through the use of different analytic techniques, the research team formulated a rich analytic model that nicely shed light into the intricate relationships within the data set, finally educating the primary research goals of the study in methodological maturity.

4. Results

In order to ascertain that the three scales utilized in this study were valid, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) of the items of each scale was conducted prior to conducting the SEM analysis. Even though the original scales were elsewhere validated and constructed, it was important to verify that they could be used and were valid within the Iranian EFL context. The results are presented in Table 5. TSR sub-scale, which was constructed based on the TCP scale, consists of 7 items and shows CFI of 0.936, GFI of 0.967, and RMSEA of 0.045. The ER scale has 10 items with CFI of 0.981, GFI of 0.959, and RMSEA of 0.043. The 25-item PWBW scale demonstrates a CFI of 0.928, a GFI of 0.937, and an RMSEA of 0.044. These CFA results confirm that the scales have good model fit in the Iranian EFL context, validating their construct validity for this sample. The reliability of the scales in this context was also tested and Cronbach's alpha coefficients (presented in the Methods section) were greater than 0.7, which indicates good internal consistency. Overall, all of these scales indicate good fit indices based on the criteria: CFI > 0.9, GFI > 0.9, and RMSEA < 0.06 for assessing good model fit for SEM analyses.

Table 5.

Validation of Indices for Each Scale

Scales	number of items	CFI	GFI	RMSEA
The TSR scale	7	0.936	0.967	0.045
The ER scale	10	0.981	0.959	0.043
The PWB scale	25	0.928	0.937	0.044
Total	42			
Acceptable fit indices		>0.9	>0.9	<0.06

4.1. Preliminary Analysis (Descriptive Data and Response to the First Research Question)

Descriptive statistics for the aforementioned components are given in depth. The sampled participants numbered 243 and were distributed across three key components: TSR, ER, and PWB. TSR possessed a moderate range of 16.00 to 30.00 with a mean of 21.44 and a standard deviation of 2.20, indicating moderate consensus among the participants' perceptions. ER demonstrated the most variability with scores between 10.00 and 35.00, mean 24.75, and the highest standard deviation of 5.07, indicating large individual differences in emotional management approaches. Scores for PWB varied between 9.00 and 30.00, mean 24.35, and standard deviation 4.46, indicating moderate variability in general psychological functioning among participants (Table 6).

Table 6.

Descriptive Statistics

Components	Skewness	Kurtosis	Mean	SD	1	2	3
Teacher-student relationship	243	-0.80	2.41	21.4403	2.20432	-	
Emotion regulation	243	-0.14	-0.37	24.7510	5.07151	455**	-
Psychological well-being	243	-0.73	1.31	24.3451	4.46432	.648**	387**

Addressing the first research question, the correlation matrix Table 6 illustrates that TSR, ER, and PWB are all significantly correlated with some unexpected distribution characteristics. Skewness and kurtosis statistics pick up irrelevant deviations from normality: TSR has a negative skewness of -0.80 and kurtosis of 2.41, ER extremely low negative skewness of

-0.14 and extremely low negative kurtosis of -0.37, and PWB extremely high negative skewness of -0.73 and kurtosis of 1.31. Statistically, they also correlate positively with one another, TSR and PWB correlating strongly ($r = .648, p < .01$), ER and PWB correlating positively ($r = .387, p < .01$), and TSR and ER correlating moderately ($r = .455, p < .01$). These outputs suggest that all of the variables are within good ranges of normality (kurtosis -7 to +7, skewness -2 to +2) and are supportive of the interrelated construct nature of these psychological processes and their emphasis on the dynamic interplay between relational processes, emotion regulation, and psychological adjustment.

4.2. SEM Analysis (Response to the Second Research Question)

To answer the second research question, the hypothesized model was tested by passing the model under statistical testing using the Amos 26 package. As evident from the table, the chi-square value of 0.171, calculated in this case, was seen to be non-statistically significant, indicating a good fit of the model. Additionally, all the model fit indices, i.e., GFI = 0.946, NFI = 0.968, IFI = 0.971, and CFI = 0.931, were higher than the optimal cut-off of 0.9, which characterized a well-fitting model. Still, the RMSEA = 0.046 was smaller than the cut-off value of 0.06, which also characterized the perfect model fit. All these discoveries collectively validate the accuracy and sufficiency of the model to describe the structure that exists inside the data.

Based on our statistical figures established in Figure 2, path coefficients estimated through Amos 26 analysis shows that there are critical associations between the involved variables. With coefficients of 0.47 to 0.68, the coefficients suggest that TSR mediates very strongly the ER-PWB relationship among Iranian EFL instructors. Partial mediation is also present, which means TSRs are an important ingredient in this equation but that there also exist direct routes from ER to PWB. This would suggest that the quality of the TSR is an important ingredient to understand how ER influences PWB in this sample.

Table 7.

Goodness of Fit Indices

	<i>P</i> (chi-square)	GFI	NFI	IFI	CFI	RMSEA
Acceptable fit	>0.05	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9	<0.06
Model	0.171	0.946	0.968	0.971	0.931	0.046

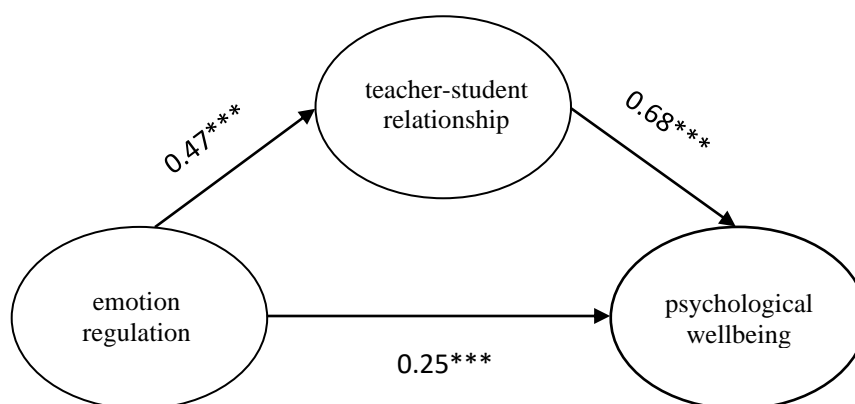


Figure 2.

*SEM Results. Path Coefficients are Presented at Standard Coefficients. ***<0.001*

Concerning the bootstrapping analysis in Table 8, SEM analysis confirms significant and statistically high interrelations between ER, TSR, and PWB. Direct influence of ER on TSR has a moderate positive path coefficient of $\beta = 0.31$ ($p < 0.001$) with 95% CI [0.21; 0.41], indicating a significant relationship. The indirect influence of ER on PSW through TSR has a path coefficient of $\beta = 0.11$ ($p < 0.001$) with a 95% interval of confidence [0.07; 0.15] not containing zero, thus confirming the statistical significance of the mediation path. Notably, the total effect of ER on PSW is significant, with path coefficient $\beta = 0.71$ ($p < 0.001$) and a 95% confidence interval [0.61; 0.81] pointing towards ER having a significant effect on PWB directly and indirectly through the mediation role of TSR.

Table 8.*Direct and Indirect Effects of SEM Analysis*

Path	B	SE	95% CI [Lower bound; Upper bound]	P	Decision
<i>Direct Effects</i>					
ER→TSR	0.31	0.05	[0.21; 0.41]	<0.001	Supported
TSR→PSW	0.52	0.05	[0.49; 0.69]	<0.001	Supported
ER→PSW	0.30	0.05	[0.20; 0.40]	<0.001	Supported
<i>Indirect Effects</i>					
ER→TSR→PSW	0.11	0.02	[0.07; 0.15]	<0.001	Supported
<i>Total Effects</i>					
ER→PSW	0.71	0.05	[0.61; 0.81]	<0.001	Supported

In sum, our results revealed strong statistical correlations between Iranian EFL teachers' TSR, ER, and PWB. Fit indices for the model were exemplary, with many of them surpassing the suggested thresholds. Path coefficients illustrated the strong mediating effect of the TSR, both direct and indirect effects. The analysis placed ER in a significant relationship with PWB, and TSR proved to be a significant intermediary factor. These findings illuminate the multifaceted interdependence among these factors in the context of the EFL classroom, which provides rich psychological terrain for language instructors to negotiate.

5. Discussion

The general purpose of the current study was to investigate the mediating role of the teacher-student relationship (TSR) between emotion regulation (ER) and psychological well-being (PWB) in Iranian EFL instructors. Structural equation modeling was used as the study's methodology in an effort to gain a comprehensive understanding of the intricate psychological processes behind teacher-student relationships in academic environments.

In response to the first research question about the magnitude of relationships among TSR, ER, and PWB, the findings are consistent with previous research. The study revealed high correlations consistent with Li and Zhang (2024) and Luo and Derakhshan (2024), showing high relationships between the variables. Thus, the findings confirmed Yuan's (2024) findings on interpersonal dynamics influencing motivation and learning performance. Zhang et al.'s (2023) findings of the negative correlation between social-emotional competence and job burnout were further substantiated, with the study providing further clarity on the intricate interrelations among these variables. To answer the second research question on the extent of mediation by the TSR, this study extended those of Aldrup et al. (2018) and Deng et al. (2018).

The findings established that the TSR is a strong mediator in the ER-PWB relationship. This result is in line with the research by Ma et al. (2018), which highlighted the classroom interpersonal dynamics in shaping psychological processes. In addition, the current study reaffirmed Xiyun et al.'s (2022) results regarding the impact of ER on teachers' PWB but with a deeper comprehension of the mediating processes. Based on our findings and on the tenets of CBLE, the results underscore the applied significance of creating supportive TSR in EFL contexts. Since CBLE emphasizes emotional regulation and empathetic interaction, our research demonstrated how enhancing positive relations among educators and students has direct impacts on teachers' PWB by decreasing job burnout and enhancing emotional regulation.

This emphasizes the integration of CBLE principles in teacher preparation courses and professional development classes to foster more sustainable and emotionally enriching teaching cultures. In addition, our findings indicate that interventions to enhance TSR can indirectly optimize learning performance through enhanced teacher PWB. By emphasizing trust building, care, and consideration, teachers can establish healthy environments in which they and their students can develop emotionally and intellectually. This has implications for policy and curriculum, suggesting that education policy addresses the creation of conditions conducive to positive interpersonal relationships in the classroom in an effort to construct a more humane and productive language learning environment in keeping with the overall goals of CBLE.

The comprehensive study approach elevates previous research by Ma and Liu (2024) and Zhi and Derakhshan (2024), offering a richer model of TSR's interaction with ER and its effects on PWB. By identifying direct and indirect effects, the study provides valuable information about the complex mechanisms of learning interactions to ultimately deepen understanding of psychological processes in the construction of EFL learning settings. These overall findings from our investigation highlight the vital role of positive TSR in overcoming professional difficulties, minimizing employment burnout, and cultivating respectful learning environments. The present study provides an in-depth examination of the complex psychological forces driving fruitful educational encounters, paving the way for future research and applied practices in EFL classroom settings.

6. Conclusion

The study delved into the complex relationships between teacher-student relationship (TSR), emotion regulation (ER), and psychological well-being (PWB) of Iranian English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers. The study creates meaningful relationships that enhance our knowledge of psychological dynamics in classrooms.

The outcomes indicate that TSR is an essential mediator between ER and PWB. By using structural equation modeling, this research verifies prior research by Li and Zhang (2024), Luo and Derakhshan (2024), and others in suggesting intricate psychological mechanisms that affect teaching professionals' lives. The research revealed that ER had high correlation with PWB, and TSR was a significant mediating factor. This corroborates earlier research by Zhang (2023) and Xiyun et al. (2022) in providing deeper insight into the manner in which social processes influence psychological outcomes within the workplace. Of special note, the study identified ER's direct and indirect effects on PWB. TSR represents a key mechanism by which these effects are channeled, confirming and building on earlier research by Ma et al. (2018) and Aldrup et al. (2018). Limitations include its somewhat small sample size, self-report measures, and cross-sectional design, which may restrict generalizability to other settings.

But the study implications in research are important on the practice side of education, indicating the necessity for intensive professional practice and methodology aimed at strengthening teacher-student relationships. The findings emphasize the significance of interpersonal relationships in learning environments. They demonstrate that TSRs are much more than instructional transactions, they are meaningful psychological channels that condition professional performance pervasively, emotional fulfillment, and learning accomplishment. This study shows that such interventions to improve teacher ER skills, if in turn supported by methods to build positive TSR, have the potential to make a significant contribution to teachers' well-being and indirectly the quality of education students experience.

These results have several applied uses. To start, teacher preparation courses need to include instruction on teaching ER and interpersonal skills. Secondly, schools should provide teachers with professional development on a consistent basis so that they may develop these abilities during their careers as teachers. Thirdly, school administrators should build positive school climates that prioritize teacher happiness and support healthy teacher-student relationships. Overall, this piece belongs to the growing literature emphasizing teacher well-being as a key element in teaching effectiveness. By situating TSR as a mediator, this study points to the need for an integrated model of teacher support that addresses both their affective concerns and interpersonal relationships with students. Long-term effects of such intervention on teacher turnover, student achievement, and school climate may be the future area of research. Future research needs to prioritize longitudinal work, cross-cultural comparisons, and a more heterogeneous sampling plan to be able to extend these findings and validate and generalize them. By further investigating these complex interactions, researchers will be in a position to establish more effective support systems for teachers and continue to enhance the overall quality of opportunities to learn.

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The Flip Side of Language Learning: Student Perceptions and Achievement in Iranian EFL Classrooms

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ABSTRACT

In the postmodern era, considering the new technological facilities, researchers are trying to improve the traditional learning process by presenting new learning models. One of these models, called blended learning, tries to presents specific ways and solutions to blend synchronous and asynchronous learning. The flipped classroom, a subcategory of this model, reverses the traditional classroom format. This study investigates the role of this model in EFL learners' perceptions of class activities and their language achievement. To do so, two 10th-grade high school classes were selected as the participants. In the experimental group, the flipped learning approach was implemented through creative software developed by the researchers. The software was designed based on the book that students were supposed to study that semester. The software framework was Storyline which is a suitable program for creating interactive courses. Learners' perceptions were also measured using the translated version of the 'Students Perceptions of Classroom Activities' scale. The results revealed that the flipped learning approach could account for over 70 percent of Choice perception, about 50 percent for Challenge, and 10 percent for Joy perception. The results also demonstrated a significant impact of flipped learning on language achievement. The results of this study may help instructors and practitioners to use technology in their teaching program and be optimistic about its significant results on their learners' outcomes.

KEYWORDS: blended learning, challenge, choice, flipped learning, interest, joy, language achievement

1. Introduction

Technology has affected many aspects of people's lifestyles, and learning is no exception. One of the new methods of learning that has emerged recently is the flipped learning model, one of the subcategories of blended learning, presented by two chemistry teachers trying to provide their absent students with the materials taught in the class. They started recording their classes and sending them to their absent students via the internet. Not only were absent students satisfied with this innovative work, but also the other students were interested in receiving these materials (Chao, 2015). This was the starting point of the flipped learning model, and then it matured through time. Bergman and Sams (2012) described the flipped learning model as a type of blended learning that maximizes the value of in-class time.

Due to some drawbacks of traditional learning, educational scholars are trying to improve educational systems throughout the world (Jahedizadeh, 2025). They know that teacher-centered classrooms based on lecturing make students passive

in the classroom (Doman & Webb, 2017) which can result in the reduction of concentration and engagement (Ghanizadeh, 2022). Another noticeable point is that in traditional classes, the knowledge is presented once by the teacher and disseminating and presenting lessons happens only in the classroom (Gandomkar, 2025). In particular, during learning a new language, homework needs to be done under some guidance, but often parents cannot help their children with that, as it may exceed their knowledge (Marlowe, 2012), causing students stress before going to the classroom.

Technology can be a useful tool for improving education if it is used purposefully to reach specific goals. To solve these problems, some new methods like blended learning have emerged. In EFL/ESL contexts, flipped learning makes students more engaged and responsive (Doman & Webb, 2017). Especially in non-native countries, students are not exposed to the new language outside the classroom and by flipping lessons they can access them whenever and wherever they want, in this way flipping extends the boundaries of the classroom (Doman & Webb, 2017).

Blended learning models incorporate technology as a vital part of achieving the educational targets. This approach, as its name suggests, “blends” synchronous and asynchronous learning (Sota, 2016). It has been defined by Innosight Institute as a formal program in which students learn in part through online/offline teaching and can choose the time, place, and pace of instruction (Staker & Horn, 2012). Among various models of blended learning, flipped approach can boost the value of in-class time (Bergman & Sams, 2012; Wei, 2025).

The main obstacle in implementing the flipped approach is access to suitable and pertinent online and electronic materials (Doman & Webb, 2017). This study is an attempt to address this gap by designing an online course and exploring the effect of flipped learning on the Iranian high school learners’ perceptions of classroom activities and language learning.

The importance of this inquiry can be considered in two aspects: first, flipped learning is a new method in the world, and its advantages and disadvantages on different educational systems and language learners should be examined more thoroughly to optimize using this method in the process of language teaching. Second, the findings on the concept of flipped learning are mainly from western countries in ESL contexts, so the effect of this approach on Iranian learners can be of great value. The results of this research will help teachers to find out more about flipped learning and its effect on Iranian learners. Hence, they will be able to make the best decisions about their teaching approach.

In other words, the integration of flipped learning in language education represents a transformative shift from traditional pedagogical approaches, leveraging technology to enhance student engagement, autonomy, and academic performance (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). This study holds substantial academic significance for several reasons:

1. Advancing pedagogical innovation in language education: Flipped learning challenges conventional teacher-centered models by restructuring classroom dynamics, allowing students to engage with instructional content (e.g., videos, readings) before class and dedicating in-class time to interactive, communicative activities. Investigating its effectiveness in language learning contributes to the growing body of research on blended and technology-enhanced learning, offering empirical evidence on how such models can optimize second language acquisition (Basal, 2015).
2. Enhancing student achievement and language proficiency: Prior studies suggest that flipped learning can improve academic outcomes by providing learners with opportunities for self-paced learning and reinforcement through practice (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). However, its impact on specific language skills remains underexplored. This study aims to provide data-driven insights into whether flipped instruction leads to measurable gains in language proficiency, filling a critical gap in SLA research.
3. Contributing to theoretical frameworks in language learning: This study aligns with constructivist and sociocultural theories of learning, which emphasize active participation and social interaction in knowledge construction (Vygotsky, 1978). By analyzing how flipped classrooms facilitate peer collaboration and teacher feedback, this research seeks to strengthen theoretical models of technology-mediated language learning.
4. Informing policy and instructional design: As educational institutions increasingly adopt digital learning strategies, empirical evidence on the efficacy of flipped learning can inform policy decisions and teacher training programs. The findings may support the integration of blended learning models in language curricula, particularly in contexts that prioritize student-centered, interactive learning.
5. Developing a custom software for flipped learning in language classes: This study introduces a novel and significant contribution to the field of language education by designing and implementing a specialized software tool tailored to flipped learning. While previous research has explored flipped classrooms using generic platforms, this study advances the field by developing a purpose-built, innovative application that optimizes the flipped learning experience for language acquisition.

Hence, this research goes beyond conventional flipped learning studies by not just applying the method but engineering a specialized technological framework to maximize its benefits for language education. The development of this software ensures that the flipped model is implemented in the most pedagogically sound and technologically efficient way, providing new insights into how custom technological tools can enhance language learning.

This innovation makes the study a pioneering contribution to both language teaching methodologies and educational technology research, opening new avenues for future developments in AI-driven, adaptive, and interactive language learning systems.

This study holds significant academic value by contributing to pedagogical innovation, language acquisition theory, and instructional design. By evaluating both student achievement and perceptions, it could contribute to a more holistic understanding of flipped learning's role in language education, ultimately supporting more effective, learner-centered teaching practices.

Besides, this study examined the probable effects of flipped learning on high school English language learners. Conducting this study with high school students was motivated by key educational, cognitive, and practical considerations. First, high school students often struggle with passive learning in which the teacher gives lectures. Flipped learning—where students review materials at home and engage in discussions, problem-solving, and projects in class—promotes active learning, increasing motivation and participation. Second, high school students have varying comprehension speeds. Flipped learning allows them to pause, rewind, or rewatch instructional content at home, while class time is used for personalized teacher support, benefiting both struggling and advanced learners. Third, high school is a critical time for fostering independent learning before college. Flipped classrooms encourage students to take responsibility for their learning, improving time management and metacognitive skills. Finally, today's high school students are digital natives. Investigating flipped learning assesses how well educational technology enhances (or hinders) learning.

Conducting such research would provide evidence-based insights for educators, policymakers, and curriculum designers to optimize high school education.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Blended Learning

In the postmodern era, there are three types of classroom format: traditional face-to-face, virtual, and blended (Slomanson, 2014). Virtual learning, which is also called online learning, has been defined as an education in which learners receive content and instruction primarily via the internet (Watson, 2005). Blended learning is thus the result of blending traditional and online learning (Sota, 2016). This approach emphasizes delivering content and instruction, entirely or partly, through the internet and in a location away from home.

There are two prominent taxonomies for classifying blended learning, one with four and the other with six main models, and this study focuses on the former. These models are rotation, flex, self-blended, and enriched-virtual. The flipped classroom model is one of the rotation model sub-models or categories in which students have fixed schedules, and according to that rotate between two phases: face-to-face teacher instruction during a standard day at school, and online delivery of instruction and content of the same subject from home. In this model, students have the flexibility of determining the time, place, and method of receiving content (Staker & Horn, 2012).

2.2. Flipped Learning

Flipped learning is a specific model within the broader framework of blended learning. While all flipped classrooms use blended learning, not all blended learning follows the flipped approach. At the core of this model lies the FLIP framework, where the amalgamation of these four letters forms an acronym, with each letter representing a key concept: F for a flexible environment, L for a learner-centered culture, I for intentional content, and P for the professional educator (Alzahrani & Alqurashi, 2023; Han, 2022). In this model of learning, students receive instruction before class and engage in activities and application exercises during class. Pre-class, in-class, and after-class learning are three phases in flipped learning determined by the teacher based on learning outcomes (Unal & Unal, 2017).

As pre-class activities, students can watch videos and receive instruction for the upcoming session, and complete online exercises. Reading text materials such as books or teacher-provided notes as well as participating in online discussions are some additional pre-class activities. In-class activities can start with a short lecture or a brief content review by the teacher to help students recall the materials. Then, group learning activities take up most of the class time by encouraging students to use and apply the knowledge they acquired from the pre-class materials. Student presentations and taking quizzes are some additional in-class activities (Unal & Unal, 2017). Student self-evaluation or reflection, as a way of engagement in one's thinking (Ghanizadeh & Jahedizadeh, 2025) are some after-class activities, even though they might not be common in the flipped classroom model (Bhagat, 2016; Clark, 2015; Unal & Unal, 2017).

In a flipped classroom, students' needs are emphasized and the class time can be allocated to their weaknesses rather than instructions that can be easily learned at home (Dariyemez, 2023). Activities students normally do outside the class, known as homework, are rescheduled and restructured to be done during face-to-face class time in the flipped learning model (Mehring & Leis, 2018). The responsibilities and roles of students and teachers are affected by this important switch which enhances the quality of learning experiences (Mehring & Leis, 2018).

By flipping the instructional sequence, learners first study the material before class, and then during the class, they collaborate with the teacher and other students. In this situation, the teacher can provide immediate, corrective feedback to the class. In an EFL context, this approach can foster communicative interactions. The flipped EFL classroom is organized around interaction as a core learning strategy and helps students think through answers and devote time to developing their ideas (Mehring & Leis, 2018).

The feedback students receive, from their instructor and their classmates, gives them the opportunity to examine and reflect upon their learning and growth. The flipped learning model maximizes student-centeredness and minimizes teacher-talk time in the class and focuses on scaffolding the instruction before class via pre-class assignments. The flipped learning model creates a classroom environment for more active learning exercises and in EFL classes, it can result in a communicative learning environment.

Unal and Unal (2017) conducted a study on flipped learning and compared three concepts of students' performance, perceptions, and teacher satisfaction in a traditional and a flipped classroom. In their study, 16 public school teachers were asked to implement the flipped learning model. The results revealed an increase in active learning and problem solving in the flipped classroom due to students having learned the content before class. Other studies have also found positive results of flipped learning on student outcomes (e.g., Ay & Dağhan, 2023; Bhagat, 2016; Chao, 2015; Fisher, 2024; Gasparic, 2024; Jantakoon, 2025; Lo & Hew, 2017; Novianti, 2025).

Other studies have been conducted in Iran (e.g., Fardin et al., 2022; Shooli, 2022; Yousofi & Bashiri, 2023). Alibeigloo (2021), for instance, found that flipped approach positively affects students' use of speech acts. Studies have also explored the role of the flipped classroom in Iranian EFL students' writing ability (Li, 2022; Tahmasbi & RabaniEbrahimiPour, 2023), speaking (Lin & Mubarak, 2021), confidence (Nourinezhad, 2022). Finally, Rezaeyan (2025) aimed to explore the effect of flipped method on students' language skills and self-regulation in an Iranian context. Using a mixed methods approach, the researchers found the positive impact of flipping on students' speaking, listening, and self-regulation (Rezaeyan, 2025).

2.3. Student Perceptions of Classroom Activities

Perception is defined as the process in which individuals receive and interpret information from the environment (Jahedizadeh, 2016). Choice, interest, joy, and challenge are four dimensions of student perceptions of classroom activities (Gentry, 2002) that are identified as significant indicators of academic achievement (e.g., Ghanizadeh & Jahedizadeh, 2015). Jahedizadeh (2015), found that a supportive environment improves the students' motivations and an obstructive environment erodes their motivations.

Gentry (2002) believe that practitioners and scholars can examine schools and classrooms from the students' perspectives and understand how learners view their classroom activities, curriculum, instruction, and schools. Then learners' points of view can be considered and utilized in improving English learning courses as well as designing new ones. They also argue that this kind of evaluation, i.e., classroom activities evaluation from students' view, is not common in educational research and the result of such studies would help educators and practitioners understand what learners perceive and use that understanding to make appropriate instructional interventions.

Research has been conducted to examine the relationship between student perceptions and cognitive strategy use, the subject area, teachers' behavior and involvement (Hardré & Sullivan, 2008; Lee, 2009), as well as gender and grade-level (e.g., Gentry et al., 2002).

Students' perceptions might play a pivotal role in the success of flipped learning, as they influence engagement, motivation, and ultimately, learning outcomes. Flipped learning requires students to take responsibility for pre-class learning, and positive perceptions can lead to higher compliance with pre-class tasks and active participation in class. Also, student attitudes toward flipped learning affect their intrinsic motivation (Lo & Hew, 2017). Moreover, students' perceptions shape how they collaborate during class. Students who view in-class activities as valuable tend to participate more actively (Chen, 2018). Thus, studying perceptions is essential to optimize flipped learning and ensure it benefits all learners.

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. Does flipped learning influence EFL learners' perceptions of classroom activities?
 - 1.1. Does flipped learning influence EFL learners' perceptions of joy?
 - 1.2. Does flipped learning influence EFL learners' perceptions of interest?
 - 1.3. Does flipped learning influence EFL learners' perceptions of challenge?
 - 1.4. Does flipped learning influence EFL learners' perceptions of choice?
2. Does flipped learning influence EFL learners' language achievement?

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

This inquiry was conducted in two classes of a school in Mashhad, the capital of Khorasan Razavi Province, Iran, selected based on convenience sampling. One of these classes was the experimental group consisting of 18 students, and the other was the control group, including 18 students. Both classes were males at the same proficiency level and the same semester in their educational program. They were in the 10th grade of high school in the Iranian educational system. They were supposed to study two lessons from their textbook, *Vision*, in the first semester of the year.

3.2. Instruments

Students' perceptions and their language proficiency were assessed via using two instruments.

3.2.1. The Babel English Language Placement Test

To evaluate learners' language achievement, the Babel English Language Placement Test was utilized. It is a valid and reliable test with four forms of equal difficulty. The test measures reading, grammar, and vocabulary knowledge. The version used in this study included 25 items and took approximately 20 minutes to complete.

3.2.2. Students' Perceptions of Classroom Activities

For assessing students' perceptions of classroom activities, the translated version of the scale designed and validated by Gentry and Gable (2001) was used. It was translated into Persian and validated by Ghanizadeh and Jahedizadeh (2015). The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the subscales ranged from .71 to .80 (Interest = .86, Challenge = .73, Choice = .71, Joy = .79). The instrument consists of 31 items evaluating four dimensions of perception (interest, challenge, choice, and joy).

3.3. Procedure

To ensure participants' homogeneity in terms of proficiency and perceptions, the Babel English Language Placement Test and the perception questionnaire were administered to all students as a pretest. The experimental group was taught using the flipped learning model, in which they received audiovisual instruction at home, before coming to class. The control group was taught in a non-flipped learning approach—specifically, traditional instruction with no technology or multimedia resources. The students were all taught from the textbook itself inside the classroom. They were then required to complete homework at home.

The instructional materials for the flipped class included videos, pieces of music, PowerPoint presentations, and other audiovisual materials that the researchers designed according to the book and provided to the teacher as a software application which students could run on their computers. The software was designed based on the book that students were required to study that semester in three months and about 20 sessions (90 minutes each). Students should study two lessons of the book during the semester and the designed materials covered all parts of these two lessons. The software framework selected to design and implement the lessons was Storyline which is suitable software for creating interactive courses.

Articulate Storyline is leading software used by instructional designers, educators, and corporate trainers to create interactive, engaging, and visually appealing e-learning courses. It combines user-friendly design tools with advanced functionality, allowing users to develop content ranging from simple slideshows to complex, gamified learning experiences—without needing to code. Educators can use it to create dynamic content—such as quizzes that adapt based on user input—and engage learners through hands-on interactions.

As can be seen in Figure 1, each lesson started with this picture, and students could launch the software by clicking the START button.

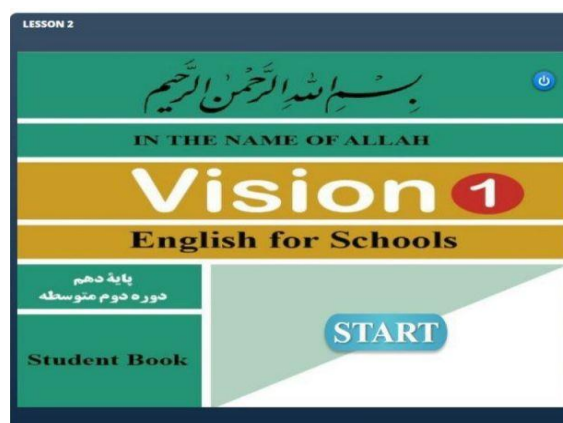


Figure 1.

The Starting Page of the Software

Each lesson in the book has different parts all of which are presented in Figure 2. Learners could select each part of the lesson they wished to work on by clicking on that section.



Figure 2.

The Content List of Lesson Two

In the Get Ready part, which serves as the warm-up, the pictures of the book were extracted and the related vocabulary was pronounced. In other words, students associated the sound, picture, and spelling, and they could play this part as many times as they needed to become familiar with the pronunciation and spelling at their own pace. At the end of this part, there were some questions that learners were required to answer. They received immediate feedback in the software by answering each question. Figure 3 shows the correct and incorrect feedback.

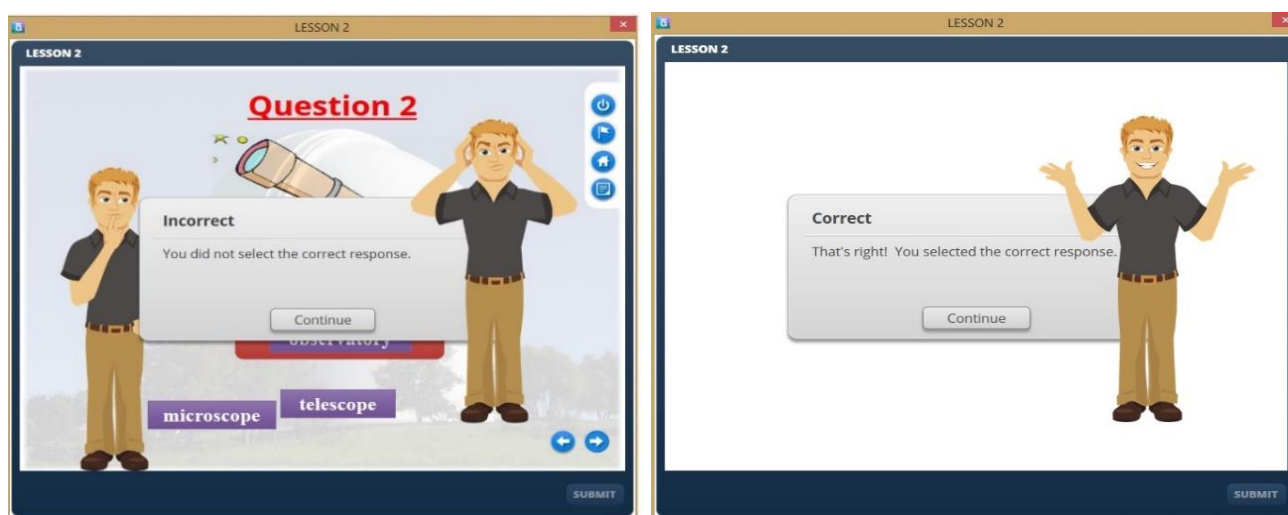


Figure 3.

The Correct and Incorrect Feedback in the Get Ready Part

After receiving the feedback, students could proceed by clicking the Continue button. They had only one attempt to answer the questions and if they wished to review a question, they needed to return to the beginning of the section. They could go to the next part entitled "conversation". This section had been prerecorded and was played while students viewed the images of two persons who were talking together and an image related to the conversation topic was set as the background. Figure 4 illustrates this section.

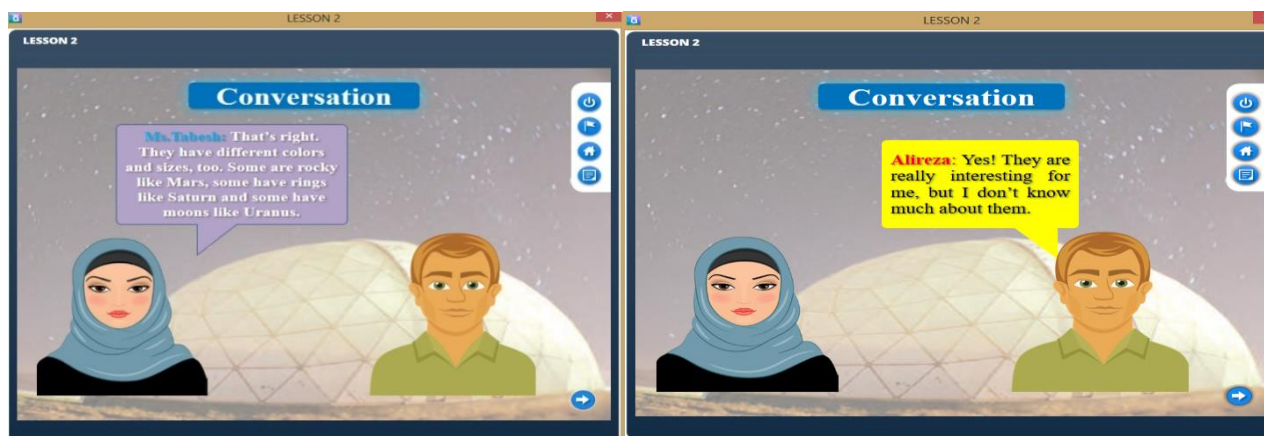


Figure 4.

The Conversation Parts

The conversation part ended with some questions and students were required to answer them interactively. Figure 5 shows two examples of this kind of question.



Figure 5.

The Conversation Questions in an Interactive Mode

The next section, "New Words and Expressions," introduced students to new words of the lesson by clicking on each word, shown in Figure 6. Clicking a word in the left column displayed a corresponding image along with a sample sentence and audio playback read the sentence aloud. The section continued with illustrative examples and concluded with interactive questions.

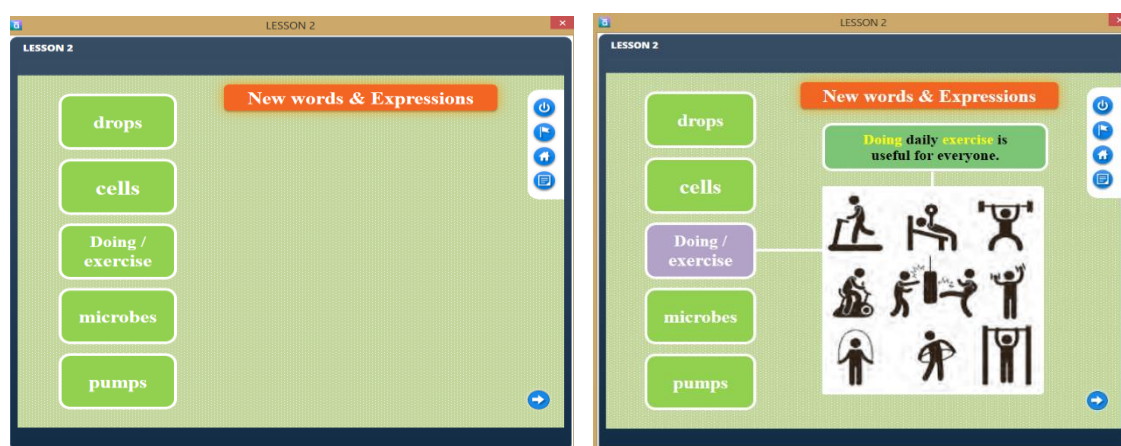
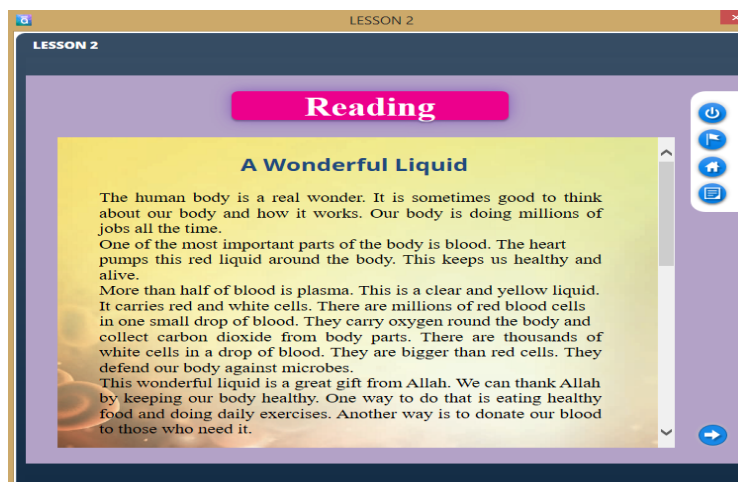


Figure 6.

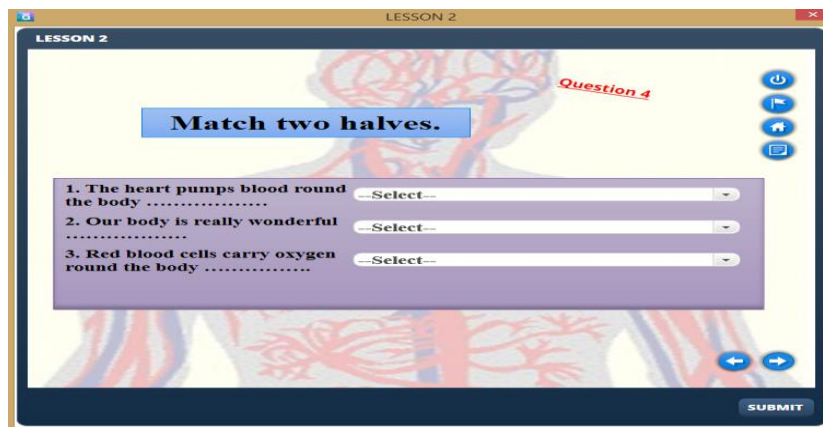
An Example of the New Words and Expressions Section

After answering the questions at the end of this part, a video file was played to provide some more information about the lesson topic. Next, the Reading section was presented (Figure 7). This section began with the reading passage of the lesson and an audio narration reading the text aloud.

**Figure 7.**

The Reading Section

Depending on the lesson topic, one or two videos were included to facilitate text comprehension. This part, like the previous parts, ended with some interactive questions to provide feedback to students. Figure 8 shows an example of such questions.

**Figure 8.**

An Example of Interactive Reading Questions

The Grammar part began with a short video explaining the grammar topic in each lesson and then some examples were presented. At the end of this part, four questions were provided to allow students to self-assess (Figure 9).

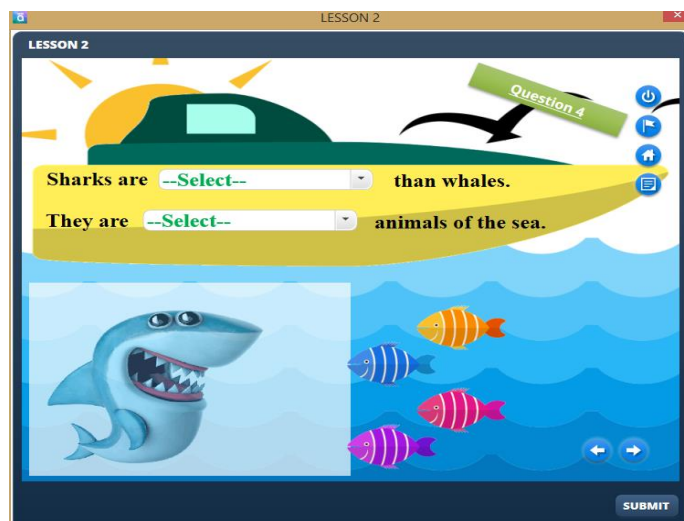


Figure 9.

An Example of Grammar Questions

The Listening and Speaking parts were the subsequent sections included in the software as shown in Figure 10.

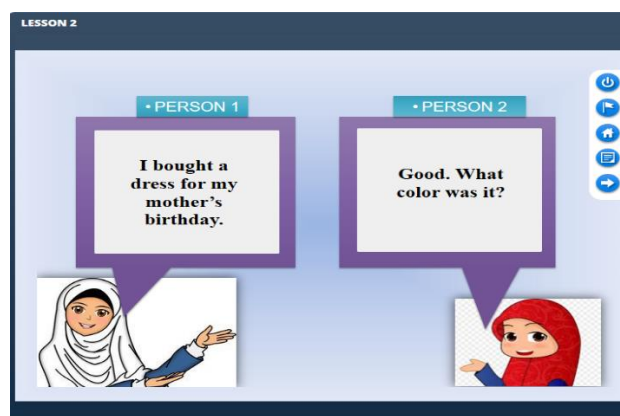


Figure 10.

Listening and Speaking Part

Students listened to the conversation while viewing the corresponding text. Figures 11 and 12 show examples of the Pronunciation and Writing sections, respectively.

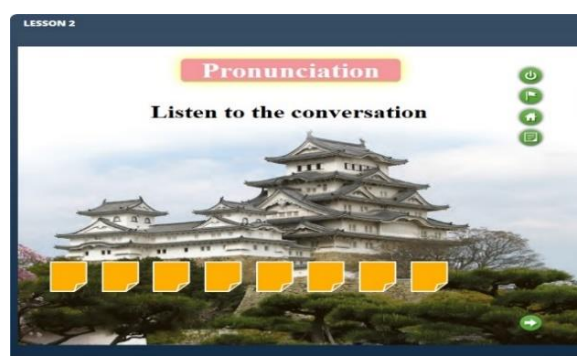


Figure 11.

Pronunciation Section



Figure 12.

Writing Section

At the end of the lesson, a brief quiz was included designed as a simple game. Jimmy wants to go scuba diving and he needs to earn points by users answering questions correctly (Figure 13).

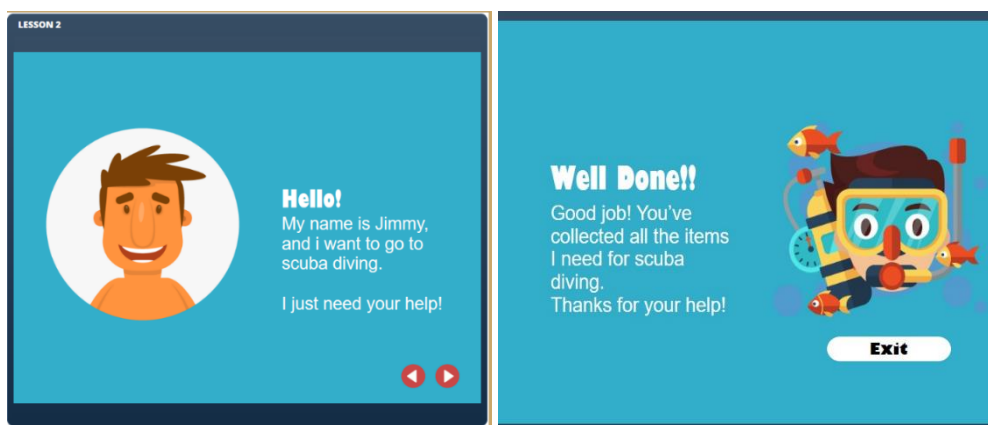


Figure 13.

Sample Pages of the Quiz Section

Finally, students could view their quiz results, as illustrated in Figure 14.



Figure 14.

The Results Section at the End of Each Quiz

Students received the software on a CD or a flash drive, based on their preference, to use on their home computers. They watched and listened to the material before going to the class. The teacher, during the first session, ensured that students could run the software without difficulty. Additionally, the teacher could also distribute the material online to students via social networking platforms.

Considering Vygotsky's theory, the teacher divided the students into four or five heterogeneous groups according to the results of the Babel Test. In groups, more knowledgeable students could provide scaffolding for others. When students were answering the questions and interacting with each other, the teacher provided individual feedback and support. To maximize instructional time between students and teachers, the teacher explained any misunderstandings or difficulties they encountered.

