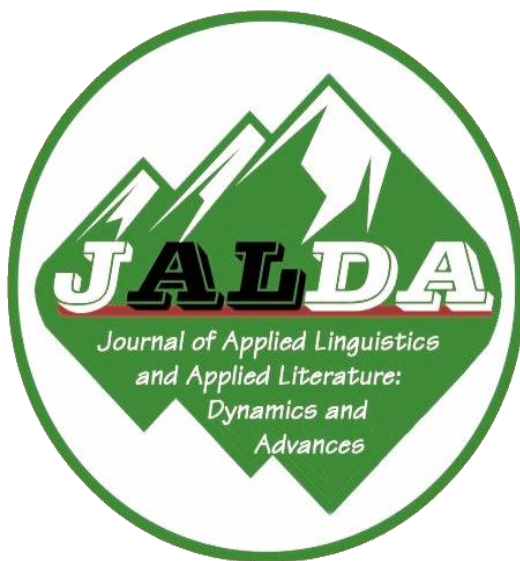


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Dynamics and Advances*



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## **JALDA's Aims and Scope**

*The Journal of Applied Linguistics and Applied Literature: Dynamics and Advances (JALDA)* is an ambitious academic publication which aims to encourage and disseminate cross-disciplinary research targeting real-world problems and real-life concerns where language and/or literature are at the center. Bringing together the now-well-established discipline of *Applied Linguistics* and the thriving subject of *Applied Literature*, *JALDA* stimulates and promotes innovative work within applied studies on language and literature. In the first place, it publishes articles on the two inter-related subjects of *Applied Linguistics* and *Applied Literature*. However, as an essential component of *JALDA*'s long-term goals, a new focus has been added, namely the dynamic relationship between language teaching and literature, a fast-growing and dynamic field that requires special attention. In fact, the long-term prospective ambition is to bring this inter-subject dynamic from background to the foreground in the journal. *JALDA*'s precise outlook on each of the three intended areas is outlined below in the hope of further illumination on its publication policies and planned purview.

### **1. Applied Linguistics**

The most prevailing definition of *Applied Linguistics* so far, with a consensus on, conceives the field as "the theoretical and empirical investigation of real-world problems in which language is a central issue" (Brumfit, 1997, p. 93). Although real-world problems concerning language may involve each of the three questions regarding the nature of language, its use and its learning, historically, the question of efficient learning and teaching of languages has been a predominant concern among real word problems attended to in *Applied Linguistics*. Accordingly, the following subjects are well-seated areas of investigation within mainstream *Applied Linguistics* which are included in *JALDA*'s scope of focus. *JALDA* considers English as a foreign language as the subject of learning:

- Second language vocabulary acquisition
- Grammatical development in L2
- Teaching and learning L2 skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening)
- Technology in language learning and teaching
- Second language curriculum and materials
- Individual differences in second language learning
- Social issues in language learning
- Language teaching methodology
- English for specific purposes
- English as a Lingua Franca
- Language assessment and testing
- English as an international language
- Research methods in applied linguistics
- Language teacher education
- Bilingual education

Although the subject of *Language Learning and Teaching* seems to have already established itself as the mainstream concern in *Applied Linguistics*, the sheer fact that language learning and teaching take place in various ecological conditions, brings forth the warning that ignoring the questions concerning the nature of language and language use might carry with it the risk of blocking our views of the true nature of language learning and teaching as well. *Applied Linguistics* studies need to preserve the flexibility to be inspired by and note the insights from the studies concerning the nature of language and language use, an area which has been labeled as the “*Linguistics Applied*” or “*Applications of Linguistics*” by Davis and Elder (2007). In other words, language pedagogy needs to be examined in its social background in order to be able to reap benefits from the *blessings of the unknown*.

It must be reminded as a word of caution that linguistics is not alone in inspiring *Applied Linguistics Studies*. In fact, attention to the contextual aspects of language learning and teaching highlights the cross-disciplinary nature of *Applied Linguistics*. In this perspective, any research that associates a language-related problem to the core knowledge in psychology, sociology, anthropology, education, neuroscience, economic and political sciences, law, business, etc. counts as *Applied Linguistics*. In this view, *Applied Linguistics* can equally be based in psychology, education, sociology, computer sciences and any other relevant area as it is in linguistics. The intention in these interdisciplinary inquires is to offer reformative, corrective and ameliorative views and suggestions for a language-related real-world problem. In this sense, the discipline of *Applied Linguistics* will be open to the attempts to account for the issues of language learning and teaching alongside its various dimensions as outlined above by giving way to the studies inspired by other language-related studies including the following:

- Corpus Studies
- Discourse Studies
- Economy and language
- Forensic linguistics
- Language and culture
- Language and environment
- Multilingualism
- Neurolinguistics
- Other related areas
- Politics and language
- Translation

According to *JALDA*’s policy formulated here, a few canonical considerations make *Applied Linguistics* distinctive from *Linguistics Studies*. Also, these key features define the nature of work on *Applied Linguistics* that is expected to be submitted for publication in *JALDA*.

- 1) Problem-orientedness
- 2) Language in its ecology
- 3) Cross-disciplinary nature
- 4) Reformative goals
- 5) Real-life data

## **2. *Applied Literature***

*Applied Literature* has emerged recently as an effort to draw literary studies more akin to human beings' everyday needs. A problem-oriented view of literature might be alien to most of the scholars in English Literature, one way or another, since the established tradition in literary studies does not concern itself primarily with real-life problems. However, there is an urgent call upon the experts and academicians of English Literature to further concern themselves with the real world, an appeal that needs to be responded effectively. Literary studies seem to be in an urgency to be taken out from the academic world into the real world. Literature needs to be treated as a real-world art concerning itself with people's lives and not simply an academic art that is analyzed and criticized within academic forums.

Inspired by this urgency, *Applied Literature* is defined here as any systematic research where literature can solve or ameliorate a real-world problem. In this sense, literature acts as a stimulus to reform. *Applied Literature* examines the effect of literature on human beings whereby the literary text is in service of dealing with real-life problems. To be able to account for the various aspects of human life in all its contexts, *Applied Literature* must be interdisciplinary in its nature. Furthermore, to meet the essential requirements of a scientific research, it has to give allegiance to a satisfactory level of methodological rigor. By definition, *Applied Literature* is thus:

- 1) Problem-oriented in terms of objectives
- 2) Effect-driven in its rationale
- 3) Multi- disciplinary in its scope
- 4) Method-conscious in its procedure
- 5) Data-based in terms of its subject
- 6) Reform-oriented in its applications

### **What Is Not *Applied Literature*?**

Articles in *Applied Literature* that are based on the following research orientations, generally classified under *Pure Literature*, do not comply with the policies of *JALDA*:

1. The starting point of the research is based on a piece of literary work rather than a problem in the outside world.
2. The rationale and justification of the study is theory-driven rather than effect-driven.
3. The study commits itself exclusively to the tradition of literary studies without any attempt to invoke insights from other disciplines.
4. The study acts upon literary texts as the only data available for analysis and does not attend to the data from the real-world human life.
5. The study does not imply any reform, amelioration or solution to a real-world problem in its conclusion.

### ***Areas of Research in Applied Literature***

Following are some subjects that can be included in *Applied Literature*. The list is not exhaustive; *JALDA* encourages initiatives and innovations in this regard:

- Therapeutic value of literature
- Trauma studies in literature
- Literature and ethical development
- Literature and science
- Literature and environment
- Literature for professional training
- Literary literacy education
- Other innovative areas

### ***3. Dynamics between Applied Linguistics and Applied Literature***

The most ambitious and prospective goal of *JALDA* is to propagate research on real-life problems where both language and literature are at the core. Here, the intention is to deal with language-related problems where literature acts as a source of solution or amelioration to the problem. *JALDA* considers this interdisciplinary preoccupation as a highly promising area of research concern for the specialist in both *Applied Linguistics* and *Literary Studies*. As part of its long-term policy, *JALDA* team fervently encourages researchers to step in this innovative forum of inquiry. *Novel* as it is, the concept of the research on the *Dynamics* between *Applied Linguistics* and *Literature* can be illustrated with the few following areas of inquiry. The list is inevitably tentative and open for further promotion. *JALDA* is opening a special forum for discussing the options and potentials available regarding the feasibility of this new research area. We ardently invite scholars and experts of the related fields to share their initiatives with us by submitting their prospects in the form of Review Articles or reporting their interdisciplinary research findings.

- The role of literature in language teaching
- The role of Literature in language teacher education
- The role of Literature in language assessment
- The role of Literature in Language teaching curriculum
- Other innovative areas

### ***Basic Criteria for Publishing with JALDA***

A research article published in *JALDA*:

- 1) starts and deals with a real-life problem, where language and/or literature is at the center.
- 2) introduces clear suggestions for tackling problems.
- 3) upholds an iterative relationship between theory and practice.
- 4) involves symptomatic and documented evidence in the form of real-world data.
- 5) may rely on the research data of quantitative, qualitative or combined nature.
- 6) involves a wide spectrum of research designs ranging from highly qualitative ethnographies or case studies to statistics-based experiments



## **SUBMIT MANUSCRIPTS**

### **General Guidelines**

The articles submitted to *JALDA* should follow the APA 7<sup>th</sup> style with some adaptations specific to *JALDA*. Contributing authors are advised to download and read *JALDA's Concise Guide for APA's 7<sup>th</sup> Edition Manual*. Please consult the *Paper Submission Template to JALDA* for submission instructions, guidelines, and contact information of the journal's editors.

### **Online submission**

Manuscripts should be written in English and must be submitted online through our online submission website. **Submit Manuscript** is an online submission and review system where authors can submit manuscripts and track their progress. Registration and login are required to submit items online and to check the status of current submissions.

### **PUBLICATION ETHICS**

*As a member of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), JALDA is committed to maintaining the highest standards of publication ethics and supporting ethical research practices.*

### **Ethics Statement**

#### *Authorship*

The authors' central obligation is to present a concise, accurate account of the research performed as well as an objective discussion of its significance. A paper should contain sufficient detail and references to public sources of information. The results of research should be recorded and maintained in a form that allows analysis and review, both by collaborators before publication and by other scholars for a reasonable period after publication.

Fabrication of data is an egregious departure from the expected norms of scholarly conduct, as is the selective reporting of data with the intent to mislead or deceive, as well as the theft of data or research results from others.

Proper acknowledgment of the work of others used in a research project must always be given. Authors should cite publications that have been influential in determining the nature of the reported work. Information obtained privately, as in conversation, correspondence, or discussion with third parties, should not be used or reported without explicit permission from the investigator with whom the information originated. Information obtained in the course of confidential services, such as refereeing manuscripts or grant applications, cannot be used without permission of the author of the work being used.

Authors must obtain permission for the use of any previously-published materials from the original publisher. Proof of permission must be provided before manuscripts containing previously-published material can be published. Proper credit lines for all previously published material must be included in the manuscript.

Plagiarism constitutes unethical scholarly behavior and is never acceptable. Authorship should be limited to those who have made a significant contribution to the concept, design, execution, or interpretation of the research study. All those who have made significant contributions should be offered the opportunity to be listed as

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It is unethical for an author to publish manuscripts describing essentially the same research in more than one journal of primary publication. Submitting the same manuscript to more than one journal concurrently is unethical and unacceptable. When an error is discovered in a published work, it is the obligation of all authors to promptly retract the paper or correct the results.

#### **JALDA's Commitment Form**

JALDA's Commitment Form for Publication Ethics Observance, Assignment of the Financial Rights, Disclosure of Potential Conflicts of Interest and Introduction of Authors can be downloaded in *MS Word Format* or *PDF Format* on JALDA's website. The form includes the following 4 sections:

1. Commitment to scholarly publication ethics and introduction of the corresponding author
2. Assignment of the financial rights to publish an article
3. Disclosure of potential conflicts of interest
4. Introducing the authors, their order of appearance, and their contribution

Please read the terms of this agreement, use the Word file or PDF file of the Commitment Form, fill in and sign it, and send the document as one of the required files upon submission.

#### **Author Guidelines**

Articles submitted to the *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Applied Literature: Dynamics and Advances (JALDA)* should represent outstanding scholarship and make original contributions to the field. The Editors will assume that an article submitted for their consideration has not previously been published and is not being considered for publication elsewhere, either in the submitted form or in a modified version. The articles must be written in English and not include libelous or defamatory materials. The articles should be between 4,000 and 8,000 words (including the abstract and references). JALDA operates a double-blind peer-review process. To facilitate this process, authors are requested to ensure that all submissions, whether first or revised versions, are anonymous. Authors' names and institutional affiliations should appear only on the web-fillable sheet. All authors are asked to submit five files including the Main File of the article (anonymous), Title Page (containing authors' names, affiliations, email and ORCID), Authorship Form (containing all authors' short biographies and Photo), Authorship and Conflict of Interest Form and Supplementary Persian Abstract.