3.4. Data Analysis

To analyze data, SPSS version 22 software was utilized. To ensure the two groups were homogeneous in their language proficiency and perceptions of classroom activities, independent-samples t-tests and multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) were conducted. The same analyses were conducted on the post-test data. To determine whether the flipped learning approach influenced language learning, an independent-samples t-test was used. To examine whether the flipped experience influenced perceptions of classroom activities, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was employed.

4. Results

To examine participants' proficiency level homogeneity, an independent samples t-test was run: control ($M=7.27$, $SD=2.67$), experimental ($M=7.11$, $SD=3.26$). The results revealed that there is no statistically significant difference between the two groups regarding the degree of their proficiency level ($t=0.67$, $p=.86$). Besides, to ensure their perception homogeneity, MANOVA was run (Table 1).

Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics of Perceptions across Control and Experimental Groups

	Groups	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
interest	1.00	19.22	2.98	18
	2.00	21.16	2.81	18
	Total	20.19	3.02	36
challenge	1.00	19.88	4.67	18
	2.00	21.72	3.12	18
	Total	20.80	4.02	36
choice	1.00	14.61	3.58	18
	2.00	16.11	2.72	18
	Total	15.36	3.22	36
Joy	1.00	17.83	3.92	18
	2.00	19.44	2.63	18
	Total	18.63	3.39	36

(1= control, 2= experimental).

The results of MANOVA revealed that there was not a statistically significant difference between the two groups on the combined dependent variables: ($F=1.03$, $p=.40$, Wilks' Lambda=.88).

To examine the difference between control and experimental groups regarding language achievement, an independent samples t-test was run. The results showed that the mean scores of language learning across participants in the control and experimental groups are different: control ($M=9.38$, $SD=2.25$), experimental ($M=11.50$, $SD=2.06$).

As Table 2 indicates, there is a statistically significant difference between the two groups regarding the degree of their language learning ($t=-2.93$, $p=.00$).

Table 2.*Independent Samples T-Test Showing the Results of Posttest on Language Learning*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
		F	Sig.	t	df			
Babel- Post	Equal variances assumed	.71	.40	-2.93	34	.00	-2.11	.72
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.93	33.74	.00	-2.11	.72

To investigate the effect of the flipped learning approach on students' perceptions of classroom activities, the differences were computed in the post-test. As can be seen in Table 3, the means of the experimental group in all four perceptions are higher than those of the control group.

Table 3.*Descriptive Statistics Showing the Results of Post-Test on Perceptions*

	Groups	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Interest-Post	1.00	28.38	7.97	18
	2.00	32.11	3.70	18
	Total	30.25	6.41	36
Challenge-Post	1.00	25.72	4.07	18
	2.00	34.55	4.70	18
	Total	30.13	6.23	36
Choice-Post	1.00	14.50	5.10	18
	2.00	27.72	3.15	18
	Total	21.11	7.90	36
Joy-Post	1.00	26.38	8.18	18
	2.00	30.66	3.94	18
	Total	28.52	6.69	36

To see if these observed differences are statistically significant, MANOVA was run (Table 4), and the results indicated a significant difference between the two groups ($F=26.54$, $p=.000$, Wilks' Lambda=.22). This implies that about 65 percent of the variance in perceptions can be accounted for by the flipped learning approach employed in the experimental group.

Table 4.*MANOVA Table Displaying the Results of Perceptions across Control and Experimental Groups*

	Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Square
Level	Wilks' Lambda	.22	26.54	4.00	31.00	.000	.65

As Table 5 demonstrates, the difference holds true across three perceptions: Challenge ($F=36.28$, $p=.00$, partial eta squared=.51), Choice ($F=87.39$, $p=.00$, partial eta squared=.08), and Joy ($F=3.99$, $p=.05$, partial eta squared=.10). As can be seen, the highest differences are observed in Choice and Challenge perceptions with no significant impact on Interest perception. The results demonstrated that the flipped learning approach could account for over 70 percent of Choice perception, about 50 percent for Challenge, and 10 percent for Joy perception.

Table 5.*MANOVA Table Displaying the Results of Three Types of Perceptions across Control and Experimental Groups*

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Groups	Interest-Post	124.69	1	124.69	3.22	.08	.08
	Challenge-Post	702.25	1	702.25	36.28	.00	.516
	Choice-Post	1573.44	1	1573.44	87.39	.00	.720
	Joy-Post	164.69	1	164.69	3.99	.05	.105

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Considering the first research question, the results showed that the flipped model positively affected the learners' perceptions of classroom activities. According to the findings of this study, the flipped learning model enhanced the joy perception by about 10 percent. In the pre-class learning phase in the flipped learning model, students worked with the software, which included colorful pictures, background music, and some interactive activities. In comparison to studying the mainstream book, these kinds of activities were likely more enjoyable for students. As Little (2012) stated, engaging in activities and feeling joy have a positive correlation and, in this study, working with the software creates a greater likelihood of engagement in the activities potentially leading students to experience higher levels of joy.

The second finding is related to 'Choice' and the results indicated the highest impact (70%) of the implemented flipped learning model on this dimension. Street (2001) suggested instructors provide learners with choices in activities to foster their motivations. In the flipped learning model, learners can select each section of the software and do related activities in their preferred order and at their own pace, as often as needed. Hence, they have significant autonomy in choosing the first and second levels of Bloom's taxonomy before going to the class.

Thus, the flipped learning model was found to have a stronger impact on students' perception of Choice (reflecting autonomy and control) compared to Joy (reflecting immediate emotional enjoyment) due to the fundamental ways the method restructures learning. This difference stems from the distinct nature of these two subcategories. In flipped classrooms, students engage with pre-class materials (videos, readings, quizzes) at their own pace, allowing them to pause, rewind, or revisit difficult concepts. Furthermore, unlike traditional lectures, flipped learning often incorporates choice-based activities. Research indicates that when students have input into their learning pathways, their sense of ownership and motivation increase. In contrast, Joy is more variable and context-dependent. While some students enjoy the flexibility and independence, others may experience stress (Chen Hsieh et al., 2017). Unlike Choice, which is structurally embedded in flipped models, Joy is more subjective; some learners prefer structured, teacher-led environments.

The third aspect of the study was on the effects of the flipped model on the Challenge perception and the results showed that the Challenge dimension was positively affected, showing a 50 percent enhancement. Considering the definition of challenge, a "stimulating or interesting task or problem" (Chval & Davis, 2008, p. 27), the flipped classroom requires students to answer more questions from their instructors and their classmates, which can result in them facing more challenges. In their groups, formed according to Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development theory, less proficient students encounter challenges interacting and doing activities with more proficient students. Similarly, more knowledgeable students face the challenge of effectively scaffolding less proficient peers within their group.

All in all, the findings of the present study showed a significant positive effect of the flipped learning model on students' perceptions of classroom activities, which is consistent with previous studies (Unal & Unal, 2017) and most learners reported a more enjoyable environment in flipped classrooms in comparison to traditional classes, supporting the findings of previous studies (Grypp & Luebeck, 2015; Huang & Hong, 2016).

The second research question investigated the effect of flipped model on students' achievement. The findings of the present study showed significant improvement in students' learning; the mean scores of the experimental group on the post-Babel test were higher than the control group, corroborating the results of the previous studies (Bhagat, 2016; Chao, 2015). By maximizing the value of in-class time in the flipped learning model, students have the chance of experiencing higher levels of Bloom's taxonomy, analyzing, applying, evaluating, and creating, which can help them improve their mastery (Unal & Unal, 2017).

Furthermore, flipped learning can simulate authentic situations and help learners practice English in semi-authentic situations and receive immediate feedback from their instructor and classmates (Mehring & Leis, 2018). Therefore, the results regarding the effect of the flipped method on EFL students' achievement are in line with previous research (e.g., Bicen & Beheshti, 2022; Lee & Wallace, 2018; Yan, 2024). Fitriah (2025), for instance, conducted a meta-analysis to examine studies published between 2015 and 2024 investigating flipped learning and student achievement. They analyzed 14 articles, all of which found a positive effect of the flipped classroom on EFL students' proficiency and skills (e.g., Etemadfar et al., 2020; Hosseini, 2021; Öztürk & Çakıroğlu, 2021; Putri, 2024; Yulian, 2021).

The results partially contrast with those of Cabi (2018), who found no significant effect of flipped classroom on students' performance. Other studies have also reported no significant effect of flipping on learner outcomes (e.g., Sun & Wu, 2016). These divergent results may be attributed to differences in students' learning styles and strategies.

Implementing flipped classrooms in Iran might face several contextual challenges due to unique educational, cultural, and technological constraints within the country. These factors include:

1. **Technological and infrastructure limitations:** Some students, particularly in rural or low-income areas, lack reliable internet access, smartphones, or computers, making pre-class video lectures and online activities inaccessible. Also, Internet speeds can be slow, and government restrictions (e.g., blocking platforms like YouTube) limit access to educational content unless localized alternatives (e.g., Aparat, Shad app) are used. Moreover, both teachers and students may lack sufficient training in using digital tools effectively for flipped learning.
2. **Sociocultural attitudes toward pedagogy:** The educational system in Iranian public schools has long relied on lecture-based, teacher-dominated instruction (Ghanizadeh & Rostami, 2015). Students and parents may resist

student-centered approaches, expecting direct instruction. Many students are accustomed to rote memorization and exam-focused learning, making active learning (e.g., discussions, problem-solving) in flipped classrooms unfamiliar and challenging. Also, in single-gender schools of Iran, flipped learning dynamics may differ, with some studies suggesting girls may engage more in online discussions, while boys may need more structured accountability.

3. Curriculum and assessment constraints: The Iranian Ministry of Education mandates a fixed syllabus, leaving little flexibility for teachers to redesign lessons for a flipped model. On the other hand, high-stakes exams (e.g., Konkur for university entrance) prioritize content coverage over critical thinking (Ghanizadeh & Rostami, 2015), discouraging innovative methods like flipped learning that emphasize deeper engagement. Finally, teachers often have little freedom to modify content or assessment methods to implement flipped learning effectively.
4. Institutional and logistical barriers: Many English teachers in Iran are not trained in flipped pedagogy, and professional development opportunities are limited. School leaders may be skeptical of its effectiveness or reluctant to adopt it due to accountability concerns, and large class sizes make individualized attention harder to achieve.
5. Economic and policy factors: Public schools often lack resources to provide devices or digital infrastructure for flipped learning and policies on digital content (e.g., filtering, approval of online materials) can hinder access to global ELT resources (Ghanizadeh & Rostami, 2015).

Despite these challenges, some strategies could improve flipped classroom adoption in Iran; such as hybrid models (offline digital resources), localized platforms (Shad, Aparat), teacher training (like workshops), and parental involvement. Thus, while flipped learning has potential in Iranian ELT, its success depends on overcoming infrastructural, cultural, and systemic barriers. Tailored solutions that consider local constraints are necessary for effective implementation.

The findings of this study would help EFL practitioners to design flipped courses by using appropriate tools and following special guidelines. Considering the results of the present study, they would be able to make their own flipped courses to enhance the learning gain of their students. This study would make sure the instructors and material developers of the positive effects of the flipped learning classrooms on Iranian learners, especially K-12 students, and they would be able to use the result of this study to design more enjoyable and motivational classes.

The results of this study also would help instructors and practitioners from other fields to use technology in their teaching program and be optimistic about its amazing results in their learners' outcomes. There are successful models of flipped courses in other fields, for example, math, that was reviewed in chapter two for non-Iranian learners that Iranian practitioners can develop and replicate them for Iranian learners, as this study did. Future studies can examine the effect of this kind of learning on other grades of the k-12 program in Iran and private institutes and study other aspects of the flipped learning classes in Iran and its effects on teachers as well as learners.

The findings and limitations of the present study suggest possible avenues for future studies: Future studies can examine this effect for different ages and different genders. One key issue is gender-based learning differences, which may introduce selection bias. Studies suggest that male and female students often exhibit distinct learning preferences, engagement patterns with technology, and classroom participation styles. These inherent differences mean that results from a single sex may not accurately predict outcomes in other educational settings. Without accounting for these variations, the study's conclusions could be misleading when applied to broader educational contexts.

Besides, researchers can conduct their research in private institutes instead of schools. The time of the study can be expanded and instead of one semester, it can be applied for one or even some years to find out the longitudinal effects of this kind of learning. Future studies also can design special courses with different tools and different ways of content delivery and different style of materials development to find out the effect of each element on the quality of the course. Besides, special courses can be designed to investigate the effect of the flipped learning model on each of the main skills for Iranian learners, including reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The effect of this kind of learning also can be studied in the ESP area.

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Iranian Sworn Translators' Perceptions regarding Their Work-Related Satisfaction, Happiness, and Burnout

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ABSTRACT

The concepts of work-related satisfaction, happiness, and burnout have received increasing attention in psychological research. As the field of translation studies is interdisciplinary, it has consistently drawn inspiration from various fields in the humanities, including psychology. Since sworn translators play a crucial role in translation communities, the present article aimed to look into job-related satisfaction, happiness, and burnout utilizing a qualitative interview-based approach and Iranian sworn translators as participants. The findings revealed that sworn translations involved challenges and occasionally unpleasant aspects; nonetheless, the majority of participants reported feeling satisfaction and happiness in terms of the job in general, the translation process, and their income. Furthermore, this profession has led several participants to experience fatigue, stress, nervousness, sleep disturbances, and indigestion, but the most frequent manifestations of burnout are mental exhaustion and pain in the neck, arms, hands, and eyes. These findings can be helpful for sworn translators and policymakers seeking solutions or preventing negative consequences.

KEYWORDS: sworn translators, job satisfaction, happiness at work, burnout

1. Introduction

Although Translation studies has had a strong focus on translation itself and translated texts, this discipline has shifted from solely text-related studies to translation as a social practice in which many actors cooperate (Wolf, 2010). With the emergence of sociological trends, Chesterman (2009) proposed a branch of study called translator studies with a primary focus on the agents of translation, like translators and interpreters. Many researchers have accordingly concentrated on translation professionals; however, sworn translators seem to have received less attention compared to other types of translators (Plencovich et al., 2021).

Sworn translators are highly professional individuals whom the Judiciary has authorized to translate legal, official, and personal documents (Mayoral, 2000; Seddighi Seresht, 2021). They reside at the heart of the translation community, making them an ideal candidate for research by examining their attitudes towards their working conditions, the presence or absence of job satisfaction and happiness at work, and the possible existence of mental and physical burnout. Sworn translators were chosen for this research because their situation is unique compared to other translators; they have to deal with issues that freelance, in-house, and other types of translators will not normally encounter, such as a rigorous accreditation process, higher profile texts, legal liabilities, and generally less freedom over translation procedures and translation rates. These added challenges and responsibilities make sworn translators' attitudes, especially towards satisfaction, happiness, and burnout, intriguing and study-worthy.

While there have been some studies into sworn translators in the Iranian context (Abbas Nejad & Ghasemi Nejad, 2016; Ghasemi Nejad, 2018; Pezeshki, 2017; Seddighi Seresht, 2021); there is a notable absence of research exploring Iranian sworn

translators' job-related satisfaction, happiness, and burnout. Job satisfaction and happiness at work are both undeniably worthy subjects of investigation because they can affect both translators and their translation quality (Liu, 2013). Moreover, work-related burnout can easily influence translators' perspectives and performance (Akbari Motlaq & Tengku Mahadi, 2020). Therefore, this study can contribute to understanding sworn translators' well-being by offering insights that can inform professional support systems and improve working conditions.

To pursue the objective of studying these concepts, the following research questions must be answered:

1. What is sworn translators' attitude toward their job satisfaction?
2. What is sworn translators' attitude toward their happiness at work?
3. Has this job caused any form of burnout in official translators?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Sworn Translators' Duties and Responsibilities

Although there are seemingly minor differences in every country, the concept of sworn translation and the roles and duties of sworn translators remain essentially the same. These individuals are crucial in the translation community: they are legally capable of producing sworn translations, and they also approve the credibility of translations with their signatures and seals (Ordóñez-López, 2021; Plencovich et al., 2021). A sworn translation has the same legal significance as an original document and can be used for judicial and administrative purposes. (Arcones, 2015). Translations by sworn translators in Brazil, for instance, have jurisdiction throughout the country. In other words, such translations will be accepted across the entire region, including Brazilian embassies and consulates abroad (Nascimento, 2006).

Similar to other countries, according to Iranian laws, sworn translators are authorized by the legal authorities to perform certain translational acts. Written translation is required for documents produced in a language other than Persian, whereby their Persian renditions are required in an Iranian administration. This is also required for documents created in Iran, whose translations are called for in a foreign country (Zahedi, 2013). Interpreting is required when a person present in any legal setting, especially in court sessions, does not know the official language (Vahabi & Ghorbanzadeh, 2023).

Additionally, even after a strict accreditation process, serving as a sworn translator is a significant responsibility. For example, translation errors are punishable by law, because they can have serious negative consequences for clients (KUBACKI & Gościński, 2015). Misconducts include translating without a valid license, refusing to provide service to clients, refusing to attend court or legal sessions without a plausible excuse, not having an office, not adhering to prices set by the Judiciary, and finally, committing translation errors; additionally, first-time offenders are punished by license disqualification for one year, second-time offenders by disqualification for two years, and the penalty for recidivism is lifetime disqualification (Zahedi, 2013).

2.2. Job Satisfaction, Happiness at Work, and Work-Related Burnout

Job satisfaction refers to the degree of positive or negative feelings that employees experience in their jobs (Şchiopu, 2015). It is an employee's sense of success on the job (Aziri, 2011). Job satisfaction is influenced by a myriad of factors such as the nature of the tasks, work environment, compensation, recognition, feedback, autonomy, relationships, and alignment with personal values and goals (Belias & Koustelios, 2014; Pitaloka & Sofia, 2014). In turn, job satisfaction can have a positive effect on the overall well-being of employees, both mentally and physically (Westover et al., 2010). In fact, one of the most evident effects of job satisfaction is on an individual's mental health (Nadinloyi et al., 2013). When employees are happy and satisfied with their jobs, they experience lower levels of stress, anxiety, and depression (Aruldoss et al., 2021; Poursadeghiyan et al., 2016).

Although the concept of job satisfaction has not been widely explored in translation studies, it has received increasing attention. For instance, both Wallis (2006) and Mohammadi Dehcheshmeh (2017) focused on the effects of technology (specifically, translation memories for the former, besides an assortment of translation memories and machine translation for the latter) on translators' job satisfaction. They both concluded that use of such technology could greatly affect translators' satisfaction. From another perspective, Çoban (2019) and Hubscher-Davidson (2018) sought to find a relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction (although the second author also studied translators' tolerance for ambiguity). Both studies found a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction, while Hubscher-Davidson was led to another positive correlation between tolerance for ambiguity and job satisfaction. From yet another perspective, Liu (2024) examined the experiences of Chinese translators during the COVID-19 pandemic. She found that these translators were satisfied with working in environments that allowed them to learn more, and they viewed the pandemic as another challenge to overcome.

Proceeding to a few studies about interpreters, Leminen and Hokkanen (2024) examined interpreters' job satisfaction and ethical stressors; although they did not observe a clear link between the two, they were able to identify Finnish interpreters' ethical dilemmas. Both Monzó-Nebot and Álvarez-Álvarez (2024), as well as Phanthaphoommee and Thumvichit (2024), qualitatively evaluated health-care interpreters' job satisfaction: the first article found job satisfaction to be tied to fulfilling essential needs, which for that sample of interpreters was competence, connectedness, and autonomy; the second article discovered that interpreters required social support, self-worth, and a sense of belonging to feel satisfied.

More importantly, two articles addressed sworn translators' job satisfaction. Piecychna (2019) stated that she could find no previous research into sworn translator job satisfaction, which is why she had 73 Polish sworn translators (i.e., the number of people who ended up responding) answer a multi-item Likert scale questionnaire. She discovered that the participants enjoyed high levels of job satisfaction in the following items: independence, variety, ability utilization, responsibility, creativity, and achievement, whereas the security and compensation items tended to cause dissatisfaction. Korpál (2021) took a broader approach by tackling the stress, medical complications, and job satisfaction of sworn translators through a questionnaire administered to 127 participants. He presented the participants with nine aspects of the job and asked them to rate their satisfaction, bringing positive results.

Moving on, happiness at work is the joy individuals experience with their work; it is a mindset characterized by self-improvement and the pursuit of personal and professional goals (Willis, 2024). Happiness at work is influenced by both internal factors and external circumstances, making it susceptible to emotional fluctuations and shifts in the work environment (Lutterbie & Pryce-Jones, 2013; Lyubomirsky & Kurtz, 2008). This emotion is significant, as employees who experience it tend to be more productive, creative, and committed to their jobs; moreover, they tend to have higher levels of overall well-being (Costa et al., 2024).

Similar to the concept of job satisfaction, a few scholars have examined the subject of translators' happiness at work. For instance, the ultimate goal of Liu (2013) was to find a correlation between translators' visibility and happiness at work; she found that the more visible the translators were, the more positive their feelings. Interestingly, Bednárová-Gibová (2020) and Bednárová-Gibová and Majherová (2021) assessed literary translators' happiness at work, finding that they were happy, with happiness positively correlated with status and remuneration. Then for agency translators, Bednárová-Gibová (2021) discovered significant positive correlations between happiness at work and environmental factors, text types, time pressure, and concentration.

Bednárová-Gibová and Madoš (2019) measured happiness at work between two groups of high-profile legal translators: Slovak sworn translators and Slovak EU institutional translators. Their primary goal was to identify the factors correlated with happiness before comparing happiness levels between the two translator groups. They reported both groups to be happy although neither was significantly happier than the other; they also observed correlations between happiness and age, remuneration, status, visibility, and influence. In another study with the same participants, Bednárová-Gibová (2022) identified some differences between the two groups: sworn translators described higher levels of hedonic happiness and instant satisfaction than institutional translators.

Last but not least, burnout is a condition of physical and emotional fatigue that leads to a slow decline in a person's motivation and professional identity, causing them to lose the sense of purpose and significance they once experienced from work (Kristensen et al., 2005; Riethof & Bob, 2019). Employees suffering from burnout often lack the energy required to perform their jobs effectively and struggle to connect with their work; this condition typically arises from prolonged exposure to high levels of work-related stress (Bakker et al., 2005). As individuals grapple with stress, they may also face disengagement and detachment from their responsibilities, along with feelings of negativity and cynicism toward their work environment or colleagues (Bakker et al., 2004; Demerouti et al., 2001).

There is a visible shortage of literature on burnout (and not just some of its symptoms) in the field of translation studies. Araghian and Ghonsooly (2018) examined burnout syndrome and its relationship with personality traits in Iranian undergraduate and graduate students. They claimed that translation was a demanding task, resulting in emotional strain and that individual personality characteristics may influence performance outcomes. Their findings indicated a positive correlation between burnout and neuroticism and a negative correlation between burnout and agreeableness, suggesting that students exhibiting elevated levels of anxiety, stress, and insecurity were at a greater risk of experiencing burnout, whereas students who possessed more amicable and cooperative traits were less susceptible to experiencing burnout.

Through a longitudinal study, Akbari Motlaq and Tengku Mahadi (2020) sought to investigate the influence of diverse life stressors encountered by translation students during their pre-service training on their burnout and career optimism in their inaugural years as professional translators. They found that the participants' experiences of burnout were influenced by various life stressors and a lack of social support, leading to diminished positive attitudes towards their careers as translators.

3. Methodology

3.1. Design

This research is based on a phenomenological research design which sets out to pursue subjective perceptions of reality by describing the phenomenon through the eyes of the participants, dealing with personal experiences instead of objective data (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008; Patten, 2016). "It is usually akin to descriptive research in that it is about describing rather than explaining" (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p. 90). Interviews, focus groups, and observations are typical instruments for this design (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). Potential limitations of this design (and qualitative models in general) include subjectivity and non-generalizability (Polkinghorne, 1989; van der Schaaf, 2019). Nonetheless, these limitations posed no issue for this article, as it never aimed to be generalizable; it only aimed to be exploratory and uncover the sworn translators' point of view.

3.2. Instrumentation

Since this avenue of research is very new in the Iranian context, an exploratory study was imperative, leading to descriptions through interviews instead of statistical corroboration.

There is an abundance of questionnaires about work-related satisfaction, happiness, and burnout, especially in psychological and organizational research. The researchers analyzed some of these questionnaires to find the most essential topics to raise, which formed the basis of a semi-structured interview. Initially, the researchers drew questions about job satisfaction from the Job Descriptive Index (JDI) and its companion piece the Job in General Index (JIG). These widely used measures of job satisfaction were developed to assess individuals' feelings toward their jobs (Kiefer et al., 2005; Kinicki et al., 2002; Stanton et al., 2002). Second, happiness-related questions were developed using the Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS). This scale was initially developed to assess overall life happiness (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999); however, the researchers made minor adjustments to the phrasing to evaluate happiness at work. Third, burnout questions were part of the Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT), which was created to consolidate research on the intricate nature of burnout among workers (Schaufeli et al., 2019). As the unabbreviated title suggests, "the BAT only measures burnout complaints, not the causes or consequences of burnout" (Schaufeli et al., 2019, p. 6).

Once the scales were chosen, the researchers asked the three sworn translators to examine the questionnaires and identify the most important questions. Because the researchers wanted the interviews to comprise as few questions as possible (so that interviews would not take too long), among the marked-down items, they selected several that were the most representative of each issue. They then proceeded to translate these items into Persian language. After the translation was completed, the researcher had several other translators, and experts looked it over and suggested any necessary revisions. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in Persian.

Additionally, semi-structured interviews are essentially a bridge between the rigidity of structured interviews and the chaos of unstructured ones, whereby a balance of power is maintained because interviewers guide and direct interviewees through conversation without restricting them (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014). Advantages of using this type of interview include conducting in-depth explorations, the potential of hearing unanticipated information, and not letting participants get too carried away with their explanations (Matthews & Ross, 2010).

As semi-structured interviews were the target, the interviewer controlled the themes discussed. Still, interviewees were allowed to elaborate and talk more to address the issues on their minds, so, at the end of each section, they were explicitly asked if they wanted to add anything. Appendix 1 covers all questions asked during the interviews.

3.3. Participants

The sampling procedures were a combination of criterion and convenience sampling. For the former, criterion data gathering searches for participants that possess a specific criterion or feature; moreover, "the researcher deliberately targets cases which offer a dramatic or full representation of the phenomenon, either by their intensity or by their uniqueness" (Dorneyi, 2007, p. 128). Accordingly, the only inclusion criterion in this inquiry was for translators to be certified by the judiciary system and, more importantly, to run a practice with the said certification.

As for the latter, convenience sampling entails selecting those participants who are most readily available (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014). As an epitome of non-probability sampling, convenience sampling suffers from the drawbacks of non-generalizability, "non-coverage" (since representatives of certain aspects in the population may not be selected), and "self-selection" (as individuals may refuse to participate) (Golzar et al., 2022, p. 3). In all fairness, convenience samples are seldom entirely derived from convenience alone; they typically incorporate elements of purposeful selection (Dorneyi, 2007).

Convenience sampling was, for lack of a better word, convenient since the researchers first visited translators based in the cities of Kerman and Mashhad, where the researchers had lived, and they directly or indirectly knew many sworn translators there. Next, they traveled to Tehran because this is the capital city of Iran, and more than half the population of the sworn translators in the whole country (precisely 497 out of 815 according to <https://sanam.eadl.ir>, which is the official website for sworn translators), are situated in this city. As a result, the final tally of participants covered 27 sworn translators located in three cities: Kerman, Mashhad, and Tehran.

3.4. Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection in this research was straightforward; the most taxing step was persuading as many sworn translators as possible to participate. Since personal contact was bound to be more effective than calls and texts, the researchers walked into the sworn translators' offices and asked if they would be willing to be interviewed. To ensure positive responses, they were assured that their anonymity would be protected and that the interviews would not take too long. Unfortunately, many people refused to participate either because they were too busy or because they had no interest in participating in such research (at least, these were the reasons they offered). Those translators who were kind enough to accept were asked the interview questions, and their answers were carefully written down word for word, and the sessions were voice recorded with the participants' explicit permission.

Regarding the data analysis, the researchers found that qualitative content analysis—a qualitative method for analyzing information—would be appropriate for semi-structured interviews. Content analysis involves taking analytical steps to identify themes, label and interpret said themes (coding), and draw conclusions on their basis (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014). Coding is an essential part of content analysis and can be divided into two stages: 1) initial coding, where the researchers find themes related

to the matter at hand and clearly label them; and 2) second-level coding, in which researchers examine the labels, recognize recurrent themes, and find patterns as well as categories (Dörneyi, 2007).

Accordingly, the researchers of the present article carefully went through the interviews before highlighting any thoughts that the participants had voiced about work-related happiness, satisfaction, enjoyment, income, burnout, and challenges and labeled them as such. The researchers then analyzed these labeled sections to find recurrent themes, patterns of ideas, agreements, and disagreements, so that the translators' attitudes could be reported in well-organized categories. It is noteworthy that the researchers conducted the coding process individually, thoroughly reviewed each other's work, and reached a consensus on the most reliable codes and patterns.

4. Results

4.1. Demographic Information

Table 1.

Demographic Information

Demographics		n
Gender	Female	7
	Male	20
Age ¹	31 to 44	4
	45 to 64	19
	65 and older	4
Language ²	English	23
	German	3
	Arabic	1
Degree	Highschool diploma	1
	Associate degree	2
	Bachelor's degree	9
	Master's degree	6
	Ph.D.	9
Major ³	Translation Studies	12
	Language related	11
	Non-language related	4
Years of Experience ⁴	1-5	1
	6-10	5
	More than 15	21

Even though English translators were not specifically targeted, it is not surprising that this count is much higher than that of other languages because that is precisely how the whole population is: in accordance with <https://sanam.eadl.ir>, out of all the 815 sworn translators in Iran, 571 operate in English.

High school education is the minimum requirement for taking an exam for sworn translation. In the past, fewer people would reach higher academic levels, but according to the report of informed applicants, in the last two rounds of interviews, PhD students and holders seemed to be preferred (or they could have simply been the most qualified candidates).

Sworn translators who had studied translation studies covered the majority (by a narrow victory), followed by the runner-up of language-related majors. This sounds reasonable, as these people studied to work with languages, translate, and interpret.

4.2. Happiness

Apart from five participants who admitted to being negative people and having an unhappy approach towards life, the rest of the

¹ Since a statistical analysis was not the endgame, knowing the exact numerical age would be useless here. As a result, the interviewer only needed to know in which age group the participants fit; the only issue left was how to forge the age groups. In as much as this research followed professionals' attitudes towards their careers, it would be appropriate to associate age to profession. Super and Jordaan (1973) proposed age groups based on stages of career development, as in how far in their careers people have come at each certain age. Obviously, people of lower age groups (like teenagers) did not exist in this sample.

² Working language apart from Persian.

³ Specifying the exact major for each participant was not the directive. It was only important if they had studied translation studies, a language-related major (aka literature, teaching, or linguistics), or one of the many other university majors that have nothing to do with studying the language.

⁴ Even though they may have had more years of experience as other types of translators (freelance translators for instance), only their experience as official translators mattered to this study.

participants gravitated towards the happier side of the scale. Surprisingly, when later asked if they were happy translators, fewer people (3) saw themselves as unhappy translators, meaning that the majority of participants identified themselves as moderately to very happy translators. A few of them decided to explain further:

"I'm happy to have this job."

"Translating makes me happy. But I'm not completely happy because of how challenging this job is."

"Making people happy makes me happy, but some people are bad."

4.3. Satisfaction

When they were asked if they enjoyed the act of translation in general, only two participants disagreed. These two individuals were highly negative towards everything, all aspects in question. When asked why they kept doing this job if they intensely disliked the work to its core, they remarked:

"When you are not working, you will get more tired. This is the only job I am familiar with and know how to do well."

"Translation is killing me. I do it out of necessity."

Three participants remarked that they loved the act of translation itself, but not much as sworn translation or as a business done for money:

"I enjoy translating, but not sworn translation."

"A translator is an artist, but sworn translation is a business."

"Only interest can keep you going; our job does not allow for spare time; we have to take work home."

As mentioned, apart from two interviewees, the rest highly appreciated the act of translating, so some of them added these statements:

"I have always been passionate about translation."

"I love translating."

Then, the interviewees were asked directly if they were satisfied with their jobs, which resulted in 22 positive responses through statements similar to the following:

"This job is valuable because it can help many people."

"The job as a sworn translator is good overall."

"I'm satisfied with my job."

Nevertheless, five people were not satisfied with sworn translation as a job. Some of them elaborated:

"It appears good in the beginning, but then you realize this job has too many responsibilities with a low income."

"It's fascinating only if we consider the income."

Despite mostly positive attitudes towards the job, the participants had difficulty deciding whether being a sworn translator was a better job than most jobs. Apart from one neutral person, the remainder were divided into equal groups of agreement and disagreement. The neutral individual refused to provide a straight answer:

"I do not know if it is better than other jobs because I do not know how to do other jobs."

Afterward, participants unanimously agreed that both the process of translation and running a sworn translation office were challenging. This is because of the following reasons:

- Rude clients
- Time pressure
- Complex process of approving the translation
- Massive financial and legal responsibility
- Translation errors incur full liability, particularly in personal documents. One translator recounted an amusing little tale, in which it is clear how even a minor error can cause trouble for the client:

On a day just like any other, a previous client walked into our office all irate and snapped: "Can you see my big mustache? Do you see it?" When we let out a hesitant yes, he complained: "Then why did you list me as female in my ID?"

Finally, in response to whether translation was exciting or boring, the larger part of cluster (18) admitted that it tended to get boring because translating personal documentation and educational certificates was routine. Here are the reasons they

provided:

"There is not much variation; it is just a matter of replacing names and numbers as well as going over minor details."

"These types of documents require not much creativity; only texts like contracts require some creativity, although certainly not as much as literary texts."

"Sworn translation is mostly working with templates and clichés."

4.4. Satisfaction with Income

Clients are responsible for paying for services delivered by the sworn translators. The Judiciary has published a list of prices for each type of document (but the translators' hands are not entirely tied; they could somewhat raise the prices if they see fit, but not much they wish, only according to the proportion approved by the Judiciary). Moreover, the list of prices must be attached to the wall for all clients to see. Under the circumstances, clients may throw a fit if the asking prices do not match the list, even though they cannot understand how difficult translation is, especially if the documents are illegibly handwritten.

As for sworn translators' attitudes towards their incomes, in response to how they assessed it in terms of regular expenses, more often than not (19 versus 8), they marked income as sufficient. When asked if they agreed that the fees were fair in exchange for the amount of work they did, minus nine translators, they agreed, however, begrudgingly. The third question was met with a positive majority, meaning that 22 translators had enough income to live on. Despite these positive answers, the participants voiced many complaints:

"Other translators get to set their own fee; we have no choice but to follow the Judiciary's rules."

"The office has many expenses, too."

"The pay is only enough because I own the office and am not paying rent."

"The income was acceptable before the inflation, but not anymore."

Some sworn translators were also bitter because, in their jobs (and similarly in other knowledge-based jobs such as teaching), they make less than other people, such as businessmen, car dealers, or realtors. They thought it unfair how one had to study for years and constantly work to keep their knowledge up-to-date, yet they could not make as much as other jobs that require less expertise.

4.5. Burnout

Regarding the likelihood of suffering from fatigue, a larger number of participants acknowledged mental exhaustion than physical exhaustion (16 versus 10); thus, mental exhaustion was more common in sworn translators than physical exhaustion. A few translators even elaborated:

"Health hazards of this job are plentiful, especially mental health hazards."

"We face many irritants on this job. We are all angry and annoyed."

The subsequent issue addressed was whether or not working as a sworn translator could cause negative feelings of stress and nervousness, neither of which turned out to be too common, with nervousness being a little more common, as 13 people reported occasionally getting nervous when things do not go their way, or they have to deal with difficult people, compared to eight participants who had encountered signs of stress.

Next, the adverse health impacts proved problematic. Six participants reported having suffered from indigestion at one point or another, while 13 described pains in their arms or hands from typing or neck and back, plus eye complications from staring at a screen for long hours. Only five translators experienced trouble sleeping.

5. Discussion

While most participants identified themselves as happy and satisfied, they certainly voiced many complaints (for instance, about income and the many challenges of the job). The existing literature has accounted for why satisfaction can coexist with grievances. According to Herzberg's controversial study, satisfaction and dissatisfaction are not opposites. "The opposite of job satisfaction is not job dissatisfaction but, rather, *no* job satisfaction; and similarly, the opposite of job dissatisfaction is not job satisfaction, but *no* job dissatisfaction" (Herzberg, 2003, p. 6). Consequently, just because the participants expressed dissatisfaction does not necessarily negate their overall satisfaction, having complaints (i.e., sources of dissatisfaction) does not nullify the existence of satisfaction. Armstrong (2006) proposed another perspective: when people are given a chance to express their opinions, they have no problem complaining, but they may struggle to acknowledge their dissatisfaction or may even be in denial about being dissatisfied.

The outcomes of this investigation are in agreement or opposition with previous research. Responses to queries about general satisfaction and happiness indicated that most sworn translators were satisfied and happy with their profession, which is in line with Bednářová-Gibová and Madoš (2019), Korpál (2021) and Pieczychna (2019), who all arrived at the verdict that sworn

translators experienced relatively high job satisfaction and happiness levels. In general, moving from sworn translators to translators, several sources have suggested that translators are typically satisfied with their jobs (Atkinson, 2012; Courtney & Phelan, 2019; Katan, 2009; Leminen & Hokkanen, 2024; Sakamoto et al., 2024; Setton & Liangliang, 2009; Virtanen, 2019).

As for the enjoyment of translational activities, interviewees in this article enjoyed translating, perhaps far more than they liked the business. Likewise, all translator types (excluding sworn translators) enjoyed completing translation tasks (Moorkens, 2020), felt immense satisfaction from completing translation jobs and from the art of translation (Courtney & Phelan, 2019), and enjoyed creating translated texts (Sakamoto et al., 2024).

Regarding whether sworn translation was a better job compared to others, participants expressed ambivalence, making it challenging for the researchers to determine the prevailing sentiment. On the contrary, the majority of non-certified translators in Courtney and Phelan (2019, p. 9) agreed that “it would be difficult to find a better job.”

Several participants in this article noted that sworn translation consisted mostly of routine documents and tended to be more repetitive than creative, making the job fairly dull. In contrast, another study has pointed towards highly satisfied sworn translators within the areas of task variety and creativity because they had the chance to try their own methods (Piecychna, 2019).

Although the interviewees expressed numerous grievances regarding income, their positive responses to questions about income fell on the heavier side of the scale. Both Bednářová-Gibová and Madoš (2019), and Piecychna (2019) encountered sworn translators, the majority of whom were satisfied with their compensation. On the other hand, sworn translators in the study by Korpál (2021) exhibited above-average satisfaction with remuneration rates, even though these rates were their primary source of dissatisfaction (as mentioned above, satisfaction and dissatisfaction do not cancel each other out). Focusing on investigations that did not involve sworn translators, Moorkens (2020) maintained that translators saw remuneration rates as moderately fair even though they felt disempowered regarding payment terms. Furthermore, some respondents in Courtney and Phelan (2019) reported that income was a source of stress for them; however, Lee (2017), and Lambert and Walker (2022) decided that translators were not particularly happy about their payments.

Next, some elements of burnout uncovered in the interviews, namely, mental and physical exhaustion, nervousness, stress, and health problems (such as pain in the back, neck, arms, or hands, plus eye irritation), were consistent with the findings of Korpál (2021), who indicated that sworn translation and interpreting could cause fatigue, stress, back pain, and eye irritation. For non-certified translators, Courtney and Phelan (2019) revealed that their respondents suffered from a medium level of occupational stress, and even though previous research claimed that occupational stress lowers job satisfaction, such a relationship was not observed in their study. Then, Leminen and Hokkanen (2024) described many factors, such as speech content, quality, schedules, technical restraints, etc., that cause interpreters considerable stress. Finally, Araghian and Ghonsooly (2018) found above-average burnout scores among translation students, while Akbari Motlaq and Tengku Mahadi (2020) reported that translators experienced burnout through extreme emotional fatigue and depersonalization during their first year on the job.

6. Conclusion

As some studies have shown, one's positive attitude (namely, happiness and satisfaction) can affect one's performance (Fisher, 2010; Hosie et al., 2007; Naveed et al., 2011; Utami & Harini, 2019; Westover et al., 2010). This article's main goal was to gauge sworn translators' attitudes toward the main aspects of their jobs; therefore, the research questions dealt with these aspects.

The participants expressed multiple grievances about the job (such as inferior income, translation difficulties, challenges of running an office, along with personal and legal liabilities). In response to the first and second questions, despite all the present inconveniences, the majority of sworn translators reported themselves to be generally happy and satisfied (at least most of the time).

Concerning the third research question, this job has caused sworn translators to experience at least one form of burnout. Since sworn translations mainly consist of written translations, meaning sitting behind a screen and less leg work, mental exhaustion is more common than physical exhaustion, although physical exhaustion is not rare. Some participants reported stress, nervousness, trouble sleeping, and indigestion; however, the most frequent physical complication reported was pain in the hands, arms, neck, and back, in addition to irritated eyes, all of which are caused by sitting behind a screen all day long and not taking sufficient breaks because of how much work needs to be done.

Although the findings of this article cannot be generalized due to its qualitative sampling methods and analysis procedures, this article can still be helpful because it can broaden the working knowledge about sworn translators in general, their job satisfaction, happiness at work, and burnout. Through this study, sworn translators (and policymakers as well) can recognize what elements regarding mental and physical well-being they should take care of before these elements can negatively influence sworn translators' lives and jobs (as it has been mentioned before, positive attitudes, namely satisfaction and happiness, and burnout can influence productivity).

Regrettably, the researchers encountered a few complications that limited this study. First, there were not many previous investigations into sworn translators' frame of mind or actual working conditions, especially in the Iranian context, from which the researchers could have drawn inspiration. Second, the researchers had difficulty finding enough sworn translators who would agree to spare some time to be interviewed.

Last but not least, there are many routes future researchers can take on the subject of job-related satisfaction, happiness, and burnout. They should be able to adopt one of the following suggestions, or they can mix and match. First and foremost, regarding both translators in general and sworn translators in particular, the apparent presence of relationships between many factors, or lack thereof, remains to be seen: between satisfaction and dissatisfaction and their respective predictors, between attitude, performance, and productivity, between motivation, satisfaction, and happiness, between working conditions and burnout, and so on. Future researchers can judge all these relationships through qualitative methods or turn to quantitative approaches with statistical analyses, including but not limited to relationships between the abovementioned factors and others, such as gender, age, education, etc. Alternative avenues of research include investigating what other elements can generate satisfaction, happiness, and burnout (i.e., predictors), as well as how satisfaction, happiness, and burnout can affect mental and physical health.

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8. Appendix 1: Interview Questions

Demographic Information

1. Gender
2. Age
3. Working languages
4. Years of experience as an official translator
5. University major
6. Academic degree

Happiness

1. Are you a happy person in general?
2. Are you happy as a sworn translator?

Satisfaction

1. Are you satisfied with your job as a sworn translator?
2. Do you enjoy the act of translating?
3. Do you think this job is better than other jobs?
4. Is translation challenging?
5. Is translation exciting or does it tend to get boring?

Satisfaction with Income

1. Is it enough for normal expenses?
2. Do you deem it fair for the work you do?
3. Is it enough to live on?

Burnout

1. Does the job cause you mental exhaustion?
2. Does it cause you physical exhaustion?
3. Does it cause you stress?
4. Do you tend to get nervous?
5. Do you have trouble sleeping?
6. Has the job harmed your physical health in any way?



Investigating the Differential Effects of Task Repetition and Task Rehearsal on Immediate and Delayed Oral Performance of EFL Learners with Low Working Memory Capacity

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ABSTRACT

Task-based instruction has gained significant attention in second language research, particularly in how task conditions impact learner performance. This study examined the differential effects of repetition and rehearsal, two distinct task-readiness conditions, on the immediate and delayed L2 performance of EFL learners with low Working Memory Capacity (WMC). A quasi-experimental design was employed to address the research questions. Four instruments were utilized: the Oxford Placement Test (OPT), a WMC test, a practice task, and a main task. Thirty-eight EFL learners were randomly allocated to two groups, each exposed to a distinct readiness condition—rehearsal or repetition. Participants were selected from an intermediate-level English course at a private language institute using convenience sampling and then randomly assigned to the two conditions. Both groups accomplished an oral task twice, with the rehearsal group being aware of the second performance in advance, while the repetition group had no such awareness. Task performances were evaluated based on Complexity, Accuracy, and Fluency (CAF). The results indicated that although both conditions positively influenced task outcomes, only the rehearsal group showed statistically significant improvements across all CAF dimensions in both immediate and delayed performances. These results contribute to the growing body of research on individual differences in task-based learning by demonstrating that rehearsal is a more effective readiness strategy than repetition for EFL learners with low WMC. This finding can inform instructional design and classroom practice in contexts where cognitive load is a concern.

KEYWORDS: task repetition, task rehearsal, working memory capacity, oral performance, oral reproduction, EFL learners

1. Introduction

In the past few years, task-based language teaching (TBLT) has garnered significant attention for its potential to enhance L2 learners' performance and acquisition. A substantial body of research has explored the influence of task implementation conditions, such as task repetition and rehearsal, on L2 oral and written production (Abdi Tabari et al., 2024; Mostafaei Alaei & Mansouri, 2024). Within this field, task planning has emerged as a critical construct, especially after Ellis (2005) introduced his taxonomy of planning, which was later expanded by Bui (2014). Bui's framework distinguishes between task-external readiness (e.g., task rehearsal and strategic planning) and task-internal readiness (e.g., task repetition and topic familiarity). Task rehearsal and task repetition are both recognized as significant preparation strategies; however, they diverge in a crucial aspect: the learners' awareness of the impending task repetition. Task rehearsal entails informing learners in advance about upcoming performance,

enabling them to strategize properly, while task repetition requires executing the task without prior information (Bui, 2014; Ellis, 2019).