JALDA (previously *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Discourse Analysis*) has been published since 2016 as the *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Applied Literature: Dynamics and Advances*. As part of the Open Access policy, publishing articles in JALDA is *free of charge* for authors. The similarity rate of all submissions to JALDA is checked through *plagiarism-detecting software* before being processed for peer review.

# JALDA

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## CONTENTS

Flipped Instruction and Its Potential to Control Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Through Shad Application <i>Mahmoud Nabilou, and Abbas Ali Zarei</i>	1-19
Willingness to Communicate and Action Control Among Iranian EFL Learners <i>Parisa Rajabi; Farhad Mazlum; Mahdi Dasta</i>	21-43
Investigating the Effect of Strategic Planning on the High Working Memory Upper- Intermediate EFL Learners' Lexical Complexity of Descriptive and Argumentative Writings: Cognitive Theory Perspective <i>Farahman Farrokhi; Yaser Hadidi; Parya Tadayyon</i>	45-66
Flipping EFL Classroom: Learners' Self-regulation and the Production of Selected Grammatical Points <i>Samira Farahani; Mohammad Ali Heidari Shahreza; Mohsen Shahrokhi</i>	67-89
Toward Designing Education 4.0 Competency-Based ESP Curriculum (E4CEC) in the Context of Iranian Education: Challenges and Opportunities <i>Reza Dashtestani; Shadi Forutanian</i>	91-108
The Impact of Multimodal Feedback on Writing Complexity, Accuracy, and Fluency of Iranian EFL Learners in Flipped and Traditional Classrooms <i>Maryam Farnia; Fatemeh Hemmati; Raziye Rabbani Yekta; Shoora Mirsayafi</i>	109-130
Teachers' Use of Macrostrategies Across Teaching Experience: Impacts on Learners' Motivation <i>Nasrin Behnam; Zohreh Seifoori; Biook Behnam</i>	131-153

Directives in Research Articles Across Disciplines: Impoliteness Strategies or Engagement Markers? <i>Saleh Arizavi</i>	155-174
On the Validation of Laclau and Mouffe's Theory of Discourse: A Case of a Persian Film <i>Hasan Tarlanialiabadi; Rahim Bohlooli Niri</i>	175-194
The Normative I / Eye of the Postcolonial Disability in Octavia Estelle Butler's "The Evening and the Morning and the Night" <i>Melika Ramzi</i>	195-208
"Being kind toward everything alive": Aldo Leopold's Land Ethic in Richard Powers' Bewilderment <i>Maryam Azizi; Mohammad-Javad Haj'jari; Naser Maleki</i>	209-228
Reading and Reimagining Post-Brexit London: A Theoretical Exploration of Ali Smith's Seasonal Quartet through Gurr and Iser <i>Faride Arefinia; Hossein Mohseni</i>	229-246
Book Review: "Pedagogies for Autonomy in Language Teacher Education: Perspectives on Professional Learning, Identity, and Agency" <i>Muhammed Parviz</i>	247-250
<b>Persian Abstracts</b>	251-262



## **Flipped Instruction and Its Potential to Control Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Through Shad Application**

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### **Abstract**

Flipped instruction has been shown to be effective in improving learning. However, this improvement might come at a cost. Since the responsibility for preparing is shifted to students, there is also a risk of augmenting learners' anxiety. This study was an attempt to check the effects of flipped instruction through shad application on foreign language classroom anxiety among Iranian English learners. 120 male pre-intermediate English language learners constituted the main participants of this study. The participants were randomly assigned to one control and three experimental groups based on their performance on an Oxford Placement Test (OPT). The instruction provided for the control group was conventional instruction while the first experimental group received traditional flipping, the second group received demonstration-based instruction, and the third experimental group received double-flipped instruction for eight sessions, each lasting for 45 minutes. Data collection was done using pretests and posttests of foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA); the results of ANCOVA revealed that all the three types of flipped learning had more positive effects than conventional instruction on reducing the learners' anxiety level; however, there were no meaningful differences among the three types of flipping. The results of this study might be valuable for English learners and teachers, materials writers, and curriculum developers. The choice of the right kind of teaching materials and instructional techniques can help reduce learners' anxiety.

**Keywords:** flipped instruction, foreign language classroom anxiety, Shad application

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## **Introduction**

Aydin (2008) believes that feeling anxious can really affect how well one learns a new language. For over half a century, foreign language (FL) research has focused on how anxiety affects learning a new language. Earlier research has found that teaching an FL can be more stressful than other subjects in education. Horwitz et al. (1986) define FL anxiety as how students see themselves, what they believe, how they feel, and how they act when learning a new language in class. This happens because learning a new language is different from other subject areas. MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) are of the opinion that language anxiety is feeling worried and nervous when using or learning a second language.

MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) contend that anxiety can cause substantial problems for students learning a new language. It can make it hard for them to learn, remember, and use the new language. Scientists have looked at why students have a hard time learning a new language and have done many studies to figure out how to help them with the problems they have found (Sahoo & Sinha, 2020). It is clear that every student comes to a language class feeling differently and with different levels of motivation. Some students are excited to learn a new language, while others are worried about it (Mahboudi, 2019). Basically, how much students want to learn a foreign language, their feelings about it, and how nervous they are can all affect how well they do in the class. Anxiety can make it hard to learn languages, do well in school, and feel good about yourself (Zarei & Rahmaty, 2021). Horwitz et al. (1986) reported that researchers were not able to accurately explain anxiety when learning a new language and understand how it affects language learning. Previous research on FL anxiety has mainly looked at being nervous when speaking, instead of other language skills and components. People used to think that speaking was the scariest skill to learn, but then they realized other language skills could also make people anxious.

Zarei and Rahmaty (2021) point out that in recent years, more and more researchers have been studying ways to help language learners feel less worried and do better in learning languages. According to Rajabi et al., (2021), about half the people learning a foreign language feel some level of anxiety. This was noted by Gok et al. (2021), who observed that people who worry a lot about learning a new language might not enjoy studying it, and this may further exacerbate their performance.