Bui and Yu (2021) assert that pre-task knowledge may guide students' focus to the preparation phase of subsequent speech performances, particularly concerning Levelt's (1989) formulation stage. This technique may result in substantial improvements in CAF. The distinction between task rehearsal and task repetition is essential, since students' anticipation of subsequent performance may directly affect their methodology towards the task. During task rehearsal, the anticipation of future repetitions allows learners to treat the first enactment as a preparatory phase, potentially enhancing their focus on key elements of the task, such as CAF (Bui & Yu, 2021; Ellis, 2018a). In contrast, task repetition, where learners are unaware of subsequent performances, may lead to a different type of engagement with the task.

This distinction is particularly relevant for learners with low WMC, who often struggle with managing task complexity and cognitive load during performance (Mostafaei Alaei & Mansouri, 2024). Pre-task awareness, as in task rehearsal, could help these learners allocate their cognitive resources more effectively, particularly during speech planning and production stages (Bui & Yu, 2021). By guiding their attention toward key aspects of performance, task rehearsal could mitigate the cognitive overload that low-WMC learners may experience, allowing them to achieve better outcomes compared to task repetition, where no such preparation is provided.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Background

Skehan's (2014a) Limited Attentional Capacity (LAC) framework provides a significant explanation for L2 task performance. This concept posits that, unlike native speakers who possess parallel processing capabilities, L2 students have constrained attentional capacity and hence engage in serial processing during language creation. Due to processing constraints, several performance factors compete for available resources. Consequently, learners will struggle to focus on all aspects of language concurrently and will need to choose one aspect over another (Ellis, 2009; 2018b), often resulting in difficulties in L2 output. LAC contends that readiness circumstances might help learners surmount their attentional constraints and achieve a more equitable performance regarding CAF.

Planning has been the primary interpretation of preparing students for a task in the TBLT literature. Bui (2014), and Ellis (2019) asserted that task preparation extends beyond planning, including several additional factors that facilitate learner readiness for a task. Bui (2014) contended that planning had two significant constraints. This approach is constrained by its narrow focus, since it just encompasses supplementary time for students' preparation, either before or during a task. However, other choices exist, including different forms of familiarity with the topic, task, and method, which do not need additional time for readiness but intrinsically equip learners for task execution. Secondly, in Ellis's planning taxonomy, the ideas of task repetition and task rehearsal have been utilized interchangeably. Bui (2014, 2019) modified Ellis's categorization by introducing the comprehensive idea of task preparedness, which encompasses both external factors that represent explicit or intentional readiness, and internal variables that are perceived as implicit or unintentional readiness.

2.2. Empirical Research on Task Repetition and Rehearsal

Task repetition is a form of planning (Ellis, 2009), that entails the repetition of a task in a language learning context (Bygate, 2018). Bygate and Samuda (2005) define task repetition as "asking language learners to repeat the same or slightly modified task after a certain interval, such as one or two weeks" (p. 43). This repetition is an additional opportunity provided by the teacher for language learners. The existing research on task repetition indicates that it can have a highly significant positive impact on the performance of L2 learners in oral tasks, particularly in relation to measures of CAF (Bui, 2019; Fukuta, 2016; Lambert, 2017; Thai & Boers, 2016). One potential explanation is that people may possess sufficient time for cognitive processing, enabling them to meticulously formulate the language they would like to utilize to successfully convey the core aspects of their message. This may subsequently decrease the cognitive burden on their working memory (WM), hence enhancing communication efficacy (Ellis, 2003).

Although task repetition seems like a straightforward concept, there are differences in the ways that it is put into practice. The kinds, intervals, and frequency of repetition of the operationalizations determine their classification. Patanasorn (2010) introduced three different kinds of repetition. Depending on whether a task requires repeating the content, the technique, or both, several forms of repetition apply. Previous studies (Bygate, 2001; Lynch & Maclean, 2000) have shown that learners' overall complexity and accuracy are positively impacted by both procedural and content repetition. However, It has not been discovered that task repetition produces statistically significant gains in every aspect of language output. Various studies have shown differing outcomes on the impact of various operationalizations of repetition.

According to Kim and Tracy-Ventura's (2013) research, accuracy and syntactic complexity are improved by the repetition of tasks and processes. Fukuta (2016) looked at learners' attention direction in relation to task and procedural repetition in research. The findings indicated that, in contrast to procedural repetition, task repetition yielded superior performance for accuracy and lexical diversity. The aforementioned findings indicate that learners are not inherently motivated to concentrate their attention on certain elements of the task under repetition conditions.

The literature presents variations in task conditions with regard to the time intervals between repeated sequences. According to Bui (2019), repetition may be classified into three overarching temporal operationalizations: multiple task repetition spanning extended intervals, interval task repetition, and immediate task repetition. Lynch and Maclean (2000) performed research in which second language learners were instructed to deliver poster presentations at 6 intervals to various interlocutors. The study's results revealed that intermediate-level learners had superior performance with regard to both fluency and accuracy. In a different investigation, Wang (2014) instructed participants to engage in a subsequent storytelling task, whereby they were required to recount a narrative to an imagined audience immediately after their first narration, which included the use of source material in the form of a video-based tale. The results indicated improvements in the dimensions of CAF.

In research conducted by Lambert (2017), students were engaged in a series of aural-oral activities, which were repeated six times. The findings demonstrated that repeating these tasks led to an improvement in speech fluency. Prior research has also examined the use of massed task repetition with varying time intervals ranging from one day to ten weeks. Ahmadian and Tavakoli (2011) and Fukuta (2016) examined the impact of task repetition on CAF with a one-week space between the performances. Nevertheless, the findings of these investigations produced conflicting outcomes. Ahmadian and Tavakoli (2011) identified advantages in all three domains of speech production, but Fukuta (2016) noted enhancements only regarding lexical variety and accuracy. Fukuta (2016) further noted that the effectiveness of accurate task repetition surpassed that of procedural repetition.

The frequency of repeats, or the quantity of times a task is performed, has also been inconsistently studied in task repetition research. In their respective studies, Bygate (2001), Wang (2014) and Bui (2019) utilized a single-task repetition protocol with their students. The results of these investigations consistently showed enhancements in fluency and complexity, with Wang's (2014) study further revealing a positive impact on accuracy. This finding implies that a single repetition may be enough to elicit familiarity with the task or topic, hence promoting readiness within the task itself, resulting in an overall improvement in performance. Extensive repetition in studies is more likely to uncover minor impact on CAF or the trajectory of changes in CAF, hence facilitating the identification of the ideal repetitions number to enhance language learning. For instance, Lambert (2017) reported that during the first three performances, participants' speaking rates significantly increased. However, when it ended after the sixth performance, it was evident that this improvement was just temporary.

As stated earlier, the manner in which task repetition is operationalized exhibits variability with regard to task type, repetition type, interval duration, and frequency of repetition. Consequently, this disparity has posed challenges in comparing the findings of various research. There is little research particularly investigating the extent to which learners are aware (have the foreknowledge) of future performances. This is perhaps because previous studies have frequently used task repetition (including uninformed learners), interchangeably with rehearsal (including informed learners).

In a study conducted by Ellis (2005), a review was carried out on articles that were deemed to be focused on rehearsal. The predominant research addressed in Ellis's review, such as those conducted by Gass (1999) and Bygate (1996, 2001), examined task repetition prior to task rehearsal. The concept of rehearsal in this context corresponds with that articulated by Bui (2014), Bui and Yu (2021), and Ellis (2019). Bui (2014) emphasized the difference between task rehearsal and task repetition, with the primary distinction being based on the individual's awareness (foreknowledge) of "whether one knows if s/he is going to do the task again" (p. 67). Task repetition constitutes a form of implicit planning, referred to as task-internal preparedness, based on Bui's theoretical framework on task readiness. This allows learners to potentially gain advantages from being familiar with the topic and procedures involved. task rehearsal offers explicit planning possibilities, referred to as task-external preparedness, allowing learners to prepare for future performances.

2.3. Working Memory

WM is defined as a sophisticated cognitive mechanism that temporarily retains and processes knowledge while concurrently managing activities such as verbal communication (Baddeley, 2017). It acts as "an interface between perception, long-term memory, and action" (Baddeley, 2003, p. 829). For instance, when a second language learner participates in a narrating task, they hold a mental representation of what they have seen in their WM and try to find suitable linguistic forms to express it. This cognitive process relies on the WM system (Ahmadian, 2013).

The triadic framework of WM, proposed by Baddeley and Hitch (1974), has been extensively used in second language research. This model consists of three essential components: the phonological loop, which stores phonological information and aids in vocabulary acquisition in a new language (Baddeley, 2003); the visuo-spatial sketchpad, which retains visual and spatial information; and the central executive oversees attention and orchestrates essential functions including encoding, storage, processing, and retrieving of information (Huitt, 2003). The episodic buffer, a novel element of the model, operates as a short-term storage mechanism with limited capacity that synthesizes data gathered from many sources (Baddeley, 2003).

Barrett (2004) described WMC as "the number of items that can be recalled during a complex WM task." Studies indicate that WMC is essential for everyday cognitive functions (Ahmadian, 2013). Variations in individuals' WMC (e.g., high vs poor) result in differences in cognitive tasks, including verbal communication (Kane, 2007). L2 learners with higher WMC exhibit superior allocation of cognitive and attentional capabilities to novel knowledge, hence enhancing their efficacy in completing speaking tasks. For example, high WMC learners tend to speak more fluently and with greater monitoring of their output (Rosen & Engle, 1997). On the other hand, low WMC learners often make more errors in speaking due to limited capacity to attend to and process information, which underscores the need to support their retrieval of linguistic information to enhance fluency (Nielson, 2014).

WMC may be assessed by complicated span tasks, including the Speaking Span Task (SST), which evaluates the storing as well as processing capabilities of second language (L2) learners' WM (Juffs & Harrington, 2011). The SST is particularly advantageous as it involves both the retention of information (e.g., recalling a sequence of words) and its processing (e.g., forming grammatically and semantically correct sentences with every word), therefore serving as a close representation of WMC (Daneman, 1991; Daneman & Green, 1986). Daneman (1991) asserted that the SST provides a dependable assessment of speech output and language fluency.

Research in the realm of task-based performance examined the correlation between WMC and the CAF triad of L2 learners within the context of task repetition. Ahmadian (2013) explored the effect of memory capacity on the mediation of task repetition for the CAF triad among 42 second language learners. They executed an oral narrative task on two occasions with a 2-week interval between them. Their oral performance was evaluated based on L2 CAF. Findings demonstrated learners with higher WMC in L2 exhibited greater fluency and accuracy than those with lower WMC.

In another study, Muhammadpour (2023) investigated the impact of various task repetition schedules on the oral CAF of second language learners with different degrees of WMC. The research included 36 intermediate learners, categorized into two groups according to their WMC: task repetition for high and low WMC learners. Both groups executed a silent animation narrative task, then engaging in quick repetition. They were instructed to repeat the assignment three days and one week later, without rewatching the cartoon. The learners' oral task performances were documented and evaluated for CAF measures. The findings indicated that varying task repetition schedules significantly influenced low-WMC learners, who exhibited considerable enhancements in lexical variety (complexity) with time. The findings underscore the educational importance of utilizing varied task repetition schedules to enhance the oral performance of L2 learners with high and low WMC.

3. The Current Study

Previous studies have demonstrated a substantial link between WMC and the cognitive academic language proficiency of language learners' oral task performance. Specifically, individuals with high WMC often outperform those with low WMC in these cognitive ability framework (CAF) categories. Nonetheless, no study has examined whether changing task implementation settings may improve oral task performance in L2 learners with low WMC. It is plausible that foreknowledge of an upcoming task could mitigate the potential impact of WMC on learners' oral CAF. Additionally, there has been no investigation into whether varying task implementations lead to measurable improvements over time in low WMC L2 learners. Therefore, the current study aimed to expand current research by examining the differential effects of task repetition and task rehearsal on the oral task production of EFL learners with low WMC. The research focused on key performance measures, including CAF, to determine whether the learners benefit more from task rehearsal or task repetition. Additionally, the study assessed the immediate and delayed impacts of both task implementation conditions, providing insights into their long-term effects on L2 performance. This study attempted to address the subsequent research questions:

1. Do task repetition and task rehearsal have differential effects on the immediate oral performance of EFL learners with low working memory capacity?
2. Are the gains (if any) in task repetition and task rehearsal maintained when the exact same task is repeated after one week interval?

4. Methodology

4.1. Design

This study was conducted inside a quantitative framework with a quasi-experimental design marked by a between-subjects structure. Since random assignment of individuals from pre-existing intact classrooms was not practical, a quasi-experimental design was thought appropriate (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Mackey & Gass, 2015). In this study, two experimental groups were subjected to distinct task-readiness conditions (task repetition vs task rehearsal) to assess their impact on oral performance. The dependent variable was oral task performance, assessed by CAF. The independent variable was the kind of task preparedness, while WMC served as a mediating variable.

To guarantee internal validity, group equivalence was established using the Oxford Placement Test (OPT), and individuals were paired according to their low WMC scores utilizing a validated speaking span task. Extraneous factors, including previous subject knowledge, instructional content, and instructor input, were controlled by using identical materials, topic prompts, and time allocations for both groups (Dörnyei, 2007). To enhance external validity, a representative sample of intermediate EFL learners was chosen, and tasks were administered in a classroom setting that mirrored standard pedagogical settings (Anderson-Cook, 2005). Data collection happened during four sessions, during which participants' task outputs were audio-recorded, transcribed, and evaluated according on specified CAF criteria.

4.2. Participants

The study's target population included male intermediate-level EFL learners enrolled at the English language institute in Guilan, Iran. These students were registered in preparation classes for critical English proficiency assessments, including IELTS. The

sampling method included convenience sampling from an initial cohort of 85 students, from which a homogenous sample was derived based on their OPT results (Allan, 2004). Learners with OPT scores between 120 and 149 were identified as intermediate and included in the study. From this eligible pool, participants with low WMC were identified using a validated Speaking Span Task. Following established criteria in previous research (Hestvik, 2012; Zhou, 2017; Muhammadpour, 2023), learners with WMC scores of 18 or below were categorized as having low WMC.

This process yielded a final sample of 38 male learners, aged 16 to 20, reflecting the gender-specific structure of language institutes in Iran. All participants had approximately six years of EFL learning experience and attended biweekly sessions of 90 minutes each (see Table 1). The sample size of 38 was established based on previous quasi-experimental research in TBLT and WMC (e.g., Bui, 2014; Hassanzadeh-Taleshi et al., 2023; Hsu, 2019; Muhammadpour, 2023), which employed similar group sizes ($n=13-20$ per group) to identify significant impacts on oral task performance. Thirty-eight candidates were selected at random and assigned to one of two groups: task rehearsal ($n = 19$) or task repetition ($n = 19$).

Table 1.

Participants' Descriptive Information

Groups	Number	OPT score <i>M (SD)</i>	Age <i>M (SD)</i>	Year of study <i>M (SD)</i>
Task rehearsal	19	132.94 (6.17)	18.16 (1.30)	2.45 (0.11)
Task repetition	19	133.11 (6.38)	18.05 (1.43)	2.42(0.17)
Total	38	133.02 (6.28)	18.11 (1.36)	2.75 (0.19)

4.3. Instruments

4.3.1. Research Instruments

4.3.1.1. Oxford Placement Test (OPT)

The OPT, designed by Allan (2004), has two parts: grammar and listening, each including 100 multiple-choice questions. In the listening section, students were tasked with identifying specific words they heard, such as distinguishing between similar-sounding words like "oarsman" and "horseman." The grammar section primarily focused on assessing learners' understanding of standard verb tenses and sentence structure. The allotted time to complete the test was sixty minutes. The reliability of this test is supported by a high Cronbach's alpha score ($\alpha = .94$), indicating strong internal consistency (Geranpayeh, 2003). It has been extensively used in similar research to ensure participant homogeneity.

4.3.1.2. Working Memory Capacity (WMC) Test

The evaluation of WMC was performed with a speaking span task modified from Daneman (1991). There was one trial set and five blocks of word sets in this task. The word count in each set varied from 2 to 6, incrementally intensifying the requirements on the students' WM. Each set of words was shown to the participants, and they were given 60 seconds to come up with a sentence that used those words correctly in terms of grammar and meaning. The assignment consisted of 100 prevalent English terms, each including two syllables and seven letters. For one second, a computer screen displayed every word from the set. Following the disappearance of the last word, participants saw a prompt represented by a question mark, signifying the start of the sentence creation phase. Two metrics were used to assess the learners' WM: the span score and the overall score. The span score indicated the maximum number of words with which the participant could effectively construct sentences, whilst the total score denoted the words quantity accurately used from a potential 100. The scoring procedure aligns with prior validated implementations (e.g., Hestvik et al., 2012; Zhou, 2017).

4.3.2. Instructional Materials

4.3.2.1. Practice Task

Students were shown a *Tom and Jerry* animation for 36 seconds as the practice task. Their task was to watch the show and then, in a monologue style, tell the story of it. The format of the practice task was identical to that of the main task, but the substance was different. This helped the students get habituated to the big project, reduce their anxieties, and feel more at ease throughout.

4.3.2.2. Main Task

The main task was a 3-minute silent *Tom and Jerry* animation with a meticulously constructed and systematically arranged narrative used in many prior investigations (e.g., Bei, 2013; Bygate, 2001; Hassanzadeh-Taleshi et al., 2023). Following the video presentation, each student was required to recount the tale monologically, without the opportunity to get criticism from

classmates or the instructor. The reason for this was that their verbal output originated from their own speaking abilities rather than the collaborative building of language exchanged during dialogic encounters with peers (de Jong et al., 2012). The researchers' goal in employing a silent animation was to prevent students from utilizing any language that may negatively impact their speaking ability (Bygate, 2001). Additionally, narrative tasks were employed in earlier pertinent investigations (Ahmadian, 2012; Hassanzadeh-Taleshi et al., 2023; Muhammadpour, 2023), which increased the comparability of the findings of this study.

4.3.3.Performance Measures

Participants’ oral task outputs were assessed using well-established CAF measures (see Table 2), as suggested by Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) and employed in numerous empirical studies (Ahmadian, 2011; Bui & Skehan, 2018; Hsu, 2019; Muhammadpour, 2023). Rater calibration and inter-rater reliability were ensured using Cohen’s Kappa, with disagreements resolved through discussion. Both immediate and delayed task performances were analyzed to capture short-term and sustained effects of the interventions.

Table 2

Measures of CAF Based on Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) and Bui and Skehan (2018).

Complexity measures		Accuracy measures	Fluency measures
• “Amount of subordination: It is calculated by dividing the total number of AS-units by the total number of independent clauses.”	• “Number of different verb forms: the number of various verb forms that are used.”	• “Percentage of error-free clauses: the number of error-free clauses divided by the total number of clauses multiplied by 100.”	• “Speech rate A: the total number of syllables produced in each narration divided by the total number of seconds took to complete the task and multiplied by 60.”
• “Mean length of AS-units: the total number of words divided by the total number of AS-units.”	• “Percentage of error-free AS-units: the number of error-free AS-units divided by total number of AS-units multiplied by 100.”	• “Percentage of target-like verbal morphology: the number of correct finite verb phrases divided by the total number of verb phrases multiplied by 100.”	• “Speech rate B: the total number of meaningful syllables (i.e., excluding dysfluencies) produced in each narration divided by the total number of seconds took to complete the task and multiplied by 60.”

4.4. Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected over four sessions within three weeks (see Table 3 for an overview). This duration was deemed sufficient based on prior studies examining short-term task readiness effects (e.g., Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2011; Fukuta, 2016; Bygate, 2001), and was designed to capture both immediate and delayed impacts of task rehearsal and repetition.

In session one, all participants completed a background questionnaire and took the OPT to assess their English language proficiency.

In session two, the participants first completed the Speaking Span Task (SST) to assess their WMC. Based on their scores, those identified as having low WMC proceeded to perform the practice task. For this task, all participants watched a brief silent Tom and Jerry animation and were then asked to retell the story in English in a monologic format, without any time limitations. This session was designed to reduce potential performance anxiety and to familiarize learners with the procedures and expectations of the main task.

In session three, each group received their respective treatments:

- Task Rehearsal Group: Participants were informed beforehand that they would be asked to perform the main oral task twice. They watched a 3-minute silent *Tom and Jerry* animation and narrated the story. After a brief break, they were asked to repeat the same task. This foreknowledge allowed for strategic rehearsal.
- Task Repetition Group: Participants performed the same task without being informed that they would repeat it. After watching the same animation and narrating the story, they were unexpectedly asked to do it again within the same session. This ensured that any planning was incidental.

In session four (delayed task performance), held one week later, all participants in the both groups were asked to retell the same story again, without prior notice. This session was designed to measure the retention of performance gains under both conditions. All oral performances were individually audio-recorded using handheld recorders.

Table 3*Summary of the Procedures*

Week	Experimental stage	Participants	Stages
Session 1	Test	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oxford Placement Test (Allan, 2004) • Background survey
Session 2	Test Practice	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaking Span Task (Daneman, 1991) • Performed practice task
Session 3	Treatment	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performed main task • Repetition
Session 4	Treatment	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repetition

4.5. Data Analysis

Initially, the researchers transcribed all the data, and 15% of the transcripts were randomly chosen. Two researchers split and classified them according to CAF metrics. The inter-rater reliabilities of the measures were evaluated and appeared at an acceptable level ($\alpha > .7$) (Cohen, 2013). Subsequently, one of the researchers evaluated the remaining transcriptions.

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27 (IBM Corp, 2020) was used to assess the differences between groups for complexity, correctness, and fluency. The prerequisites for conducting independent sample t-tests were verified, confirming both the equality of variance and the normality the data. Furthermore, all observations were mutually independent. The three questions' CAF measurements were subjected to a number of independent t-tests.

5. Results

5.1. Research Question One

To investigate the effects of task rehearsal and task repetition on the immediate oral performance of EFL learners with low WMC, participants' narratives were transcribed and analyzed using established measures of CAF. The data were collected immediately after the implementation of the two task conditions, and independent-sample t-tests were conducted to compare the performance of the two groups (Table 4).

In terms of complexity, the results showed significant differences between the two groups for the amount of subordination ($t(38) = 3.527, p = .001$), number of different verb forms ($t(38) = 2.526, p = .016$), mean length of AS-units ($t(38) = 2.158, p = .016$), and lexical diversity ($t(38) = 3.898, p = 0.001$).

Regarding accuracy measures, results of independent t-tests indicated significant differences for error-free clauses ($t(38) = 6.444, p = .001$), error-free AS-units ($t(38) = 2.459, p = .019$), and correct verb forms ($t(38) = 2.688, p = .011$) with the task rehearsal group outperforming the task repetition group.

Finally, in terms of fluency, the rehearsal group again demonstrated superior performance. The results demonstrated significant differences between the two groups for speech rate A ($t(38) = 2.974, p = .005$) and speech rate B ($t(38) = 2.071, p = .046$). Consequently, the opportunity for immediate task rehearsal enabled the learners to generate more intricate, precise, and fluent English compared to those in the task repetition group.

Table 4.*Differences in CAF on Immediate Repetition between the Two Groups*

	Variables	<i>M (SD)</i>		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
		Task Rehearsal	Task Repetition		
Complexity measures	Amount of subordination	1.41 (.14)	1.25 (.13)	3.527	.001
	Number of different verb forms	8.15 (2.00)	6.73 (1.40)	2.526	.016
	Mean length of AS-units	10.11 (1.57)	9.08 (1.33)	2.158	.016
	Lexical diversity	65.36 (6.99)	55.88 (7.96)	3.898	.001
Accuracy measures	Error-free clauses	68.63 (7.61)	52.96 (7.37)	6.444	.001
	Error-free AS-units	56.26 (12.59)	46.43 (12.04)	2.459	.019
	Correct verb forms	68.36 (15.73)	55.76 (13.01)	2.688	.011
Fluency measures	Speech rate A	137.11 (24.99)	116.61 (16.67)	2.974	.005
	Speech rate B	121.11 (26.00)	106.19 (17.58)	2.071	.046

5.2. Research Question Two

To examine the potential long-term effects of the rehearsal and repetition conditions, a delayed post-task performance was conducted during the fourth session—one week after the initial task. The same narrative task was used, and oral outputs were transcribed and analyzed using the same CAF framework. Independent-sample t-tests were again applied to the delayed performance data (Table 5). Significant differences in favor of the rehearsal group were observed for all CAF measures ($p < .05$), mirroring the immediate task outcomes. These findings indicate that the observed performance trends persisted even after a one-week interval between tasks.

Table 5.

“Differences in CAF between the Two Groups after One Week”

	Variables	<i>M (SD)</i>		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
		Task Rehearsal	Task Repetition		
Complexity measures	Amount of subordination	1.43 (.21)	1.27 (.21)	2.874	.007
	Number of different verb forms	8.05 (1.77)	6.73 (2.07)	2.097	.043
	Mean length of AS-units	10.63 (1.20)	9.20 (1.42)	3.015	.003
	Lexical diversity	64.17 (7.19)	58.06 (4.59)	3.340	.002
Accuracy measures	Error-free clauses	61.23 (6.63)	53.45 (8.54)	3.134	.003
	Error-free AS-units	57.90 (10.75)	50.08 (10.08)	2.312	.027
	Correct verb forms	66.48 (14.01)	55.38 (12.47)	2.578	.014
Fluency measures	Speech rate A	132.73 (20.48)	117.93 (22.13)	2.139	.039
	Speech rate B	122.13 (18.96)	106.12 (19.49)	2.565	.015

6. Discussion

The research questions in this study focused on whether significant differences existed between the impact of task rehearsal and task repetition on oral performance of the learners with low WMC, as evaluated by the CAF metrics. The results revealed a clear distinction: learners who engaged in task rehearsal demonstrated significant improvement across all CAF dimensions from the first to the second task performance, whereas learners in the task repetition group, despite showing some progress, did not exhibit statistically significant changes in any CAF subcomponent over time. This outcome highlights the nuanced differences between rehearsal and repetition, which are often treated as similar in previous research, yet produce markedly different effects on task outcomes.”

Moreover, the findings underscore that rehearsal, characterized by pre-task awareness of future repetitions, is more effective than repetition, where learners are unaware of subsequent performances. When learners are explicitly aware that they will repeat a task (explicit preparedness), they achieve better results than those who engage in task repetition without prior knowledge (implicit preparedness). This supports the notion that awareness fosters deeper cognitive engagement and enhances L2 development (Leow, 2019), aligning with research that reported greater learning gains in conditions where learners were aware of upcoming tasks compared to those where they were not (Kachinske, 2015).

“These findings further lend support to Ellis’s (2019) prediction that pre-task awareness heightens learners’ attention to the linguistic encoding of their message, or in terms of Levelt’s (1989) model of speech production, a greater focus on the formulation stage. As Ellis (2019) suggests, when learners are aware of future performances, they are more likely to allocate cognitive resources to refining the linguistic form of their message, which leads to improved performance on subsequent attempts. In this study, learners’ awareness of the upcoming task allowed them to focus more intensively on the formal aspects of language, such as syntactic complexity, accuracy, and lexical variety, thus enhancing their overall performance. This is consistent with Wang’s (2014) assertion that when learners find it easier to encode their conceptual message into language, they can dedicate more cognitive resources to refining their sentence and utterance formulation, resulting in greater gains in complexity and accuracy.”

A further explanation for the superior performance in the rehearsal group could be the opportunity for learners to reflect on their initial task performance during the one-week interval between tasks. Knowing that they would perform the task again may have prompted participants to engage in informal rehearsal, reflecting on what they could improve upon for their second attempt. This reflective process could have functioned as an informal intervention, helping learners consciously learn from their previous mistakes and apply those insights to improve their future performance (Bui & Yu, 2021). This reflection aligns with theoretical perspectives that suggest intervals between repeated performances provide learners with opportunities to cognitively process their initial attempts, allowing them to focus more on language form and improve their output (Ellis, 2016; Ellis, 2020; Lynch, 2018). As such, pre-task awareness and the interval between performances likely served as powerful cognitive tools that enhanced learners’ ability to produce more accurate, complex, and fluent language during the second task performance.

Moreover, previous research highlights the role of learners’ self-reflection as an informal yet powerful instrument

between performances, often leading to improved task results, especially in accuracy (Kartchava & Nassaji, 2019; Khezrlou, 2021). Even though self-reflection is not traditionally considered a formal pedagogical instrument, it is proved to effectively guide learners' attention to linguistic form (Dao, 2021), that is a critical element in intervention strategies between task performances (Ellis, 2016).

In this study, the improvements observed in both syntactic and lexical complexity under rehearsal conditions suggest that pre-task awareness facilitated a more effective planning process for the second task performance. This planning allowed learners to develop a more organized and sophisticated interlanguage (Housen et al., 2012b). Complexity, often linked to interlanguage restructuring, reflects changes and development within the learner's linguistic system (Skehan & Foster, 1999). This research, in contrast to several others that indicate no impact of task repetition on accuracy, revealed substantial improvements in both particular accuracy and global accuracy. Although simultaneous enhancement across all CAF dimensions is uncommon in TBLT, it is not unprecedented. Skehan (2014b) observed that research has investigated methods to improve performance in all aspects by meticulously manipulating task selections and circumstances to alleviate attentional constraints. Empirical research demonstrates the potential for enhancements in CAF measures when task repetition is coupled with a degree of readiness. Numerous research (e.g., Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2011; Bui, 2019; Wang, 2014) indicate improvements in all areas of CAF under these settings, signifying a favorable result.

Ellis (2019) posited that for task repetition to significantly affect accuracy, a form-focused intervention between performances is crucial. The accuracy gains observed in this study support this view, as pre-task awareness likely prompted learners to engage in self-reflection, functioning as an implicit form of intervention. Furthermore, the accuracy improvement may be explained by participants intentionally carrying over "rehearsed" elements into the second performance, recognizing that their first attempt was preparatory for the main task. This awareness may have triggered their monitoring mechanisms, as suggested by theoretical models of language production, encouraging learners to strive for more accurate output (Bui & Yu, 2021). These accuracy gains also suggest that rehearsal helped learners select and apply appropriate linguistic forms to their pre-verbal messages, enabling them to overcome cognitive limitations and refine their L2 system.

Regarding fluency, the significant improvements indicate that awareness of the upcoming task helped learners consolidate and proceduralize their L2 knowledge, allowing for greater control over oral articulation and written expression (Housen et al., 2012b; Skehan, 2014b). This supports the notion that rehearsal facilitates the proceduralization of linguistic knowledge, which is critical for fluent performance.

An unexpected finding was the lack of significant improvement in the repetition group across the CAF dimensions. While this contradicts much of the existing literature, it aligns with study by Kobayashi (2022), where participants engaging in identical task repetition failed to show meaningful progress. A plausible explanation for this outcome may lie in the characteristics of the repetition task itself. According to Ellis (2020), precise task repetition may be suboptimal in task-based instruction since it might result in adverse learner perceptions, often linked to sensations of tedium or disinterest (Hu, 2018). Unlike learners in the rehearsal group, who anticipated the second task and viewed it as an opportunity to improve (Bui & Yu, 2021), those in the repetition condition may have perceived the task as monotonous, resulting in a lack of motivation to perform better on their second attempt.

7. Conclusion

This study aimed to explore how two task-readiness conditions—task rehearsal and task repetition—differ in their impact on the immediate and delayed oral performance of EFL learners with low WMC. The research showed that, via rigorous assessments of CAF, although both conditions may enhance learner performance to a degree, task rehearsal resulted in consistently superior improvements. The improvements were seen not only in immediate performance but also persisted one week later, indicating a more enduring effect of practice on language development.

This study's findings significantly enhance the field of second language acquisition by elucidating the interaction between task implementation conditions and cognitive learner variables, such as WMC. Although the notion of task repetition has been extensively examined, limited research has distinctly differentiated between repetition and rehearsal, especially among low-WMC learners. This study elucidates the ongoing debate by demonstrating that rehearsal, which entails prior knowledge of a repeated task, enables learners to engage in more profound planning, thereby alleviating the cognitive load during task execution. This theoretical differentiation is essential for developing more efficient and cognitively adaptive language instruction.

The findings highlight the significance of task introduction and sequencing in educational settings. Language instructors, particularly those instructing students with potential WM difficulties, need to use rehearsal as a tactical instrument. Merely notifying learners that they will revisit a task later, regardless of content consistency, may markedly alter their preparatory mindset, resulting in enhanced verbal performance. In contrast to spontaneous repetition, rehearsal engages conscious planning, potentially bolstering learners' confidence and alleviating task-related anxiety, so enhancing their overall oral performance.

This research underscores the potential of rehearsal as a realistic, cost-effective solution in educational environments. Rehearsal, requiring no further materials or technology, may be seamlessly incorporated into many teaching situations, making it especially advantageous in environments with limited resources or substantial class numbers. It also offers potential for personalized education, as educators may customize rehearsal activities according to students' cognitive profiles.

The results extend beyond the classroom, suggesting that curriculum designers and teacher trainers should include the

idea of task preparedness—both internal and external—into training modules and language learning programs. This will enable instructors to transcend conventional notions of repetition and embrace more sophisticated task design concepts rooted in cognitive science and substantiated by empirical data.

The study also presents other opportunities for further investigation. Future research may investigate the comparative efficacy of rehearsal against other forms of pre-task preparation (e.g., strategic planning, online planning), or how its impact differs across various task genres, skill levels, or instructional modes such as online education. Additional research is necessary about the interplay between learners' emotional factors—such as anxiety or motivation—and cognitive preparedness in affecting performance results.

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Motivational Goal Orientations as Determinants of Agentic and Social Engagement of Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners

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ABSTRACT

Motivational goal orientations play a critical role in shaping learners' engagement in the classroom. This study was to investigate how performance-avoid, performance-approach, mastery-avoid, and mastery-approach goals determine agentic and social engagement of Iranian intermediate EFL learners. For this purpose, 200 Iranian intermediate EFL learners of language institutes in Isfahan and Gachsaran, Iran, were selected by convenience sampling. The OQPT was administered to ensure the homogeneity of the participants. The data were collected by Goal Orientation Survey and Student Engagement Questionnaire, which were distributed online and analyzed using standard multiple regression. The findings demonstrated that the mastery approach and performance approach significantly determined agentic engagement, and the performance approach significantly determined social engagement. These findings provide valuable insights into the motivational dynamics within Iranian intermediate EFL classrooms. Educators can enhance student engagement by focusing on fostering mastery and performance goal orientations and creating a supportive learning environment, ultimately improving the language learning outcomes of Iranian intermediate EFL learners.

KEYWORDS: engagement, EFL learners, goal orientation, motivation

1. Introduction

Skinner and Pitzer (2012) delineated the construct of student classroom engagement as the degree to which learners exhibit enthusiastic commitment to and active participation in the educational process. Empirical inquiries within the domain of student engagement elucidate three interrelated strengths. Firstly, engagement serves as a robust predictor of critical academic outcomes, encompassing student learning, achievement, and performance, alongside retention and graduation rates (e.g., Lei et al., 2018; Upadaya & Salmela-Aro, 2013). Moreover, engagement provides a protective mechanism, shielding students from various conventional adolescent risks, such as delinquency and dropout rates (e.g., Virtanen et al., 2021; Wang & Fredricks, 2014).

Secondly, in contrast to the majority of status indicators related to academic outcomes (such as gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status), engagement has demonstrated its nature as a malleable state susceptible to modification by numerous factors within the purview of educational institutions and parental influence. This characteristic renders it a prime candidate for targeted intervention strategies (Fredricks, 2014; Fredricks, 2019). Thirdly, certain manifestations of engagement are observable within the classroom environment. In reality, its opposite, disengagement or disaffection of students, represents a significant source of stress for educators (e.g., Fredricks, 2014). Consequently, educational practitioners and institutional leaders readily recognize its significance (Finn & Zimmer, 2012).

Furthermore, there exists a widespread agreement concerning the significant influence that motivation exerts on the process of acquiring a non-native language, as well as on its associated outcomes, the learner's emerging second language (L2)

Furthermore, there exists a widespread agreement concerning the significant influence that motivation exerts on the process of acquiring a non-native language, as well as on its associated outcomes, the learner's emerging second language (L2) competence. As Cohen and Dörnyei (2002) point out, "[m]otivation is often seen as the key learner variable, because without it nothing much happens" (p. 172). Investigating the motivation of learners not only facilitates the identification of the determinants of learners' endeavors to acquire L2 proficiency but also provides significant insights into the manner in which L2 learners interact with their immediate sociocultural context and, by extension, the broader global environment (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Loan, 2023).

Motivation also holds considerable significance in influencing the rate and efficacy of second and foreign language acquisition, specifically within classroom settings (Al Kaboody, 2013; Esra & Sevilen, 2021). Beyond the contributions of cognitive ability and language aptitude in the EFL/ESL domain, motivation emerges as a pivotal determinant of successful language acquisition endeavors. It is conceptualized as goal-directed behavior and characterized as the amalgamation of effort, a desire to attain language learning objectives, and positive attitudes toward the language learning process (Anjomshoa & Sadighi, 2015).

Motivational Goal Orientations, a motivation-related theory also called goal orientation, represent "the purposes that individuals have for engaging in specific behaviors" (Anderman & Wolters, 2006, p. 371). Theoretical frameworks have initially proposed a dichotomy in personal goal orientations, specifically mastery (i.e., an emphasis on comprehension and personal advancement) and performance (i.e., a concentration on surpassing peers) (Ames, 1987).

Regarding motivational goal orientations, both empirical studies have elucidated the link between mastery goal orientation and an array of favorable outcomes. For instance, research indicates that students who endorse mastery goal orientation exhibit a higher likelihood of being significantly engaged in the task at hand (De La Fuente, 2004), employing effective problem-solving tactics (Matos, 2007), and demonstrating self-regulation in their learning processes (Elliot & Dweck, 1988). Furthermore, it has been established that mastery goals are associated with enhanced effort and persistence, bolstered self-efficacy beliefs (Sakiz, 2011), heightened interest and intrinsic motivation (Elliot & Church, 1997), positive emotional states (Roeser, 1996), and a reduction in anxiety levels (Wolters, 1996), all of which contribute to an increased probability of success.

Goal orientations play a pivotal role in students' learning trajectories. Empirical evidence suggests that individuals engaged in learning-oriented curricula tend to achieve higher evaluative metrics, whereas those with a predominant performance goal orientation exhibit lower evaluative metrics (Barron & Harackiewicz, 2003). In a similar vein, Ames and Archer (1988) posited that students who acknowledge the significance of goal orientation within educational settings are more likely to implement effective strategies, favor more challenging tasks, exhibit a more favorable disposition toward the class, and harbor a stronger conviction that success is a product of individual effort.

Nonetheless, the insufficient motivation exhibited by EFL learners constitutes a considerable challenge for language educators within the state-operated educational framework of Iran. It is frequently observed that students participate in EFL classes lacking the requisite enthusiasm necessary to engage meaningfully and achieve success in the inherently demanding endeavor of acquiring a foreign language. In an effort to counteract this deficit in student motivation, some instructors may resort to behavioral techniques acquired through experiential learning, which they believe will enhance student interest in language acquisition, while others may experience frustration in response to their unmotivated students, consequently leading to a decline in the quality of their instructional delivery (Papi & Abdollahzadeh, 2012). Therefore, the present study aimed to find the way motivational goal orientations of Iranian intermediate EFL learners determine their agentic and social engagement in the classroom.

2. Literature Review

Classroom engagement refers to a student's active involvement in a learning activity in the classroom (Christenson, 2012). As posited by Reeve and Tseng (2011), engagement constitutes a multifaceted construct that comprises four interrelated components: behavior, emotion, cognition, and agency.

Reeve and his associates suggested that agentic engagement constitutes a significant aspect of student engagement, characterizing it as the endeavor of individuals to actively enhance their educational experiences while assuming accountability for those experiences (Reeve, 2012; Reeve & Tseng, 2011). Illustrative activities encompass students articulating their viewpoints in the classroom and informing the instructor when a particular topic captivates their interest. Reeve (2012) advocated for the integration of agentic engagement as a fundamental dimension of student engagement, asserting that engaged students do not merely respond to educational activities but instead adopt a proactive stance towards those activities, thereby exercising agency over their own learning.

Agentic engagement embodies the pre-emptive, mutual, and pedagogically constructive actions that students undertake to stimulate their own learning and personal advancement (Bandura, 2006; Reeve, 2013). It is characterized by the pre-emptive measures the student employs prior to and during the initiation of a learning experience (e.g., proposing an idea, contributing input, articulating a preference) with the expectation that the educational facilitator (the teacher) will modify the instructional approach to better align with the student's interests and objectives. Learners who are actively engaged participate to "make a difference" in the instructional process they encounter, often through making choices (such as choosing a book or a YouTube video) or voicing their preferences.

Agentic engaged learners pursue a dynamic of teacher-student interaction that encompasses mutual connection, implying that the teacher's verbal and non-verbal behaviors during instruction influence the student's responses and actions, and conversely, the student's contributions during instruction reciprocally shape (e.g., alter, enhance, enrich) the teacher's actions and discourse (Sameroff, 2009). Within the framework of agentic engagement, the student attempts to collaborate with the teacher to cultivate a more motivationally supportive educational milieu and a teacher-student rapport that is more adept at generating rewarding, motivating, and personally meaningful learning experiences for the student. In summary, agentic engagement serves as a learner-initiated avenue to (a) enhance one's learning, development, and performance and (b) make pedagogical activities (and the broader learning environment) more conducive in terms of motivation (Reeve & Shin, 2020).

The concept of social engagement represents an additional dimension of engagement; however, the scholarly investigation of this dimension remains comparatively limited, rendering it less firmly established in relation to the other three engagement dimensions. Finn and Zimmer (2012) were the first scholars to define social engagement as the degree to which students adhere to classroom regulations or the prevailing social norms within the educational environment. Pekrun and Linnenbrink-Garcia (2012) conceptualize social engagement as socio-behavioral engagement. Their characterization of socio-behavioral engagement encompasses the notion that students cultivate top-grade social relationships with their peers, which can yield positive ramifications for students' learning experiences. Such relationships entail students collaborating effectively and providing mutual support.

In their examination of engagement within the language learning environment, which transcends mere interactive tasks, Oga-Baldwin et al. (2021, p. 225) also deliberated the incorporation of social engagement as an additional dimension within the engagement framework, asserting that it represents "a special case of the more basic cognitive, behavioral, and emotional aspects of interaction." Indeed, the social dimension is evident in learners' behaviors (e.g., how students begin and sustain turns during interactions in paired or group settings), affective responses (e.g., the eagerness and enjoyment exhibited by students during collaborative interactions), and cognitive engagement (e.g., the attentiveness of students to the construction and application of either content or language to facilitate effective communication). A pertinent example by Philp and Duchesne (2016) aptly illustrates this assertion. When students actively listen to each other, draw upon one another's knowledge and opinions, and offer constructive feedback, they exemplify social engagement.

The cultivation of social engagement may foster positive connections between agemates and teachers (Pekrun & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012), thereby mitigating the likelihood of social isolation, detachment, and student attrition (Hoi & Hang, 2021). The elements constituting social engagement within the classroom environment include collaboration, attentive listening, punctuality, and the maintenance of equitable relationships with both instructors and peers (Pekrun & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012). In contexts beyond the classroom, social engagement is predicated upon shared values and objectives that facilitate participation in community clubs and student groups (Wentzel, 2012).

2.1. Motivational Orientation

A goal is outlined as "the object or aim of an action, for example, to attain a specific standard of proficiency, usually within a specified time limit" (Locke & Latham, 2002, p. 705). Goals delineate the learners' objectives and the underlying motivations for executing educational tasks. Varied categories of goals are linked with distinct cognitive, affective, or behavioral reactions. Furthermore, students' motivational goals and their cognitive performance are highly related (Barker, 2002). Proponents of the cognitive perspective on motivation assert that goals can provide learners with guidance and impetus for the completion of tasks (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002).

Goal orientations pertain to the rationales or intentions that learners possess for engaging in educational tasks, characterized by goal-directed and cognition-based behaviors (Midgley, 2000). This orientation embodies a cohesive framework of beliefs that culminates in "different ways of approaching, engaging in, and responding to achievement situations" (Ames, 1992, p. 261). Behaviors that are goal directed hold significant relevance for language learners, as their mental frameworks will profoundly influence their approach to and engagement in the educational tasks. Distinct goals engender varying patterns of response (Midgley, 2000). Besides, goal orientation "can reflect a type of standard by which individuals will judge their performance or success, which then has consequences for other motivational beliefs such as attributions and affect as well as actual performance and behavior" (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996, p. 234).

The capacity to discern various categories of goal orientations among learners enables stakeholders to comprehend a student's motivational drivers, thereby facilitating their educational success (Harnar, 2021). Furthermore, individuals who align themselves with mastery goals exhibit enhanced perseverance when confronted with challenges, in contrast to those who adopt performance goals, who are prone to evading difficult tasks (Ford, 1998). The distinct categories of achievement goals that a student pursues are correlated with varying patterns of affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses (Elliot & Hulleman, 2017). Scholars of motivational goal theory typically categorize achievement goals based on competence, specifically in terms of either advancing competence through mastery of tasks or exhibiting competence in comparison to peers (Guo, 2022). Moreover, motivational goal orientation is posited to have a significant relationship with students' engagement (Miller, 2021), which subsequently influences a student's readiness and motivation to acquire knowledge. This concept is intrinsically linked to a student's perceived competence and their motivation to engage in behaviors aimed at enhancing competence (Urhahne & Wijnia, 2023).

Goal orientations are categorized into four primary types: mastery, performance, approach, and avoidance, along with four subdivisions—mastery approach, mastery avoidance, performance approach, and performance avoidance. Mastery-

approach goals are directed toward achieving the optimal outcome from a given situation, wherein students possess confidence in their capabilities, thus perceiving their errors, mistakes, or failures as fundamental components of their educational journey (Stoeber, 2008). The mastery approach emphasizes engagement in the learning process and skill development; consequently, students identified with this orientation prioritize their focus on their own abilities and skills. Mastery-avoidance goals represent one of the most common forms of achievement goals, reflecting an individual's aspiration to evade performance that falls short of their personal desires or expectations (Poortvliet, 2015). Individuals oriented toward mastery-avoidance are apprehensive about their potential inability to master a task and may not consistently strive to leverage the situation to its fullest advantage (Stoeber, 2008).

Individuals possessing a performance-approach orientation primarily concern themselves with the impressions they convey; they aspire to demonstrate superior abilities relative to their peers (Stoeber, 2008). Performance-approach goals revolve around the notion of showcasing competence and capabilities. An individual with a performance-approach orientation evaluates their personal values based on their abilities in relation to others and seeks to publicly validate their capabilities, as such validation constitutes their definition of success. Conversely, an individual with a performance-avoidance orientation aims to evade unfavorable impressions, which translates into a desire not to perform inferiorly compared to others (Stoeber, 2008). The underlying premise is that performance-avoidant individuals attempt to prevent or circumvent negative evaluations of their abilities while striving to conceal their failures or perceived incompetence. Such students are motivated to avoid appearing incompetent, lacking in capability, or being less skilled than their classmates (Wolters, 2004). In other words, the emphasis lies in the avoidance of failure and the perception of incompetence in relation to one's peers (Schunk, 2008).

2.2. Motivation Goals and Engagement

To elucidate the manner in which perceived goal structures may either facilitate or obstruct student engagement, we need to acknowledge that motivation and engagement represent closely related meta-constructs characterized by considerable commonality. Eccles and Wang (2012) denoted that definitions of both motivation and engagement that are excessively broad or overly specific can present significant challenges, albeit for distinct reasons. Vague, excessively generalized definitions provide minimal guidance to educators to enhance their student's learning experiences, whereas definitions that are overly precise are of limited utility to both policymakers and theorists.

Student agentic engagement emphasizes the importance of the student as an invaluable agent in the learning environment. The agentially engaged student contributes independent thoughts, asks constructive questions, and expands on discussions between and among classmates and the instructor in a social environment where dialogue encourages further learning through discussion (Reeve, 2013; Reeve & Tseng, 2011).

Agentially engaged students socialize with instructors and peers to provide constructive input that increases personal and peer learning (Reeve, 2013). In addition, Reeve (2013) asserted that an instructor who creates a welcoming and accepting environment promotes socialization and encourages student agentic engagement. Klassen (2013) and Cadime (2016) argued that instructor social engagement with students is an essential element in building a classroom climate conducive to learning; Kelly and Zhang's (2016) research confirmed previous findings that the student-instructor relationship positively correlated to student agentic engagement.

Given that research on agentic engagement is comparatively recent, few empirical studies investigated the link between agentic engagement and goal orientations. Nevertheless, Reeve and Lee (2014) posited that when educators foster a mastery-oriented classroom environment, their students are likely to demonstrate heightened attention and effort, enjoy diligent work, employ more profound cognitive strategies, and perceive peers as valuable sources of knowledge, assistance, and support. In essence, such students focus comprehensively on all facets of engagement (i.e., behavioral, emotional, cognitive, and agentic). The underlying rationale for the emergence of agentic engagement in such educational settings is that students are afforded the opportunity to articulate their opinions or feelings during activities as active participants (Ainley, 1993). Furthermore, agentic engagement necessitates that students possess the capacity to navigate novel and challenging circumstances (Peach & Matthews, 2011), and it is believed that students' mastery goal orientations are instrumental in fulfilling these prerequisites.

Despite the growing body of research on motivational goal orientations in educational settings, there is a notable scarcity of studies specifically examining how these orientations influence both agentic and social engagement among EFL learners, particularly in the Iranian context. While existing literature has explored the impact of motivational goals on various aspects of student behavior and achievement, the interplay between these orientations and distinct types of engagement remains underexplored, especially within the Iranian educational landscape. Furthermore, much of the current research either focuses exclusively on academic outcomes or only on one type of engagement without considering the multifaceted nature of student involvement in the classroom. This study sought to fill this gap by investigating how performance-avoid, performance-approach, mastery-avoid, and mastery-approach goals determine agentic and social engagement among intermediate EFL learners in Iran, thereby responding to the following questions contribute to a deeper understanding of the motivational processes that influence language learning and classroom dynamics.

1. Do motivational goal orientations (performance-avoid, performance-approach, mastery-avoid, and mastery-approach) of Iranian intermediate EFL learners determine their agentic engagement in the classroom?
2. Do motivational goal orientations (performance-avoid, performance-approach, mastery-avoid, and mastery-approach) of Iranian intermediate EFL learners determine their social engagement in the classroom?

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a descriptive correlational design to explore the relationships between motivational goal orientations (performance-avoid, performance-approach, mastery-avoid, and mastery-approach) and agentic and social engagement of Iranian EFL learners. This design was chosen because it allowed us to identify patterns and associations between these variables as they naturally occurred without manipulating them. Specifically, this approach was suitable as our research aims to investigate if agentic and social engagement were predicted by motivational goal orientations. While this design inherently does not establish causation (Salkind, 2010), its utility in examining how variables are related and providing insights into their co-occurrences is paramount for our objectives. Furthermore, the inclusion of predictive elements enabled us to assess how well the independent variables (motivational goal orientations) could predict the dependent variables (agentic and social engagement) (Field, 2013). This predictive capability is crucial as it offers valuable insights into the dynamics between these variables.

3.2. Participants

The participants in this study were selected from intermediate male and female Iranian EFL learners, whose ages ranged between 18 and 35, studying English at the intermediate level classes of language institutes in Isfahan and Gachsaran, Iran. The learners were initially classified at the intermediate level according to the language school's placement criteria; however, to ensure a more objective assessment of the homogeneity of the learners with respect to their English proficiency levels, an Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT; Allan, 1992) was administered. Based on the band score criteria established by the OQPT, a sample of 200 learners who satisfied the criteria for placement in an intermediate group was identified as the target participants for the study. The demographic information of the participants is presented in table 1.

Table 1.

Demographic Information of Participants

Demographics		Frequency	Percent (%)
Age	18-23	114	57
	24-29	59	29.5
	30-35	27	13.5
Gender	Male	83	41.5
	Female	117	58.5
Proficiency	Intermediate	200	100

3.3. Instruments

3.3.1. Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT; Allan, 1992)

The OQPT serves as an instrument for assessing English language proficiency, comprising 60 multiple-choice items that evaluate vocabulary (30 items) and grammar (30 items), and is aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Learners who achieve scores ranging from 0 to 10 are classified as beginners; those obtaining scores between 11 and 17 are categorized as breakthrough learners; learners scoring between 18 and 29 are identified as elementary; pre-intermediate students score between 30 and 39; intermediate learners attain scores between 40 and 47; advanced students score between 48 and 54; and proficient students achieve scores ranging from 55 to 60. The reliability of the test, estimated by Cronbach's alpha, was .82.

3.3.2. Goal Orientation Survey (Miller, 2019)

It consists of 20 statements that are aligned to specific goal orientations of performance-avoid, performance-approach, mastery-avoid, and mastery-approach, each comprising five items. Participants responded to each statement using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). The reliability coefficients of the four sub-scales were above 0.87 (Miller, 2019). The reliability of the survey, estimated by Cronbach's alpha, was .89.

3.3.3. Students' Engagement Questionnaire (Reeve & Tseng, 2011)

This questionnaire includes 27 statements that measure the five engagement components, namely emotional engagement (four items), social engagement (five items), cognitive engagement (eight items), behavioral engagement (five items), and agentic engagement (five items). The responses are rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). It is noteworthy that the social and agentic sub-scales of this questionnaire were used in the present study, which comprised ten items.

The reliability coefficients of the social and agentic sub-scales were 0.82 and 0.75, respectively (Reeve & Tseng, 2011). The reliability coefficients of the social and agentic sub-scales estimated by Cronbach's alpha in the present study were .86 and .84, respectively.

3.4. Procedure

The data collection took four months, and the instruments were distributed online using Google Docs (<https://docs.google.com/forms>) among 200 intermediate Iranian female and male EFL learners. The first researcher's email was provided so that the participants could contact her if they had any questions regarding the questionnaires. It is noteworthy that all the participants signed the online consent form, and the aims and objectives of the study were briefly explained in the online form of research instruments. Finally, the obtained data were analyzed by standard multiple regression.

4. Results

The First research question of the study sought to uncover whether motivational goal orientations (performance-avoid, performance-approach, mastery-avoid, and mastery-approach) of Iranian intermediate EFL learners determined their agentic engagement in the classroom. Multiple regression was run to answer this question.

Table 2.

Model Summary of Agentic Engagement

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.38	.14	.12	.64

According to the adjusted coefficient of 0.12, it can be stated that the independent variables of the model explained 12% of agentic engagement variances.

Table 3.

ANOVA Test of Multiple Regressions Agentic Engagement

	Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	9.79	4	2.44	5.87	.00
	Residual	56.7	136	.41		
	Total	66.5	140			

The model as a whole was statistically significant ($F(4, 136) = 5.87, p < .05$) (Table 3). In other words, the motivational goal orientation components (i.e., mastery approach, performance approach, performance avoid, and mastery avoid) could significantly predict agentic engagement. Standardized and unstandardized coefficients of the components of motivational goal orientation are presented in Table 4.

Table 4.

Coefficients of Agentic Engagement

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	1.44	.48		3	.00
performance-avoid	.1	.1	.1	1	.31
1 performance approach	.16	.07	.21	2.29	.02
mastery avoid	-.12	.12	-.1	-1.02	.3
mastery approach	.34	.12	.27	2.71	.00

Based on the above table, the mastery approach and performance approach significantly predicted agentic engagement. In other words, 21% and 27% of the variances in agentic engagement were predicted by mastery and performance approach, respectively.

The second research question of the study sought to uncover whether motivational goal orientations (performance-avoid, performance-approach, mastery-avoid, and mastery-approach) of Iranian intermediate EFL learners determined their social engagement in the classroom. Multiple regression was run to answer this question.

Table 5.*Model Summary of Social Engagement*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.46	.21	.19	.8

According to the adjusted determination coefficient of 0.19, it can be said that the independent variables of the model explain 19% of social engagement changes.

Table 6.*ANOVA Test of Multiple Regression of Social Engagement*

	Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	24.63	4	6.15	9.42	.00
	Residual	88.86	136	.65		
	Total	113.5	140			

The model as a whole was statistically significant ($F(4, 136) = 9.42, p < .05$) (Table 6). In other words, the motivational goal orientation components (i.e., mastery approach, performance approach, performance avoid, and mastery avoid) could significantly predict social engagement. Standardized and unstandardized coefficients of the components of motivational goal orientation are presented in Table 7.

Table 7.*Coefficients of Social Engagement*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	.78	.6		1.29	.19
1 performance-avoid	.08	.13	.06	.67	.5
performance approach	.37	.09	.36	4.05	.00
mastery avoid	.02	.15	.01	.15	.88
mastery approach	.22	.16	.13	1.42	.15

As the above table shows, the performance approach significantly predicted social engagement. In other words, 36% of the variances in social engagement are explained by performance-approach orientation.

5. Discussion

The first research question was to find the motivational goal orientations (performance-avoid, performance-approach, mastery-avoid, and mastery-approach) of Iranian intermediate EFL learners, which determined their agentic engagement in the classroom. In so doing, a multiple regression was run, and the findings demonstrated that the mastery approach and performance approach significantly predicted agentic engagement.

Consistent with the finding of this question, Shih (2021) established that a performance-approach goal orientation serves as a positive predictor of agentic engagement. Students who strive to exhibit their abilities or skills through performance-approach goals are inclined to seek enrichment and personalization in the instructional experiences they encounter (Reeve, 2012).

To further substantiate the findings, agentic engagement encapsulates students' endeavors to initiate processes that enhance the likelihood of experiencing both heightened motivation and substantive learning. Consequently, it is not unexpected that both mastery-oriented and performance-oriented goals, whether oriented toward individual improvement or exceeding the performance of peers, exhibit associations with this facet of academic engagement (Shih, 2018).

Moreover, agentic engagement entails students' affirmative and proactive exercises of their autonomy within the instructional context (Sinatra, 2015). For instance, within the classroom environment, students may advocate for diverse inputs to the instructional process, articulate their preferences, suggest alternative instructional methodologies to their educators, convey their needs and ideas, pose inquiries, seek clarification regarding concepts they find perplexing, and request assistance in modeling, tutoring, and receiving feedback throughout the instructional process (Reeve & Tseng, 2011). These characteristics of engagement align with both mastery and performance approaches, as performance-approach goals are inherently concerned with the demonstration of abilities within the classroom context, while individuals who resonate with a mastery goal orientation

possess an intrinsic motivation to enhance their competencies and a desire to acquire new skills while refining existing ones. Therefore, these two categories of learners are likely to advocate for various inputs to the instructional discourse, articulate their preferences, and propose alternative instructional methodologies to their educators (specifications of agentic engagement).

In other words, agentic engagement encompasses the articulation of ideas that have the potential to influence the course flow in line with the preferences and needs of students. Indeed, it is anticipated that students who perceive a mastery-oriented focus within the educational environment will engage actively in the course dynamics with the objectives of learning and personal development (Datu et al., 2022).

Consistent with the findings of the present study, Hıdıroğlu and Sungur (2015) found that mastery approach goals made a significant contribution to the prediction of students' agentic engagement in science. This means that students who are willing to learn and master the material express their preferences and manipulate the flow of the course according to their learning style. Students' mastery avoidance goals and performance approach goals also correlated positively with students' agentic engagement.

Kıran (2019) further demonstrated that students' agentic engagement within science classes was significantly predicted by their mastery approach goals, self-efficacy beliefs, performance-approach goals, and mastery avoidance goals. Reeve and Tseng (2011) established that student achievement could be anticipated by the degree of agentic engagement exhibited. Reeve (2013) also found that the framework encompassing behavioral, emotional, agentic, and cognitive engagement accounted for 25% of the variance observed in academic achievement. Nonetheless, the associations between cognitive and emotional engagement and achievement were not substantiated, while the connections between behavioral and agentic engagement and academic success were affirmed. Collectively, researchers have concluded that agentic engagement functions as a pre-emptive, deliberate, cooperative, and beneficial pathway initiated by students, leading to enhanced academic performance and motivational support.

The second research question aimed to uncover whether motivational goal orientations (performance-avoid, performance-approach, mastery-avoid, and mastery-approach) of Iranian intermediate EFL learners determined their social engagement in the classroom. For this purpose, a multiple regression was run, and the findings indicated that the performance approach significantly predicted social engagement.

Performance-approach orientation is characterized by a focus on demonstrating ability and outperforming others (Silver, 2006). EFL learners with this orientation may be more motivated to engage socially in language learning environments to prove their competence. They might seek opportunities to showcase their skills, which can lead to increased participation in group activities or discussions, thereby enhancing their social engagement (Bryson & Hand, 2007).

Learners who are driven by a performance-approach orientation often engage more with peers to compare their performance and receive feedback. This interaction can create a dynamic social environment where learners collaborate, share knowledge, and support each other, nurturing the appreciation of social engagement and community (Rogat & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2019). Besides, a performance-approach orientation thrives in competitive contexts. In EFL settings where assessments, rankings, or comparison of performance are prevalent, learners might engage more socially to form study groups, participate in competitions, or engage in peer-led activities (Lack, 2010), all of which can enhance their social ties and engagement.

To further justify the findings, it can be stated that engagement with others can enhance a learner's social identity. For EFL learners with a performance-approach orientation, building a positive reputation among peers through social collaboration (Levy, 2004) can reinforce their self-concept as competent language users, further promoting social engagement.

Also, in many cultures, such as the Iranian culture, language learning is often viewed as a collective endeavor. EFL learners might feel a greater sense of obligation or desire to engage socially (Erez, 2013) to adhere to cultural expectations of teamwork and sharing knowledge.

In general, a performance-approach orientation can positively influence the social engagement of EFL learners by driving motivation, facilitating peer interactions, creating competitive dynamics, encouraging feedback seeking, reinforcing social identity, and aligning with cultural expectations of collaboration. These factors collectively enhance their engagement with both the language and their peers, contributing to a more interactive and supportive learning environment (Smith, 2005).

6. Conclusion

The findings of this study emphasized the critical role that motivational goal orientations play in determining both agentic and social engagement among Iranian intermediate EFL learners. By exploring how performance-avoid, performance-approach, mastery-avoid, and mastery-approach goals influence various engagement styles, the research sheds light on the complex motivational dynamics that underpin effective language learning. The findings underscore the importance of understanding these motivational factors in order to create a more engaging and supportive educational environment. As students navigate their learning experiences, the interplay between their motivational orientations and their engagement behaviors can significantly impact their overall language proficiency and classroom satisfaction.

Regarding the implications of this study, teachers should be encouraged to integrate principles of goal orientation theory into their teaching practices. By fostering a mastery-oriented classroom culture that emphasizes intrinsic motivation, educators can encourage learners to focus on personal improvement and the joy of learning English rather than merely striving for external rewards or grades.

Furthermore, the study highlights variations in motivational goal orientations among learners in terms of their engagement. Educators should adopt differentiated instructional strategies that cater to diverse motivational needs and preferences. For instance, providing options for collaborative projects may benefit those with a strong social goal orientation, while individualized assignments could support mastery-oriented students seeking to challenge themselves. Professional development workshops can also equip educators with the necessary skills to identify and respond to students' motivational goals, ultimately improving instructional effectiveness and student outcomes.

The study was not without limitations. The study sample was limited to specific language schools in Iran, which may not represent the broader population of EFL learners nationwide. Variations in educational practices, cultural contexts, and learner demographics in different regions may influence motivational orientations and engagement levels. Consequently, caution should be exercised when generalizing these findings to other contexts within Iran or to EFL learners in different countries.

The reliance on self-reported measures to assess goal orientations and engagement can also be a source of bias. Participants may have provided socially desirable responses or may not have fully understood the scales used for measurement, which could lead to inaccuracies in data. Future research could benefit from incorporating multiple data sources, such as observations or interviews, to obtain a more nuanced understanding of learners' motivations and engagement behaviors.

Finally, this study adopted a cross-sectional design, capturing data at a single point in time. This design limits the ability to infer causal relationships between motivational goal orientations and classroom engagement. Longitudinal studies could offer deeper insights into how these dynamics evolve over time and under varying educational circumstances.

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Tapping into Reflective Professional Development in Light of Critical Incidents Analysis: A Case of EAP Teachers

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ABSTRACT

A critical characteristic of effective teachers is their ability to manage unforeseen and critical incidents (CIs) defined as disruptive events that undermine teachers' resilience. While existing research has examined CIs across various educational contexts, their potential for the professional development (PD) of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) teachers has remained under explored. This qualitative study sought to explore the types of CIs encountered by Iranian EAP teachers and to assess how reflection on such incidents contributes to their PD. Twelve EAP teachers participated in this study based on convenience sampling. Data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted individually at an English institute in Kerman, Iran, and the results went through inductive thematic analysis and inter-coder reliability which identified three primary themes of CIs: teacher-related, learner-related, and institution-related. Additionally, the findings indicated that reflection on CIs fostered EAP teachers' cognitive, affective, and social dimensions of PD. The study implies the necessity of targeted PD initiatives through reflection on CIs in the context of Iran. While complete mitigation of CIs may seem unlikely, reflective practice can lead to positive outcomes for all parties including EAP teachers, students, and administrators.

KEYWORDS: critical incidents, professional development, reflective practice, teacher education, English for academic purposes

1. Introduction

The journey toward becoming a teacher is a prolonged and challenging process, characterized by significant cognitive and affective tensions (Babaii, 2020; Borg, 2015; Darling-Hammond, 2021; Kelchermans, 2023; Nguyen, 2022; Trent, 2020; Yazan & Rudolph, 2018). Contemporary research no longer conceptualizes teacher preparation as a straightforward application of theory to practice; instead, it is recognized as a dynamic and conflict-laden journey (Darling-Hammond, 2021; Kelchermans, 2023). These conflicts often stem from misalignment between teachers' pedagogical beliefs and expectations of professional communities (Nguyen, 2022), discrepancies between their teaching philosophies and institutional demands (Babaii, 2020; Borg, 2015; Trent, 2020), conflicts between their self-perceptions and traditional roles of teachers (Yazan & Rudolph, 2018), and contradictions between their prior assumptions and the content of teacher training programs (Freeman, 2022).

Extensive research on teachers' professional development (PD) has underscored the pivotal role of cognitive and emotional conflicts to critically reassess their beliefs and practices (Farrell, 2021; Mercer & Kostoulas, 2023; Wyatt, 2024). PD is defined as ongoing and intentional process through which teachers enhance their professional competencies, knowledge, and skills to stay current and effective in the field (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Language teachers have the opportunity to engage in ongoing PD using different approaches, outlined by Farrell (2013) as top-down and bottom-up approaches. Top-down approach originates from higher authorities; in contrast, the bottom-up approach to PD involves teachers taking the initiative to

investigate aspects of their practices and beliefs in order to develop their own theories of teaching and learning. This approach emphasizes the importance of individual teachers' personal experiences and reflections on teaching, leading to a more personalized and self-directed PD process (Farrell, 2021).

Supporting teachers' hands-on experience in a lifelong learning process is known as reflective practice (RP) which is an evolving and cyclical process encompassing teachers' insights which enable them to make informed, evidence-based decisions regarding their teaching practice (Bolton, 2009; Farrell, 2019). The primary aim of engaging in RP is to enhance educational quality and assist teachers in maintaining an objective perspective away from habitual practices that may not effectively address all educational challenges.

Addressing cognitive and affective dissonance requires teachers to reconsider their pre-conceived notions of teaching (Britzman, 2007; Pinner, 2023) while navigating the gap between their idealized concept of teaching and the realities of classroom practice (Barkhuizen, 2022; Karimi & Nazari, 2019). By examining the types of dilemmas teachers encounter and the strategies they employ to resolve them, teachers can become more autonomous in directing their PD (Borg, 2015; Johnson & Golombek, 2023). While teacher educators have been systematically promoting RP (Adey, 2004; Farrell, 2021; Hoban & Ferry, 2006; Kılıç & Cinkara, 2020), many teaching contexts still continue to use traditional, top-down forms of PD. A standard one-size-fits-all approach, however, may seem inadequate as these issues are shaped by contextual variables. As a result, a more context-specific approach needs to be implemented to bridge the disparity between theoretical principles and classroom reality.

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) teachers, as language professionals, help students develop the English skills needed for academic settings. They design and deliver lessons tailored to students' needs and assess both language proficiency as well as academic skills among students (Bayram et al., 2022; Fitzpatrick, 2022). EAP teachers also face CIs in real classrooms where they question their assumptions and adapt their teaching to students' needs to achieve a deeper pedagogical understanding and improve learning outcomes (Esmaeili & Afzali, 2020; Estaji & Fatalaki, 2022; Lotfi Gaskaree et al., 2024; Mohammed, 2016; Nazari & Atai, 2022). Ranging from student misbehavior to assessment dilemmas, CIs occur in EAP contexts of Iran and existing teacher training programs seem ineffective to help them tackle the conflicts (Esmaeili & Afzali, 2020).

Traditional teacher training in Iran has overlooked the unpredictable nature of classroom realities, focusing instead on theoretical knowledge and standardized practices (Atai & Nejadghanbar, 2017). This gap implies that teachers are often ill-equipped to reflect on and learn from CIs, missing the valuable opportunities for their PD. Without reflection, teachers likely repeat ineffective strategies or become demotivated in their profession (Atai & Nejadghanbar, 2017; Soodmand Afshar & Donyaie, 2022). Despite all these challenges, EAP teachers' PD has received scant attention. Given this context, there is a dire need to investigate the types of CIs Iranian EAP teachers face and to explore how CIs can foster their PD.

The current study is significant because the analysis of EAP teachers' CIs can provide an accurate representation of the practical aspects of EAP teaching, thereby informing future EAP pedagogy in teacher education programs in the context of Iran. Additionally, investigating the factors contributing to CIs in EAP contexts, the strategies teachers employ to address them, and the PD derived from such experiences can facilitate sharing of professional knowledge. This, in turn, may enhance teachers' awareness and confidence in managing similar challenges effectively.

Previous research has focused on investigating CIs in different educational contexts rather than enhancing EAP teachers' PD through reflection on CIs. In order to fill the gap, the present study sought to explore on the types of CIs Iranian EAP teachers experience and the role of their reflection on CIs in their PD. Accordingly, the current study addressed the following questions:

- (1) What are the different types of critical incidents that EAP teachers encounter in Iran?
- (2) How is EAP teachers' professional development fostered through their reflection on CIs?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Reflective Teacher Professionalism

Reflective teacher professionalism refers to the practice of teachers critically assessing their teaching methods, beliefs, and experiences to enhance their professional growth and improve student learning outcomes. This approach encourages teachers to examine their instructional strategies, understand the impact of their decisions, and adapt their practices based on feedback and reflection (Farrell, 2018). This ongoing process encourages teachers to engage in self-assessment, fostering a deeper understanding of their instructional strategies and promoting continuous improvement in their practice. By reflecting on their experiences, teachers can identify strengths and weaknesses, adapt to diverse student needs, and enhance their effectiveness in the classroom. This approach not only contributes to personal and professional growth but also cultivates a culture of collaboration and shared learning among teachers. Ultimately, reflective teacher professionalism leads to improved educational outcomes and supports the development of a more responsive and adaptive teaching environment (Zeichner & Liston, 2014).

In EAP settings, reflective teacher professionalism is particularly vital as it addresses the unique challenges faced by students transitioning to academic language and discourse. EAP instructors must critically evaluate their pedagogical approaches to ensure they are effectively meeting the linguistic and cultural needs of their students. Through reflection, educators can adapt their teaching strategies to better facilitate language acquisition and academic success, fostering an inclusive learning atmosphere (Hamp-Lyons, 2010). This reflective practice also promotes collaboration among EAP professionals, enabling them to share best practices and resources that enhance student engagement and achievement. As the landscape of higher education continues to

evolve, reflective teacher professionalism in EAP contexts ensures that instruction remains relevant and responsive to the diverse needs of learners (Farrell, 2020).

Recent applications in EAP contexts demonstrate the strength of narrative inquiry in giving voice to teachers' marginalized perspectives. For instance, Atai and Nejadghanbar's (2017) study utilized narrative interviews to explore Iranian EAP teachers' CIs and to reveal how CIs became turning points in their PD. The narrative format allowed teachers to reconstruct these events with emotional and contextual richness that standardized assessments would miss. On the other hand, due to Hawthorne effect, teachers might have modified their narratives knowing they were being studied. In a similar vein, Hamlin (2004) reviewed formal field reports authored by student teachers in pre-education courses, revealing that the analysis of CIs enabled these student teachers to progress beyond mere descriptions of their observations.

Reflective journals often focus on teachers' challenges in EAP contexts. For instance, Pourhassan and Nazari (2021) found that journaling helped pre-service EAP teachers processing incidents related to student expectations and methodological uncertainties, incidents context, their responses, emotional reactions, and alternative approaches they might take in future similar situations.

Recent CIs research emphasize dialogic methods that move beyond individual reflection to incorporate collaborative analysis. These approaches recognize that CIs gain deeper meaning through discussion and multiple interpretations. A study by Estaji and Fatalaki (2022) demonstrated how dialogic CI analysis helped Iranian EFL teachers reframe classroom challenges through peer feedback and mentor guidance. Participants reported that collaborative reflection provided alternative interpretations they had not considered individually. Generally speaking, in the existing literature, the tools implemented for data collection regarding CIs mainly relied on self-reports and there is scarcity of research which used direct observation or classroom video-recording to provide a more unbiased and reliable source for data collection to investigate CIs.

2.2. Critical Incidents

Critical incidents (CIs) in educational settings are unplanned events that occur during teaching and learning, often revealing underlying challenges or opportunities for reflection (Richards & Farrell, 2020). These incidents, which may involve student misbehavior, instructional difficulties, or classroom dynamics, are not necessarily dramatic but are deemed critical based on their perceived significance by teachers. For example, a student's sudden disengagement or a conflict during group work can be characterized as CIs, prompting teachers to examine their practices. Such incidents are vital because they expose gaps between theory and practice, helping teachers refine their pedagogical approaches and develop problem-solving skills (Lithoxoidou & Papadopoulou, 2024). CIs also foster reflective practice, enabling teachers to question assumptions and adapt strategies to diverse learner needs. Without analysis, these incidents may perpetuate ineffective teaching methods or unresolved classroom issues, ultimately hindering student outcomes (Atai & Nejadghanbar, 2017; Lotfi Gaskaree et al., 2024).

Critically analyzing incidents is essential to transform everyday challenges into professional growth opportunities. Various scholars have proposed distinct frameworks for the analysis of CIs. An effective method for systematically examining these incidents involves a thorough investigation and comprehension of the incident itself. Tripp (2006) identified two key stages in the process of understanding a CI. The first stage is called "what aspect" through which the CI is described. This initial phase focuses on the detailed description of a specific phenomenon or issue which is observed or recorded. Through the second stage, known as "why aspect", the teacher articulates the meaning or value of the incident, interpreting its implications and the role it plays in broader contexts.

Failure to analyze CIs can lead to repeated misunderstandings, eroded teacher-student relationships, and missed chances to address inequities (Dicke, 2024). Research highlights that unexamined incidents contribute to novice teachers' feelings of unpreparedness, as they lack the reflective tools to navigate complex classroom realities. Conversely, structured analysis bridges theory-practice divides and cultivates adaptive expertise (Lithoxoidou & Papadopoulou, 2024).

2.3. Teachers of EAP

EAP teachers are language professionals who help students, specifically non-native speakers, develop the English skills needed for success in academic settings like universities. The roles and responsibilities of EAP teachers are diverse and demanding. Their expertise goes beyond general English, focusing on academic discourse, critical thinking, and understanding the conventions of university study (Bayram et al., 2022; Fitzpatrick, 2022). They design and deliver lessons tailored to students' academic needs and assess both language proficiency and academic skills facilitating students' adjustment to academic life fostering autonomy through group and independent tasks (Mohammed, 2016; Nazari & Atai, 2022). They also provide feedback to students and stakeholders, collaborate with colleagues, develop curricula, and maintain a supportive, culturally aware classroom environment (Fitzpatrick, 2022).

To foster PD, especially in EAP contexts, CIs analysis is a powerful reflective tool. By examining real classroom events, EAP teachers can question their assumptions, adapt their teaching, and share insights with peers, leading to deeper pedagogical understanding and improved student outcomes (Fitzpatrick, 2022). This process is especially valuable in diverse EAP settings, where cultural and linguistic differences frequently present unique teaching moments that can drive professional growth and innovation (Mohammed, 2016). Reflecting on CIs serves as a tool for EAP teachers' PD by promoting self-awareness, problem-solving skills, informed decision-making, and emotional resilience (Glushko, 2023). The iterative nature of reflection means

that EAP teachers are continually assessing and refining their practices. This commitment to lifelong learning is essential for ongoing professional growth.

In practice, EAP teachers often unpack CIs individually or in groups, using reflective journals, workshops, or peer discussions. They might explore issues like time management, student motivation, or classroom dynamics, and then brainstorm solutions or new approaches. Sharing these experiences with colleagues helps build a supportive community and creates a valuable resource for both novice and experienced teachers, as collective reflection can lead to shared strategies and deeper insights (Estaji & Fatalaki, 2022). This reflective practice not only leads to more effective teaching but also supports emotional resilience and professional confidence. By turning classroom surprises into learning opportunities, EAP teachers continuously evolve, benefiting both themselves and their students (Nazari & Atai, 2022).

2.4. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework underpinning the current study is “Transformative Learning Theory (TLT), developed by Mezirow (2008) emphasizing how adults undergo profound cognitive shifts by critically reflecting on their experiences, particularly through disorienting dilemmas which are considered as moments that challenge prior assumptions and necessitate new ways of thinking. In the context of EAP, the unexpected classroom events (CIs) serve as key tool for transformative learning. When EAP teachers engage in reflective professional development, they use these incidents to refine their teaching practices, adapt to learners’ needs, and enhance their professionalism.

Mezirow’s (2008) TLT begins with a disorienting dilemma, a situation where an individual’s existing beliefs are disrupted, prompting self-examination and critical reflection. For EAP teachers, CIs often serve as such dilemmas. Reflection is central to TLT, as it allows teachers to critically assess assumptions, develop flexible strategies to handle CIs, and contribute to their PD. Reflecting on CIs may inspire EAP teachers to experiment with new teaching methods or approaches that they might not have considered otherwise. In sum, CIs act as disruptive yet generative moments in EAP teaching, triggering Mezirow’s (2008) phases of transformative learning. When teachers engage in structured reflection, they move beyond technical skill development toward critical professionalism.

3. Methodology

3.1. Design

The present study followed a qualitative research design focusing on interview methods. Qualitative design was used to provide a deep and comprehensive exploration of EAP teachers’ experiences and perspectives into CIs in the context of Iran and the enhancement of their PD through reflection on them (Ary, 2019).

3.2. Participants

The participants were twelve EAP teachers from an English language institute in Kerman, Iran. The participants were novice and experienced EAP teachers (five males & seven females) with the age range of 24-35. The largest group of participants held a master’s degree in teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) and English Literature, with seven individuals in this category (five TEFL & two English Literature). Three participants possessed a bachelor’s degree in TEFL and English Literature (one TEFL & two English Literature). Two interviewees held Ph.D degrees in English Literature and TEFL majors.

Worth mentioning, EAP teachers in the present study varied in terms of their teaching experience ranging from one to twelve years; as a result, a variety of CIs from the perspective of novice as well as experienced EAP teachers were explored. According to Graham (2020), teachers with more than five years of teaching experience are regarded as experienced ones. In this study, experienced teachers were operationally defined as those with more than five years of EAP teaching experience and those with fewer years than five were categorized as novice ones. Hence, the participants included seven experienced and five novice teachers. The study used convenience sampling due to the first researcher’s accessibility to the participants, as she was the participants’ colleague in the English language institute.

Table 1.*EAP Teachers' Demographic Information*

Participants	Gender	Age	Teaching Experience	University Degree	Major
T1	M	25	1	BA	Eng. Literature
T2	F	29	4	BA	TEFL
T3	F	26	2	MA	Eng. Literature
T4	M	30	1	MA	TEFL
T5	F	35	12	Ph.D.	TEFL
T6	F	33	8	MA	TEFL
T7	M	32	5	BA	Eng. Literature
T8	F	24	2	MA	TEFL
T9	F	27	3	MA	Eng. Literature
T10	M	31	7	MA	TEFL
T11	M	34	11	Ph.D.	Eng. Literature

3.3. Data Collection Procedure

Prior to data collection, pilot interviews were conducted with three non-participants to refine the interview questions and to ensure they effectively capture the intended research focus allowing for necessary modifications based on non-participants feedbacks. Aligned with the research objectives, an interview protocol was developed based on the research objectives with an attempt to determine the number, order, flow, and level of details needed for interview questions. In this study, an interview protocol was developed to ensure consistency based on Tripp's (2006) stages of CIs analysis known as "what aspect" and "why aspect". Interviewees were mainly asked about details of what exactly happened in their classes and how they reflected on them. To maintain consistency and minimizing the interviewer's bias, a set of guiding questions were used during each interview. Interviews were conducted in English in a way that fostered a conversational atmosphere, encouraging participants to share their thoughts openly and honestly.

The data collection included several stages to ensure consistency, reliability, and ethical integrity. First, participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the structure of interviews, and confidentiality of their responses. All the participants were required to sign an informed consent before participating in the interviews, acknowledging their voluntary participation and their right to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. Interviews took place in person depending on the participants' availability and preference.

Each interview lasted approximately twenty minutes, providing sufficient time to address the questions while allowing for follow-up questions and discussion. During the interviews, responses were audio-recorded with the participants' consent. This ensured that the data was accurately captured and could be transcribed verbatim for later analysis.

Once the transcriptions were complete, they were reviewed by the interviewer for any discrepancies or missing information. Ethical considerations were strictly adhered to throughout the data collection phase. Participants' identities remained confidential and any personal information shared during the interviews were anonymized to ensure privacy. The data were stored securely and used solely for research purposes.

To enhance the credibility of the interviews, the researchers employed consistency checks, commonly referred to as peer review, which involved soliciting two additional researchers, who possessed a certain degree of familiarity with the subject matter, to conduct an independent analysis of the data. To reduce potential inconsistencies and discrepancies, the transcription was also carefully proofread by a skilled bilingual colleague. The trustworthiness of the findings was further reinforced through member checking wherein the researchers informally verified the accuracy of their interpretations with participants during the data collection phase. Additionally, the researchers utilized techniques such as echoing, paraphrasing, and seeking further clarification on ambiguous comments made by respondents during the interviews to ensure clarity and understanding.

3.4. Data Analysis

The recorded interviews were transcribed and analyzed to uncover themes and subthemes. In order to analyze the semi-structured interview data, inductive thematic analysis, proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), was conducted to carefully examine the CIs in EAP classes and the role of CIs analysis in the PD of EAP teachers. The study went through six stages of inductive thematic analysis: 1) familiarization with the data, 2) generating initial codes, 3) searching for themes, 4) reviewing themes, 5) defining and naming themes, and 6) producing the report. To be more exact, in the initial stage, the researchers made an attempt to anticipate potential emerging themes from the transcribed interviews. The second phase involved systematically coding noteworthy aspects of the data to summarize the core message. In the third stage, researchers identified themes within the coded data, aiming to arrive at significant aspects of participants' experiences. The fourth stage involved reviewing the potential themes to ensure they accurately reflected the data and considering how they related to the entire data set. Through the fifth stage, the researchers developed clear definitions and names for each theme, ensuring they accurately represent the content and meaning of the data. And finally, in the sixth phase, the researchers wrote the analysis, selecting compelling quotes to support each theme.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the coding process, inter-coder agreement was calculated. Two independent coders analyzed responses to twelve interview questions and reached agreement on ten, resulting in an inter-coder agreement rate of 83.3%. Discrepancies were discussed and resolved through consensus. This level of agreement met established standards for reliability in qualitative research.

4. Results

4.1. Results for the First Research Question

The inductive thematic analysis of the interview data revealed the themes related to the research questions that will be scrutinized in the following section. In response to the first research question which investigated the type of CIs occurring for EAP teachers in the context of Iran, three major themes namely teacher-related, learner-related, and institution-related CIs were identified. In the following section, each theme will be elaborated (Figure 1).

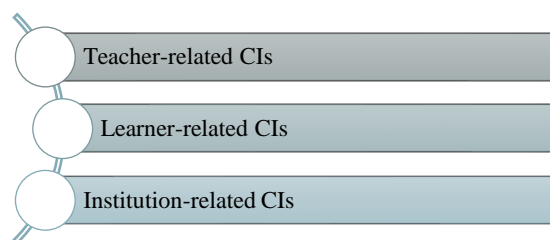


Figure 1.

Types of CIs in EAP Classes

4.1.1. Teacher-Related CIs

According to Karimi and Nazari (2019), teacher-related CIs mostly emerge from teacher's actions, decisions, or behavior that affect the learning environment. As the interview data revealed, during bumpy moments in EAP classes, the interviewees reported four subcategories of teachers' insult, unclear instructions, insufficient proficiency, and their reluctance to seek advice. The following excerpts from the participants' interviews have been provided below. In order to avoid any ambiguity in the interviewees' responses, grammatical and lexical errors have been revised.

"I remember a time when I ridiculed one of my students in a writing class. After reviewing the written assignments delivered to me, I highlighted that student's errors and showed them to the class. I emphasized that I didn't expect an EAP student to have such terrible grammar errors. I immediately noticed that she got embarrassed and discouraged". (T2)

"Once I ridiculed a student by stating: 'That's the silliest question I have ever heard'. I soon realized that my comment made her feel embarrassed. From that session on, she never asked any questions and kept silent". (T9)

"Teaching my students how to do note taking, I did not give them enough explanations and examples and this caused my students felt frustrated". (T4)

"One day I assigned a group project, but I failed to provide clear guidelines and this led to confusion among my students about what was expected of them". (T12)

"Once I was teaching a reading passage including advanced idiomatic expressions, but I failed to provide appropriate definitions and examples. This resulted in my students' disengagement". (T8)

"During a writing task, I struggled to explain basic grammar concepts due to my lack of grammar understanding. I have always been uninterested in English grammar and admit that I do not like to teach it either. I could not convey the right information to my students". (T3)

"Despite facing challenges with classroom management, I refused to ask my experienced colleagues for their strategies to tackle CIs, insisting that I could handle the situation alone". (T12)

"I had great struggles with integrating technology into my EAP classes. Although I found myself incapable of working with technology effectively, I did not like to get help from my tech-savvy peers. Honestly speaking, some of my colleagues are more competent at technology than me". (T6)

4.1.2. Learner-Related CIs

An issue which arises in EAP classes is a wide variety of students' behavior and attitude that influence the learning process (Riapina & Utkina, 2022). Analysis of the interviews revealed four subcategories of students' disruptive and rude behavior, academic nonconformity, disengagement, and absenteeism.

"In my first year of teaching, a student started interrupting me several times trying to mock my accent. I addressed his behavior calmly, but he continued to disrupt the class. I felt very disappointed and didn't know how to tackle the problem". (T10)

"A student of mine used her phone a lot during the class. I asked her nicely to put her phone aside; however, she loudly shouted: 'This class is boring'. Her comment not only disrespected me but also influenced other students to behave similarly. Finally, I asked her to leave the class. To my surprise, she shrugged her shoulders and left the class quite indifferently". (T2)

"I assigned my students to write an academic essay for next week. One of my students submitted a creative writing task entirely ignoring the guidelines for academic essay writing. When I pointed out this nonconformity, she argued that she preferred to express herself freely and never cared about the guidelines. I felt frustrated believing that academic standard is essential for EAP writing tasks". (T8)

"During a collaborative listening activity, I found a silent student refusing to participate or engage with her peers. When I asked her questions in an attempt to encourage her to participate, she responded in an indifferent manner saying she did not care about the class and this discouraged other students". (T4)

"A student frequently missed the class without valid reasons and failed to catch up two missed assignments. When I asked about her many absent sessions, she responded that she could not see any reason for attending my class". (T1)

4.1.3. Institution-Related CIs

Institution-related CIs usually stem from policies and administrative decisions at the institutional level which influence the teaching and learning process (Babaii, 2020; Tsui, 2007). Participants reported three subcategories of policy change, insufficient teacher training, and priority of students over teachers.

"My problem with the institute where I am teaching is that the institute changes class schedules without notice and this disrupts me, my students, and my lesson plans". (T7)

"In our institute, a new grading policy was introduced just before final exams and this has made assessment quite complicated for teachers". (T11)

"Some of my colleagues are insufficiently trained and do not implement effective teaching methods. Sometimes I heard students complain about some teachers and if I want to be fair, they are totally right. Our institute sometimes hires disqualified teachers". (T1)

"Our institute does not provide opportunities for our professional development. I think most teachers really need it to update themselves". (T3)

"After facing a lot of problems in my class with a cheeky and rude boy, I reported him to the manager of the institute. To my surprise, I was blamed, but not the student. I was also asked to ignore that student's rude behavior in my class. To tell you the truth, I did not expect such a reaction from the institute manager". (T12)

4.2. Results for the Second Research Question

In response to the second research question, the interviewees reported their post-event and analytical reflection on CIs. After the thematic analysis of the interview data, three main themes emerged concerning the PD that EAP teachers achieved through reflection on CIs: Cognitive, affective, and social professional development (Figure 2).



Figure 2.

EAP Teachers' Professional Development

4.2.1.Cognitive Professional Development

Cognitive professional development refers to the enhancement of teachers' knowledge, skills, and understanding related to teaching practices, theories, and methodologies. This involves critical thinking and the ability to analyze and synthesize information to improve teaching effectiveness (Borg, 2015; Tsang & Wong, 2017). The participants' cognitive development consisted of four subcategories namely adapting teaching strategies, improving assessment techniques, enhancing classroom management, and expanding students' language proficiency. The following excerpts illustrate how EAP teachers learned from their reflection on CIs in various dimensions of their cognitive development after the CIs happened in the classroom.

"Following a lesson where my students struggled with a particular grammar point, I reflected on my instruction and decided to implement different teaching strategies such as visual aids and interactive exercises leading to better student comprehension in my future classes". (T11)

"After noticing that my students performed poorly on a recent test, I thought about the alignment of my assessment with the course objectives. Then I decided to revise my assessment method to include formative assessment that better gauge the students' understanding". (T7)

"During a reading activity that revealed gaps in my students' vocabulary knowledge, I realized the importance of pre-teaching vocabulary and began to incorporate more explicit vocabulary teaching into my instruction, leading to improved language proficiency among my students and meeting my students' needs during reading tasks". (T3)

4.2.2.Affective Professional Development

Affective professional development focuses on the emotional aspects of teaching, including attitudes, values, and feelings. It emphasizes the importance of teachers' emotional intelligence and their ability to connect with the students (Mercer, 2016). According to the interviewees, the following three subcategories contributed to their affective development: Building empathy, managing stress, and developing resilience. The following quotes from the interviewees will scrutinize the affective development achieved through reflection on CIs among EAP teachers.

"After an incident where a student was reluctant to participate due to fear of making mistakes, I reflected on the emotional climate of the classroom. I learned to foster a supportive environment by sharing my own language learning struggles which encouraged my students to take risks". (T2)

"Following a challenging class where the tension was high, I reflected on my emotional response. I recognized the need for self-care and stress management techniques such as mindfulness practice which helped me maintain the composure of my class". (T10)

"After observing a student who was visibly upset during the class discussions, I reflected on how to better address my students' emotional needs. I learned to create opportunities for students to express their feelings, leading to stronger emotional connections and trust within the classroom". (T8)

"Upon reflecting on a successful project where students engaged deeply with the material, I recognized the joy of excited students. This reflection encouraged my passion for teaching and motivated me to design more engaging lessons". (T5)

4.2.3.Social Professional Development

Social professional development pertains to the interactions and relationships that teachers build with colleagues, students, and the broader community. It emphasizes collaboration, communication, and networking (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). As a main category of learning achieved through teachers' reflection on CIs, social development was referred to by the participants. This category included subcategories such as fostering collaboration, networking with colleagues, and creating inclusive classes.