Chen and Hwang (2020) found that when teachers are in control, students feel more anxious about learning a foreign language. If this is so, flipped learning could be a good way to change the way students practice. Instead of doing practice at home, they do it in class, and they can watch lectures at home. In flipped learning, students learn new things and study on their own before coming to class. People learn better when they study alone, but they also learn well when they study with others, when they learn with friends or the teacher. In regular schools, students might be scared to mess up in class, not want to talk, and worry about being judged by their classmates or teachers. This can make them more anxious. Homework can also make students feel worried about learning a new language. Actually, Roehl et

al. (2013) have mentioned that teaching in schools and giving homework might not be what students need in today's classes. As Goodwin and Miller (2013) admit, teachers give students work to do, but sometimes it is really hard, and students feel quite frustrated and confused. The essence of their argument is that when the teacher is in control of learning, it can make it harder for students to think critically and develop more anxiety when learning a new language.

As Gustian et al. (2023) propose, the flipped classroom is a new way of teaching that teachers are using more frequently nowadays. This is not like the usual way of teaching, where teachers mostly explain things in class. Students need to watch a video before class that has the information they will talk about in class. The teacher wants the students to join in and work with their classmates during class. Gustian et al. (2023) believe that the flipped classroom model (FCM) can help people learn English as a foreign language. They also mention that some experts have discovered benefits from their own research proving that EFL learners can be helped by something called FCM in education. Despite such claims (as well as pieces of evidence) supporting the effectiveness of flipped instruction in improving language learning, little is actually known about how students might feel in a flipped learning class. On the one hand, better preparation (and the better performance resulting from it) may reduce learners' anxiety level. On the other hand, shifting the responsibility for learning to students may be anxiety-inducing. Furthermore, most of the previous studies have focused on the comparison of flipped learning (or a particular type of it) with a conventional method of teaching. Little, if any, research has focused on the comparison of different types of flipped learning affecting EFL learners' classroom anxiety, especially in the online context of SHAD. To address this gap, this study addressed the following research question:

Are there any significant differences among different types of flipped learning (traditional flipping, demonstration-based flipping, double-flipped classroom) and conventional instruction with regard to their effect on foreign language learners' classroom anxiety?

### **Literature Review**

Several aspects of flipped learning have been addressed in the literature. Gok et al. (2021) studied the effect of the flipped instruction on the foreign language reading anxiety (FLRA) as well as foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) of a group of pre-service English language teachers. They had two groups (flipped and non-flipped) of first-year English language instructors. The results revealed a significant reduction in the FLRA and FLCA level for the flipped group, whereas the non-flipped group experienced no meaningful change.

Rajabi et al. (2021) looked at how flipped instruction could affect the anxiety and listening ability of Iranian EFL students. Sixty-eight students who were learning English were selected and divided into two groups - one group for a new teaching method and the other as a regular group. Before the treatment began, both groups were tested for how anxious they were in the classroom and on their listening skills in an English test. The comparison group got the lessons and videos on WhatsApp and had to study them before coming to class. The experimental group

listened to the audio files one or two times in the classroom. The next step was giving both groups a test to measure their anxiety in the classroom and their listening skills. Data analysis showed no considerable difference between the anxiety scores of the two groups.

Parvaneh et al (2022) conducted a study to see how the flipped classroom and language skills affect how independent and worried Iranian students feel while learning English. Students from Payame Noor University were divided into two groups: one to try something new and the other to not try anything new. The findings showed that flipped classrooms have a big impact on students' independence and feelings of worry when learning a new language. The research showed that how well someone knows a language does not seem to affect how much they control their own learning or how anxious they feel about using the language. The study further showed that using flipped classrooms has a long-lasting effect on students' nervousness about speaking a new language and their ability to learn independently. The researchers concluded that using the flipped classroom model can work well for teaching English in many places and can have good results.

In another research, Abdullah et al. (2021) tried to see if flipped instruction helps students feel less nervous when speaking English. They used a combination of research methods and collected data using a questionnaire about anxiety in English speaking. The researchers gave out the questionnaire at three different times: before, during, and after the new method was used. More information was gathered from group interviews and students' written reflections. The results showed that EFL learners felt less scared when speaking English after using FCM for twelve weeks. The results of One-way ANOVA showed that EFL learners had different levels of anxiety when speaking English. MANOVA results further suggested significant differences among the four dimensions of AESPQ. All in all, FCM worked well for all the students in this study because it met their needs and matched their way of learning.

Han et al (2022) investigated how FLCA affects doing well in school, and how emotions and classroom environment play a role. The study used a convenient way to collect data from Chinese university students. They used a method called CB-SEM and a software called AMOS to check if the model was good and to test their ideas; they also looked at how well their measurements were correct and reliable. The results showed that FLCA had a bad and strong impact on students' grades. In addition, EIC helped improve the connection between FLCA and doing well in school. The researchers found that being aware of and being able to control their feelings could help students feel less nervous when learning a new language, and also made them better at speaking it. Finally, the classroom setting had a positive and important effect on the connection between FLCA and emotional intelligence in communication.

Previous studies have focused on how feeling nervous affects learning English as a Second Language (Asadzadian & Asadzadian, 2019). In the present study, we wanted to see how flipped learning changes how anxious students feel. Previous studies have found that anxiety can make it harder to learn English.



Anxiety can cause many problems, like disappointment and bad performance. People who are very anxious do not do well in school, they do not learn much, and they get nervous while studying. Reciprocally, students who do not do well in English classes and on tests feel very worried and stressed (Gawi, 2020). To help students feel less stressed, English teachers should make the classroom a nice place to be. Actually, students feel more anxious when their teachers are too serious or strict in the classroom (Razak et al., 2017)

Flipped learning may be a useful way to overcome the above-mentioned problems. An important part of designing a flipped classroom is making sure that students can easily use the technology they are already familiar with (Kim et al., 2017). The Shad platform designed by the Iranian Ministry of Education is an online application through which Iranian teachers can present their video and audio lessons. Students can save or send files like educational videos, audio, and tools. They can also talk to other students and the teacher about the materials. Students can use their computers or mobile phones to go online and see their homework, and do some work at home. Students can review the materials whenever they want and as many times as they need. Teachers can divide each lesson into different parts to facilitate students' understanding of the topics. Before the Covid-19 era, online teaching and flipped instruction were not used much in language teaching and learning in the context of Iran; such classes were mainly face-to-face not online. The outbreak of Covid-19 somehow highlighted the necessity of such online instructional platforms.