"After witnessing how group dynamics affected student participation during a project, I reflected on the importance of collaboration skills. I implemented structured group roles and activities that promote teamwork, enhancing social interaction among students. In fact, the result was incredible". (T6)

"After facing challenges in teaching a new curriculum, I realized the value of collaboration with my peers. I reached out to my fellow teachers for support and ideas, leading to shared resources and strategies that benefit all involved". (T2)

"Following an incident where some students felt excluded during the activities, I reflected on inclusivity practice. I learned to implement diverse teaching methods that cater for different learning styles and backgrounds, promoting social cohesion among students". (T4)

5. Discussion

The present qualitative study revealed a notable gap in the extant body of literature regarding CIs in EAP classrooms in the context of Iran. The first research question addressed the types of CIs experienced by Iranian EAP teachers. As the results of the

inductive thematic analysis of interviews revealed, Iranian EAP teachers faced unexpected moments in terms of three main types of teacher-related, learner-related, and institution-related CIs. The categorization of CIs into teacher-related, learner-related, and institution-related types provides a nuanced understanding of the complexities faced by EAP teachers. Teacher-related incidents often stem from personal challenges or pedagogical dilemmas, highlighting the need for ongoing professional development that is responsive to individual teacher experiences. For instance, a study by Farrell (2019) emphasizes the importance of reflective practice in addressing such challenges, suggesting that teachers who engage in reflection can better navigate their professional landscape. This categorization not only aids in identifying specific areas for growth but also underscores the interplay between personal and contextual factors in shaping teaching practices.

These findings are in line with Babaii (2020) and Karimi and Nazari (2019) who considered CIs as disrupting the classroom atmosphere, agitating classroom discipline, deteriorating the teacher effectiveness, and reducing the effectiveness of language institutes. Such situations were considered as critical because teachers found themselves between two options that resulted in ethical dilemmas. The results are also congruent with Borg (2015), Freeman (2022), and Trent (2020) in terms of EAP teachers' conflicts with institutions. Such CIs pose discrepancies between teachers' pedagogical beliefs and institutional demands. Moreover, the findings corroborate the previous research by Barkhuizen (2022), Estaji and Fatalaki (2022), and Soodmand Afshar and Donyaie (2022) who claimed CIs originating from students entail serious challenges in educational settings. Unquestionably, CIs arising from teacher-related, learner-related, and institution-related factors can significantly hinder the effectiveness of EAP teaching and learning processes.

The second research question aimed to investigate how teachers' reflection on CIs contributed to EAP teachers' PD. As the results of the interviews showed, the participants admitted that reflection on CIs assisted them develop professionally in three different aspects: Cognitive, affective, and social development. Cognitive development, according to the participants, included adapting teaching strategies, improving assessment techniques, enhancing classroom management, and expanding their students' language proficiency. Moreover, the interviewees pointed out that their reflection could escalate their affective development through building empathy, managing stress, and developing resilience. The last but not the least category contributing to EAP teachers' PD, as mentioned by the interviewees, was social development that included fostering collaboration, networking with colleagues, and creating inclusive classes. As Lester (1998) advocates, teachers' reflection on their practices makes connections between theory and practice and build up a new knowledge base.

The analysis of CIs revealed that EAP teachers experience cognitive, affective, and social dimensions of professional development. Cognitive development was particularly pronounced as teachers engaged in reflective practices that prompted them to reconsider their pedagogical strategies and assumptions about student learning. This aligns with the findings of Zeichner and Liston (2014), who argue that critical reflection is essential for effective teaching and learning. Affective development also emerged as EAP teachers navigated emotional responses to incidents, fostering resilience and adaptability. Meanwhile, social development was evident in the collaborative dialogs among teachers, which not only enhanced their professional networks but also facilitated a shared understanding of best practices in EAP instruction.

Undeniably, reflection on CIs fosters teachers' efficacy since they observe the positive effects of their own generated solutions which in turn boosts teachers' PD. As Kılıç & Cinkara (2020) mentioned, teachers can appraise their best practices and reflect on their future PD through stories of their classroom experiences. Additionally, Yost (2000) pointed out, if teachers get involved in the process of problem-solving for their CIs, their critical reflection increases substantially leading them towards professionalism. The findings seem congruent with the studies by Hall and Townsend (2017) and Nejadghanbar (2021) revealing that the careful investigation of CIs provides teachers with awareness about the nexus between assumptions and practices. In the EAP context of Iran where top-down PD opportunities are barely supported by language institutes, using CIs analysis as a bottom-up PD approach can function as an affordable and convenient approach for teachers' PD through which they shoulder the responsibility of proceeding towards professionalism. Following these critical events, reflection allows EAP teachers to contemplate the experiences they have undergone, examining the insights they applied in managing various circumstances. Although CIs are inevitable in diverse educational settings, their analysis as a bottom-up approach to teachers' PD assists them overcome the challenges in their classroom.

The interplay between these dimensions of PD highlights the multifaceted nature of EAP teaching. The interconnectedness of cognitive, affective, and social growth suggests that PD initiatives should adopt an integrative approach that encompasses all three areas. As noted by Richards and Farrell (2020), PD should be tailored to address the specific needs of teachers while promoting a holistic understanding of their roles within educational institutions. Therefore, recognizing and analyzing CIs can serve as a powerful tool for fostering comprehensive professional growth among EAP educators, ultimately enhancing the quality of instruction they provide.

6. Conclusion

In summary, this qualitative study elucidates the significant role that CIs play in the PD of EAP teachers. This comprehensive understanding emphasizes the importance of context in shaping EAP teachers' practices and highlights the necessity for targeted PD initiatives that address the complexities of their teaching environments. Similarly, Hosseini and Modarresi (2015) underscore the role of reflection as a catalyst for improvement implying that individual and contextual factors influence outcomes. While complete mitigation of CIs may seem unlikely, encouraging educators to reflect on their experiences, along with the support from policy-makers in addressing challenging moments, can lead to positive outcomes for all parties involved including EAP teachers, students, and administrators. In sum, it can be concluded that every CI, despite appearing detrimental at the first glance,

presents an opportunity for EAP teachers' personal and professional growth.

The findings of the study can be reconnected to Mezirow's (2008) Transformative Learning Theory (TLT) that begins with a disorienting dilemma, a crisis, or a challenge that disrupts the existing assumptions of EAP teachers who need to reexamine their beliefs and teaching practices. TLT also emphasizes the critical reflection as the key mechanism for transformation. According to the findings, EAP teachers can reevaluate their beliefs and teaching practices through cognitive PD. Additionally, EAP teachers can foster their affective PD by managing frustration and building resilience. Social PD is also enhanced through engaging with peers, mentors, or receiving institutional support.

The implications of these findings are profound for both EAP practitioners and educational institutions. By acknowledging the diverse types of CIs that teachers encounter, institutions can design more effective PD programs that foster effective reflection among communities of practice by providing a supportive environment for teachers to learn from one another and exchange their best solutions for tackling unexpected moments in their classroom. In the same vein, Abbasian and Modarresi (2022) emphasize reflection and adaptation advocating for institutional support as an opportunity for growth.

Additionally, creating supportive environments where teachers feel empowered to share their experiences can enhance collective efficacy and lead to improved student outcomes. As suggested by Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2015), fostering a culture of continuous improvement through CIs analysis can significantly contribute to student engagement. Moreover, curriculum designers may benefit from the findings regarding the importance of CIs in teacher education curricula. Ultimately, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on teacher PD by underscoring the values of CIs in EAP contexts.

In the current study, several limitations must be acknowledged when generalizing the findings. Firstly, the study exclusively relied on qualitative data obtained from the interviews. It would have been preferable to investigate the CIs by directly observing the classroom or recording teachers' strategies rather than relying on their self-reports. Despite limited generalizability, the study offers transferability of the findings to similar under-supported EAP contexts globally.

It is recommended that further studies be carried out using mixed methods techniques to draw conclusions more readily generalizable to larger communities. Additionally, exploring the impact of CIs and their consequences on EAP teachers' emotional well-being in various educational contexts may provide precious insights. Further research investigating the CIs in educational contexts as English for specific purposes or English as a foreign/second language would also be a very useful follow-up to this study. As educational landscapes continue to evolve, it is imperative to equip teachers with the tools they need to thrive amidst challenges, thereby ensuring that they are well-prepared to meet the needs of their learners in an increasingly globalized academic environments.

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The Challenges of Implicatures and Dealing with Them in Persian Dubbing

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ABSTRACT

Various articles have addressed the field of audiovisual translation and its related issues, but the pragmatic aspects of this area have not been addressed as they should be. As pragmatic issues are mainly covert in dialogues, and films are dialogue-oriented, it is crucial to consider these aspects in this area. Implicature is one of these hidden aspects of meaning which challenges the translators' knowledge and competency. Sometimes ignoring this pragmatic aspect results in misinterpreting the intended meaning of the original version, whether it is a text or a film. Therefore, the present study intends to examine the translation of implicatures and their intricacies in Persian dubbing. To this end, four American films (Notting hill, The bucket list, The ultimate gift and Still Alice) were selected, all of which had been dubbed into Persian. All parts of these films were analyzed to determine whether there is any mismatch between original and dubbed versions in terms of this pragmatic aspect. The translation techniques and their frequency of occurrences which were applied to translate this pragmatic aspect are illustrated too. The results indicate that there are mismatches between the original and dubbed versions in terms of implicature, and the most frequent number of mismatches refers to scalar implicatures. Conventional and conversational implicatures follow it respectively. Moreover, deletion is the most frequent translation strategy which was applied to render this pragmatic aspect.

KEYWORDS: implicature, pragmatics, translation, dubbing, translation techniques

1. Introduction

Audiences have to try hard to understand the implicatures of the foreign films. However, sometimes they do not understand the meaning of these hidden aspects correctly and may lack the required background information to grasp them (Pérez-González, 2014). When there is a difference between what speakers say and what they mean, we deal with implicit kind of meaning (Levinson, 1983, p. 97). As a matter of fact, Grice (1975) considers implicature as the intended meaning of the speaker, not what is uttered explicitly.

In fact, the translator plays an important role in recognizing and conveying this pragmatic aspect by producing efficient translation. Pym (2014) believes that language is a set of communicative clues with recoverable implicatures which should be translated to avoid any misinterpretation on behalf of the target readers.

Translators meet different challenges while conveying this pragmatic aspect. Hatim (2001) believes that the meaning which is implicitly stated in the source text should also be expressed in an implicit way in the target one. Frank (2015, p. 7) also asserts that the translator should convey the implicit meaning of the original text in the same implicit way in the target one, but sometimes translating an implicit meaning leads to misunderstanding in the target text. In these cases, the translator has to make

a conscious decision. In other words, explicitation disrupts the meaning of the original text, so the implicit meaning should not be explicitly stated (Gutt, 1996).

As different pragmatic aspects result in challenges regarding description and empirical testing, research into these areas has been limited (Guillot, 2016). In recent years, some studies have been conducted in the area of audiovisual translation which focus on pragmatic aspects of language like (im)politeness, taboo language, dialects, and etc. (Bruti & Zanotti, 2016; de Pablos-Ortega, 2020; Ghia, 2019; Pavesi & Formentelli, 2019).

Despite the importance of implicature in dubbing, not much research has been done on it. Hence, the present study tries to investigate this pragmatic principle in dubbing and answers three questions: 1. Is there any mismatch between the original and dubbed versions in terms of implicature? 2. If yes, what are the frequencies of different types of implicatures as well as the frequencies of mismatches between the original and dubbed versions of these films in terms of this pragmatic principle? 3. What kinds of translation strategies have the translators applied to convey this pragmatic principle? And what are the frequencies of them?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework serving the present study consists of two parts which are clarified in the following parts.

2.1.1. Implicature

Yule (1996, pp. 40-46) supposes that the implicit meaning of the utterance is formed when the cooperative principles are violated by language users. He classifies different kinds of implicatures as following:

- (1) Conversational implicatures (these are formed by violating the cooperative principles)
- (2) Scalar implicatures (these kinds of implicatures show one value from a scale of values like: all, many, always, often, etc.)
- (3) Conventional implicatures (some specific words lead to these kinds of implicatures like: yet, even, but, etc.)

Yule (1996, p. 44) believes that there is also a kind of implicature related to numbers which implicates only that number.

2.1.2. Translation Strategies

Chesterman (2016) is among the scholars who have suggested different kinds of translation strategies, and his categorization of pragmatic translation strategies is as following:

- (1) Cultural filtering: Here the SL items, specifically culture-specific ones, are rendered to the functional or cultural equivalents of the TL.
- (2) Explicitness change: In this strategy, either the translator renders the implicit ST information in an explicit way in the TT (explicitation), or he/she acts the opposite way and conveys the explicit information of the ST implicitly in the target one (implication).
- (3) Information change: This includes the two strategies of addition (addition of information to the TT) and deletion (deletion of the information of the ST)
- (4) Interpersonal change: In this strategy, the overall style is altered. It includes cases like changing the ST level of formality or its technical lexis.
- (5) Illocutionary change: Changing the speech acts falls into this category.
- (6) Coherence change: "It has to do with the logical arrangement of information at the ideational level in the text".
- (7) Partial translation: It includes translations such as: summary translation, transcription, and the like.
- (8) Visibility change: This encompasses methods in which the translator's presence is much apparent like using footnotes or bracketed comments.
- (9) Transediting: This strategy encompasses methods of editing and rewriting the badly written original texts.
- (10) Other pragmatic changes: Other cases like altering the dialect or text layout fall into this category.

2.2. Past Research

Pinto (2010) investigates advice in English subtitles of Spanish films. He tries to answer the question why students who watch Spanish films consider Spaniards vulgar and rude. He concludes that there is a level of impoliteness in the English subtitles which is caused by an increased level of directness and reduction of mitigating elements.

There are also some works on the pragmatic aspects of dubbing that have investigated hesitation markers (Romero-Fresco, 2009), interjections (Bruti & Pavesi, 2008; Cuenca, 2006), and discourse markers (Baños, 2014; Cuenca, 2008; Freddi & Malagori, 2014; Fresco, 2006; Romero-Forchini, 2010).

In the case of studying implicature in audiovisual translation, Desilla (2014) suggests a new approach to the examination of audience reception. She investigates the comprehension of implicit meaning by both Greek and British viewers, and observes that Greek viewers have difficulty understanding this type of meaning because it is necessary for the viewers to be familiar with British culture. To collect data, she used a questionnaire which included questions about the films implicatures. Each group of viewers included nine women in the age group of 18 to 52 years old, one of which were British English speakers and the other one speak Greek as their native language. Qualitative analysis of this study showed that viewers do not always understand the implicit meaning intended by filmmakers, and often have their own personal understanding.

In another research, Salari (2019) studied the representation of pragmatics and its principles in Persian dubbing. First, they clarify the classifications which researchers have previously recommended for pragmatic aspects, one of which is the implicit aspect of meaning. Then, they demonstrate their representations and how translators change them in Persian dubbing by providing some instances of these films.

In a recent study, Ameri (2023) investigates the translation of general extenders in Persian dubbing and non-professional subtitling. He believes that non-professional subtitlers applied a source oriented literal approach. On the other hand, these pragmatic issues were edited or deleted by the dubbing team caused by synchronicity which is one of the limitations in dubbing. He suggests that the negligence of the dubbing team can be another factor which results in these kinds of alterations.

Salari et al. (2024) also prioritize the most challenging pragmatic principles in Persian dubbing. They investigate the frequencies and types of mismatches between the original and dubbed films in terms of three pragmatic principles of presupposition, speech act, and implicature. They also identify the translation strategies applied in the dubbed versions. Finally, they consider a hierarchy for the most challenging pragmatic principles in Persian dubbing.

3. Methodology

To determine the translation of implicatures and their intricacies in Persian dubbing, four American films were selected, all of which had been dubbed into Persian (Table 1). All parts of these films were thoroughly analyzed using content analysis. To determine the different types of implicatures and the translation strategies applied, the qualitative phase of content analysis was used. The quantitative phase was also utilized to determine the frequencies of implicatures in the original films, the frequencies of mismatches between the original and dubbed versions, and the frequencies of translation strategies. To identify different types of implicatures, Yule's classification (1996) of implicatures was used. Chesterman's classification (2016) was also utilized to determine the translation strategies. To ensure the validity of the analysis, one of the authors conducted the analysis and two others revised and confirmed it.

Table 1.

General Information about the Selected Films

Original titles	Titles of the dubbed versions	Release year	genres	Run time
Notting Hill	ناتینگ هیل	1999	romance, comedy	124min
The ultimate gift	هدیه نهایی	2006	drama	117min
The bucket list	فهرست آرزوها	2007	drama, comedy	97min
Still Alice	من هنوز آلیس هستم	2014	drama	101min

4. Data Analysis

In this part, some examples of the aforementioned films are presented which clarify the mismatches between original films and their dubbed versions in terms of implicatures and how translators dealt with the intricacies of this pragmatic principle.

Example (1)

Film title: *The Ultimate Gift*, **scene time:** 2nd minute

(Context: Everyone gathered at the cemetery to perform Red's funeral. It's raining and Red's son is uttering this sentence.)

ST	TT
Well, it's a sure bet he's laughin'... watchin' us get soaked.	حتما داره بهمون میخنده که مته موش آب کشیده شدیم (He must be laughing at us that we became like soaked rats.)

In example (1), the underlined phrase (get soaked) in the original version has been rendered to an idiomatic expression in Persian which carries a conversational implicature caused by flouting the maxim of quality. This kind of implicature is not seen in the original version. Thus, implicitation is the translation strategy which has been applied here.

Example (2)

Film title: *The Bucket List*, **scene time:** 13th minute

(**Context:** Edward is in the hospital and the doctor is examining him.)

ST	TT
Doctor: How's that cap doing?	Doctor: با سوند که مشکلی نداشتی؟ (You didn't have any problem with the catheter??)
Edward: Didn't know what I ever did without it.	Edward: بدون اون تا حالا مرده بودم. (I would have died without it.)
Doctor: Humor is a good sign.	Doctor: وقتی شوخی می‌کنی یعنی بهتر شدی. (When you're kidding, it means that you've gotten better.)

In example (2), the underlined sentence in the original version results in a conversational implicature caused by flouting the maxim of relevance, but it has been rendered to an explicit sentence in dubbing through explicitation strategy.

Example (3)

Film title: *Still Alice*, **scene time:** 45th minute (**Context:** John and Alice are standing outside.)

ST	TT
John: When I get finished are we still going to go for a run?	John: وقتی کارم این‌جا تموم بشه میریم قدم بزنیم؟ (When I finish my work here, shall we go for a walk?)
Alice: Yeah, I just need to grab another layer.	Alice: آره میرم یه چیزی بپوشم. (Yes, I'm going to wear something.)

In example (3), the word still in the underlined sentence results in a conventional kind of implicature which implies that they already planned to go walking, and Alice forgets because of her Alzheimer's disease. This implicature has been deleted in the dubbed version. Therefore, deletion is the translation strategy which has been applied here.

Example (4)

Film title: *Notting Hill*, **scene time:** 5th minute

(**Context:** William is going to work and uttering these sentences as the narrator.)

ST	TT
William: And so it was just another hopeless Wednesday, as I set off through the market to work, little suspecting that this was the day which would change my life forever. This is work, by the way, my little travel book shop ... which, well, sells travel books -- and, to be frank with you, doesn't always sell many of those.	William: مثل همیشه این یکی دیگه از چهارشنبه‌های مایوس‌کننده بود و من از خونه تا سر کارم که چند کیلومتری بود داشتم پیاده می‌رفتم، هرگز تصور نمی‌کردم این چهارشنبه زندگی منو برا همیشه تغییر میده، به هر حال این‌جا محل کار منه، کتابفروشی کوچیک من. بیش‌ترین کتابی که می‌فروشم سفرنامه‌های گوناگونه. راستش بخوابین فروشم چنگی به دل نمیزنه. (As always, this was another hopeless Wednesday And I was walking from home to work which was a few kilometers away, I never imagined this Wednesday would change my life forever. Anyway, this is my workplace, my little bookstore. Most of the books I sell are various travelogues. To be frank with you, my sale makes no appeal.)

In example (4), the word most has been added to the dubbed version which carries a scalar kind of implicature. The underlined clause in the original version is also rendered to an expression which induces a conversational implicature caused by flouting the quality maxim. This implicature is not seen in the original version and the sentence has been explicitly stated. Therefore, addition and implicitation are the strategies which have been applied here.

Example (5)

Film title: *The Ultimate Gift*, **scene time:** 107th minute

(**Context:** Hamilton remembers the day Red called him for the first time and asked him to be his attorney.)

ST	TT
[Hamilton's Voice] Sir, are you sure you wouldn't like to meet first?	[Hamilton's Voice] قربان! مطمئنید که نمی‌خواهین اول همدیگر ببینیم؟ (Sir! Are you sure you do not want to meet each other first?)
[Red's Voice] You were at the top of your law class, were you not?	[Red's Voice] شما وکیل هستید، مگه نه؟ (You are a lawyer, aren't you?)
[Hamilton's Voice] Yes, sir.	[Hamilton's Voice] بله آقا، هستم. (Yes sir, I am.)
[Red's Voice] Then you're my lawyer. Now let's get on with it. We got a world to conquer.	[Red's Voice] پس از این به بعد وکیل من هستید. (Then from now on you are my lawyer.) بهتره کارتون رو شروع کنید. ما خیلی کار داریم. (You better start your work. We have a lot of work to do.)

In example (5), the underlined sentence in the original version is a kind of hyperbole and results in a conversational implicature induced by flouting the maxim of quality. It has been translated to an explicit sentence in the dubbed version. So, explicitation has been used as the translation strategy in this instance.

Example (6)

Film title: *The Bucket List*, **scene time:** 67th minute

(**Context:** Edward points to the old woman sitting next to them and starts talking.)

ST	TT
Edward: See that old woman? Odds are, we're gonna be dead, before her.	Edward: اون پیرزن می‌بینی؟ (Do you see that old woman?) عجیبیه که باید قبل از اون بمیریم.
Karter: A happy thought.	(It's odd that we have to die before her.) Karter: کجاش عجیبیه؟ (Where is it odd?)

In example (6), the underlined part in the original version carries a conversational implicature triggered by flouting the relevance maxim, because Carter's response has nothing to do with Edward's question. However, it has been rendered to a question with a different meaning which does not induce this kind of implicature. So, a total change has been occurred here.

Example (7)

Film title: *Still Alice*, **scene time:** 11th minute

(**Context:** John is asking Alice about her lecture at the university.)

ST	TT
John: How did it go?	John: اوه، چطور برگزار شد؟ (Oh, how was it held?)
Alice: What?	Alice: چی؟ (What?)
John: UCLA...	John: سخنرانی دانشگاه. (University lecture.)
Alice: Good. They were really... receptive.	Alice: اوه، خیلی خوب بود، شنونده‌های خیلی علاقمند. (Oh, it was very good, very interested listeners.)
John: I'm sure they were.	John: خوشحالم. (I am glad.)

In example (7), UCLA refers to the name of university and carries a conversational implicature caused by flouting the quantity maxim. In the dubbed version, the word lecture has been added and this implicature has been removed. So, addition has been applied here as the translation strategy.

Example (8)

Film title: *Notting Hill*, **scene time:** 8th minute

(**Context:** Anna comes to William's bookstore for the first time, and at the same time someone in the bookstore steals a book. William walks over to the thief and talks to him. Then he comes to Anna and apologizes for what happened.)

ST	TT
William: Sorry about that...	
Anna: No, that's fine. I was going to steal one myself but now I've changed my mind. Signed by the author, I see.	William: معذرت می‌خوام... (I'm sorry...) Anna: خیلی عالی بود. منم می‌خواستم کار اونو بکنم ولی حالا دیگه تغییر عقیده دادم. نویسنده خودش این کتاب امضا کرده. (It was great. I also wanted to do it, but now I have changed my mind. The writer himself signed this book.)

In example (8), the underlined sentence in the original version has been uttered in response to William's apology, but it has been rendered to a sentence which carries a conversational implicature caused by violating the quantity maxim. Therefore, a total change has been occurred here.

Example (9)

Film title: *The Ultimate Gift*, **scene time:** 57th minute

(**Context:** Jason and his uncles and aunts gather for Thanksgiving. They are all curious to know about Jason's inheritance.)

ST	TT
Uncle: So he's making you work for your inheritance?	Uncle: اون مجبور کرده واسه ارثت کار کنی؟ (Did he make you work for your inheritance?)
Jason: Not anymore, because I don't think I could ever win at this one.	Jason: دیگه نه. فکر نمی‌کنم تو این مرحله موفق بشم. (Not anymore. I don't think I will succeed at this stage.)

In example (9), the word because carries a conventional kind of implicature which implicates the reason why Jason doesn't work for his inheritance. However, this word has been deleted in the dubbed version.

Example (10)

Film title: *The Bucket List*, **scene time:** 17th minute (**Context:** Thomas has brought some food for Edward.)

ST	TT
Thomas: Okay, we've got some pocho and melons... some dorado mozzarella and a veal a la card I brought some biscuits and...	Thomas: به مقدار انبه و خربزه و به مقدار پنیر ایتالیایی با گوشت گوساله داریم. خودم همش براتون آوردم. (We have some mango and melon, and some Italian cheese with beef. I myself brought them all to you.)
Karter: You sure you wanna eat all that?	Karter: می‌خوای اونارو بخوری؟ (Do you want to eat them?)
Edward: That's the plan.	Edward: همین کار رو می‌خوام بکنم. (This is what I want to do.)

In example (10), the word all carries a scalar implicature which implicitly ask whether he wants to eat them all or just some. This word has been deleted in the dubbed version. So, deletion is the translation strategy which has been applied here.

Example (11)

Film title: *Still Alice*, **scene time:** 55th minute

(**Context:** The family members are eating lunch, while Lydia and Anna are arguing.)

ST	TT
Anna: Oh, that's very articulate. Well said.	Anna: نمی‌دونستم تا این حد خوش بیانی. (I didn't know you are so articulate.)
Lydia: You want me to show you?	Lydia: می‌خوای نشونت بدم چقد خوش بیانم؟ (Do you want me to show you how articulate I am?)

In example (11), the underlined question in the original version carries a conversational implicature induced by violating the quantity maxim. This sentence has been rendered to an explicit one by adding how articulate I am. So, explicitation is the strategy which has been applied here.

Example (12)

Film title: *Notting Hill*, **scene time:** 6th minute (**Context:** William is upset about his financial loss at the library.)

ST	TT
Martin: Shall I go get a cappuccino? Ease the pain.	Martin: ضرر زیادیه، برم برات به کاپوچینو بخرم؟ میدونی کمی درد رو تسکین میده. (That's a great loss; Shall I go get a cappuccino for you? You know it relieves pain a little bit.)
William: Yes, better get me a half. All I can afford.	William: آره، آره. ولی به لیوان کوچیک، پول بزرگش ندارم. (Yes! Yes. But a small glass. I don't have the money to buy a bigger one.)

In example (12), the original sentence carries a conversational implicature caused by violating the quantity maxim, because Martin doesn't explain the cause of this pain. The sentence (ضرر زیادیه ضرر) has been added to the dubbed version and explicitation has occurred here. The words all and better also carry scalar kind of implicatures which have been deleted in the dubbed version. Therefore, explicitation and deletion are the translation strategies which have been applied here.

Table 2 shows the frequencies of different kinds of implicatures in the original films. According to this table, conventional implicatures have the highest frequency of occurrence. Scalar, conversational, and numeral ones also follow them respectively.

Table 2.

The Frequencies of Different Kinds of Implicatures in the Original Films

Films' titles	Total implicatures	conversational	scalar	conventional	numeral
Notting Hill	602	147	188	237	30
The bucket list	295	156	77	62	-
The ultimate gift	446	121	125	165	35
Still Alice	458	79	159	211	9

Table 3 illustrates the frequencies of mismatches between the original and dubbed versions regarding different kinds of implicatures. As it's evident in this table, scalar implicatures have the highest frequency of occurrence. Conventional, conversational and numeral ones also follow them and are in the next levels respectively.

Table 3.

The Frequencies of Mismatches between the Original and Dubbed Versions in Terms of Different Kinds of Implicatures

Films' titles	Total mismatches	conversational	scalar	conventional	numeral
Notting Hill	69	21	28	17	3
The bucket list	31	14	7	10	-
The ultimate gift	63	14	24	24	1
Still Alice	50	16	15	19	-

Table 4 demonstrates the frequencies of different translation strategies applied to render these various kinds of implicatures. Deletion has the highest frequency of occurrence in this table. Furthermore, explicitness change, total change, addition and illocutionary change are in the next levels respectively.

Table 4.

The Frequencies of Different Translation Strategies Applied

Films' Titles	Deletion	Addition	Explicitness Change	Illocutionary Change	Total Change
Notting Hill	40	6	8	-	15
The Bucket List	20	2	6	-	3
The Ultimate Gift	40	2	12	1	8
Still Alice	32	8	7	-	3

5. Discussion and Conclusion

As it is apparent, there were mismatches between the original and dubbed versions in terms of implicatures. These mismatches were of various kinds. In fact, the most frequent kinds of mismatches belonged to scalar implicatures. Conventional, conversational and numeral ones were also in the next levels, respectively. In some cases, the original implicatures were deleted in the dubbed versions which included the highest frequency of occurrence. In some other ones, what had been stated implicitly in the original versions had been rendered in an explicit way or vice versa in the dubbed ones. In other words, explicitness change was at the second rank in terms of frequency. Total change, addition and illocutionary change also followed it respectively. Therefore, this pragmatic aspect has undergone changes in the aforementioned dubbed versions.

Of course, it is necessary to keep in mind that some limitations impose on dubbing which affect the translation product. One of these limitations is lip synchronicity (Chaume, 2012) in which the dubbing sound and the actors' lip movements must match. Chaume (2012) believes that some aspects are crucial in dubbing; producing a coherent and loyal translation is among those important items which are essential to be considered.

Another constraint which imposes on dubbing is that the translator is not the only person who decides in this process and it involves a group of people including dubbing actors, dubbing assistant, dubbing director, translator and editor (Pérez-González, 2014), and the dubbing director is the one who finally approves the product. Other factors that may result in imposing some limitations on dubbing are censorship and the differences between source and target language structures. So, these limitations may lead to the implicit meaning of the original film being lost in dubbing.

However, the translator is proficient in both source and target languages, and he must be the one who has the permission to make such changes (Chaume, 2004). Despite all these limitations, sometimes the translators' inadequacy may result in such changes. Thus, it's essential for the translators to achieve the required skills in the pragmatic aspects of the translation and do their best to observe these aspects in their translations.

This study has shed some light on the translation of implicature and its challenges in Persian dubbing. Future studies could investigate other pragmatic aspects in dubbing and subtitling. Researchers could also examine the translation of implicature in other modes of AVT (i.e. audiodescription, voice over, and etc.). The current study investigates four films; future research could extend the findings and analyze more films. In this research, the effects of this pragmatic aspect and its translation on audiences have not been examined; future research could also investigate the translation of implicature and its reception by audiences.

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Linguistic Analysis of Translated News: An Insight into the Concept of News Value

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ABSTRACT

With the aftermath of globalization and the increased demand for localized information, translation assumed a significant position in the world of news. Due to this close connection, in recent years, journalistic concepts such as gatekeeping and framing have contributed to towards much interdisciplinary research in the field of translation studies. Nevertheless, many other topics have remained untouched by translation scholars, one of which is the seminal concept of news value manifested in the linguistic and semiotic dimensions of news products. Exploring news values and their relation to translation offers potentials for a better grasp on the nature of translated news and the process of news translation in newsrooms worldwide. Consequently, the headlines of 120 translated news pieces related to two international conferences were analyzed using Bednarek and Caple's (2017) discursive news value analysis framework. These news headlines were published on four renowned Iranian news websites from 2021 to 2023. The results revealed that these websites construct similar patterns of news values and establish eliteness, negativity, and superlativeness more than other news values in their translated headlines. This was an indication of the lack of originality among news websites in reporting international events and also their orientation toward following a predetermined ideological positioning. As a whole, the present research is a true interdisciplinary one attempting to learn about the construction of news values in the context of Iran and translation discourse and unveil news agencies' motivation in linguistically constructing and establishing these values.

KEYWORDS: Iranian news websites, journalism, language of news, news values, translation

1. Introduction

In recent years, as a result of globalization, growth in the flow of information, and the development of different types of media, news has become an ever more consumable source of information (Xia, 2019). Nowadays, news reaches people with significant speed and quantity (Schäffner, 2017) and has taken part in shaping people's understanding and interpretation of their surroundings and events (Gambier, 2006). Although, professional ethics of newsroom bind news producers to report events as it is and assume independence from outside control, it is a common assumption that news is affected by "different ideological manipulations in order to serve the favor of dominant authority and or power" (Azodi & Salmani, 2015, p. 163) arising from the established government or the news agency itself. In other words, news production sometimes leads to a new framing of reality (Bednarek & Caple, 2013) which, to some extent, undermines the objectivity of news pieces (Kristensen, 2021). This new reality is presented to the audiences in their own language (Bielsa, 2009) through the linguistic aspect as well as the semiotic dimension, which consists of news layouts, photos, videos, and audio.

As global as the world of news can be, a language barrier still exists for news consumption because of a strong public preference for news reading and viewing in their native-language. Thus, news has to be translated or, in fact, localized “to come to terms with the national-and political sensitivities of a people while meeting market requirements” (Orengo, 2005, p. 170) of a specific geography. The reason for using the term localization is to emphasize the transformation of the source text in the process of news translation (Zanettin, 2021). This transformation can consist of a few lexical substitutions to rewriting the whole linguistic and semiotic content, which can serve ideological purposes similar to that of news writing (Schäffner, 2017). Nevertheless, the ideological transformations are inherent in the process of news translation and conform with and reinforce “the reader’s ideological identity and sense of political affiliation” (Orengo, 2005, p. 179) so as to conceal the traces of the transformations, maintain a consistent number of readers, and create a sense of membership. This everlasting relation between ideology and news translation was unnoticed by the general public in the past, but due to the effort of many scholars particularly those in the field of translation studies, ideological manipulation of news translation is now seen as a general rule and even standard practice in news rooms (see Ameri & Khoshsaligheh, 2018; Jalalian Daghigh & Amini, 2022; Khanjan et al., 2013; Valdeón, 2022).

One of the main features of news production, closely linked to shaping and transforming the news content, is the concept of news value. In newsrooms, news values are one of the first criteria mentioned when talking about the rules of news selection and construction (Wendelin et al., 2015). They “enable news discourse both to attract, inform and entertain readers” (Bednarek & Caple, 2019, p. 126) and can be simply conceptualized as the worthy aspect of an event constructed or established through linguistic and semiotic dimensions of news discourse (Bednarek et al., 2021). Therefore, researching news values can provide insights into news production and the agendas of a news agency. As translation is fused with news production, the construction of news values impacts news translation as well. However, except in recent years, news values have not been the focus of linguistic or translation research (Bednarek & Caple, 2014) as a result of a lack of a proper framework and conceptualization of news values in the world of translation studies and linguistics.

With this gap in mind, the current research provides a nuanced understanding of news values and news translation in the context of Iran by focusing on translated news pieces published on four famous Iranian news websites. The main topic of these pieces was related to two international conferences called the World Economic Forum (Davos) and the United Nations Climate Change (COP). This research strived to determine if specific news values were emphasized or absent in reporting and translating topics related to international economic, political, and environmental issues in the context of Iran, and if there were any ideological motivations embedded in constructing them. With an analysis and comparison, this study further tried to establish whether or not Iranian news agencies act uniformly in constructing news values when it comes to similar topics. This study introduces an innovative outlook on the relation between journalism, linguistics, and translation studies as it focuses on the context of Iran and uses an interdisciplinary framework to learn more about a topic that was dismissed from previous research, not only in the field of linguistics and translation studies but also in journalism and news research. The findings could be of value and use for translators interested in professional opportunities in the world of news translation, those who seek to broaden their understanding of the relation between translation and news values, and individuals and institutions invested in revising and writing new materials for future news translators.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The World of News

One of the first things most people interact with on a daily basis is some form of news, whether national, international, hard, or soft news. Parallel to that, this interaction mostly occurs online and is not limited to the consumer’s geographical boundaries, which allows instant and real-time consumption of news taking place in a near but mostly distant location (Ban & Noh, 2018). Although interest in gathering information and news is not new, a version of this new form of news consumption took shape in the second half of the 19th century and is called modern journalism, which was a respond to the “growing appetites of metropolitan publics for news from around the world, giving rise to what has been described as the globalization of the event (Palmer, 1983: 213)” (as cited in Bielsa, 2016, p. 207). Around the same time, “the newspaper became the first mass cultural medium of modernity” (Bielsa & Bassnett, 2009, p. 38), and its defining characteristic was reporting factual information rather than opinions, resulting in the appearance of global journalism (Bielsa & Bassnett, 2009) and global news agencies. Furthermore, in these global newsrooms, news relevance rather than proximity (Bielsa & Bassnett, 2009), extreme speed and efficiency (Schäffner, 2017), impartiality (Bielsa & Bassnett, 2009), and online news publishing (Zanettin, 2021) replaced previous norms of news reporting in newspapers and on cable channels.

Evidently, from the agencies’ standpoint, opinions and preferences are not considered to be a part of news production, and news pieces are general and neutral reports of an event. However, in reality and in the public eye “media coverage is seen as a socially determined construction of reality” (Bednarek & Caple, 2013, p. 4) by all involved in the process of news production, especially the editors, because “[w]ith good editors, the newspaper is almost a mirror on their own personality. It reflects their own values” (Neighbour, 2011) rather than the unbiased report of events. Apart from what goes into newsrooms and the stance of the news publisher on a specific matter, the government and the market impose limitations, rules, and norms on the content of news (Lewis, 2006). Overall, audience monitoring made available through the internet and analytic software allows the power of government, organizations, markets, and news agencies to be applied smoothly and structure and shape the news content to their benefit.

All these discussions fall under the top of ideology and its direct relation to news production. Ideology in the context of news is not always seen as a positive aspect and comes with its own consequences, and is understood as “a process of constructing meanings in the service of power” (Deuze, 2008, p. 2). For instance, “the shape imposed on the message by the configuration [done through applying an ideology] affects in a crucial way the construction of the receiver’s mental image” (Falkenhayner, 2019, p. 21) and distorts and alters their perception of the happenings. On the other hand, ideology can assume a different definition in the field of journalism. This idea originated in Deuze’s (2005) work, and he equates journalism with ideology, but here, ideology has a different definition and is called occupational ideology, which is related to the journalists’ perception of their job and profession and how they incorporate that ideology into their day-to-day work. This occupational ideology is not similar to the ideological positioning imposed on news by different parties and might be of secondary importance, as journalists mostly cannot afford to work independently (Joseph, 2012), and they should adhere to the institutional and political rules and ideologies. Nevertheless, the presence of both forms of ideologies can be traced in various aspects of a news piece, one of which is the linguistic aspect.

2.2. The Language of News

In modern times and today’s context, a piece of news does not only consist of textual material but is accompanied by multiple types of media, such as graphics, images, emojis, typographical elements, audio, and videos, and journalists were taught to take liberties in their job and to be creative in embracing these extra options. Also, in some cases, the semiotic aspect of the news takes precedence over the linguistic part; for instance, Instagram is an image-oriented platform, and if an agency decides to publish news on this platform, they have to first take the image aspect into consideration and then pay attention to the linguistic segments. Nevertheless, what reflects “the corporate identity of the media institution” (Schäffner, 2017, p. 328) and is considered to be an integral aspect of the news production is the linguistic aspect of the news. The language of news differs from other linguistic forms and has specific guiding principles and rules. In a similar line of inquiry, van Leeuwen (2006) maintains that news language “differs from nearly all other forms of writing as it uses short, snappy sentences and the active voice to convey its information” (p. 222) needless to say, these strict rules are not limited to written texts produced for newspapers and are part of the journalists’ educational procedure and daily activities (Cotter, 2010). Maintaining such rules is in accordance with the objectivity and neutrality criteria most news agencies try to follow, and provides a product suitable to be sold to and published in various markets (Bielsa & Bassnett, 2009).

Furthermore, although linguistic rules are applied by news agencies to almost all news products, there are still language differences between news outlets and even between various news sections, such as local, international, or sports news (Bednarek & Caple, 2019). As these differences can be caused by organizational preferences or ideological motivations and as language has a social dimension, the “close analysis of situated language use [in news writing] can provide both fundamental and distinctive insights into the mechanisms and dynamics of social and cultural production in everyday activity” (Rampton et al., 2004, p. 2) of news outlets and agencies around the world. Likewise, Cotter (2010) mentions that the language of news goes beyond conveying facts and information and is relevant to the social context of the world and the communities where news circulates, as well as the social dimension of news texts and their language. However, without addressing translation and its discourse, analyzing the linguistic dimension of news would be incomplete.

As previously mentioned, access to international and national news happens in real-time through social media and live broadcasting; nonetheless, there still exists a language barrier for consumers (Ban & Noh, 2018), which can only be tackled with the help of translation. Although intertwined with news, translation has always assumed an invisible position in the process of news production, as it is rarely talked about in newsrooms and the academic environment (Schäffner, 2017). In addition, the speed of accessing information in audiences’ native language has increased to a near-instantaneity (Cronin, 2003), disguising and eliminating the intermediary position of translation in facilitating the process of news production and consumption (Scammell, 2020). Also, translators’ works are edited by journalists to make them fit for purpose (Schäffner, 2017), contrary to popular belief that considers any act of translation as proper translation, similar to literary or religious translation.

All discussed amounts to the fact that news translation is not a simple linguistic transposition or a word-for-word substitution, as a matter of fact, “news translation is heavily influenced by the processes and demands of journalism and by the linguistic framework specific to each cultural community” (Guerrero, 2022, p. 235) and also undergoes extreme levels of editing due to not owing much respect to faithfulness and source texts. Therefore, it can be deduced that “the norms in news translation are fully dictated by journalists and the news industry. So, while other professions may establish a more or less felicitous synergy with translation, the news industry imposes itself wholly on translation” (Floros, 2012, p. 929) and other forms of linguistic production in the news environment. Aside from the news industry, news translation “deals with recurring challenges that involve political correctness” (Bielsa & Bassnett, 2009, p. 32) similar to writing the news text. Transformations taking place in news translation, motivated by ideologies of organizations and governments, “become systematic and patterns emerge” (Conway, 2010, p. 202) which can be scrutinized to learn more about the crossroad of news, language, and translation. Overall, it can be inferred that the process of news translation and its language are highly influenced by invisible ideological, cultural, and political motivations that determine its shape and reception. Also, examining news translation provides a deeper understanding of these elements and the societies they operate within.

3. News Values

In newsrooms, news value or newsworthiness is a fundamental concept determining the news's linguistic and semiotic construction, transformation, and translation. News values are "selection criteria that are equally applied first to the 'event' that has taken place, ... and second to the 'story' as it competes with other stories" (Bednarek & Caple, 2013, pp. 3-4) for publishing and broadcasting. To put it more simply, news values demonstrate "how specific events are constructed as news-worthy in published news stories" (Bednarek & Caple, 2013, p. 5). This simple statement is only one of the definitions of this concept and is the closest one to the backbone of the present research. In addition to defining this concept, an effort was made by scholars and journalists to provide a comprehensive list of news values for future studies and training journalists. For instance, one of these classic lists proposed by Williams and Martin (1911) consists of "1. The prominence of persons or places concerned. 2. The proximity of the event to the place of publication. 3. The unusualness of the event. 4. The magnitude of the event. 5. The human interest involved. 6. Timeliness" (p. 213). Nevertheless, not much consensus exists among the proposed lists by various scholars.

In addition, news values are not only a list of qualities applied to the news but rather they take charge of various stages of news production (Cotter, 2010) and provide numerous information on the ideological nature of decisions made in newsrooms. In other words, news values are a reflection of "organisational, sociological and cultural norms combined with economic factors" (Weaver et al., 2009, p. 49) controlling news production. The news values' ability to provide such information is in relation to the fact that they are "socioculturally assigned, rather than 'natural' or 'inherent' in the event" (Bednarek & Caple, 2017, p. 42). Many scholars, especially linguists, have pointed out the ideological nature of news values, which is a sign that news values manifest themselves mostly in the linguistic or verbal aspect of news. They assume language is used to maximize and portray the newsworthiness of an event, especially in headlines, and "an investigation of headlines offers a general picture of the news values underlined by the press" (Zeng & Li, 2023, p. 5) and their general preferences toward using specific values. As a result, in recent years exploring news values which was once considered to be outside the scope of linguistics' work became captivating for them and "a handful of linguists have tried to come up with their own conceptualization of news values" (Bednarek & Caple, 2017, p. 36) one of which is the one put forth by Bednarek and Caple (2017) (see Methods). Translation, a tool for linguistic transfer of information and news, is equally guided by news values. The construction of news values in translation holds even greater significance as it is a clear indicator of how much a translation is kept close to the source and what standards are adhered to in specific newsrooms (Zeng & Li, 2023). However, the number of studies focusing on the relation between news values and translation is scant and demands additional consideration.