The Covid-19 pandemic actually affected education seriously. It forced the conventional physically situated face-to-face systems of education into an unprecedented long period of hibernation all over the world. Due to the requirements of the new situation, teachers needed to change regular classroom practices and adapt themselves to the new ways people learn and socialize. Therefore, classes had to be held online. At the same time, the flipped classroom is when the usual way of teaching is turned around. Instead of learning new information in class, you do it at home by yourself. This means that the relationship between teachers and learners have to undergo further changes.

To summarize, although based on the reviewed literature, flipped learning is a viable alternative to the conventional way of teaching that can open new horizons and herald new opportunities in education by giving teachers higher levels of flexibility, it can also potentially be a source of additional anxiety for learners, thus damaging their long-term learning efficacy. When flipping takes place in an online context, on the one hand, there may be additional levels threat to learners' anxiety level due to the fear of being able to cope with the demands of the online context. Particularly, the Shad application, which was developed for the first time in response to the unprecedented challenge of COVID-19, could augment the anxiety of EFL learners. On the other hand, since the presence of the teacher was no longer a direct threat to learners' anxiety level, flipping the classroom in the online context could be less anxiety-inducing. To resolve this issue, the researchers of this study compared the effect of different types of flipped instruction and conventional instruction on Iranian EFL learners' classroom anxiety.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The present study was carried out in a high school in Alvand, Qazvin. 120 students studying at the 10<sup>th</sup> grade took part in this study; they were selected from among 150 10<sup>th</sup> graders, and they were placed into four groups. The participants were all aged 16 and 17. A placement test confirmed that the level of the students was lower-intermediate. The participants were assigned to four homogeneous groups of 30 students. The participants were from families that could afford providing their children with appropriate equipment such as smart phones and laptops. Since Shad application is an easy-to-use application, there was no problem or limitation regarding their familiarity with using this application.

### **Materials and Instruments**

The main material used in the present study was the course book “*Vision I*”, which is taught as the English book for the 10<sup>th</sup> graders and the book includes four units in which all the four skills and all the components of the English language are included. The topics vary from saving the nature to traveling around the world. The grammatical points also include a variety of structures including the future tense, singular and plural types of nouns, modals, regular and irregular adverbs, etc. The course book includes a student book accompanied by a workbook.

The instruments that were used in the study included a placement test and pretest and posttest of foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) in the form of a questionnaire. The placement test was the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) and was used to make sure the participants were homogenous. The validity and reliability of this test have been checked and approved before; still, it was checked again and the reliability index of the test (estimated through the KR-21 formula) turned out to be 0.81. The participants were given 60 minutes to do the placement test. The OPT includes 60 items. The test ranking was as follows and was based on the number of correct answers by the participants: 1-17 beginner, 18-27 elementary, 28-36 lower-intermediate, 37-47 upper-intermediate, 48-55 advanced, 56-60 very advanced.

The questionnaire for foreign language classroom anxiety scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al. (1986) was given to the participants in all groups before and after the treatment in order to compare the participants' anxiety. The questionnaire dealt with the fear of learning a foreign language in a course, for example, the fear of speaking in front of other students. The questionnaire had one dimension and the number of items was 33. The response format of the questionnaire was a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The reliability index was reported by the developers to be 0.93. Nevertheless, its reliability was rechecked in the context of the present study, and the index was found to be 0.85. Some items of the questionnaire were negatively worded and in order to make the scoring procedure easier, the scale was reversed for these items based on the questionnaire's instruction.

## **Procedure**

Initially, the participants of the study with the above-mentioned characteristics were selected through convenience sampling based on availability. To check the language proficiency level of the participants, a standardized placement test (OPT) was given to the participants. All the learners were made familiar with how to answer the questions at the beginning of the study, and the researcher explained the aim of the study to them. A placement test (OPT) was used to homogenize the participants, and four groups of 30 students were formed based on the results of the placement test from among the 150 students.

The control group consisted of 30 students aged 16 and 17. The participants in the control group were provided with conventional instruction, and the intended lexical and grammatical items were taught to them through traditional and conventional methods. During each session, the learners in the control group were provided with the explanations and exercises related to each lesson. All of the participants in this group participated in eight sessions of teaching, each lasting for 45 minutes (because of the limitations posed by the Ministry of education). Explaining the contents through giving the meaning of the word and sometimes translating into their mother tongue were the main procedures implemented in this group. What mattered was that there was no flipping in this group. It was a teacher-centered class in which the teacher not only presented almost all of the lesson but also determined what the students should do in the class. At the end of each class, the teacher also assigned some homework for the students to do at home. Therefore, unlike the flipped learning classes, the students learnt in the class and practiced at home.

Like the control group, each of the experimental groups consisted of 30 participants at the same age and level of proficiency. The learners were taught the contents through flipped instruction. The participants in these groups also participated in eight sessions of teaching, each lasting for 45 minutes. The learners watched the files on their personal devices and computers. During the first session, the teacher explained to the learners how to use the files and what to do. There were three different types of flipped learning as the treatment of the study; therefore, three experimental groups were formed.

In the traditional flipping group, to help students prepare themselves for the class, they were asked to watch some short tutorial or explanatory videos before attending the class. The files were provided by the teacher and given to the students through Shad application. The students in this group had to practice these contents in the class and discuss them, and the teacher provided them with appropriate feedback and comments about their performance. In each session of the class, the students practiced the main concepts; to do so, they did some exercises or had a debate with their peers, and the teacher provided them with personalized feedback about their strong and weak points in explaining the lesson. The feedbacks were delivered to the learners face-to-face, using notes or recorded voice through Shad application when time was not enough. The teacher took notes of the points that had to be improved in

order to make the explanation clearer and more understandable. When they left the class, the students were expected to review the things that they had learned in class so that they would expand their knowledge. For example, the first lesson of the 10<sup>th</sup> grade has two main grammatical structures which include using the modal verb “will” and “to be going to” to talk about the future, and the vocabulary of this lesson are mainly about nature and animals. The teacher corrected their mistakes about the explanation of functions of these two grammatical structures by providing some examples of their own plans for the future.

In the demonstration-based flipping group, it was the process that was the focus of the class. The teacher had recorded videos of himself performing activities in a step-by-step fashion; he provided the students with the files through Shad application. The students studied these files at their convenience; they were expected to practice and follow the teacher’s model in class. Like the demo sessions in which new teachers demonstrate their teaching ability, the students came to the class and performed what they had watched and learned through the files. They were expected to perform in ways similar to the teacher. To further improve their learning, the students used tutorial videos and reviewed certain steps as many times as they needed. These video files were also provided by the teacher.