Moreover, news values manifest themselves in the pictures and videos accompanying the news, which is the semiotic aspect. The semiotic components of the news illustrate news values "through the ways in which elements, contexts, and participants are framed, cropped (in or out), or angled within the image frame" (Bednarek & Caple, 2017, p. 52) thus, concentrating on the semiotic aspect also demonstrates the hidden sociopolitical interest and the narrative that an agency or a government follows. All things considered, contemplating on and studying the concept of news value, whether from a linguistic or semiotic lens, is of importance since "they inform the mediated world that is presented to news audiences, providing a shared shorthand operational understanding of what working journalists are required to produce" (Harcup & O'Neill, 2017, p. 1470). Also, further research can provide proper answers for the remaining questions regarding how news values are constructed not only in authored pieces but also in translated ones and what implications their construction bear with themselves. Nevertheless, the semiotic analysis of news values falls outside the scope of the present study. Overall, this paper aims to linguistically analyze the constructed news values in the translated news pieces published on Iranian news websites to examine if these websites align or diverge in constructing news values and to determine the ideological reasons for their convergence or divergence.

4. Methodology

To study the news values, the headlines of selected news pieces were analyzed. Following a qualitative and descriptive strand of research, for this study, a monolingual corpus of translated news headlines into Persian was compiled that were published from 2021 to 2023. The main topic of these news pieces was related to two international conferences called the United Nations Climate Change (COP) and the World Economic Forum (Davos) conference. There were multiple underlying reasons for selecting such conferences. First and foremost, the scope of these conferences revolved around crucial discussions on political, economic, and environmental topics and issues such as the Israel-Gaza crisis and the Paris Agreement (COP2021). Also, these public debates and discussions happening among high-profile politicians from the West and the East are not theoretical and have sparked several international changes, such as averting a war between Greece and Turkey, providing low-carbon solutions, and vaccinating more than one billion children. Secondly, since the selected news pieces were translated and not authored, it would hopefully lead to a greater insight regarding the discourse of news translation in Iran, which has been shadowed by the invisibility of news translators and the process of news translation. Furthermore, the central reason for only analyzing headlines was that salient points of a news piece are always summarized in the headline, and markers of the ideological leanings of an agency can be located in the headlines (Orengo, 2005).

News pieces published on Asr Iran, Fararu, Khabar Online, and Entekhab websites were the main focus of this study. These four websites are widely known and referenced news websites in reporting hard news, especially in relation to economic and environmental topics in the context of Iran. To gather the news pieces, various keywords such as "davos", "davos اجلاس", "اجلاس داووس", "COP28", "COP27 اجلاس", "اجلاس کاب ۲۶", and etc. were searched on them with the help of their built-in search engine. A total of 617 news pieces related to both conferences were gathered. As finding the exact source of news in news translation is a difficult task, the present research solely focused on the target texts, or in other words, news texts that were considered to be translated. Therefore, all news pieces on the mentioned topics were read carefully to determine whether they

were translated or authored. In some cases, the name of a foreign news agency was mentioned as the source of the news; in others, the language and choice of words were unnatural, manifesting multiple features of translationese. However, we cannot solely rely on unnatural language to assert that a piece of news is a translation. Therefore, to enhance the reliability of data, only the headlines of those pieces that used direct quotations or phrases like “به نقل از” and “به گفته‌ی” were considered to be translated and a part of the research corpus. Based on these criteria, 237 pieces were translated, out of which 120 (30 news pieces for each of the four websites) were randomly selected to be analyzed. The main obstacle in the present research was related to finding the proper method for determining if a news text was translated or authored. This challenge was addressed through iterative analysis of each news text and also, identifying multiple indicators of translation as previously discussed.

For the purpose of this study, Bednarek and Caple's (2017) suggested framework, Discursive News Values Analysis, was utilized to analyze the translated headlines with the help of MAXQDA 2020 Software. Bednarek and Caple's (2017) framework consists of two aspects, linguistic and semiotic. However, the focus of the current study is on the linguistic aspect only. The linguistic list of news values consists of 10 resources, which are “consonance, eliteness, impact, positivity, negativity, personalization, proximity, superlativeness, timeliness, and unexpectedness” (Bednarek & Caple, 2017, pp. 79-80). This framework helps to determine which of the news values are more favored in Iranian newsrooms to be incorporated into the linguistic aspect of translations and what ideological reasoning lies behind their selection and construction. Therefore, the proposed list was adopted to discursively and linguistically examine the 120 translated headlines of news pieces related to the COP and Davos conferences published on the four mentioned Iranian news websites. It should be emphasized that through consistent coding, analysis, and revision, the influence of potential ideological biases was mitigated.

4.1. Data Analysis

To clarify the analysis process, two instances are presented, and then the results are elaborated.



Figure 1.

Khabar Online's News Piece on COP Conference

Figure 1 displays a news piece published on Khabar Online's website about the warning the World Health Organization gave at the COP conference¹. Table 1 demonstrates the constructed news values and the linguistic elements that correspond to those values.

Table 1.

Constructed News Values in Figure 1

No.	News Values	Headline
1.	Eliteness	WHO
2.	Impact	سالانه ۷ میلیون نفر در جهان مرگ مغزی می‌شوند (با آلودگی هوا) [7 million people worldwide suffer brain death every year (due to air pollution)]
3.	Negativity	آلودگی هوا، هشدار، مرگ مغزی [air pollution, warns, brain death]
4.	Superlativeness	۷ میلیون نفر [7 million people]

¹ . Translation: WHO warns about air pollution; 7 million people worldwide suffer brain death every year.
<https://www.khabaronline.ir/news/1557566/%D9%87%D8%B4%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1-WHO-%D8%AF%D8%B1%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%87-%D8%A2%D9%84%D9%88%D8%AF%DA%AF%DB%8C-%D9%87%D9%88%D8%A7-%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%87-%DB%B7%D9%85%DB%8C%D9%84%DB%8C%D9%88%D9%86-%D9%86%D9%81%D8%B1-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%AC%D9%87%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%85%D8%B1%DA%AF-%D9%85%D8%BA%D8%B2%DB%8C>

The first constructed news value in this headline is eliteness because of the acronym WHO, which refers to a prominent and elite organization. For the next one, in the headline, the effect and implied cause of the effect are mentioned, resulting in the construction of the news value of impact. Moreover, the word ‘warning’ alongside two negative lexis is used, which creates the news value of negativity. Lastly, superlativeness is constructed in this headline by using a quantifier.

ادعای جدید اسرائیل: آنچه در حال حاضر رخ داده است، جنگ میان
ما و ایران است



Figure 2.

Fararu's News Piece on Davos Conference

Figure 2 displays a piece of news related to a topic discussed at the Davos conference ² which was published on Fararu's website. Table 2 is a demonstration of all the linguistic news values established in this translated headline.

Table 2.

Constructed News Values in Figure 2

No.	News Values	Headline
1.	Consonance	ادعای جدید [new claim]
2.	Impact	جنگ میان ما و ایران [war between us and Iran]
3.	Negativity	جنگ [war]
4.	Proximity	ایران [Iran]
5.	Timeliness	جدید، در حال حاضر [new, now]

The first established news value in the headline is consonance, which is constructed by using a phrase that refers to a similarity with the past. The second news value is impact, and it is established by referring to a situation with an implied significant consequence and effect. Additionally, the word ‘war’ is used in the headline, which constructs the news value of negativity. Also, mentioning the word ‘Iran’ leads to the construction of proximity for the target audiences who are Persian. The fifth and last news value in this headline is timeliness, which is constructed by using a temporal reference and also the word ‘new’.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1. Quantitative Analysis

As elaborated in the previous sections, this research was designed to gain a better insight into the linguistic construction of news values in the discourse of translation and also to specify the similarities and differences among various news websites in using the concept of news values and the reasons for such differences or similarities. Hence, Figures 3 to 7 display the frequency of news values for each of the news websites in the corpus.

²Translation: Israel's new claim: What is happening now is a war between us and Iran.

<https://fararu.com/fa/news/701252/%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%B9%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D8%AC%D8%AF%DB%8C%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A6%DB%8C%D9%84-%D8%A2%D9%86%DA%86%D9%87-%D8%AF%D8%B1%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%AD%D8%A7%D8%B6%D8%B1-%D8%B1%D8%AE-%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AF%D9%87-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA-%D8%AC%D9%86%DA%AF-%D9%85%DB%8C%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%85%D8%A7-%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA>

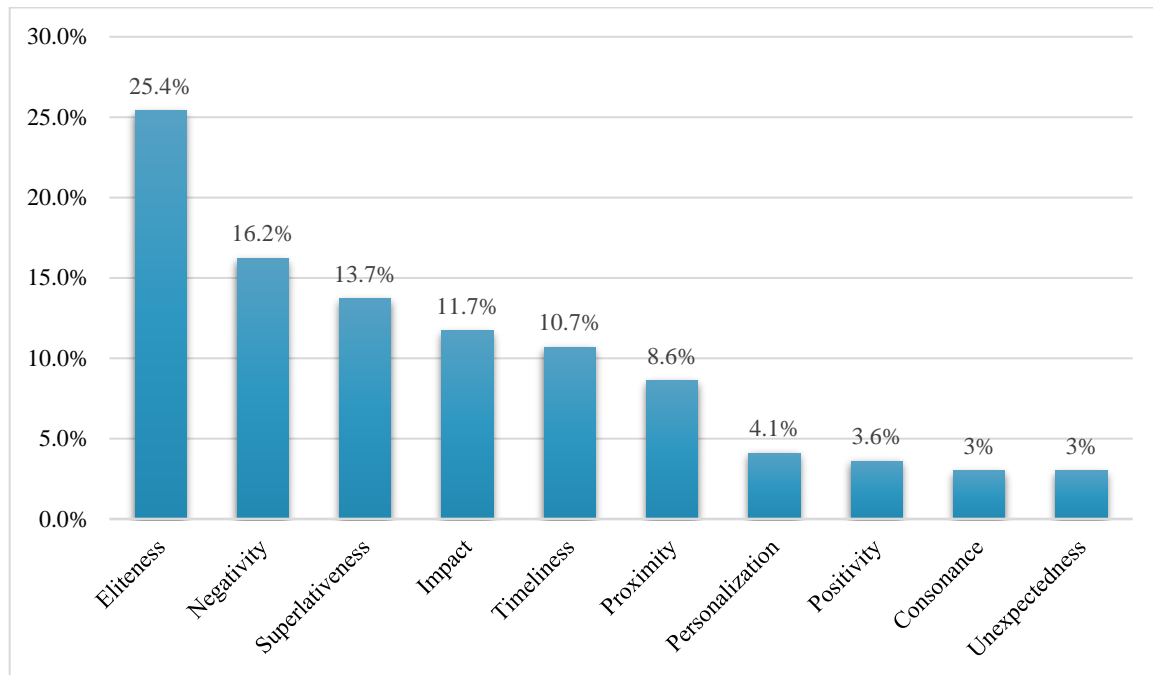


Figure 3.

Constructed News Values on Asr Iran's Website

In Figure 3, the frequency of each news value constructed in the analyzed headlines published on Asr Iran's website is shown. It is apparent that eliteness ($n = 50$) had the highest frequency among other news values, and consonance ($n = 6$) and unexpectedness ($n = 6$) were the least frequently established ones. Alongside eliteness, negativity ($n = 32$) and superlativeness ($n = 27$) enjoy a higher frequency compared to other news values, which is attestation to the fact that eliteness, negativity, and superlativeness have co-occurred in most news headlines. News values of personalization ($n = 8$) and positivity ($n = 7$) were not much favored by this website. Other remaining values, which are impact ($n = 23$), timeliness ($n = 21$), and proximity ($n = 17$), were moderately used, which probably is, due to constructing them where it was possible rather than overusing them to increase the impact of the news on the audiences or adding a sense of cultural or spatial closeness for them.

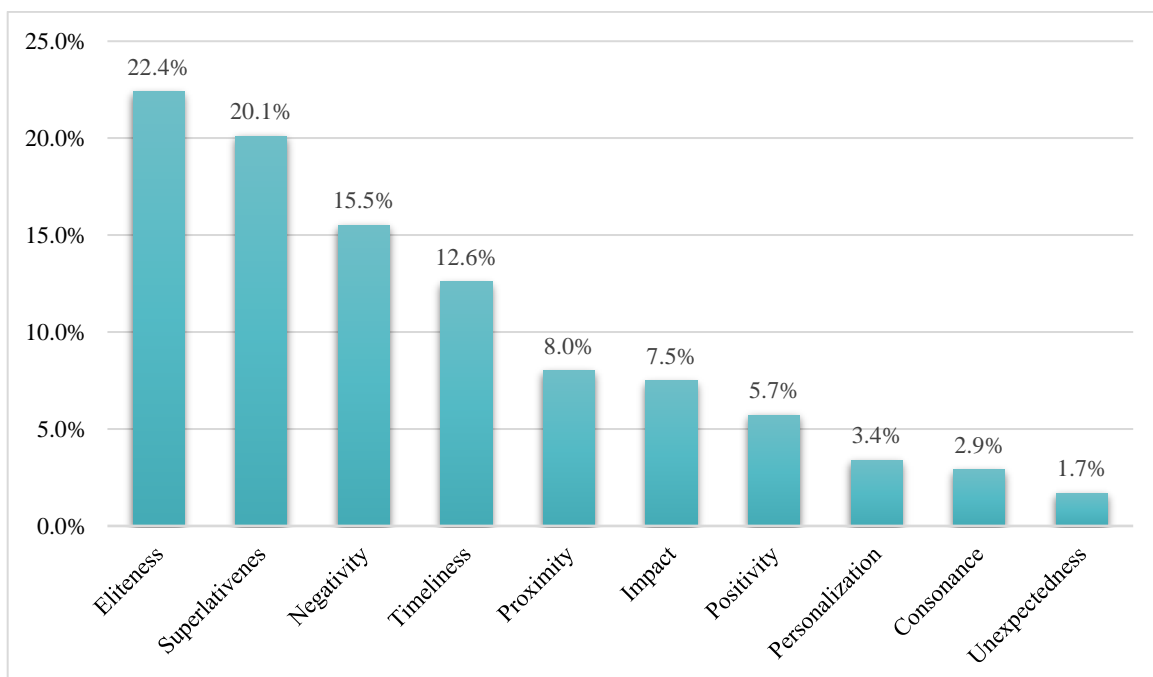


Figure 4.

Constructed News Values on Fararu's Website

Figure 4 displays the frequency of news values found when analyzing headlines on Fararu's website. As is evident, eliteness ($n = 39$), superlativeness ($n = 35$), and negativity ($n = 27$) are the most constructed news values, and again, consonance ($n = 5$) and unexpectedness ($n = 3$) fall in the last place. However, another news value with a relatively higher frequency is timeliness ($n = 22$), indicating this website's tendency to allude to the newness of the news in the headline. Furthermore, the news values of proximity ($n = 14$) and impact ($n = 13$) were moderately used, and the news values of positivity ($n = 10$) and personalization ($n = 6$) fell on the side of the less constructed news values.

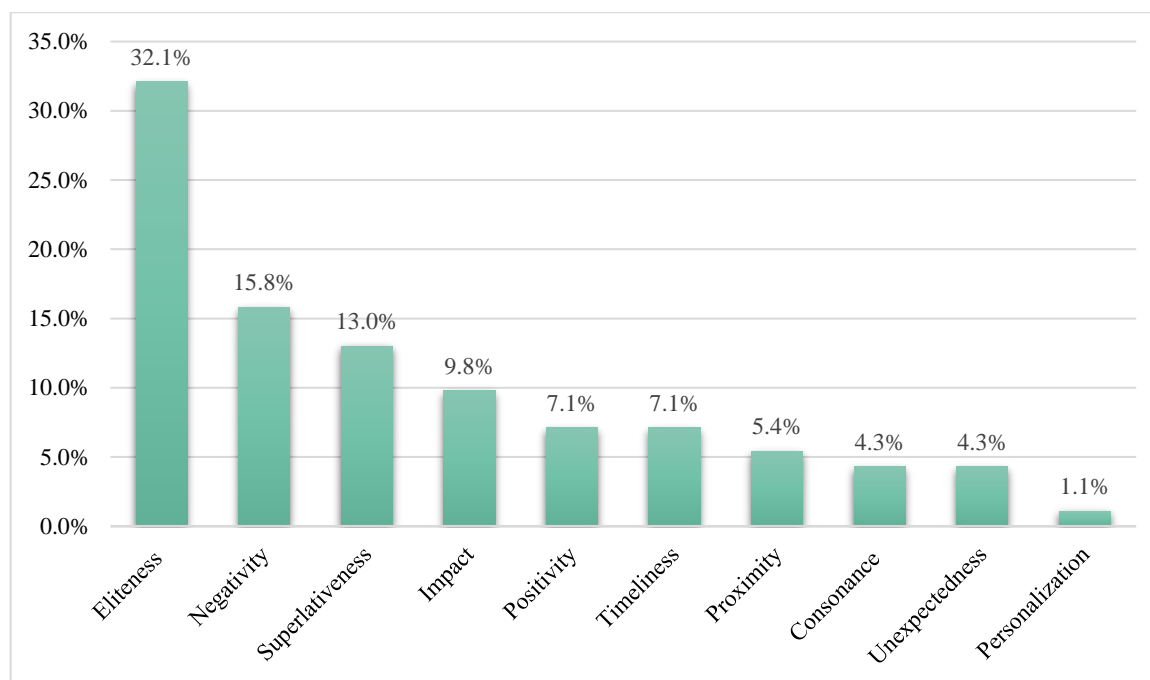


Figure 5.

Constructed News Values on Khabar Online's Website

Similar to Figures 3 and 4, Figure 5 is related to another website (Khabar Online) and again eliteness ($n = 59$), negativity ($n = 29$), and superlativeness ($n = 24$) were constructed more than other news values, except the fact that the frequency of eliteness is considerably higher in this news website compared to other news values. Another exception is related to the news value of positivity ($n = 13$), which has been moderately used in the translation of the headlines and falls alongside the news values of impact ($n = 18$), timeliness ($n = 13$), and proximity ($n = 10$). In addition, the news values of consonance ($n = 8$), unexpectedness ($n = 8$), and personalization ($n = 2$) were the least frequent ones.

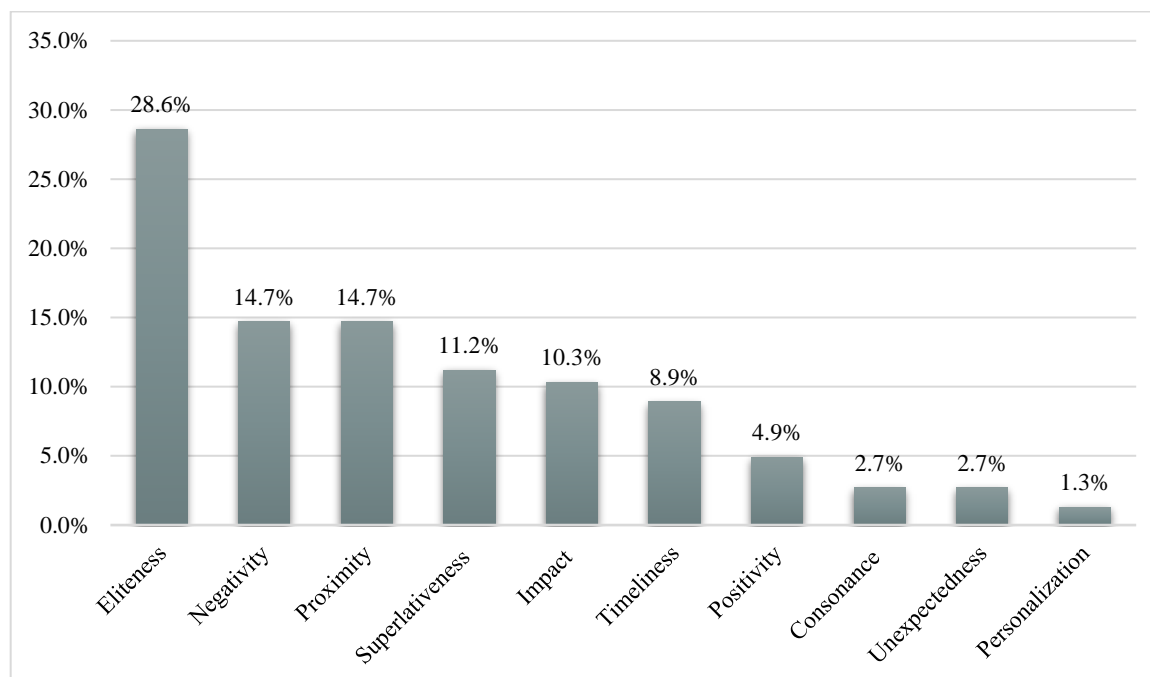


Figure 6.

Constructed News Values on Entekhab's Website

Figure 6 demonstrates the frequency of news values linguistically constructed in the headlines of Entekhab's website. On this website, the news values of eliteness ($n = 64$) and negativity ($n = 33$) still enjoy a higher frequency among other news values, nevertheless, the news value of proximity ($n = 33$) also falls in the category of most frequently used news values while superlativeness ($n = 25$) is moderately used similar to impact ($n = 23$) and timeliness ($n = 20$). The other four remaining news values (positivity ($n = 11$), consonance ($n = 6$), unexpectedness ($n = 6$), and personalization ($n = 3$)) are the least constructed ones in the translated headlines of this website.

Aside from scrutinizing the frequency of news values of each of the websites on its own, it is necessary to provide a comprehensive picture of these frequencies alongside each other, enabling us to compare and contrast and reach a justifiable and credible conclusion.

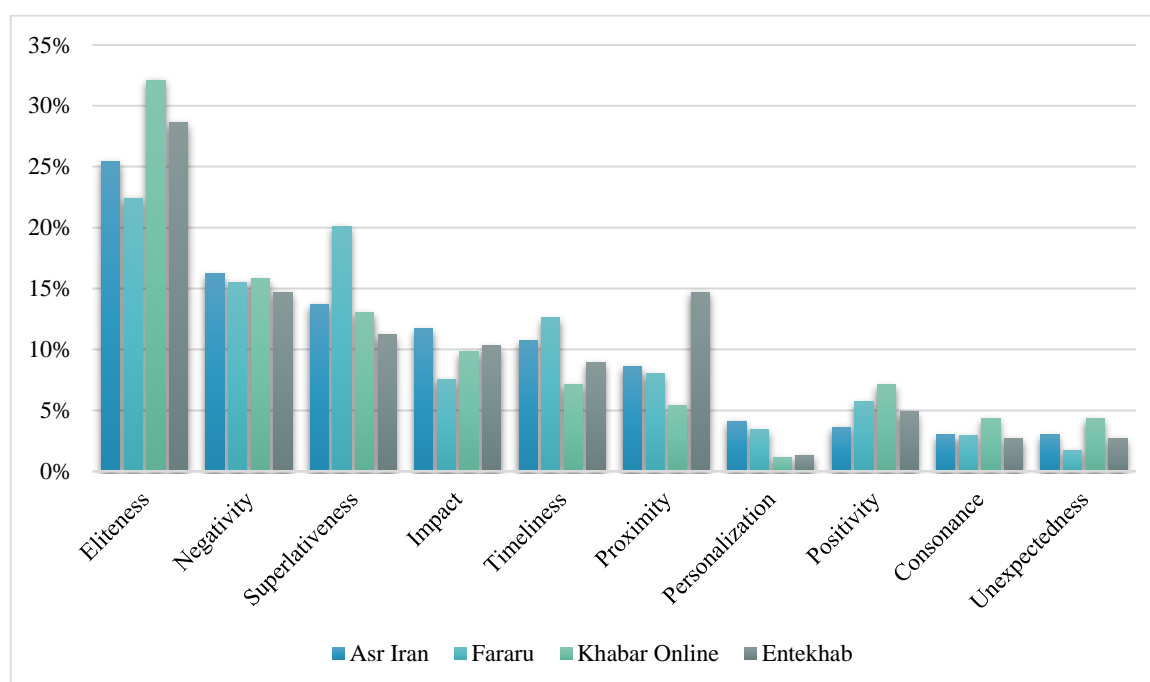


Figure 7.

Constructed News Values on the Four Websites

It is easily discernible from the data demonstrated and elaborated in Figures 3 to 6 and now in Figure 7 that these four websites use a similar pattern in constructing linguistic news values in their translated headlines. Therefore, eliteness, superlativeness, and negativity are the most constructed news values, and the least established ones for all four websites are consonance and unexpectedness.

5.2. Qualitative Analysis

Based on the data presented in Figures 3 to 7, it can be deduced that in all these websites, eliteness had the highest frequency compared to the other nine news values, which can be due to the nature of the two conferences that the news pieces revolved around. COP and Davos conferences are notable conventions that invite elite figures from all around the world to attend and share their thoughts and theories so as to find the best way to deal with international matters. In most analyzed pieces, the name of an eminent figure or institution was mentioned. Thus, it would be natural for eliteness to be constructed more than other news values by stating the role labels or the names of elite figures in the headlines while reporting these conferences. Apart from eliteness, the two news values of negativity and superlativeness had higher frequencies in comparison with other news values. A possible explanation for this is that negative and intensified news tends to result in higher rates of audience interaction, attraction, and engagement with the news. In today's world, this engagement is of significant importance for news websites as most news readership happens online, and news revenue now depends less on newspaper sales and more on attracting digital clicks, which brings about more revenue and the chance of survival for news websites alongside other websites and platforms people use to publish their narrative of the news. This is aligned with what Zanettin (2021) and Ban and Noh (2018) discuss on online and negative news production and consumption. Furthermore, the higher frequency of negativity explains the lower frequency of positivity as they are contradictory in nature, and also, positive news is not as attractive as negative news for the target audiences.

With regard to news values of impact, timeliness, and proximity, it can be stated that they were constructed on moderation. If in every headline a cause and effect or a consequence of a situation was mentioned, the headlines would have looked very similar and lost the initial attraction, which justifies the moderate construction of impact. Also, in the case of timeliness, as these conferences happen once a year and the news pieces are published mostly around the same time they are happening, specifying the newness of the news piece would be superfluous. Additionally, owing to the international nature of the conferences and in agreement with what Bednarek and Caple (2017) mention about reporting international news in a specific locale, constructing the news value of proximity for the Persian audience is difficult and unnecessary. Therefore, the moderate use of this news value is related to the news pieces that talked either about a related topic to Iran or about Iran's attendance at these conferences. The remaining news values, which are personalization, consonance, and unexpectedness, had the lowest frequency compared to the other ones on all the websites. As Bednarek and Caple (2017) explain elaborating on the DNVA framework, the lower frequency of these news values is partly because of the essence of the topic of the news pieces (personalization and consonance) and the difficulty in linguistically constructing the value (unexpectedness).

Apart from the similarities, there are a few noticeable differences in the construction of the news values. For instance, Khabar Online has constructed eliteness more than other websites; in the case of Fararu's website, the news values of superlativeness and timeliness have higher frequencies compared to the frequency of the same news values in the other websites, and proximity was mostly established in news headlines by Entekhab's website. Nevertheless, the difference between the frequencies of these news values among the four websites is not consistent and notable enough to make inferences about them. The random dissimilarities, such as the ones mentioned, can be explained based on what Deuze (2008), Falkenhayner (2019), and a countless number of other researchers had put forth regarding the specific ideological motivations, general organizational rules of news agencies, and market demands. Making concrete conclusions about these dissimilarities requires further discursive and descriptive studies on each of the selected news websites.

6. Conclusion

This research was designed in an attempt to analyze the topic of news values in the context of Iran, to understand Iranian news agencies' preferences and norms regarding the construction of such a concept in the discourse of translated news, and deduce the underlying reasons for the linguistic construction of specific news values. Therefore, a set of translated news headlines related to two international conferences (COP and Davos) published in four famous Iranian news websites (Asr Iran, Fararu, Khabar Online, and Entekhab) was discursively analyzed, implementing the linguistic framework proposed by Bednarek and Caple (2017) for researching the topic of news values.

By and large, the results attest to the fact that the four websites used very similar patterns of constructing news values while translating their news headlines. The co-occurrence and the higher frequency of eliteness, negativity, and superlativeness in all these websites became evident through the results, and the underlying reasons, such as the attraction of negative and intensified news for the audiences, the increased revenue based on this attraction, and the elite and international nature of the conferences, were explained (See Results and Discussion). The similarities might have multiple causes. First and foremost, although globalization has sped up the information-retrieving process for people, "it has not led to a diversity of content" (Scammell, 2020, p. 295), because most news agencies translate and publish news already distributed by international news conglomerates rather than broadcasting the news themselves or finding other sources to rely on for translation. This leads to the homogenization of news rather than providing newer takes on an event or a happening. This homogenization also "flout[s]

established language and cultural norms and standards” (Darwish, 2006, p. 60) of a community and ignores audience preferences in favor of the news agency or the government’s dominant ideologies.

Another reason can be associated with the four chosen news websites falling under the category of reformist news websites based on the distinct approaches taken by their chief editors and news directors in news reporting. Thus, their predetermined tone and dominant ideology in reporting news can be similar, resulting in the construction of the same news values whether writing or translating the news. In addition, the similarities can be a result of Iran’s general inattention to international economic and especially environmental issues; otherwise, the ideological differences would have been more prominent in reporting and translating the news. Also, the higher construction of proximity compared to other moderately and less used news values is an indication of the fact that these agencies focus more on topics concerning Iran and do not provide original and different ideas on international topics. Aside from the similarities, random differences were spotted in the data analysis. These differences can be explained based on news agencies’ in-house decisions and their understanding of what their respective readership demands from them. The pressure to comply with the demands of the readers has soared in recent years due to the increased competition among agencies, the emergence of the concept citizen-journalists, the development of new audience monitoring opportunities, and the proliferation of news publishing on the general public’s social media pages. In general, none of the mentioned reasoning is considered to be more dominant and superior than the others, and an amalgamation of these reasons might be at work.

In conclusion, it should be mentioned that this research is delimited to study news values and yet we know that, in a newsroom many things can happen last minute, hence, “arbitrary factors including luck, convenience and serendipity can come into play” (Harcup & O’Neill, 2017, p. 1473) not only affecting the construction of news values. Nevertheless, learning about how news is shaped linguistically and the central motivations in news production in a particular context, results in a heightened understanding of how information is conveyed to people, especially in the age of globalization where instantaneous access to any form of news has increased but the mainstream media is still being controlled by a specific few. Also, this understanding can help people form a critical view of the information they receive, rather than being only passive consumers of this commodity. From a theoretical and academic point of view, the present research is also valuable for gaining a better understanding of the noteworthy but unexplored concept of news values in Iran and the discourse of news translation. This paper can lay the ground for further research. As an alternative to centering the attention on a similar corpus, soft news pieces or hard ones published on other leading Persian news agencies, whether inside or outside Iran, can be selected, or a specific time period can be opted for to determine the historical changes of news value in Iran’s newsrooms. Also, analyzing the semiotic aspect of news values and only focusing on news images can be a fruitful direction for future research. Last but not least, identifying and proposing a list of culture-specific news values remains an uncharted territory. The incorporated list of news values in this research is proposed for English-speaking countries, and the question persists as to whether a localized list can be discovered for the context of Iran, which requires ensuing investigation.

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Examining Disfluencies in Translation Students: The Effects of Anxiety on English-Persian Consecutive Interpreting

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ABSTRACT

Given the cognitive demands of consecutive interpreting and the psychological pressures faced by novice interpreters, the present quantitative study aims to identify the most frequently occurring disfluencies in the output of English-Persian interpreter trainees and to explore how interpreting anxiety influences different types of disfluencies. A total of 23 translation trainee students were selected based on convenience sampling. Data were gathered through the Interpreting Classroom Anxiety Scale and a CI exam. After classifying the disfluencies, it was revealed that hesitation, silent pauses, and prolongation are the predominant disfluency features. These types of disfluencies indicate cognitive overload and failures in language planning. Statistical analyses showed a significant correlation between high levels of anxiety and an increased frequency of these disfluencies; however, no significant relationship was found between interpreting anxiety and disfluency in general. This suggests that anxiety adversely affects fluency and overall interpreting performance. This study highlights the critical role of psychological factors, particularly anxiety, in interpreter performance and training. The findings call for the inclusion of anxiety-reduction techniques in interpreter education and suggest future research on experience-based disfluency patterns and Persian-specific disfluency classification.

KEYWORDS: consecutive interpreting, disfluency, interpreting anxiety, trainee, interpreters

1. Introduction

Consecutive interpreting (CI) is a multitasking, time-sensitive linguistic endeavor conducted before an audience (Zhao, 2022). In contrast to simultaneous interpreting, which often takes place in a tranquil setting such as a booth, consecutive interpreting may occur in a noisy environment. This exposure to ambient noise affects how interpreters regulate their voice. Psycholinguistic research on speech production indicates that speakers adapt to variations in environmental noise levels, with the term ‘Lombard sign’ denoting this sensitivity to ambient sound (Bakti, 2009). In noisy environments, speakers adjust their voice level, pitch, frequency, pause patterns, articulation, and speech rates (Gósy, 2007; Lane & Tranel, 1971; Summers, 1988). Moreover, most speech disfluencies that arise during speech production in ambient noise are characterized by restarts and repetitions (Gósy, 2007). Speech disfluency denotes the interruptions that arise in the typical progression of speech. Disruptions manifest in various forms, such as pauses, repetitions, revisions, and interjections, and are regarded as a natural component of spontaneous speech (Bortfeld, 2001). Disfluencies frequently occur in human communication and are evident in the speech of both native and non-native speakers across various contexts and settings.

Interpreting necessitates the execution of various complex cognitive and psychomotor tasks for an audience, whether in public or private settings, making it a highly stressful profession (Kurz, 2003; Riccardi, 1998). Researchers have consistently identified anxiety management as essential for successful interpreting (Cooper, 1982; Gile, 1995; Moser-Mercer, 1985; Moser-

Mercer et al., 1998), and it serves as a significant predictor of interpreter competence (Alexieva, 1997). Stress impacts interpreters' performance and significantly influences the quality of their output. Zhao and Dong (2013) assert that interpreting quality is influenced by multiple factors, notably two critical criteria: the accurate transmission of the source content and the fluent expression in the target language. According to Zhao (2023), the potential for misinterpretation reflects the former, while Zhao (2022) argues that the fluency of the output signifies the latter. Fluency has been recognized as "an important construct in interpretation quality assessment in both professional and educational settings and for different stakeholders" (Han et al., 2020, p. 1).

Zhao (2022) underscores the importance of stress in interpreting, asserting that students aspiring to be interpreters must overcome the anxiety associated with public speaking during their interpreting assignments. However, as noted by Penet and Fernandez-Parra (2023), while it may not be possible to fundamentally change students' personalities based on trait emotional intelligence theory, fostering an understanding of their emotional traits can help them build resilience in the face of such challenges. Anxiety during target language delivery is likely to cause speech disfluencies among interpreters, especially among inexperienced interpreters, such as student interpreters (Cho & Roger, 2010). Studies indicate that anxiety correlates with foreign language (FL) speaking (MacIntyre & Noels, 1996), resulting in disfluencies during FL communication (Arnaiz & Pérez-Luzardo, 2014) and in public speaking scenarios (Andrade & Williams, 2009). Moreover, research conducted by Craig (1990), Menzies (1999), and Messenger (2004) demonstrate that anxiety intensifies stuttering. Stuttering constitutes a notable form of speech disfluency, with anxiety potentially acting as a contributory factor (Zhao, 2022).

Disfluency has been the subject of considerable research (Ambrose & Yairi, 1999; Diemand-Yauman et al., 2011; Schachter, 1991). In recent decades, the term disfluency has gained prominence in the literature concerning speech production and perception (Lickley, 2015). Nevertheless, the academic community in Interpreting Studies (IS) has not yet allocated significant attention to the speech disfluencies evident in interpreters' output (Tóth, 2011). Moreover, a study of the relevant literature indicates that little effort has been undertaken to investigate the English-Persian language pair in relation to disfluency in interpreting. Nonetheless, this does not suggest that Persian disfluency has not been studied scientifically in any discipline. The majority of studies on disfluency in the Persian language concentrate on its clinical aspects, particularly stuttering (Mozafar Zangeneh et al., 2012; Sakhai, 2021; Salehpour, 2020; Vahab, 2013).

The present study aimed to address this research gap by conducting one of the preliminary investigations on disfluencies in the English-Persian language pair within interpreting studies. Given the scarcity of research on disfluencies in this language combination, this study contributes novel insights into how anxiety manifests in students' target-language output, particularly in a context where Persian remains understudied in interpreting research. Consecutive interpreting was chosen as the interpreting mode for this research due to its recognized position as the predominant instructional method in interpreting programs (Setton & Dawrant, 2016a). The researchers intended to examine the correlation between students' CI anxiety and the types and frequency of disfluencies in their target language production. This focus is crucial because disfluencies not only affect perceived interpreting quality but may also serve as observable markers of cognitive strain and anxiety—factors that can hinder professional development. Zhao (2022, p. 7) supports the exploration of the relationship between CI anxiety and disfluency, asserting that "speech disfluencies, especially fillers and repetitions, tended to increase as a function of a student interpreter's anxiety level."

To reach this aim, the present study posed the following research questions:

- RQ1. What are the most frequently occurring disfluencies in the English-Persian output of CI trainees?
- RQ2. What issues do these disfluencies indicate within the speech production system?
- RQ3. Does interpreting anxiety correlate with CI trainees' output in terms of fluency?

2. Literature Review

The concept of disfluency has been examined from multiple perspectives within the field of interpreting, including the categorization of disfluencies and their correlation with other significant aspects of interpreting practice. This range of investigation underscores the complexity of disfluency as a phenomenon and its implications for interpreter performance and communication efficacy.

For instance, Mead (2002) investigated the management of pauses by both professional and trainee interpreters during consecutive interpreting in their A (L1) and B (L2) languages. The study comprised 45 participants, encompassing novice and expert conference interpreting students, along with professional interpreters, principally concentrating on those who used Italian as their A language and English as their B language. Mead found that as interpretation experience rose, the incidence of hesitations associated with grammatical and lexical errors diminished. Trainee interpreters exhibited a higher frequency of pauses when interpreting into their B language.

A study by Yin (2011) further investigated the correlation between interpreter experience and pause management by analyzing successive interpretation outputs from undergraduate students. The research analyzed 28 consecutive interpretation outputs from third-year English majors in China to assess the frequency of disfluencies. The students were evaluated on their final interpretation examination and later were interviewed about the obstacles they encountered. The results indicated that inexperienced CI learners often depend on excessive fillers and redundant expressions, whereas they handle pauses more adeptly in language laboratory environments. Yin determined that optimal stress levels could help students reduce substantial pauses, highlighting the importance for both students and teachers to recognize the challenges associated with fillers and repetition.

Focusing on training progression, Bakti (2019) investigated the target language output of trainee interpreters, specifically analyzing the frequency and distribution of different error types in relation to training progression. The consecutive interpreting of English source texts into Hungarian by seven interpreting students was documented over three semesters. Error analyses indicated that the frequency of error types remained relatively consistent across semesters. Interpreted texts displayed a greater incidence of disfluencies than spontaneous speech, indicating that task difficulty, rather than the level of training, affected disfluency patterns.

The findings from Zhang and Song's (2019) study enhance the comprehension of interpreter performance. The study examined the correlations between self-repair behaviors and subjective assessments of student interpreters' CI performance. The researchers transcribed twelve interpretations from a competition, identifying instances of self-repair according to Levelt's (1983) classification system. The statistical analysis revealed strong positive correlations between overt repairs and content quality, alongside negative correlations between form and delivery with covert repairs. The results demonstrated that subjective evaluations correlated more strongly with content quality than with instances of self-repair, offering important implications for CI training and future research initiatives.

Shen and Liang (2021) further explored self-repair utilization in professional and student interpreters, emphasizing form, motivation, and the influence of expertise on fluency. The retrospective interview-based experiment on Chinese-to-English CI revealed that both groups employed a range of repair techniques, primarily motivated by error correction and appropriateness. Professional interpreters demonstrated a higher focus on semantic accuracy and exhibited fewer syntactic errors, reflecting different processing capabilities in comparison to student interpreters.

Expanding on cognitive aspects of interpreting, Zhao (2022) examined the role of individual factors—namely language proficiency, working memory, and anxiety levels—on speech disfluencies in simultaneous interpretation among 53 student interpreters. This study adopted cognitive assessments and an interpreting test, demonstrating that anxiety levels significantly influenced the frequency of disfluencies, especially fillers and repetitions.

A review of the current literature reveals that, while disfluency has been extensively examined in the field of interpreting studies worldwide, this subject remains inadequately investigated by scholars in the Iranian context. However, Yenkimaleki et al. (2022) have significantly contributed to this field by investigating the impact of fluency methods on the speech fluency of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. Their study had two groups of 34 trainees each: one group was acquainted with the topic, while the other was not. The results indicated that fluency training markedly improved trainees' performance, especially in relation to prevalent subjects. These findings highlight the prospective significance of fluency training for EFL educators, material developers, and interpretation training initiatives, establishing a basis for more investigation within the Iranian context.

Yenkimaleki and van Heuven (2024a) conducted another study to examine the impact of fluency training on interpreter trainees' speech, focusing on fluency, comprehensibility, and accentedness. The trainees were categorized into two groups: one group dedicated 33% of their training time to fluency strategy training, while the other group concentrated 67% of their training time on comprehensive oral communication skills. Structured interviews were used to evaluate fluency, comprehensibility, and accentedness. The results indicated that fluency training notably improved fluency and comprehensibility, with a negligible effect on accentedness.

In a recent study, Yenkimaleki and van Heuven (2024b) investigated the relationship between oral fluency perception in two contexts: a broad perspective, which includes overall speaking proficiency, and a narrow perspective, which emphasizes flow, smoothness, grammar, and vocabulary. The results indicated that raters provided notably lower fluency scores when assessments were conducted using narrow criteria in contrast to broader criteria. Expert raters exhibited a higher level of severity in their evaluations compared to non-experts, especially regarding the narrow fluency criteria. No significant differences were observed between the ratings of native and non-native raters. The research indicates that interpreter trainees can enhance their broad and narrow fluency skills via focused training and regular practice.

3. Methodology

This study adopted a quasi-experimental, correlational design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) to investigate the relationship between interpreting anxiety and disfluency in the CI output of trainee interpreters. While the study did not employ control/experimental groups or interventions (typical of strict experimental designs), it met key criteria for experimental research through (1) controlled task administration under standardized conditions, (2) systematic measurement of variables (anxiety via ICAS and disfluencies via Praat), and (3) quantitative analysis of their relationship. The study included 23 students (14 female, 9 male), aged 20 to 23 years ($M = 21.5$, $SD = 1.12$), enrolled in the English-Persian Translation program at Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman; Iran. The participants were in their seventh semester and had registered for the 'Consecutive Interpreting' course. Prior to the consecutive interpreting test (CIT), the trainees completed 16 sessions (90 minutes each), focusing on CI skills and requirements following Setton and Dawrant's (2016b) framework. The course was taught by an instructor with 10 years of experience in teaching consecutive interpreting. None of the participants possessed previous experience or training in interpretation. All participants identified Persian as their A-language and English as their B-language. Participants were chosen through convenience sampling to maintain the constancy of other variables, such as teaching methods and materials, which are not the focus of this research. The research employed three instruments for data collection.

The study commenced with the implementation of the listening module of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) to ensure consistency in participants' listening skills. Only participants who achieved a minimum score of Band

6.0—a benchmark indicating competent listening comprehension—were included in the study. This screening ensured that observed disfluencies could be more confidently attributed to anxiety, not uneven listening skills. The choice to include only the listening module in the IELTS package was determined by the importance of listening skills in CI. Interpreting requires oral input; therefore, inadequate listening comprehension among student interpreters results in incomplete or insufficient output in the target language. Participants were tasked with interpreting a 5-minute speech on the topic of 'Locusts Invasion,' which comprised 385 words sourced from Voice of America English News (VOA). This topic was selected because it represents a real-world scenario where accurate interpreting is critical (e.g., agricultural crises requiring international response), thereby eliciting naturalistic interpreter performance. An American-accented native speaker presented the speech at an appropriate pace. The selected audio clip presented no linguistic or vocabulary challenges for students. The length, content, and complexity of the speech were comparable to those experienced by students during their classroom CI treatment.

Moreover, the research employed Chiang's (2006) interpreting classroom anxiety scale (ICAS) to assess and quantify the anxiety levels experienced by interpreters in educational environments. The instrument uses a 5-point Likert scale, with values from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), comprising 44 items, several of which necessitate reverse scoring. The scale consists of three subcategories: fear of interpretation and negative evaluation, cognitive processing anxiety, and low self-confidence. Chiang (2006) found alpha coefficients of 0.94 for the overall measure, 0.92 for the fear of interpretation and negative assessment subscale, 0.80 for the cognitive processing anxiety subscale, and 0.77 for the poor self-confidence subscale. The participants' replies to the ICAS questionnaire were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software (version 23). Concerning the CI test, the participants' recorded CI performances were transcribed in preparation for the forthcoming evaluations.

The researchers used Gósy's (2003) taxonomy of speech disfluencies to examine each transcription and deployed Praat software to quantify silent pauses and prolongations. Gósy's (2003) taxonomy differentiates between two principal groups of speech disfluencies: (a) uncertainty-related disfluencies (UDSs) and (b) error-type disfluencies (ETDs). UDSs encompass hesitations, fillers, repetitions, restarts, elongations, and intra-word pauses. ETDs include Freudian slips, grammatical inaccuracies, contamination, erroneous word activation, 'tip of the tongue' (TOT) phenomena, alterations, sequencing issues, and slips of the tongue (SOT).

Furthermore, silent pauses can be classified into two subcategories: grammatical and non-grammatical. Grammatical pauses are inherent interruptions in speech or writing that arise from structural elements, including punctuation or sentence clarity such as pauses for punctuation and commas. Conversely, non-grammatical pauses are unrelated to the structural pauses of the language and stem from alternative reasons. Non-grammatical pauses encompass subcategories such as silent pauses, which, while not contributing to grammatical structure, fulfill functions like emphasis or contemplation. These contrasts facilitate comprehension of the subtleties of pauses in communication.

Analyzing silent pauses requires establishing a sensitivity level or cut-off point to differentiate between the two categories. The current literature on CI reveals a lack of agreement on the establishment of a minimal threshold for measuring silent pauses. However, Cardoen (2012) proposes two distinct cut-off points: 1.40 seconds for grammatical pauses and 0.56 seconds for non-grammatical pauses. The present study applied these threshold values. In the prolongation category, the researchers compared the word spoken by the participant under normal conditions with the word presumed to be prolonged to ensure accuracy. If the latter was articulated for a longer duration than the former, it was classified as a prolongation.

4. Results

The initial question intended to identify the most frequently occurring disfluencies in the English-Persian output of CI trainees. Descriptive statistics, including range, mean, and standard deviation, were run to answer this question. The normality assumption was checked prior to analysis, and the findings are presented below (Table 1).

Table 1.*Tests of Normality of Disfluency Features*

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Hesitation	.16	23	.11	.92	23	.08
Contamination	.36	23	.06	.71	23	.1
Phonological	.44	23	.05	.59	23	.07
Prolongation	.15	23	.13	.86	23	.06
Serial order error	.53	23	.11	.32	23	.07
Syntactic error	.18	23	.06	.9	23	.12
Pause with a word	.51	23	.09	.4	23	.00
False word activation	.31	23	.07	.61	23	.00
Filler	.36	23	.07	.57	23	.00
Restart	.16	23	.12	.92	23	.1
Restart with change of affix	.09	23	.2	.93	23	.14
Change of word	.26	23	.13	.85	23	.07
False start	.11	23	.2	.91	23	.42
Silent pauses	.16	23	.12	.91	23	.06
Repetition	.2	23	.22	.81	23	.11
Freudian slip	.52	23	.16	.32	23	.05
Others	.25	23	.05	.64	23	.06

The results do not show significant deviations from normality ($p > .05$). Therefore, it is safe to conduct parametric analyses in terms of normality assumption.

Table 2.*Descriptive Statistics of Disfluency Features*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Hesitation	23	.82	120	110.26	24.94	622.36
Contamination	23	.00	3	.6	.89	.79
Phonological	23	.00	2	.34	.64	.41
Prolongation	23	83	99	89.86	10.35	107.2
Slip of tongue	23	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Serial order error	23	.00	1	.08	.28	.08
Syntactic error	23	4	22	16.49	3.8	14.49
Pause with a word	23	.00	1	.13	.34	.11
False word activation	23	.00	7	.91	1.7	2.9
Filler	23	.00	14	1.65	3.32	11.05
Restart	23	.00	8	2.8	2.3	5.33
Restart with change of affix	23	.00	10	3.82	2.87	8.24
Change of word	23	.00	5	1.91	1.75	3.08
False start	23	.00	17	5.26	3.84	14.74
Silent pauses	23	82	95	83.26	11.14	124.2
Repetition	23	.00	18	4.08	4.27	18.26
Freudian slip	23	.00	2	.17	.57	.33
Others	23	.00	14	2.13	2.97	8.84

As shown in Table 2, among the 18 disfluency features, the most frequently used ones were hesitation ($M = 110.26$, $SD = 24.94$, $Max = 120$), silent pauses ($M = 89.86$, $SD = 3.84$, $Max = 95$), prolongation ($M = 83.69$, $SD = 10.35$, $Max = 99$), and syntactic error ($M = 16.49$, $SD = 3.8$, $Max = 22$). It is noteworthy that the SOT feature was not found in the data ($M = 0$), so it was the least frequently used disfluency feature.

The results of the second question based on Gósy's (2003) speech disfluency taxonomy (Figure 1) reveals several significant observations:

- Hesitation and silent pauses are classified as speech disfluencies connected to uncertainty, arising from both conceptual and linguistic planning processes. Gósy's (2003) model posits that these disfluencies arise at the interface between conceptualization and linguistic formulation, signifying difficulties in transitioning from abstract concepts to concrete linguistic structures.
- Prolongation is ascribed to mechanisms related to the mental lexicon and articulation planning. Gósy's (2003) model posits that prolongations may indicate challenges in lexical retrieval or phonetic encoding during speech production.
- Syntactic errors are generally linked to inadequacies in language planning. In Gósy's (2003) model, syntactic errors are likely to arise during the form encoding phase, particularly during morpho-phonological encoding.

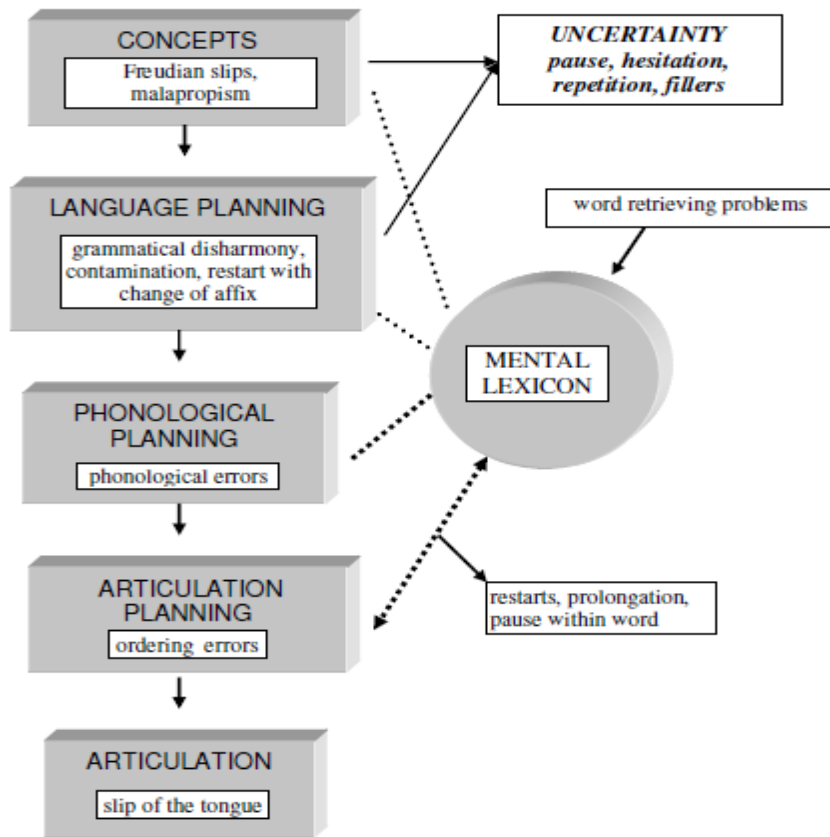


Figure 1.

Speech Production Process and Locations of Disfluencies (Gósy, 2003, p. 82).

The third research question examined the potential relationship between interpreting anxiety and the fluency of trainees' CI output. A Pearson product-moment correlation was run to compare the interpreting anxiety scores of the participants with the 18 disfluency features (Table 3).

Table 3.*Descriptive Statistics of Disfluency Features and CI Anxiety*

	Mean	SD	N
Hesitation	110.26	24.94	23
Contamination	.6	.89	23
Phonological	.34	.64	23
Prolongation	89.86	10.35	23
Slip of tongue	.00	.00	23
Serial order error	.08	.28	23
Syntactic error	5.3	3.8	23
Pause with a word	.13	.34	23
False word activation	.91	1.7	23
Filler	1.65	3.32	23
Restart	2.8	2.3	23
Restart with change of affix	3.82	2.87	23
Change of word	1.91	1.75	23
False start	5.26	3.84	23
Silent pauses	83.26	11.14	23
Repetition	4.08	4.27	23
Freudian slip	.17	.57	23
Others	2.13	2.97	23
CI anxiety score	130.91	17.54	23

As the above table shows, from the disfluency features, the highest mean belonged to hesitation ($M=110.26$), and the lowest was for the slip-of-tongue feature ($M=0$). Also, the mean score of CI anxiety was 130.91.

Table 4.*Correlation between Disfluency Features and CI Anxiety*

		Hesitation	Contamination	Phonological	Prolongation	Serial order error	Syntactic error	Pause with a word	False word activation	Filler	Restart	Restart with change of affix	Change of word	False start	Silent pauses	Repetition	Freudian slip	Others
Consecutive interpreting anxiety score	Pearson Correlation	.48*	-.05	-.00	.35*	-.00	.18	-.28	.19	-.04	.2	-.10	.35	-.00	.4*	.05	-.03	.05
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.02	.79	.99	.04	.97	.4	.18	.38	.82	.34	.64	.09	.98	.04	.8	.87	.8
	N	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

There was a statistically significant relationship between the interpreting anxiety scores of the participants and the disfluency features of hesitation ($r=.48$, $p=.02$), prolongation ($r=.35$, $p=.04$), and silent pauses ($r=.4$, $p=.04$). In other words, the higher the CI anxiety, the higher the manifestation of the disfluency features of hesitations, prolongations, and silent pauses.

Table 5.*Descriptive Statistics of Disfluency and CI Anxiety*

	Mean	SD	N
Disfluency	16.85	23.53	23
CI anxiety score	130.91	17.54	23

Table 6.*Correlation between Disfluency and CI Anxiety*

		disfluency
Consecutive interpreting anxiety score	Pearson Correlation	.19
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.34
	N	23

As the above table shows, there was no significant relationship between disfluency and CI anxiety ($r = .19$, $p = .34$).

5. Discussion

This study intended to explore disfluencies in English-Persian CI, addressing a gap in interpreting studies in the context of Iran. The results indicated that hesitations, silent pauses, prolongations, and syntactic errors were the most frequently occurring disfluencies. Gósy (2001) similarly identified hesitations and silent pauses as the predominant disfluency features. Her observation of slips of the tongue as a prevalent disfluency stands in contrast to the findings of the current study, in which such occurrences were the least commonly recorded. This divergence likely reflects inherent differences between monolingual speech and bilingual CI, compounded by language-pair specifics and training effects. Future studies could explicitly compare disfluency hierarchies across modalities (e.g., CI vs. simultaneous interpreting) to isolate task-specific influences.

Also, the findings of the second question highlighted that hesitation and silent pauses indicate malfunctions in both concepts and language planning, while prolongation signifies challenges in mental lexicon and articulation planning. Syntactic errors stem from deficiencies in language planning. Gósy (2001) explores the functions of disfluencies in spontaneous speech, emphasizing their role as indicators of cognitive processes and reflecting a disharmony of speech planning. This aligns with the current findings suggesting that the structure of a language influences the processes of speech planning and production, leading to specific types of disfluencies that may differ from one language to another. Bakti's (2009) analysis noted that grammatical errors indicate malfunction in morphological and syntactical planning. Both studies emphasize the importance of understanding cognitive processes, such as lexical retrieval and grammatical structuring, in relation to disfluencies in simultaneous interpretation. Similarly, Tóth (2011) believed disfluencies are primarily linked to issues of lexical access and the disharmony between lexical access and articulatory planning. He asserted that prolongations are a sign of problems connected to the activation of the mental lexicon; as the current study reported that prolongation signifies challenges in mental lexicon.

The findings from the last question revealed that, while no significant relationship was observed between interpreting anxiety and disfluency in general, a statistically significant relationship existed between the participants' interpreting anxiety scores and the disfluency features of hesitations, prolongations, and silent pauses. This is consistent with Bakti's (2009) research on speech disfluencies, despite her focus on simultaneous interpreting. However, Bakti reported that elevated anxiety levels resulting from the cognitive load experienced by interpreters lead to an increase in error-type disfluencies (ETDs). This finding contrasts with the results of the current study indicating that uncertainty-related speech disfluencies (UDSs) are influenced by heightened interpreting anxiety. This contrast may be attributed to the study of different types of interpreting. Zhao's (2022) findings indicate a correlation between elevated anxiety levels in student interpreters and an increased frequency of fillers and repetitions. This does not align with the current findings, potentially due to the examination of different languages; however, both studies support the idea that anxiety influences UDSs.

6. Conclusion

This study offers significant insights into the influence of interpreting anxiety on disfluency among English-Persian trainee interpreters. Through the analysis of a sample of 23 students at Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman, it was found that hesitation, silent pauses, and prolongation are the primary manifestations of disfluency in their performance during consecutive interpreting tasks.

The findings of this study have significant pedagogical implications for interpreter training programs, particularly in addressing disfluencies and anxiety in consecutive interpreting (CI). First, since hesitation, silent pauses, and prolongation were the most frequent disfluencies—and were linked to interpreting anxiety—trainers should incorporate targeted exercises to reduce cognitive load and enhance fluency. Techniques such as chunking exercises, shadowing, and delayed repetition can help trainees improve their conceptual and linguistic planning, reducing uncertainty-related disfluencies. Additionally, since syntactic errors were prevalent, explicit instruction on grammatical structures and syntactic reformulation in both source and target languages should be emphasized to strengthen language planning skills. Second, given the correlation between anxiety and disfluencies like hesitations and prolongations, trainers should integrate stress-management strategies into the curriculum. Mock interpreting sessions under timed conditions, along with mindfulness and relaxation techniques, may help trainees build resilience against performance anxiety. Furthermore, providing constructive feedback in a supportive environment can mitigate anxiety and encourage smoother output. Finally, since disfluencies often stem from lexical retrieval difficulties (as seen with prolongations), trainees should engage in extensive vocabulary-building and lexical access drills, such as rapid word association and paraphrasing exercises. By addressing both cognitive and affective factors, interpreter training programs can enhance fluency, reduce disfluencies, and better prepare students for real-world interpreting scenarios.

This research proposes multiple intriguing directions for further investigation to improve our understanding of disfluencies in English-Persian interpretation and their implications for interpreter training and performance. A comparative analysis of beginner and expert interpreters across various genres of source texts may uncover trends in disfluencies, thereby identifying unique obstacles for trainees and guiding targeted training approaches. Establishing a taxonomy of disfluencies unique to Persian will greatly aid in categorizing elements such as pauses and repeats, hence improving the comprehension of interpretation performance. Furthermore, investigating the factors contributing to disfluencies—such as text complexity or time constraints—may yield insights into the cognitive mechanisms engaged in interpretation. Nonetheless, akin to other investigations, the present one possessed certain constraints, including a restricted sample size and an emphasis on a singular language pair, which may constrain the generalizability of the results.

7. References



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The Effect of Task Complexity and Task Repetition on Iranian EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effects of task complexity and task repetition on the reading comprehension of Iranian EFL learners. The primary aim was to determine whether varying levels of task complexity and the repetition of these tasks could lead to significant enhancements in learners' reading comprehension abilities. A pretest-posttest design was utilized to assess the participants' performance before and after the intervention. Statistical analyses, including the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test and paired samples t-tests, were conducted to assess data normality and evaluate the significance of observed differences. The findings indicated that both task complexity and task repetition had a substantial positive impact on the reading comprehension scores of Iranian EFL learners. Task complexity promoted deeper cognitive engagement, while task repetition facilitated retention and mastery of reading skills. These results suggest that incorporating strategically designed complex tasks and repeating them can enhance reading comprehension in EFL contexts. The study concludes that task complexity and repetition are effective strategies for improving reading comprehension among Iranian EFL learners. The enhancement in comprehension can be attributed to the cognitive challenges posed by complex tasks and the reinforcement provided through task repetition. Educators are encouraged to integrate tasks with varying levels of complexity and to implement repetitive practice within their instructional strategies. This approach not only aids in comprehension but also fosters a more engaging learning environment. Future research should explore the optimal levels of task complexity and repetition to maximize learning outcomes and examine their applicability in diverse educational contexts.

KEYWORDS: task complexity, task repetition, reading comprehension, EFL learners, cognitive engagement, instructional strategies

1. Introduction

Reading comprehension is recognized as essential for learning English as a foreign language. It allows learners to develop vocabulary knowledge, understand grammatical structures, and gain content knowledge (Grabe & Stoller, 2019). In educational contexts where exposure to spoken English is limited, reading often functions as the main source of language input (Nation, 2013). However, reading in a second language requires more than passive decoding. It involves the use of background knowledge, vocabulary recognition, and strategic processing (Koda, 2007). Many learners experience difficulties due to limited vocabulary, unfamiliar grammar patterns, or ineffective reading strategies. These challenges are commonly found in Iranian EFL classrooms, where traditional teaching methods emphasize grammar and translation rather than comprehension skills (Talebinezhad & Aliakbari, 2001). To address these issues, task-based language teaching has been proposed as an alternative approach. Task-based language teaching focuses on meaningful activities to develop language skills. Within this framework, two factors have

been examined: task complexity and task repetition. Task complexity refers to the cognitive and linguistic demands of a task, including the number of ideas to process, the need for inferences, and the organization of information (Robinson, 2011). Previous studies have demonstrated that complex tasks can lead to improved learning outcomes. For instance, Ahmadian and Tavakoli (2014) found that careful online planning conditions resulted in more accurate task performance. Similar findings were reported by Muhammadpour (2023), who observed that different task repetition schedules affected oral narrative performance among learners with varying working memory capacities.

Task repetition has also been investigated as a method to enhance language learning. Bui (2019) examined spacing effects on repeated task performance and found that distributed practice led to better outcomes than massed practice. Kim and Li (2024) further demonstrated that task repetition combined with written corrective feedback contributed to writing development. These findings align with research by Ahmadian (2017), which showed that both learners and teachers perceive task repetition as beneficial for language development. Recent studies have explored more specific aspects of task repetition. Tabari and Golparvar (2024) investigated the interplay between task repetition and task rehearsal in written production across proficiency levels. Similarly, Abdi Tabari (2025) compared massed and spaced task repetitions in writing tasks and their effects on task emotions. Khezrlou (2025) examined how task repetition with grammatizing influences oral performance and knowledge development. These studies collectively suggest that task repetition can be implemented in various ways to support different aspects of language learning. Despite these findings, few studies have examined the combined effects of task complexity and repetition on reading comprehension. This gap is particularly relevant in contexts like Iran, where reading proficiency is crucial but often underdeveloped. Nazemi and Rezvani (2019) provided some insights by showing how task familiarity and repetition affect oral performance engagement, but similar research is needed for reading skills. The current study investigated how these two factors influenced reading comprehension among Iranian EFL learners.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Task Complexity

Task complexity is understood as the mental effort required to complete language tasks. It involves different cognitive demands such as organizing information, making connections between ideas, and processing language forms (Robinson, 2001). Two main theories explain how task complexity affects learning. The first theory suggests that learners have limited attention to divide between understanding content and producing correct language (Skehan, 1998). The second theory argues that more complex tasks can help learning when they are carefully designed (Robinson, 2005). Several studies have examined these ideas. It was found that when learners had more time to plan complex tasks, they produced more accurate language (Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2014). Another study showed that learners with better memory skills performed better on complex speaking tasks (Muhammadpour, 2023). These results indicate that task complexity affects learning in different ways depending on the situation and the learner.

2.2. Task Repetition

Task repetition means doing the same or similar tasks multiple times. The first time learners do a task, they mainly focus on understanding the content. When they repeat the task, they can pay more attention to using correct language forms (Bygate, 2013). Research has shown that repeating tasks helps learners speak more fluently, make fewer mistakes, and use better vocabulary (Bui, 2019). Recent studies have provided more details about how task repetition works. One study found that combining task repetition with feedback on writing mistakes helped learners improve more than either method alone (Kim & Li, 2024). Another study discovered that learners at intermediate levels benefited most from repeating tasks in certain patterns (Tabari & Golparvar, 2024). It was also shown that focusing on grammar during repeated speaking tasks helped learners improve both their speaking and grammar knowledge (Khezrlou, 2025). These findings suggest that task repetition should be adjusted based on learner levels and goals.

2.3. Reading Comprehension

Reading in a foreign language requires several skills working together. Learners need to recognize words quickly, understand sentence structures, and connect ideas across texts (Grabe & Stoller, 2019). In Iran, reading instruction often focuses more on correct answers than on developing these reading skills (Nazemi & Rezvani, 2019). Some studies have explored better ways to teach reading. It was reported that both students and teachers believed repeating reading tasks can be helpful (Ahmadian, 2017). Another study found that spreading out practice over time worked better than cramming for writing tasks, which might also apply to reading (Abdi Tabari et al., 2025). The research suggests that using well-designed tasks with appropriate difficulty levels and repetition could improve reading instruction. However, more studies are needed to understand how these methods work specifically for reading, especially in countries like Iran where reading skills are important for academic success.

2.4. The Current Study

The current study is motivated by the need to explore effective instructional strategies for enhancing reading comprehension among Iranian EFL learners. While task complexity and task repetition have been widely studied in the context of oral production

and writing (García Mayo & Imaz Agirre, 2017), their impact on reading comprehension remains underexplored (Mackey & Gass, 2005), particularly in EFL settings where learners face unique challenges, such as limited exposure to the target language. The current study sought to address this gap by examining the effects of task complexity and task repetition on the reading comprehension of Iranian EFL learners. Specifically, the study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. Does task complexity have any significant effect on Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension scores?
2. Does task repetition have any significant effect on Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension scores?

This study investigated these questions to contribute to a deeper understanding of how task complexity and repetition can improve reading comprehension in EFL contexts. The findings may inform instructional practices and curriculum design. They provide insights into how educators can balance cognitive challenges and repetitive practice to promote language learning effectively.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The study involved 50 female Iranian EFL learners enrolled in an English language institute in Iran. Participants were selected based on their intermediate English proficiency, which was determined using the Oxford Placement Test (OPT). The OPT is a widely recognized assessment tool that evaluates learners' proficiency across four language skills: reading, writing, listening, and grammar. The test results ensured that all participants had a comparable level of language proficiency, which was essential for the validity of the study's findings.

The participants were divided into two experimental groups, each comprising 25 learners. The grouping was based on random assignment to ensure that both groups were equivalent in terms of language proficiency and other relevant variables. The first group was assigned to the task complexity condition, where learners engaged in reading tasks with varying levels of cognitive and linguistic demands. The second group was assigned to the task repetition condition, where learners repeatedly practiced similar reading tasks over the intervention period.

The age range of the participants was between 18 and 25 years old, ensuring that the sample consisted of young adult learners. This age group was selected to provide insights into the impact of the intervention on learners who are at a similar stage in their educational and language learning journeys. The homogeneity of the sample in terms of age and proficiency level helped maintain consistency across the study, reducing the potential influence of extraneous variables.

3.2. Instruments

3.2.1. Oxford Placement Test (OPT)

The Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was used to assess the participants' English proficiency and ensure homogeneity in the sample. The OPT is a standardized test that evaluates learners across four language skills: reading, writing, listening, and grammar. The test consists of 80 multiple-choice questions, with 20 items for each skill area. The OPT uses an adaptive design, meaning the difficulty of the questions adjusts based on the test-taker's responses. The total time to complete the test is approximately 60–90 minutes.

The OPT results are reported using the Oxford Level Descriptors, which categorize learners into 19 proficiency levels, ranging from A1 (beginner) to C2 (proficient). For this study, participants were required to score within the B1 (intermediate) range, which corresponds to a score range of 40–59 out of 80 on the OPT. This range was selected to ensure that all participants had a comparable level of English proficiency, which was crucial for the validity of the study's findings.

3.2.2. Reading Comprehension Task (Pretest and Posttest)

A standardized reading comprehension test, adapted from the TOEFL iBT Reading Section, was used to assess participants' reading comprehension skills before and after the intervention (See Appendix A). The test included three to four academic passages, each followed by 12–14 multiple-choice questions. The passages covered topics from various disciplines, such as social sciences, natural sciences, humanities, and business. The test measured key reading comprehension skills, including:

1. Main idea comprehension
2. Detail understanding
3. Inference-making
4. Vocabulary in context
5. Text organization and purpose

The pretest and posttest were identical in structure and difficulty to ensure consistency in measuring participants' reading comprehension gains.

3.2.3. Task Complexity Scale (TCS)

The Task Complexity Scale (TCS), developed by Robinson (2001), was used to measure the complexity of the reading tasks assigned to participants. The TCS evaluates task complexity across four dimensions:

1. Linguistic complexity: The complexity of the language used in the task.
2. Cognitive complexity: The mental processing required to complete the task.
3. Discourse complexity: The complexity of the discourse structure in the task.
4. Social interactive complexity: The level of social interaction required to complete the task.

Tasks in this group were designed to reflect three levels of cognitive demand, based on Robinson's (2001) Triadic Componential Framework. The levels were as follows:

1. Low Complexity: Tasks required basic comprehension skills, such as identifying main ideas and supporting details. These tasks involved familiar topics and simple sentence structures.
2. Medium Complexity: Tasks required intermediate cognitive skills, such as making inferences and understanding vocabulary in context. These tasks involved moderately challenging texts with some unfamiliar vocabulary and more complex sentence structures.
3. High Complexity: Tasks required advanced cognitive skills, such as synthesizing information, evaluating arguments, and analyzing text organization. These tasks involved unfamiliar topics, dense academic texts, and complex discourse structures.

The tasks were sequenced to gradually increase in complexity over the six-week intervention period, ensuring that learners were progressively challenged. The complexity of each task was rated using the Task Complexity Scale (TCS), and the ratings were cross-checked by two additional EFL experts to ensure reliability.

The task repetition group focused on repeating similar reading tasks at spaced intervals. The tasks were of medium complexity and were repeated three times over the intervention period. The repetition was designed to reinforce comprehension skills, vocabulary retention, and fluency through repeated exposure to the same or similar texts.

3.3. Design and Context of the Study

The study employed a quasi-experimental design with a pretest-treatment-posttest framework. The participants were divided into two experimental groups, each comprising 25 learners. The first group was assigned to the task complexity condition, where learners engaged in reading tasks with varying levels of cognitive and linguistic demands. The second group was assigned to the task repetition condition, where learners repeatedly practiced similar reading tasks over the intervention period. Table 1 summarizes the group procedures, instructions, and data collected for each experimental group.

Table 1.

Group Procedure and Instruction

Group	Procedure	Instruction	Data Gathered
Task Complexity Group	Engaged in tasks with increasing cognitive and linguistic demands.	Tasks included inferencing, summarizing, and evaluating complex texts.	Pretest and posttest scores, task performance data, and complexity ratings.
Task Repetition Group	Repeated similar reading tasks with spaced intervals for reinforcement.	Tasks focused on consolidating comprehension through repeated practice.	Pretest and posttest scores, task performance data, and repetition frequency.

3.4. Data Collection Procedure

The study was conducted over eight weeks, with each experimental group receiving six weeks of intervention. At the beginning of the study, all participants completed the pretest to establish their baseline reading comprehension levels. Following the pretest, the participants were divided into the two experimental groups based on random assignment.

- Task Complexity Group: This group engaged in reading tasks with varying levels of complexity. The tasks were designed to challenge learners' cognitive and linguistic abilities, requiring them to infer, summarize, and evaluate information from the texts. The complexity of the tasks increased gradually over the intervention period.

- **Task Repetition Group:** This group focused on repeating similar reading tasks at spaced intervals. The tasks were designed to reinforce comprehension skills, vocabulary retention, and fluency through repeated exposure to the same or similar texts.

Throughout the intervention, the teacher monitored participants' progress, provided feedback, and guided them in addressing errors and challenges. At the end of the six-week intervention, all participants completed the posttest, which was identical to the pretest in structure and difficulty. The posttest scores were compared to the pretest scores to measure the impact of task complexity and repetition on reading comprehension.

3.5. Data Analysis Procedure

The data analysis for this study was conducted using a variety of statistical methods to evaluate the effects of task complexity and task repetition on Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension. To begin, descriptive statistics were used to summarize the pretest and posttest scores for both groups, providing an overview of the learners' reading comprehension performance before and after the intervention. Given the study's focus on comparing the effects of task complexity and task repetition, the primary inferential statistical method employed was the paired sample t-test. This test was utilized to compare the pretest and posttest scores within each experimental group, allowing for the assessment of whether there were significant improvements in reading comprehension over time as a result of the interventions. The paired sample t-test was particularly appropriate for this study, as it helped determine the impact of the experimental conditions on the same group of participants before and after the treatment. Additionally, a One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was conducted to assess the normality of the data distribution. Ensuring that the data followed a normal distribution was essential for the validity of the subsequent parametric tests, such as the paired sample t-test. This test provided insights into the appropriateness of using parametric methods for data analysis in this study.

4. Results

4.1. Results of the First Research Question Analysis

To determine whether task complexity had a significant effect on Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension scores, the data were analyzed using the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test, a non-parametric test suitable for small sample sizes and paired data. The test was chosen because the sample size for each experimental group was 25 learners, and the data did not fully meet the assumptions required for parametric tests, such as normal distribution.

Table 2.

Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test for Task Complexity Group

Test	Pretest Median	Posttest Median	Z-value	p-value
Task Complexity Group	8.00	15.00	-4.32	.000

The results showed a significant improvement in reading comprehension scores for the task complexity group ($Z = -4.32$, $p < .001$). Next, a paired sample t-test was conducted to compare the pretest and posttest scores of the task complexity group.

Table 3.

Paired Sample T-Test on Pretest and Posttest Scores of Task Complexity Group

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Task Complexity Posttest - Task Complexity (Pretest)	7.6400	2.23383	.4467	6.71792	8.56208	17.101	24	.000

The results showed a t-value of 17.101 with 24 degrees of freedom, and a p-value of .000. Since the p-value is less than the assumed significance level of .05, it indicates that the difference in task complexity group between the pretest and posttest is statistically significant. This implies that task complexity notably influenced the reading comprehension abilities of EFL learners.

4.2. Results of the Second Research Question Analysis

The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was used to analyze the effect of task repetition on reading comprehension scores. This non-parametric test was appropriate for the paired data and small sample size.

Table 4.

Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test for Task Repetition Group

Test	Pretest Median	Posttest Median	Z-value	p-value
Task Repetition Group	8.00	16.00	-4.21	.000

The results revealed a significant improvement in reading comprehension scores for the task repetition group ($Z = -4.21$, $p < .001$). Next, a paired sample t-test was conducted to compare the pretest and posttest scores of the task repetition group.

Table 5.

Paired Sample T-Test on Pretest and Posttest Scores of Task Repetition Group

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Task Repetition Posttest - Task Repetition (Pretest)	8.24000	2.94788	.58958	7.02317	9.45683	13.976	24	.000

The results showed a t-value of 13.97 with 24 degrees of freedom, and a p-value of .000. Since the p-value is less than the assumed significance level of .05, it indicates that the difference in task repetition group between the pretest and posttest is statistically significant. This suggests that the task repetition had a significant effect on increasing EFL learners' reading comprehension.

5. Discussion

The results showed that both task complexity and task repetition improved the reading comprehension scores of Iranian EFL learners. These results confirmed that task characteristics could influence how learners engage with reading texts. Robinson (2001) stated that more complex tasks require greater attention and deeper processing, which support comprehension. In the present study, learners spent more time and effort when completing tasks with higher complexity, which helped them understand the texts more thoroughly. These findings align with those of Révész et al.'s (2016) study. They also demonstrated that increased task demands led to more careful engagement and better learning outcomes. Likewise, the improvement in performance after task repetition was also significant. Learners achieved higher scores when they repeated the same reading tasks. Bygate and Samuda (2005) explained that repeating tasks helped learners manage cognitive resources more effectively. Repetition provided learners with more opportunities to plan their responses, organize their thoughts, and focus on both content and language. Thai and Boers (2016) found that repeated exposure to the same task improved learners' focus and allowed them to process information more efficiently. In the present study, repeated tasks appeared to help learners become more confident and accurate in their reading. These findings are consistent with results of previous research in the Iranian EFL context. Zarei and Khalessi (2011) found that task repetition supported the improvement of reading comprehension among Iranian students. The findings of the current study supported those results and confirmed that both repetition and complexity could be useful in the development of reading comprehension skills.

The findings also supported key principles of task-based language teaching. Ellis (2009) emphasized that task-based approaches allowed learners to engage with language in meaningful ways. In the current study, learners worked on reading tasks that required them to understand, interpret, and analyze texts. These tasks encouraged learners to use both linguistic and cognitive skills. The improvement in reading comprehension scores following task repetition and task complexity suggested that task-based instruction could be effective for reading development. Shintani (2012) also reported that repeating tasks improved learners' performance in reading and speaking, which supported the idea that repeated engagement with the same task led to more effective processing. The use of repeated and complex tasks also appeared to increase learners' confidence. When learners became more familiar with task content and structure, they seemed more willing to engage with the texts. They may have developed reading strategies such as identifying main ideas, using contextual clues, and connecting information across the text. These strategies supported their understanding and allowed them to manage more demanding texts. The gradual increase in familiarity with the reading content through repetition seemed to reduce anxiety and promote more active participation. Moreover, individual differences among learners might have influenced how they responded to task repetition and complexity.

Kormos and Trebits (2012) found that learners with higher working memory capacity performed better on complex tasks. Skehan (2016) argued that learners responded differently to task features based on their cognitive abilities and language proficiency levels. Some learners may benefit more from repeated tasks, while others may perform better when challenged with complex tasks. The present findings suggested that learner characteristics should be considered when designing reading tasks in the EFL classrooms.

6. Conclusion

The findings showed that both task complexity and task repetition contributed to improved reading comprehension among Iranian EFL learners. Learners who were given more complex tasks or repeated the same tasks performed better on reading comprehension assessments. These results supported the view that learners benefited from cognitively engaging tasks and repeated exposure to the same reading content. The study confirmed the usefulness of task-based instruction in helping learners develop reading skills. Learners seemed to develop more effective reading strategies and felt more confident when working with familiar or cognitively demanding tasks.

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. The sample size in this study was limited to a specific group of Iranian EFL learners, which may affect the generalizability of the results. The study only focused on reading comprehension and did not investigate the impact of task complexity or repetition on other language skills such as writing, speaking, or listening. In addition, the effects of learner variables such as motivation, anxiety, and prior knowledge were not controlled. These factors may have influenced how learners responded to the tasks. The study was also conducted in a classroom context, where external factors such as teacher feedback or peer interaction might have affected the learners' performance. These limitations suggest that the results should be interpreted with caution and should not be generalized to all EFL learning contexts.

Future research can examine how task complexity and repetition influence learners across different proficiency levels and age groups. It would be helpful to study whether these effects remain consistent in other skill areas such as listening, speaking, or writing. Researchers can also explore how individual learner factors such as working memory or language aptitude interact with task features. Further investigation can help teachers design tasks that match learners' needs and improve outcomes in diverse classroom settings.

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8. Appendix A: Reading Comprehension Test

Passage 1: Social Sciences

The History of Urbanization

Urbanization is a process that has occurred over thousands of years, leading to the development of cities and towns from small, agricultural communities. The earliest urban areas emerged in Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Indus Valley, and China, where surplus agricultural production allowed a portion of the population to engage in non-agricultural activities. Over time, these urban centers became hubs of trade, governance, and culture.

The development of urban areas was closely tied to the availability of resources and the growth of complex societies. In Mesopotamia, for example, the abundance of water from the Tigris and Euphrates rivers supported agriculture, which in turn supported the growth of cities like Uruk and Babylon. These cities became centers of commerce, with extensive trade networks that extended across regions.

One of the key factors contributing to urbanization was the need for efficient administration of large populations. As cities grew, the management of resources, law, and infrastructure became increasingly complex, necessitating the development of formal institutions and bureaucratic systems. The creation of writing systems, such as cuneiform in Mesopotamia, was directly linked to the need for record-keeping in these growing urban centers.

The Industrial Revolution marked a significant acceleration in the pace of urbanization. With advances in technology and transportation, people migrated to cities in search of employment and better living standards. This period also saw the rise of the modern metropolis, characterized by dense populations, diverse economies, and significant social stratification. Factories, railways, and other industrial infrastructure transformed cities into hubs of production and innovation.

However, the rapid urbanization of the Industrial Revolution also brought about significant challenges. Overcrowding, pollution, and inadequate housing became pressing issues in many cities. In response, urban planning and public health initiatives were introduced to address these challenges. The development of sewage systems, public parks, and zoning laws were all efforts to improve the quality of urban life.

Today, urbanization continues to shape human society, with more than half of the global population living in urban areas. The challenges of urbanization, such as overcrowding, pollution, and inequality, require innovative solutions and careful planning to ensure sustainable development in the future. Urbanization is a dynamic process that reflects broader social, economic, and technological trends.

Questions for Passage 1

1. **Multiple-Choice Question: Main Idea**

What is the main idea of the passage?

- ☐ A) The history of urbanization and its impact on society.
- ☐ B) The challenges of modern urbanization.
- ☐ C) The role of agriculture in the development of cities.
- ☐ D) The technological advancements of the Industrial Revolution.

2. **Inserting a Sentence: Logical Flow**

Where would the following sentence best fit within the passage?

"These cities were often located along rivers, which provided water, transportation, and fertile land for agriculture."

- ☐ A) After the first sentence in the first paragraph.
- ☐ B) After the second sentence in the first paragraph.
- ☐ C) After the first sentence in the second paragraph.

- D) After the first sentence in the third paragraph.

3. **Vocabulary Question: Contextual Meaning**

What does the word "metropolis" in the fourth paragraph most likely mean?

- A) A small town
- B) A large and important city
- C) A rural area
- D) A historic site

4. **Reference Question: Pronoun Referent**

What does the word "these" in the third paragraph refer to?

- A) Formal institutions and bureaucratic systems.
- B) Writing systems like cuneiform.
- C) Record-keeping needs.
- D) Growing urban centers.

5. **Inference Question: Author's Attitude**

What can be inferred about the author's attitude towards urbanization?

- A) The author views urbanization as a necessary but problematic process.
- B) The author believes that urbanization has only negative consequences.
- C) The author thinks that urbanization should be halted to prevent further issues.
- D) The author feels indifferent towards the effects of urbanization.

6. **Purpose and Function Question: Paragraph Function**

What is the main purpose of the third paragraph?

- A) To explain the technological advancements of the Industrial Revolution.
- B) To describe the early urban centers and their characteristics.
- C) To discuss the challenges of modern urbanization.
- D) To highlight the need for formal institutions in urban areas.

Answer Key for Passage 1

1. **Main Idea:** A) The history of urbanization and its impact on society.
 2. **Inserting a Sentence:** C) After the first sentence in the second paragraph.
 3. **Vocabulary Question:** B) A large and important city.
 4. **Reference Question:** D) Growing urban centers.
 5. **Inference Question:** A) The author views urbanization as a necessary but problematic process.
 6. **Purpose and Function Question:** D) To highlight the need for formal institutions in urban areas.
-

Passage 2: Natural Sciences

The Role of Photosynthesis in Climate Regulation

Photosynthesis is a critical biological process through which plants, algae, and certain bacteria convert light energy into chemical energy. This process is not only vital for the survival of these organisms, but it also plays a significant role in regulating the Earth's climate. By absorbing carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the atmosphere, photosynthetic organisms help to mitigate the greenhouse effect and reduce global warming.

The basic mechanism of photosynthesis involves the absorption of light by chlorophyll, a pigment found in the chloroplasts of plant cells. This light energy is then used to convert CO₂ and water (H₂O) into glucose (C₆H₁₂O₆) and oxygen (O₂). The glucose produced during photosynthesis serves as a source of energy for the plant, while the oxygen is released into the atmosphere as a byproduct.

The global carbon cycle is heavily influenced by photosynthesis. Through this process, large amounts of CO₂ are removed from the atmosphere and stored in the form of biomass, such as trees and other vegetation. Forests, particularly tropical rainforests, are known as "carbon sinks" because they absorb more CO₂ than they release. This ability to sequester carbon makes them crucial in the fight against climate change.

However, human activities, such as deforestation and the burning of fossil fuels, have significantly impacted the balance of the carbon cycle. Deforestation reduces the number of trees available to absorb CO₂, while the burning of fossil fuels releases large amounts of CO₂ into the atmosphere. These activities have contributed to an increase in atmospheric CO₂ levels, leading to a stronger greenhouse effect and global warming.

Efforts to combat climate change often focus on enhancing the role of photosynthesis in carbon sequestration. Reforestation, afforestation, and the preservation of existing forests are key strategies aimed at increasing the Earth's capacity to absorb CO₂. Additionally, advancements in agricultural practices, such as the use of cover crops and agroforestry, can enhance the photosynthetic capacity of farmland and reduce the overall carbon footprint of food production.

In conclusion, photosynthesis is a fundamental process that not only sustains life on Earth but also plays a crucial role in regulating the climate. By understanding and supporting the natural processes of carbon sequestration, we can make significant strides in addressing the challenges posed by climate change.

Questions for Passage 2

1. **Multiple-Choice Question: Main Idea**

What is the main idea of the passage?

- ☐ A) The process of photosynthesis and its role in the carbon cycle.
- ☐ B) The impact of human activities on the carbon cycle.
- ☐ C) The importance of reforestation in combating climate change.
- ☐ D) The role of photosynthesis in the production of glucose and oxygen.

2. **Inserting a Sentence: Logical Flow**

Where would the following sentence best fit within the passage?

"This chemical energy is stored in the bonds of glucose molecules."

- ☐ A) After the first sentence in the second paragraph.
- ☐ B) After the third sentence in the second paragraph.
- ☐ C) After the first sentence in the third paragraph.
- ☐ D) After the second sentence in the fourth paragraph.

3. **Vocabulary Question: Contextual Meaning**

What does the word "sequester" in the third paragraph most likely mean?

- A) Release
- B) Absorb
- C) Store
- D) Produce

4. **Reference Question: Pronoun Referent**

What does the word "these" in the fourth paragraph refer to?

- A) Deforestation and burning of fossil fuels.
- B) Human activities.
- C) Tropical rainforests.
- D) Carbon sinks.

5. **Inference Question: Author's Attitude**

What can be inferred about the author's attitude towards photosynthesis?

- A) The author views photosynthesis as a critical process for both life and climate regulation.
- B) The author believes that photosynthesis has minimal impact on climate change.
- C) The author thinks that human activities have rendered photosynthesis ineffective.
- D) The author feels that photosynthesis is an outdated process in the fight against climate change.

6. **Purpose and Function Question: Paragraph Function**

What is the main purpose of the fourth paragraph?

- A) To explain the chemical process of photosynthesis.
- B) To discuss the impact of human activities on the carbon cycle.
- C) To highlight the role of tropical rainforests as carbon sinks.
- D) To propose solutions for enhancing carbon sequestration.

Answer Key for Passage 2

1. **Main Idea:** A) The process of photosynthesis and its role in the carbon cycle.
 2. **Inserting a Sentence:** A) After the first sentence in the second paragraph.
 3. **Vocabulary Question:** C) Store.
 4. **Reference Question:** A) Deforestation and burning of fossil fuels.
 5. **Inference Question:** A) The author views photosynthesis as a critical process for both life and climate regulation.
 6. **Purpose and Function Question:** B) To discuss the impact of human activities on the carbon cycle.
-

Passage 3: Humanities

The Evolution of Artistic Styles in the Renaissance

The Renaissance, spanning roughly from the 14th to the 17th century, was a period of profound cultural and artistic transformation in Europe. This era is characterized by a renewed interest in the classical art and literature of ancient Greece and Rome, combined with innovative approaches to artistic expression. The evolution of artistic styles during the Renaissance was marked by a shift from the rigid and symbolic forms of medieval art to more naturalistic and human-centered representations.

One of the most significant developments of the Renaissance was the use of perspective in painting. Artists such as Filippo Brunelleschi and Leon Battista Alberti pioneered techniques that allowed for the depiction of three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional surface. This innovation gave rise to a new level of realism in art, where figures and objects were portrayed with accurate proportions and a sense of depth.

The human figure became a central subject in Renaissance art, reflecting the period's emphasis on humanism. Artists like Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Raphael sought to capture the beauty and complexity of the human body in their work. Da Vinci's "Vitruvian Man," for example, embodies the Renaissance ideal of the harmonious relationship between human proportions and the natural world. Michelangelo's sculptures, such as "David" and "Pietà," are celebrated for their detailed anatomical accuracy and emotional intensity.

In addition to innovations in technique and subject matter, the Renaissance saw a diversification of artistic genres. Portraiture, landscape, and still life became increasingly popular, alongside traditional religious themes. The growing demand for art from wealthy patrons, including the Medici family in Florence, led to the flourishing of these new genres. The emergence of printmaking during this period also played a crucial role in the dissemination of Renaissance art, making it accessible to a broader audience.

The Renaissance was not limited to Italy; it had a profound impact across Europe. In the Northern Renaissance, artists like Jan van Eyck and Albrecht Dürer combined the naturalism of the Italian Renaissance with their own regional traditions. Van Eyck's meticulous attention to detail and use of oil paints resulted in works of striking realism, while Dürer's engravings and woodcuts brought Renaissance ideas to a wide audience through the medium of print.

By the end of the Renaissance, the foundations of modern Western art had been firmly established. The techniques and ideas developed during this period continued to influence artists for centuries to come, laying the groundwork for the Baroque, Rococo, and Neoclassical movements. The Renaissance remains a defining moment in the history of art, celebrated for its contributions to the advancement of artistic expression and the humanistic values that underpin much of Western culture.

Questions for Passage 3

1. Multiple-Choice Question: Main Idea

What is the main idea of the passage?

- ☐ A) The role of humanism in Renaissance art.
- ☐ B) The evolution of artistic styles during the Renaissance.
- ☐ C) The influence of the Medici family on Renaissance art.
- ☐ D) The spread of Renaissance art across Europe.

2. Inserting a Sentence: Logical Flow

Where would the following sentence best fit within the passage?

"This technique, known as linear perspective, became a hallmark of Renaissance painting."

- ☐ A) After the first sentence in the second paragraph.
- ☐ B) After the second sentence in the second paragraph.
- ☐ C) After the last sentence in the second paragraph.
- ☐ D) After the first sentence in the third paragraph.

3. **Vocabulary Question: Contextual Meaning**

What does the word "harmonious" in the third paragraph most likely mean?

- A) Balanced
- B) Musical
- C) Decorative
- D) Complex

4. **Reference Question: Pronoun Referent**

What does the word "it" in the fourth paragraph refer to?

- A) The demand for art.
- B) The Medici family.
- C) The emergence of printmaking.
- D) Renaissance art.

5. **Inference Question: Author's Attitude**

What can be inferred about the author's attitude towards the Renaissance?