In the double-flipped classroom group, students took the role of their teacher. Here, the students recorded videos of their own teaching to show that they had mastered the new skills provided in their book. They had to teach the contents and record it as a video file and then share it with their classmates through Shad application. After each session, they discussed their performance and, again, the act of showing or teaching how something is done reinforced learning. As the main focus of this study was on teaching grammar and vocabulary, the students in all the three groups of flipped learning had to work on the sections which included grammatical points and new words or expressions which are clearly stated in their course books.

After the treatment period, the students participated in the posttest and filled out the questionnaire carefully. The English version of the questionnaire was administered. The students generally had no problem understanding the main point of the items. Nevertheless, to guarantee that they understood everything, questions were answered during the administration and the unfamiliar parts were translated. Test takers spent around 45 minutes on this task, and they were asked for their active participation in the test. The data collected through the questionnaire were described and submitted to statistical analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

In order to answer the research questions, the data were analyzed by means of the statistical package SPSS 26. To address the questions of the study, ANCOVA was used to compare the posttest scores of the learners of the four groups after removing the possible effect of the preexisting differences.

## Results

This study sought to see if there are any significant differences among the effects of traditional flipping, demonstration-based flipping, double-flipped classroom and conventional instruction on students' foreign language learning classroom anxiety level. Analysis of Covariance was used to answer this research question.

Before conducting ANCOVA, the distribution of the scores was checked for normality in all the groups, and the significance level the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was above .05, showing no abnormality in the distribution of scores. The assumptions of ANCOVA were also checked: the treatment had no effects on covariate measurement since the measurement was done prior to the treatment. The covariate was reliable and no strong correlations were observed among covariates because there was only one covariate in the analysis. The relationship between dependent variable and the covariate was linear and homogeneity of regression slopes was assured.

Given the index of Cronbach's Alpha ( $r = .85$ ), the measurement of the covariate was reliable. The linearity assumption assuming that the relationship between the covariate and the dependent variable should be linear was examined in Figure 4.3, which showed that the four lines are straight, suggesting that the requirement linearity of the relationship is met.

**Figure 1**

*Scatter Plot of Pretest and Posttest of Anxiety Level*

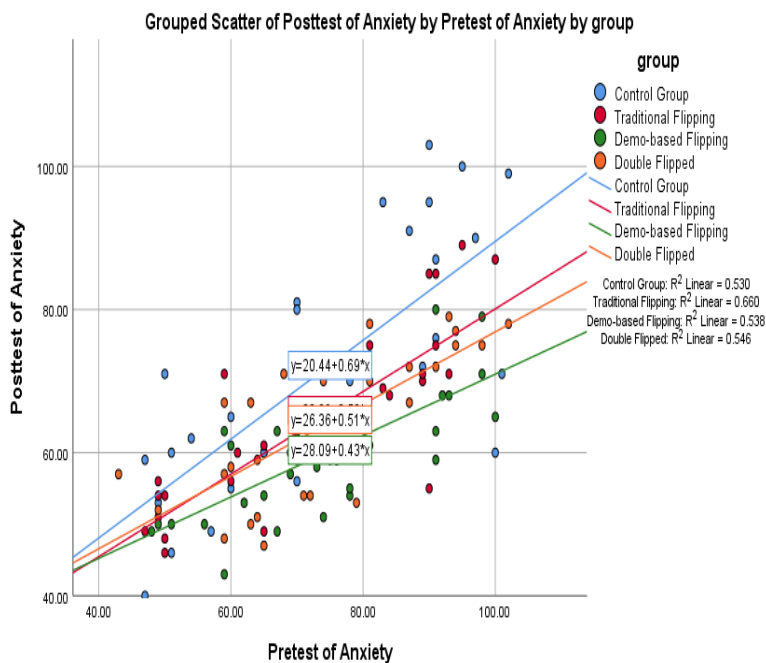


Table 1 tells us that the level of significance in Levene's test (.21) is above the selected significant level (.05); therefore, the homogeneity of variance assumption was not violated for anxiety level scores in the groups.

**Table 1**

*Levene's Test Result for Anxiety Level Scores by Group*

	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
<b>Based on Mean</b>	1.522	3	116	.212

Table 2 below shows that the significance level of the interaction between group and the pretest of anxiety level (group \* anxietypre) is above .05 ( $F_{(3, 112)} = 1.41$ ,  $p = .24$ ) and not statistically significant; therefore, no interaction was found, and the pretest and posttest scores of anxiety level in all the groups enjoyed the assumption of homogeneity of regression slopes.

**Table 2**

*Homogeneity of Regression Slopes for Anxiety Level*

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
<b>Corrected Model</b>	12354.786 <sup>a</sup>	7	1764.96	24.80	.000	.60
<b>Intercept</b>	3166.626	1	3166.62	44.49	.000	.28
<b>Group</b>	51.264	3	17.08	.24	.868	.00
<b>Anxietypre</b>	9159.548	1	9159.54	128.70	.000	.53
<b>Group* Anxietypre</b>	302.295	3	100.76	1.41	.242	.03
<b>Error</b>	7970.806	112	71.16			
<b>Total</b>	522527.000	120				
<b>Corrected Total</b>	20325.592	119				

a. R Squared = .608 (Adjusted R Squared = .583)

ANCOVA was used after making sure that the assumptions were met. Before presenting the results of ANCOVA, descriptive statistics for the scores in the groups were summarized in Table 3. The table shows that the mean scores of anxiety level in the control group ( $M = 73.57$ ,  $SD = 18.34$ ), traditional flipping group ( $M = 72.23$ ,  $SD = 16.96$ ), demonstration-based flipping group ( $M = 73.87$ ,  $SD = 15.17$ ), and double flipped group ( $M = 73.83$ ,  $SD = 14.80$ ) are close to each other on the pretest. On the other hand, the mean scores on the posttest of anxiety level are as

follows: control group ( $M = 71.27$ ,  $SD = 17.41$ ), traditional flipping group ( $M = 64.07$ ,  $SD = 12.05$ ), demonstration-based flipping group ( $M = 59.77$ ,  $SD = 8.86$ ), and double flipped group ( $M = 63.67$ ,  $SD = 10.12$ ).