- A) The author views the Renaissance as a period of minor artistic development.
- B) The author believes the Renaissance was a turning point in the history of art.
- C) The author thinks that the Renaissance was limited in its influence.
- D) The author feels that Renaissance art was too focused on humanism.

6. **Purpose and Function Question: Paragraph Function**

What is the main purpose of the fourth paragraph?

- A) To explain the role of the Medici family in the Renaissance.
 - B) To discuss the diversification of artistic genres during the Renaissance.
 - C) To describe the spread of Renaissance art to Northern Europe.
 - D) To highlight the contributions of specific Northern Renaissance artists.
-

Answer Key for Passage 3

1. **Main Idea:** B) The evolution of artistic styles during the Renaissance.
 2. **Inserting a Sentence:** B) After the second sentence in the second paragraph.
 3. **Vocabulary Question:** A) Balanced.
 4. **Reference Question:** D) Renaissance art.
 5. **Inference Question:** B) The author believes the Renaissance was a turning point in the history of art.
 6. **Purpose and Function Question:** B) To discuss the diversification of artistic genres during the Renaissance.
-

Passage 4: Business

The Impact of Globalization on Small Businesses

Globalization has transformed the way businesses operate, creating both opportunities and challenges for small enterprises around the world. The integration of global markets has allowed small businesses to access new customers, suppliers, and technologies, but it has also exposed them to increased competition and market volatility. Understanding the impact of globalization on small businesses is crucial for entrepreneurs looking to navigate this complex landscape.

One of the most significant benefits of globalization for small businesses is the ability to reach international markets. Advances in technology, particularly the internet and e-commerce platforms, have made it easier for small businesses to sell their products and services to customers in other countries. This expanded market access can lead to increased sales and revenue, as well as greater brand recognition.

However, globalization also presents challenges for small businesses, particularly in terms of competition. Small enterprises often find themselves competing with larger multinational corporations that have greater resources and economies of scale. These large firms can offer lower prices, more extensive product lines, and superior marketing strategies, making it difficult for small businesses to compete on equal footing.

Another challenge posed by globalization is the increased volatility of global markets. Economic downturns, changes in trade policies, and fluctuations in currency exchange rates can all have a significant impact on small businesses. For example, a sudden increase in tariffs on imported goods can raise costs for small businesses that rely on foreign suppliers, while a drop in the value of a foreign currency can reduce revenue from international sales.

To succeed in a globalized economy, small businesses must be adaptable and strategic. Diversifying their product offerings, building strong relationships with suppliers and customers, and leveraging technology to improve efficiency are all important strategies for mitigating the risks associated with globalization. Additionally, small businesses can benefit from participating in trade associations and networks that provide support, resources, and advocacy for their interests in the global market.

In conclusion, while globalization offers significant opportunities for small businesses, it also brings a host of challenges that must be carefully managed. By understanding the dynamics of the global market and adopting strategies to navigate its complexities, small businesses can position themselves for success in an increasingly interconnected world.

Questions for Passage 4

1. **Multiple-Choice Question: Main Idea**

What is the main idea of the passage?

- ☐ A) The benefits of e-commerce for small businesses.
- ☐ B) The challenges of competing with multinational corporations.
- ☐ C) The impact of globalization on small businesses.
- ☐ D) The role of trade associations in supporting small businesses.

2. **Inserting a Sentence: Logical Flow**

Where would the following sentence best fit within the passage?

"For example, an online retailer in the United States can easily sell its products to customers in Europe, Asia, and beyond."

- ☐ A) After the first sentence in the second paragraph.
- ☐ B) After the last sentence in the second paragraph.
- ☐ C) After the first sentence in the third paragraph.



- D) After the second sentence in the fourth paragraph.
 - 3. **Vocabulary Question: Contextual Meaning**
What does the word "volatility" in the third paragraph most likely mean?
 - A) Stability
 - B) Unpredictability
 - C) Growth
 - D) Decline
 - 4. **Reference Question: Pronoun Referent**
What does the word "these" in the third paragraph refer to?
 - A) Challenges posed by globalization.
 - B) Multinational corporations.
 - C) Large firms' advantages.
 - D) Increased market access.
 - 5. **Inference Question: Author's Attitude**
What can be inferred about the author's attitude towards globalization's impact on small businesses?
 - A) The author sees globalization as primarily beneficial for small businesses.
 - B) The author believes globalization is overwhelmingly harmful to small businesses.
 - C) The author thinks globalization offers both opportunities and challenges for small businesses.
 - D) The author feels that small businesses should avoid engaging in global markets.
 - 6. **Purpose and Function Question: Paragraph Function**
What is the main purpose of the third paragraph?
 - A) To explain the benefits of globalization for small businesses.
 - B) To describe the competitive challenges small businesses face due to globalization.
 - C) To discuss the role of technology in small business globalization.
 - D) To provide strategies for small businesses to succeed globally.
-

Answer Key for Passage 4

- 1. **Main Idea:** C) The impact of globalization on small businesses.
- 2. **Inserting a Sentence:** A) After the first sentence in the second paragraph.
- 3. **Vocabulary Question:** B) Unpredictability.
- 4. **Reference Question:** B) Multinational corporations.
- 5. **Inference Question:** C) The author thinks globalization offers both opportunities and challenges for small businesses.
- 6. **Purpose and Function Question:** B) To describe the competitive challenges small businesses face due to globalization.



The MALL Effect on EFL Learners' Attitudes, Cognitive Load, and Performance in Learning Pronunciation

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ABSTRACT

The integration of technology in education, particularly in English Language Teaching (ELT), has significantly enhanced engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes. Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) has become a powerful tool, offering innovative opportunities for language learners. This study examined the effects of MALL on Iranian EFL learners' attitudes, cognitive load, and pronunciation performance. Participants were divided into experimental and control groups, with the experimental group using the ELSA app for pronunciation practice. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and pronunciation assessments. The findings showed that the experimental group had a positive attitude toward using MALL for pronunciation practice. Additionally, learners experienced a reduction in cognitive load, suggesting that mobile learning tools ease the mental effort involved in language acquisition. A significant negative correlation was found between cognitive load and pronunciation performance, indicating that lower cognitive load led to better pronunciation outcomes. These results highlight the potential of MALL to enhance learners' engagement and pronunciation skills while reducing cognitive load. The study highlights the potential of MALL to facilitate pronunciation learning by providing an accessible and interactive platform for learners.

KEYWORDS: mobile-assisted language learning, learners' attitudes, cognitive load, pronunciation

1. Introduction

Mobile technology has become an essential part of daily life, driving its integration into various fields, including language learning (Social, 2021). Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has enabled easier access to information, and with the rise of cognitive and sociolinguistic approaches in language teaching, the late 1980s and early 1990s saw a shift toward using technology in classrooms (Baleghizadeh & Oladrostam, 2010). Mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) is an umbrella term encompassing all language-learning activities that utilize mobile devices (Cho et al., 2018). Mobile technologies have great potential to enhance second language learning by providing convenient access to materials (Kondo, 2012). The availability of mobile devices facilitates contextualized learning, making education more relevant to real-life situations (Ameri, 2020). It also fosters both formal and informal learning, offering flexible language acquisition opportunities inside and outside the classroom (Sulaiman, 2019).

The rapid growth of mobile technologies is reshaping cultural practices and creating new learning opportunities (Pachler, 2010). However, their integration into education has been gradual, as teachers must figure out how to incorporate them effectively (Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008). There is also a need for strategies and resources tailored to Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL). MALL, though a relatively young field, has seen extensive research over the past two decades;

more recent research includes works by Mortazavi (2021), Lei (2022), and Adijaya (2023). MALL has also become a growing area of research in Iran's language learning and teaching contexts.

Morady Moghadam et al. (2024) conducted a systematic review of 70 studies on Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) in Iran to identify research trends, underexplored areas, and future directions for integrating mobile technologies into language education. Their findings revealed that most studies focused on vocabulary learning (Al-Abri et al., 2024; Fithriani, 2021). Other areas of focus included grammar knowledge (Parsa & Anjomshoa, 2022), reading comprehension (Jamshidi & Mohamadi Zenouzagh, 2020; Khubyari & Narafshan, 2016), listening comprehension (Azar & Nasiri, 2014), writing accuracy, fluency, and complexity (Ebadijalal & Yousofi, 2023), and speaking development (Aliakbari & Mardani, 2022). Additionally, studies explored idiom learning (Ghanizadeh, 2022) and attitudes toward MALL (Namaziandost, 2021; Rahmani, 2022).

Many of these studies employed quantitative research designs and were primarily conducted in private language institutes, where experimental studies are easier to implement. However, research on the impact of MALL on pronunciation remains limited, which could restrict a comprehensive understanding of how mobile technology can enhance pronunciation skills (Arashnia & Shahrokhi, 2016).

A major challenge for learners of English as a foreign language is mastering pronunciation, which is a crucial aspect of language proficiency. Acquiring accurate English pronunciation is particularly difficult and requires significant time and effort (Aliaga García, 2007; Gilakjani, 2016). Clear and intelligible pronunciation is essential for effective communication and plays a key role in language instruction. Proper pronunciation facilitates learning, whereas poor pronunciation can create significant obstacles in the language acquisition process. While non-native speakers may not achieve native-level fluency, language role models should still demonstrate adequate proficiency (Kosanke, 2019). Therefore, it is essential to reevaluate the role of pronunciation in English language instruction within EFL classrooms. Mastery of grammar and an extensive vocabulary do not necessarily ensure effective spoken communication without proper pronunciation. On the other hand, clear pronunciation can make a speaker intelligible despite errors in other speaking subskills. Thornbury (2006, p. 185) emphasized that "faulty pronunciation is one of the most common causes of misunderstanding." Even when learners perform well in other areas of communication, inadequate pronunciation can obstruct meaningful and effective interaction.

Precise pronunciation can also influence an individual's social standing, as a noticeable foreign accent may be viewed unfavorably by native speakers, potentially resulting in social or professional discrimination for ESL/EFL learners (Derwing & Munro, 2005). Consequently, pronunciation intelligibility is essential for effective oral communication, serving as a fundamental aspect of communicative competence (Celce-Murcia & Goodwin, 2000). Iranian EFL teachers also face additional challenges, including a lack of suitable textbooks, materials, and expertise in teaching pronunciation.

Pronunciation is crucial for effective communication, but ESL/EFL instruction often falls short due to a lack of tailored strategies and structured methods. From a cognitive perspective, using research-based techniques can improve learning environments. Cognitive load, or the mental effort on working memory, plays a key role—excessive load hinders comprehension, while reducing it enhances understanding (Deleeuw & Mayer, 2008). Based on the above-mentioned issues, this study tried to examine the effect of learning pronunciation through MALL on Iranian EFL learners' attitudes, cognitive load, and performance by developing the following research questions:

1. What are Iranian EFL learners' attitudes toward learning pronunciation via MALL programs?
2. What is the effect of pronunciation learning in the MALL environment on the EFL learners' cognitive load?
3. What is the effect of pronunciation learning in the MALL environment on EFL learners' performance?
4. Is there a relationship between EFL learners' cognitive load and performance in the MALL context?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Technology for Language Learning & Teaching

The rapid advancement of communication technologies has transformed language teaching, enabling new forms of discourse and participation (Keren, 2012). In this line, educators have long used technology to enhance language learning (Shadiev & Yang, 2020). Technology, defined as methods and knowledge to achieve tasks (Merriam-Webster, 2016), offers limitless resources for language learners (Bull & Ma, 2001).

Research shows that technology in the classroom can be as effective as traditional methods (Shadiev & Huang, 2019). Sabzian (2013) noted that it fosters greater collaboration between teachers and students, boosting learner confidence and Drayton (2010) emphasized that computer-based classrooms offer authentic learning experiences that promote student responsibility. Moreover, Parvin and Salam (2015) found that technology enhances learners' exposure to language in meaningful contexts, helping them build knowledge. The literature highlights that technology fosters teacher-student interaction, provides comprehensible input, enhances critical thinking, shifts focus to student-centered learning, promotes autonomy, boosts confidence, and increases motivation in foreign language learning.

2.2. MALL in Language Learning and Teaching

The term Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) was introduced by Chinnery (2006), who suggested that mobile devices could serve as effective tools for language learning. However, studies and publications on the use of mobile devices in foreign language teaching and learning date back to 1994 (Burstion, 2013). MALL has evolved into a growing field of research, driven by advancements in mobile technologies and the widespread use of smartphones and tablets (Karakaya & Bozkurt, 2022).

The key benefits of MALL include enabling students to take control of their learning by choosing when, where, and how they access online materials, fostering independent and self-directed education (Burstion, 2013). Additionally, using mobile devices in language learning has been shown to increase motivation by offering non-traditional teaching methods (Karsenti, 2013).

Duman (2015) analyzed studies on mobile-assisted language learning from 2000 to 2012 and found a rapid increase in research, peaking in 2012. The most common focus was teaching vocabulary using mobile devices. In a later study, Shadiev and Yang (2020) reviewed articles from 2014 to 2019, noting that writing, speaking, and vocabulary were the most prominent areas of focus. They identified 23 different technologies used a total of 406 times.

From all above-mentioned studies, a few of them focused on the use of MALL in pronunciation. Kim and Kwon (2012) concluded that ESL apps provide effective, personalized, and flexible learning opportunities. Also, Jing (2017) found that combining phonetics teaching with mobile learning positively impacted phonetics instruction. Retnomurti (2019) developed the Android app PROTADROID for pronunciation practice, finding that learners with positive attitudes towards the app successfully engaged with it.

In Iran, Morady Moghadam et al. (2024) reviewed 70 studies on MALL in Iran (2010–2023), identifying research trends, gaps, and future directions, finding that most focused on vocabulary, grammar, writing accuracy, fluency, speaking development, and idiom learning. In another study, Rahmani (2022) found that digital flashcards significantly improved short- and long-term EFL vocabulary retention in Iran. Parsa and Anjomshoa (2022) reported that mobile learning enhanced grammar achievement but had no effect on self-efficacy among male EFL learners. In addition, Aliakbari and Mardani (2022) found that WhatsApp-based EFL learners outperformed face-to-face learners in speaking skills, motivation, and satisfaction. A study conducted by Ghanizadeh (2022) revealed that Telegram-based idiom learning improved acquisition and perceptions, reinforcing MALL's effectiveness.

Despite the limited research on the effect of MALL on pronunciation, Arashnia and Shahrokhi (2016) found that mobile-based instruction significantly improved Iranian EFL learners' pronunciation. Given the scarcity of research on pronunciation, the study also examined MALL's impact on attitudes, cognitive load, and performance.

2.3. Teaching Pronunciation

Pronunciation, encompassing stress, sounds, intonation, and intelligibility, is crucial for effective communication (Nguyen, 2023). It influences social interactions, identity, and belonging. Despite the communicative shift in teaching, ELT remains literacy-focused, often neglecting pronunciation. Historically undervalued, it has been called the "Cinderella" skill (Kelly, 1969) or "an orphan" in classrooms (Gilbert, 2010).

Pronunciation is often overlooked in language teaching due to its complexity, lack of resources, and teacher uncertainty (Beramendi & Cosentino, 2019). Many students find it challenging (Robillos, 2023), and input alone is insufficient for improvement, even over years (Solon, 2016). However, targeted feedback can significantly enhance pronunciation within weeks (Kartushina, 2015). Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) presents new opportunities for personalized and effective pronunciation practice (Liakin, 2015).

2.4. Factors Affecting the Learning of Pronunciation

Recent discussion of pronunciation and research on the teaching and learning of pronunciation have focused on the following issues: the importance of accent, stress, intonation, and rhythm in the comprehensibility of the speech of nonnative speakers; the effects of motivation and exposure on the development of native-like pronunciation; and the intelligibility of speech among speakers of different English varieties.

Accent: Accent is the auditory effect of pronunciation features indicating a speaker's regional or social origin (Crystal, 2003). Many adult English learners have foreign accents, affecting intelligibility. Understanding these traits helps teachers address pronunciation issues (Derwing & Munro, 2005).

Stress, Intonation, and Rhythm: Derwing and Munro (2005) found that prosodic errors (stress, intonation, rhythm) impact intelligibility more than phonetic errors. O'Brien (2004) showed that native German speakers prioritized prosody over individual sounds when assessing American students' German accents. These findings highlight the need for pronunciation instruction to focus on both prosody and individual sounds.

Motivation and Exposure: Age of acquisition, motivation, and cultural immersion influence native-like pronunciation. Personal and professional goals, positive experiences, and attitude also play key roles (Gatbonton, 2005).

Intelligibility and Varieties of English: Jenkins' (2009) work highlighted key phonological features essential for mutual intelligibility in nonnative English communication. For adult learners, pronunciation focus should prioritize understanding over perfection.

2.5. Learners' Attitudes Toward Learning Language Through MALL

Several studies have explored attitudes toward various technologies in language learning, including mobile phones and PDAs (Teo, 2008) focused on the internet, while Corlett (2005) examined PDAs. Azar and Nasiri (2014) found that Iranian EFL learners using cell phone-based audiobooks outperformed those using traditional formats in listening comprehension. Miqawati (2020) reported positive student attitudes toward using mobile apps for pronunciation improvement. These findings align with other studies highlighting the effectiveness of mobile technology in language learning.

2.6. Cognitive Load of the EFL Learners

In education, cognition and emotion both influence learning. Cognitive load refers to the mental effort required by working memory, which can obstruct understanding (Malamad, 2011). Cognitive load theory (Sweller, 2019) highlights working memory limitations and the organization of long-term memory. There are three types of cognitive load: extraneous (linked to teaching methods), intrinsic (related to task difficulty), and germane (associated with learning strategies). Reducing cognitive load helps improve comprehension and learning efficiency by managing distractions and focusing attention on relevant information.

2.7. Performance of EFL Learners in MALL

Mobile-based learning, or MALL, enables learning across multiple contexts through personal devices, offering access beyond time and place constraints (Crompton, 2013). Unlike traditional computer-based learning, MALL supports communicative approaches and student-centered, collaborative learning. Smartphones are now essential tools for communication, work, and education, particularly in language learning and developing oral skills.

In this line, Shirmardi et al. (2023) explored the effect of game-based instruction on the English pronunciation accuracy and the motivational perception towards the game. Conducted at a school low-intermediate level students, the study compared an experimental class taught using the Spaceteam ESL application with a control class taught through the conventional instructional methods. The results revealed that the game-based instruction improved the students' pronunciation in the experimental class and enhanced their motivation to learn language compared to the students in the control class, highlighting the effectiveness of a Mobile Game-Based Application in enhancing both pronunciation proficiency and motivation.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

This mixed-methods study involved 60 intermediate EFL learners (30 male, 30 female) studying general English at an institute in Tabriz, Iran. Aged 19-32, they were selected through convenience sampling for a six-week program.

3.2. Instruments

To meet the objectives of the study, the following instruments were used: Pronunciation test based on a rating instrument developed by Isaacs (2016); Mobile application for pronunciation learning; Cognitive load rating scale adopted by Yang et al. (2022); Interview questions to measure students' attitudes toward using MALL to improve pronunciation.

3.2.1. Pronunciation Test Based on Rating Instrument Developed by Isaacs (2016)

This test, based on Isaacs' (2016) rating instrument, evaluates students' pronunciation before and after treatment using guidelines across six proficiency levels (A1–C2). It consists of two sections: the first includes 14 questions where participants read a set of names and select the expected pronunciation from four options; the second contains 16 questions where participants read pairs of words and determine how many identical initial sounds they share (see Appendix A).

3.2.2. Mobile Application for Pronunciation Learning

The English Language Speech Assistant (ELSA) App was used as an instrument to enhance learners' pronunciation. ELSA is an AI app with personalized English language lessons. Practicing English speech with ELSA is fun and addictive. It's an App that helps with English pronunciation. With the help of artificial intelligence and videos from native English speakers, this App helps to learn a neutral American accent. (Appendix B). This software contains 7,100+ activities, mastering English pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary like never before. This app is powered by Artificial Intelligence (AI) that can quickly assess the users' fluency level and help them learn English, no matter what their native language is.

3.2.3. Cognitive Load Rating Scale Adopted by Yang et al. (2022)

This 20-item questionnaire assessed learners' cognitive load across five dimensions: difficulty, incompetence, negative pressure, lack of attention, and facility operational load. It used a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). A pilot study validated the questionnaire, and its high reliability was confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha of .905 (Appendix C).

3.2.4. Interview Questions to Measure Students' Attitudes toward Using MALL to Improve Pronunciation

Interview questions to measure students' attitudes toward using MALL to improve pronunciation. These three interview questions were adopted from Aratusa (2022). The questions were about the students' general perception of the usefulness of MALL, pronunciation learning, and students' perception respectively. The second item of the interview, the researcher asked the students about a special technique or way that the students do to support their pronunciation learning. The third item of the interview deals with what the students do if they encounter problems in English pronunciation learning. Relying on the question, the students answered that practice makes perfect. Practicing pronunciation makes the students improve even better.

3.3. Procedure

First of all, EFL students were randomly assigned into treatment and control groups. In order to check the students' pronunciation both groups took a pronunciation pretest. In the experimental group, during the treatment period, the ELSA application was used to enhance the pronunciation learning of the participants. Then they practiced common words using the sound. Repeating after the native speaker helped learners get close to the correct pronunciation. After introducing the ELSA application to the treatment group, they received a six-week instruction using this app twice. During this time, the participants in the control group received an ordinary (without application) pronunciation instruction. After the treatment period, the participants in both groups took part in the posttest to check their pronunciation. At the end of the treatment period, the instructor administered the cognitive load questionnaire that was adopted by Yang et al. (2022). The researcher validated the modified questionnaire through a pilot study (N = 20), before conducting the main study. Also, the reliability of the questionnaire was estimated. This internal consistency of the questionnaire calculated through Cronbach's alpha was .905, indicating the high reliability of the cognitive load questionnaire. Later on, in order to consider the participants' attitudes toward using MALL to improve pronunciation three interview questions were asked from the participants. These three interview questions were adopted from Aratusa (2022). All the data regarding the variables of the study were validated by the researcher. Inter-coder reliability (ICR) was used to ensure the reliability of the data. Finally, the collected data was analyzed by SPSS version 26; to analyze the data obtained from the interviews, the thematic analysis was used.

3.4. Design

This mixed-methods research was carried out among EFL students at the intermediate level who were selected based on convenience sampling. In order to uncover the causal relationships between variables, the quasi-experimental design was considered appropriate. The collected data was analyzed by SPSS version 26 software. The variables of the study were pronunciation learning through MALL, learners' attitudes, cognitive load, and performance.

3.5. Data Analysis

The collected quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS Software, version 26. First of all, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test was used to check the normality distribution of the data obtained from the cognitive load questionnaire. Then both descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized. To analyze the data obtained from the questionnaire, descriptive statistical analysis was run to get the mean score, as well as standard deviations of the data sets. In addition, Pearson Correlation was used in order to determine whether there was any statistically significant relationship between the variables of the study. Moreover, through thematic analysis, repeated themes were winnowed and classified. MAXQDA Software was used for qualitative data analysis. The interview responses were analyzed and coded to find common themes. The themes then were analyzed to see if they could be categorized and put into different groups.

4. Results

For this purpose, four research questions along with their hypotheses were formulated. Addressing the first research question: What are Iranian EFL learners' attitudes toward learning pronunciation via MALL programs? the data obtained from interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. Based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis, an iterative and reflective data analysis process was conducted.

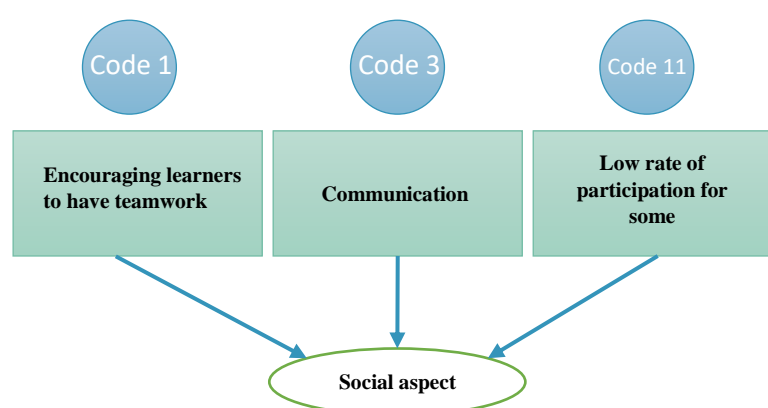
1. *Familiarizing ourselves with the data.* All the participants were interviewed to express their attitudes towards learning pronunciation via MALL programs.

2. *Generating initial codes.* In this stage, the obtained texts were analyzed carefully to find units of meaning which are statements that mean independently. These statements or meaning units were labeled based on their relationship to potential themes in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Then, these 14 codes were reviewed iteratively so that better codes would emerge. (Table 1)

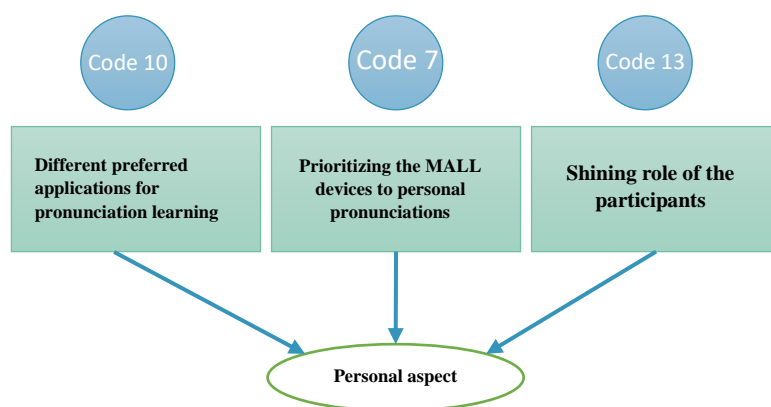
Table 1.*The Extracted Initial Codes*

Before the workshop	
No	Initial code
1	Encouraging learners to learn better
2	Producing hope and happiness among learners
3	Communicating
4	Feeling good about learning more than the traditional method of learning pronunciation
5	Enjoyable learning
6	Practicing that improves learning
7	Prioritizing the MALL devices to personal pronunciations
8	Making a little social anxiety
9	Difficult for weak students
10	Different preferred applications for pronunciation learning
11	Low rate of participation for some
12	Shining role of students
13	Active role of teachers
14	Effectiveness of mobile phone dictionaries

3. *Searching for themes.* This stage contains ordering and connecting the related codes to shape the related themes. First, the related initial codes which could be potentially associated with each other and center around one united theme were identified. In this study, 14 codes could center around 4 main themes.
4. *Reviewing Themes.* In this stage, the codes that shaped one theme were reviewed again to follow a coherent pattern. The emerging themes were not considered final themes until all the codes were analyzed carefully and precisely.
5. *Defining and Naming Themes.* In this stage, it was tried to label the themes. In this part, it should be considered how these themes are connected to the entire data set which is concerned with the research question. In this study, it was always considered that the emerging themes should explain the learners' attitudes toward learning pronunciation via MALL programs. Finally, at the end of this stage, the themes and their related codes were coherently developed which is presented in the below Figures.

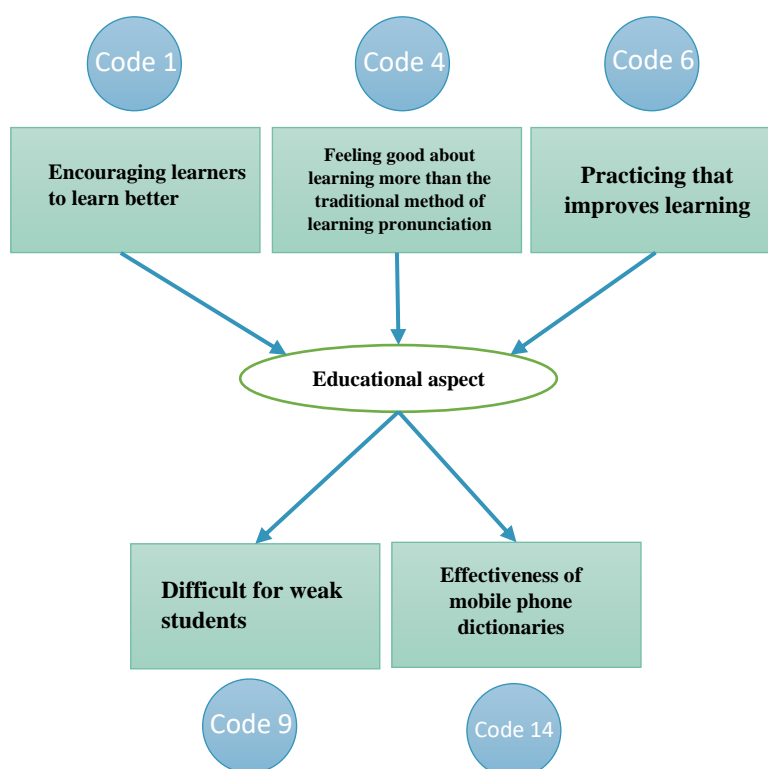
**Figure 1.***Theme One: Social Aspect*

As seen in Figure 1, comparing code 1, 3 and 11 leads to the theme of social aspect since all the three codes can be categorized under the theme of social aspect.

**Figure 2.**

Theme Two: Personal Aspect

By comparing codes, 7, 10, and 13 it is clear that all of them share the personal aspect together.

**Figure 3.**

Theme Three: Educational Aspect

As seen in Figure 3, by comparing codes 1, 4, 6, 9 and 14, it is evident that participants' ideas can be grouped into educational aspect.

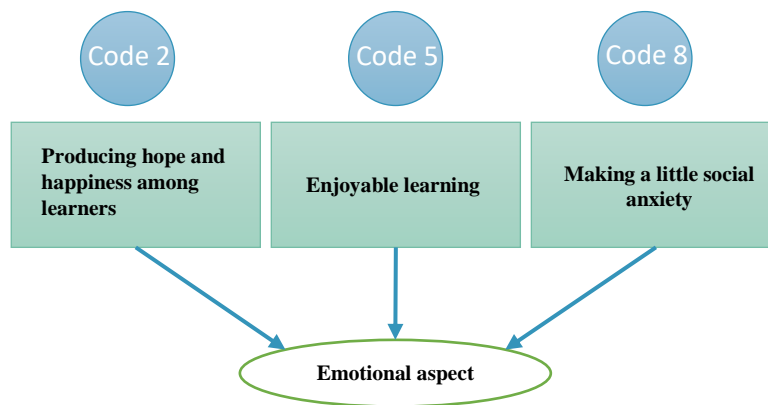


Figure 4.

Theme Four: Emotional Aspect

By comparing codes 2, 5, and 8, it can be concluded that all of them are classified under the emotional aspect.

6. *Producing the Report.* Finally, all the stages of this process of data analysis were reported here especially initial code and emerging themes. In the present study, the emerging themes were:
- Educational aspect
 - Emotional aspect
 - Personal aspect
 - Social aspect

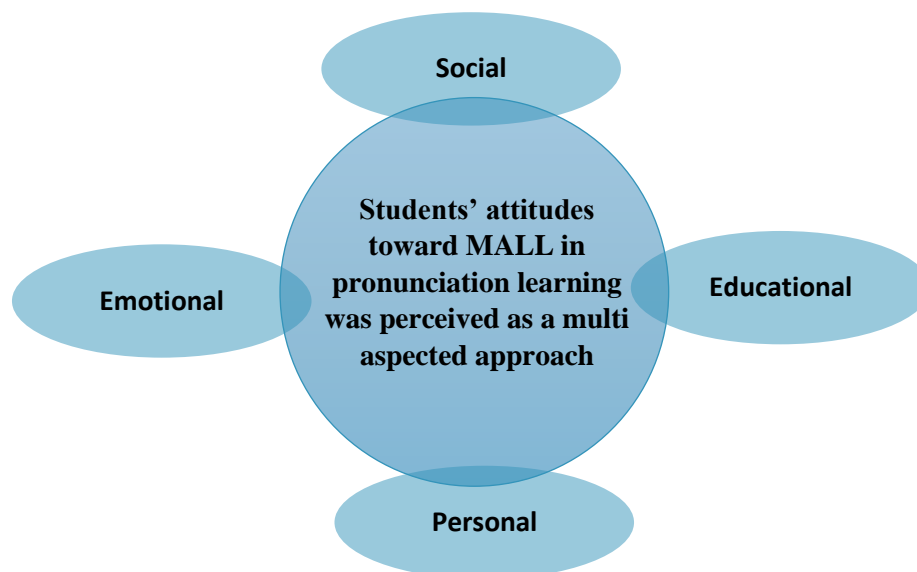


Figure 5.

The Participants' Attitudes toward Learning Pronunciation via MALL Programs in Pronunciation Learning

The following are some sample answers to the interview questions:

"It enhances learning".

"Human is a social creature".

"It is enjoyable".

"It enhances learning a lot".

"It depends on learners' motivation".

“Learners share their ideas about important points”.

“Because everyone’s perception is different and it could be useful to improve our understanding”.

To answer the second research question investigating the effect of pronunciation learning in the MALL environment on the EFL learners’ cognitive load, ANCOVA was run. Firstly, Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was run to check the normal distribution of data. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2.

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

		pre-test cognitive load	post-test cognitive load
N		60	60
Normal Parameters ^{a,b}	Mean	64.7500	62.8167
	Std. Deviation	5.50385	6.23954
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.109	.109
	Positive	.077	.059
	Negative	-.109	-.109
Test Statistic		.109	.109
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.076 ^c	.072 ^c

a. Test distribution is Normal.

b. Calculated from data.

c. Lilliefors Significance Correction.

The results showed that participants' score on pre- and post-administration of the cognitive load scale were normally distributed ($p = .07$, $.07$, $p > .05$). Table 3. Shows the descriptive statistics of control and experimental groups on post administration of cognitive load scale.

Table 3.

Descriptive Statistics of Control and Experimental Groups on Post Administration of Cognitive Load Scale

Treatment	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
experimental	59.70	6.05	30
control	65.93	4.74	30
Total	62.81	6.23	60

As illustrated in Table 3, the mean of post administration of cognitive load scale of participants who used ELSA application was 59.70 with the standard deviation of 6.05, while, the mean of post-test administration of cognitive load scale of participants who were exposed to traditional instruction was 65.93 with the standard deviation 4.74.

Table 4.

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	2195.566 ^a	2	1097.783	616.99	.000	.956
Intercept	.563	1	.563	.317	.576	.006
Pre-test cognitive	1612.750	1	1612.750	906.42	.000	.941
Grouping	452.046	1	452.046	254.06	.000	.817
Error	101.417	57	1.779			
Total	239053.00	60				
Corrected Total	2296.983	59				

a. R Squared = .956 (Adjusted R Squared = .954)

To investigate the effectiveness of implementing ELSA application versus conventional instruction on learners' cognitive load One-way between-groups Analysis of Covariance was run. The independent variable was the type of instruction (using ELSA application and conventional instruction), the dependent variable was learners' scores on the post administration of cognitive load scale, and the participants' score on the pre administration of cognitive load scale were used as the covariate in this analysis.

The results revealed that there was statistically significant difference between the control and experimental groups on post-test scores, $F(1, 59) = 254.06$, $p = .00$, partial eta squared = .817.

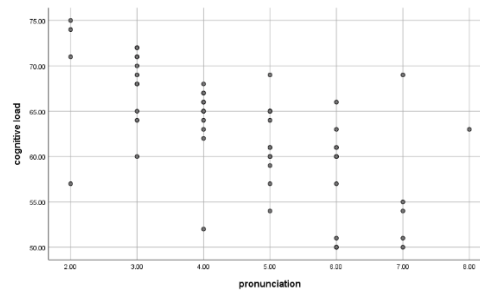


Figure 6.

Control and Experimental Groups on Post Administration of Cognitive Load Scale

To answer the third research question addressing the effect of pronunciation learning in the MALL environment on EFL learner's pronunciation performance, another ANCOVA was run. Firstly, Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was run to check the normal distribution of data. The results are summarized in table 5.

Table 5.

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

		pre-test pronunciation	post-test pronunciation
N		60	60
Normal Parameters ^{a,b}	Mean	3.7333	4.9667
	Std. Deviation	.86834	1.42595
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.221	.143
	Positive	.201	.124
	Negative	-.221	-.143
Test Statistic		.221	.143
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.081 ^c	.122 ^c

a. Test distribution is Normal.

b. Calculated from data.

c. Lilliefors Significance Correction.

The results indicated that learners' scores on the pre and post-tests of pronunciation had normal distribution ($p = .08$, $.12$, $p > .05$). Table 6. provides the descriptive statistics of the control and experimental group's scores on the post-test of pronunciation.

Table 6.

Descriptive Statistics of Control and Experimental Group's Scores on Post-Test of Pronunciation

Treatment	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Experimental	5.16	1.48	30
Control	4.10	1.21	30
Total	4.63	1.44	60

Table 6. illustrates the results of descriptive statistics for control and experimental group's score on post-test of pronunciation. For the experimental group, the mean was 5.16 with the standard deviation of 1.48, while, for the control group, the mean of was 4.10 with the standard deviation 1.21.

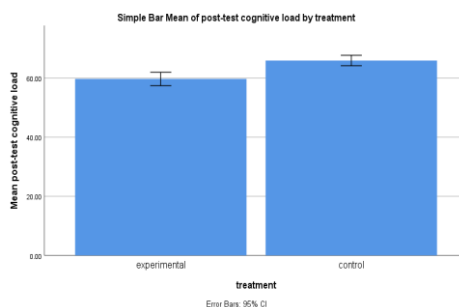
Table 7.*Tests of Between-Subjects Effects*

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	19.026 ^a	2	9.513	5.169	.009	.154
Intercept	100.892	1	100.892	54.819	.000	.490
prepronun grouping	1.960	1	1.960	1.065	.307	.018
Error	18.945	1	18.945	10.293	.002	.153
Total	104.907	57	1.840			
Corrected Total	1412.000	60				
	123.933	59				

a. R Squared = .154 (Adjusted R Squared = .124)

A one-way between-groups analysis of covariance was calculated to compare the effectiveness of two different interventions of employing ELSA application versus conventional instruction on learners' pronunciation performance. The independent variable was the type of treatment (ELSA application versus conventional instruction), the dependent variable was learners' scores on the post-test administration of pronunciation test, and the participants' score on the pre-test of pronunciation was used as the covariate in this analysis.

The results revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between the control and experimental groups on post-test scores on pronunciation, $F(1, 59) = 10.29$, $p = .00$, partial eta squared = .153.

**Figure 7.***Control and Experimental Group's Score on Post-Test of Pronunciation*

To answer the last research question exploring any significant relationship between EFL learners' cognitive load and pronunciation performance, Pearson correlation was conducted.

Table 8.*Descriptive Statistics of Experimental Group' Score on Pronunciation and Cognitive Load*

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
post-test pronunciation	4.63	1.449	30
post-test cognitive load	62.81	6.239	30

Table 9.*Correlations between Learners' Cognitive Load and Pronunciation Performance*

		post-test cognitive load
post-test pronunciation	Pearson Correlation	-.624**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	60

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

The results showed that there is a significant negative correlation between EFL learners' cognitive load and pronunciation performance ($r = -.62$, $p < .05$).

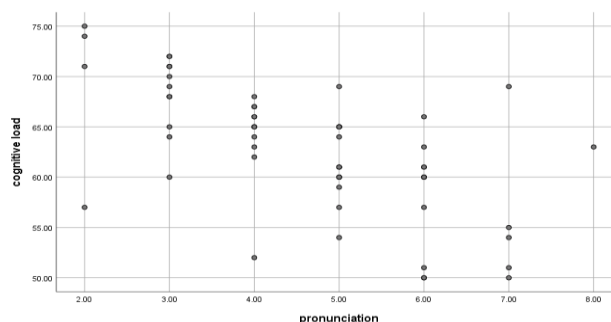


Figure 8.

Relationship between EFL Learners' Cognitive Load and Pronunciation Performance

5. Discussion

In this study, we investigated the effects of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) on Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, focusing on their attitudes, cognitive load, and performance in pronunciation learning. The study aimed to explore key aspects of MALL's role in language learning by addressing several essential questions. First, we sought to understand Iranian EFL learners' attitudes toward learning pronunciation through MALL programs. Given the growing integration of technology in educational settings, it is important to explore whether MALL can positively influence learners' perceptions of pronunciation instruction. Second, the study examined the effect of MALL on learners' cognitive load, which is crucial for understanding the mental effort required during the learning process.

Third, we aimed to investigate how pronunciation learning in the MALL environment impacts learners' overall performance, specifically in terms of their ability to improve pronunciation skills. Finally, we explored the potential relationship between learners' cognitive load and performance in the MALL context, as this relationship could offer valuable insights into how cognitive factors influence language acquisition in technology-driven environments. The following discussion will delve into the findings related to each of these questions, providing a deeper understanding of the potential benefits and challenges of incorporating MALL into pronunciation learning for Iranian EFL learners.

The analysis of the data revealed several key findings related to the research questions. First, regarding Iranian EFL learners' attitudes toward learning pronunciation via MALL programs, the results indicated that participants expressed positive attitudes, which were categorized into four main areas: social, emotional, personal, and educational reasons. Learners appreciated the opportunity for social interaction, the emotional satisfaction it provided, the personal empowerment through self-paced learning, and the educational benefits, all contributing to their overall positive outlook on MALL for pronunciation practice.

In relation to the second question about the effect of pronunciation learning in the MALL environment on EFL learners' cognitive load, the data revealed that learning pronunciation through MALL significantly reduced cognitive load. Participants reported a more manageable and less overwhelming learning experience, which allowed them to focus their mental energy on mastering pronunciation, rather than struggling with excessive cognitive strain. Addressing the third question regarding the impact of pronunciation learning in the MALL context on EFL learners' performance, the findings showed a notable improvement in pronunciation performance among learners in the MALL environment. The use of mobile-assisted learning tools was associated with better pronunciation outcomes, indicating that MALL was effective in enhancing learners' ability to produce accurate pronunciation.

Finally, in regard to the relationship between cognitive load and performance in the MALL context, a negative correlation was found between learners' cognitive load and their pronunciation performance. This suggests that as learners' cognitive load decreased, their pronunciation performance improved, emphasizing the importance of reducing mental strain to achieve better learning outcomes.

Our study aligns with previous research on the use of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) for pronunciation instruction, providing further evidence of its positive impact. Similar to Aratusa (2022), our study found that participants held positive attitudes toward using MALL for pronunciation learning. We identified social, emotional, personal, and educational reasons as key factors influencing these positive perceptions. These findings are consistent with Miqawati (2020), who highlighted MALL's effectiveness in improving pronunciation, boosting participation, and fostering positive attitudes. Furthermore, our study supports the conclusions of Haryadi and Aprianoto (2020), who observed that mobile applications increased student participation and self-learning in pronunciation. The emotional and personal factors that influenced students' preferences in their study were similarly important in our findings. Moreover, our study is consistent with the findings of Ahmed (2022), who demonstrated that mobile applications like Duolingo and WhatsApp significantly improved pronunciation accuracy, fluency, and speaking performance. In our study, participants in the MALL environment showed notable improvements in pronunciation performance, further supporting the effectiveness of mobile-assisted learning. These results align with the third research question of our study, which found that MALL positively impacted pronunciation performance.

Our findings also echo the work of Abduh (2019), who reported significant effects of mobile phone use on pronunciation improvement. In both studies, participants in the experimental groups that used MALL tools outperformed those in the control groups, further confirming that MALL technologies can enhance pronunciation skills. The theoretical underpinnings of MALL, as outlined by Norbrook and Scott (2003) and McNicol (2004), also align with the results of our study. The portability and immediacy of MALL practices enable learners to engage with content flexibly, which, as demonstrated by Chang (2018), can lead to improved language learning outcomes. Our study supports this by showing that MALL provides a convenient and accessible platform for learners to practice pronunciation anytime and anywhere, ultimately contributing to better performance.

Finally, the results of Chang (2018) regarding cognitive load and performance align with our findings. We observed a negative significant relationship between cognitive load and pronunciation performance in the MALL context, reinforcing the idea that MALL reduces cognitive load and improves learning outcomes, as also seen in their experimental group. In summary, the findings from our study regarding the positive effects of MALL on pronunciation, students' attitudes, cognitive load, and performance are consistent with and further substantiate the results from existing literature in the field.

6. Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the effects of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) on EFL learners' attitudes, cognitive load, and performance in pronunciation learning. The findings provide strong evidence of the positive impact of MALL on pronunciation acquisition, highlighting its potential as a valuable tool in language education. While face-to-face classes continue to hold significant importance in fostering serious engagement among learners, mobile learning classes have garnered higher satisfaction rates, largely due to the flexibility and convenience MALL offers. The ability to learn anytime and anywhere allows students to extend their practice beyond the classroom, making it particularly advantageous in the context of language learning where practice time is often limited.

Our analysis revealed that learners' attitudes toward pronunciation learning via MALL could be classified into social, emotional, personal, and educational factors, which positively influenced their experiences. Additionally, participants demonstrated improved pronunciation performance within the MALL environment, further validating the efficacy of mobile learning tools in enhancing language skills. Furthermore, the study found a negative correlation between cognitive load and pronunciation performance, suggesting that MALL not only alleviates cognitive load but also contributes to better learning outcomes.

From a pedagogical standpoint, the results emphasize the importance of incorporating MALL into language learning to increase motivation and engagement. The use of mobile applications can effectively capture students' attention, making learning enjoyable and accessible. Teachers can leverage MALL to create dynamic, learner-centered environments where students have control over their learning pace, thus fostering independent and self-directed learning. Moreover, by enabling students to engage with the material outside of class, MALL provides an opportunity for continuous learning and practice, which is crucial for language development.

In conclusion, the findings of this study demonstrate that MALL offers a promising avenue for improving pronunciation skills among EFL learners. By addressing both cognitive and emotional aspects of learning, MALL not only enhances learners' performance but also enriches their overall language learning experience. Therefore, incorporating mobile learning into pronunciation instruction holds significant potential for creating more flexible, effective, and engaging learning environments.

7. References

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