**Table 3**

*Descriptive Statistics of Anxiety Level Scores on Pretest and Posttest*

	N	Mean	SE	SD
<b>Pretest of Control Group</b>	30	73.57	3.34	18.34
<b>Posttest of Control Group</b>	30	71.27	3.17	17.41
<b>Pretest of Traditional Flipping Group</b>	30	72.23	3.09	16.96
<b>Posttest of Traditional Flipping Group</b>	30	64.07	2.20	12.05
<b>Pretest of Demonstration-Based Flipping</b>	30	73.87	2.77	15.17
<b>Posttest of Demonstration-Based Flipping</b>	30	59.77	1.61	8.86
<b>Pretest of Double Flipped Group</b>	30	73.83	2.70	14.80
<b>Posttest of Double Flipped Group</b>	30	63.67	1.84	10.12

The results of the ANCOVA are summarized in Table 4. After adjusting for the anxiety level scores on the pretest, significant differences were found among the mean scores of the groups on the posttest ( $F_{(3, 115)} = 9.80$ ,  $p > .005$ , partial eta squared = .20). According to these statistics, significant differences were observed among the effects of three types of flipped learning and conventional instruction on foreign language learning classroom anxiety level.

**Table 4**

*Tests of Between-Subjects Effects on Anxiety Level*

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
<b>Corrected Model</b>	12052.49 <sup>a</sup>	4	3013.12	41.88	.000	.59
<b>Intercept</b>	2953.97	1	2953.97	41.06	.000	.26
<b>Anxietypre</b>	9984.66	1	9984.66	138.79	.000	.54
<b>Group</b>	2116.13	3	705.37	9.80	.000	.20
<b>Error</b>	8273.10	115	71.94			
<b>Total</b>	522527.00	120				
<b>Corrected Total</b>	20325.59	119				

a. R Squared = .593 (Adjusted R Squared = .579)

To determine the location of the significant differences among the mean scores of anxiety level of the four groups, pairwise comparisons were made. Table 5 shows the pairwise comparisons. The table shows a statistically significant difference ( $p < .05$ ) between the control and the traditional flipping groups with a mean difference of 6.44 in favor of the control group. It should be noted that a lower score in anxiety level shows the better effect of instruction.

The results also showed a statistically significant difference in the anxiety level mean scores between the control and the demonstration-based flipping groups in favor of the control group. Furthermore, pairwise comparisons showed a statistically significant difference between the control group and the double flipped group in favor of the control group.

However, there was no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of traditional flipping and the demonstration-based groups ( $p > .05$ ), between the mean scores of the traditional and the double flipped groups, and between the demonstration-based and the double flipped groups.

**Table 5**

*Pairwise Comparisons for Anxiety Level Scores*

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	SE	Sig. <sup>b</sup>
<b>Control Group</b>	Traditional Flipping	6.44*	2.19	.024
	Demo-Based Flipping	11.67*	2.19	.000
	Double Flipped	7.75*	2.19	.003
<b>Traditional Flipping</b>	Demo-Based Flipping	5.22	2.19	.112
	Double Flipped	1.30	2.19	1.000
<b>Demo-Based Flipping</b>	Double Flipped	-3.91	2.19	.457

Based on estimated marginal means

\*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

b. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni

## Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of three types of flipped learning including traditional flipping, demonstration-based flipping, and double flipped instruction on foreign language learning classroom anxiety level of EFL learners at lower-intermediate level.

Regarding the learners' anxiety level, it was observed that the three types of flipped instruction used in the present study were more effective on reducing learners' anxiety level compared to conventional instruction. These results are in line with the findings of the studies done by Gok et al. (2021) and Abdullah et al.



(2021), who came to the conclusion that flipped instruction positively affects EFL learners' anxiety level and helps them reduce their level of anxiety while attending language learning classroom. On the contrary, Rajabi et al. (2021) came to the conclusion that flipped instruction has no positive effects on reducing EFL learners' anxiety level. In the context of the present study, however, the three types of flipped learning were almost equally effective on reducing the anxiety level of the learners. There has not been any study focusing on comparing the effectiveness of different types of flipped instruction in reducing EFL learners' anxiety level; however, it can be discussed that generally, flipped instruction reduces the authority of the teacher in the classroom compared to conventional instructions and allows the students to be more responsible for their learning process. At the same time, it needs to be acknowledged that this study was a quantitative study which compared the anxiety level of the participants and showed significant differences. However, it cannot be claimed that reduction in the anxiety level of the participants was necessarily due to the reduced authority of the teacher. Since a large number of factors may actually contribute to students' classroom anxiety, probably qualitative studies are needed to shed more light on how flipped classes, especially those in the online environment, affect EFL learners' anxiety.

Nevertheless, since all the three types of flipped instruction were shown to be better than conventional method, regardless of the type of flipped learning, it can be generally discussed that we might have to move towards the approaches and methods which are more student-centered and, therefore, more responsibility should be given to learners in language learning classes.

As to the effects of flipped instruction on students' anxiety, this study suggested that flipped learning generally reduces students' anxiety level. At the beginning, the present researchers expected the learners in the double flipped group to be more anxious compared to the other groups because the responsibility of both preparing the video files and presenting them in the classroom was shifted to them. However, after the intervention period, it turned out that this type of flipped instruction also helped the learners reduce their anxiety level.

The findings of this study about using technology for educational purposes in the classroom (in the flipped learning groups) aligns with Dinçer and Polat's (2022) assertion that it can improve students' comfort and ease of learning. This gives the teacher more time to talk with students instead of just lecturing. Flipped classrooms let students learn in different ways and places. They can work in groups, study on their own, do research, perform tasks, and get feedback. In a flipped classroom, the teacher helps students learn by watching them closely, offering different ways to learn and show what they know, and letting them take an active part in learning. The teacher also makes sure everyone can join in and gives feedback as they go along.

Flipped instruction might be better than regular teaching because students who learn this way use other educational resources outside of class, so they come to

class more prepared and can focus on more advanced thinking tasks instead of just learning grammar and vocabulary (Dinçer & Polat, 2022). Based on Bloom's theory, students understand what they learned before class and do simpler thinking tasks like understanding and remembering. This gives them more time to really understand the material before they come to class. When a classroom is flipped, students can study before the class and participate more during the class, leading to better learning. Nevertheless, we would like to acknowledge that the picture may not be this simple. In actual fact, there may be a wide variety of factors contributing to EFL learners' anxiety level. The complex multi-dimensional nature of human learners suggests that there must be much more intricate relationships among a variety of variables. For the sake of manageability, however, this study focused on the mentioned variables.

### **Conclusion and Implications**

Flipped instruction helps EFL learners to preview and study the lessons in advance and at their own pace. Flipped instruction helps learners by giving them more freedom in their schedule and assignments. They can learn anywhere and at any time.

From the findings of the study, it may be concluded that teachers can expand and deliver the learning experience outside the limited space and time of classroom environment. It allows both teachers and learners to save their time for more critical issues to be discussed and practiced during the class time. One of the strengths of this study is that it tried to use the Shad application to change how English lessons are taught. Some teachers did not think this app was helpful for teaching, but the study showed that it did make students enjoy learning and participate more.

On the basis of the findings of this study, it may be concluded that there is no superiority for any of the types of flipped learning, and there is no reason to choose and resort to a specific type. Since the participants benefited equally from all types, according to the context of teaching, population, classroom environment and equipment, learners' level of proficiency, etc., teachers can choose any type of flipped instructions.

Flipped learning generally helps language learners benefit more from their own capabilities of preparing materials and teaching them. Although some teachers believe that flipped learning removes a large amount of their authority from the classrooms and might negatively affect their face, the findings could be convincing enough to persuade them to use this interesting technique in their classes, too. One of the principles of flipped learning is to remove or reduce the authority of teachers in the learning environments. When students experience the authority themselves and have an active role in controlling the materials and what happens during a class session, their anxiety level is reduced (Parvaneh et al., 2022). Accordingly, it can be

concluded that the significant reduction in the learners' anxiety level in flipped classes is due to their active participation in and taking responsibility of their own learning process.

In the present era, known as the digital age, teaching and learning are seen as complicated processes that require the use of videos and technology. Using technology to help learners learn a language can make it easier for them to learn and do well. Using technology in the classroom can help students learn languages better. It can make students more independent learners, give them more chances to use English, and make them better at speaking and understanding English. Therefore, it can be said that using technology to flip the classroom can help students learn a new language. Additionally, technology makes it easier for students to learn from far away. This way of learning has the advantage of being easy to access and adjust to different needs. When you have access to the internet, you can use flipped classroom whenever and wherever you want. In conclusion, using flipped learning helps students get more involved in their learning and become more independent.

While it is acknowledged that caution should be taken when drawing implications from a single study, there may be certain pedagogical implications for the following stakeholders.

The findings of this study are expected to be valuable to EFL teachers regardless of their experience and teacher trainers in various ways. Novice EFL teachers have often an incomplete image of how teaching takes place in language classes and what they practice is based on what they are told to do in classrooms by either the institutes or universities. Keeping them well-informed of up-to-date theoretical and practical issues about the ways of implementing new technologies and methods can be enlightening for language teachers and language educational systems. However, teachers should be careful not to completely shift their responsibility to their students since they might not be able to handle a class and its circumstances. In these situations, classrooms may run out of control or become difficult to manage, and some students might think that their teacher is not responsible enough.

Moreover, not paying much attention to students' capabilities in our classrooms may result in their marginalization and making them passive learners who do not dare to take new responsibilities. This study reminds us that teachers should take advantage of student-centered methods as they provide learners with more opportunities to prove themselves. The current study approves that the application of somehow entertaining techniques by EFL instructors in order to reduce the learners' anxiety draws their attention to the learning process more and more. The current researchers advise teachers to feel confident with the rules and procedures of flipped instruction.

The results of this study can also be helpful for teacher training courses. Teacher trainers, especially in our universities, introduce some outdated language

teaching ideologies, insights, and methods to their trainees. Teacher trainers should be aware of instructing appropriate practices such as using new technologies and techniques to make classes more active and lively.

Syllabus and curriculum designers may also use the results of this study to make new materials and lesson plans that are less stressful for students. The flipped classroom changes how students learn by using technology to help them understand the material better. Using advanced thinking skills and making sure teachers and students talk a lot helps learning to become more meaningful and effective.

The flipped classroom model is a new way of teaching that has the potential to change how students learn. It has encouraged EFL learners to study grammar and vocabulary, and has also helped them to improve their grammar skills and vocabulary knowledge. It has also encouraged them to work together during class, by giving them more time to do activities together. This study adds to the existing body of research by showing how the flipped learning model can be used for teaching grammar and vocabulary in English as a foreign language classes.

In a nutshell, the findings of this study can be beneficial for all those who are involved in any educational context. When technology is used for preparing and delivering materials, the teacher has more time to focus on problems and difficulties, which will result in enhancing the learning outcomes, autonomous learning, motivating learners, and more opportunities for practice. Innovative strategies such as flipped instruction can help EFL materials developers design materials which are more personalized addressing the needs of any individual with diverse learning styles and preferences. Technologies can help them prepare new multimodal materials and make contents more interesting for different types of learners.

Despite the above-mentioned points, there were a number of limitations as well. The study was conducted with 120 10th-grade students from a single high school in Iran, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. A larger and more diverse sample size from multiple schools or regions could enhance the external validity of the study. Moreover, participants were selected based on lower-intermediate proficiency levels, which may not capture the full range of EFL learners' anxiety experiences. Including participants with varying proficiency levels could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how flipped instruction impacts anxiety across different learner groups. Due to the limitations and delimitations of the study including sample size, duration of the treatment, the context of experiment, etc., it is suggested that more studies be conducted in this area so that more solid and generalizable results are obtained.

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## **Willingness to Communicate and Action Control Among Iranian EFL Learners**

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### **Abstract**

Given the key role communication plays in L2 learning, studies addressing students' (un)willingness to communicate (WTC) and factors contributing to it are of pedagogical and theoretical relevance. Although studies on Iranian students' WTC and its relationship with different variables are available, no research has been conducted on how Kuhl's (1994) Action Control (AC) theory—proposed to carry explanatory potential regarding WTC—relates to it or its pertinent variables. The current study aims at investigating the predictive power of three variables (preoccupation, hesitation, and volatility) underpinning Kuhl's AC theory and two high-evidence key factors (perceived competence and communication apprehension) vis-à-vis Iranian English students' WTC in class. To collect data, Willingness to Communicate in L2 Questionnaire, Perceived Competence Questionnaire, Communication Apprehension Scale, Preoccupation, Hesitation, and Volatility Scales were given to four hundred and fourteen English students. Structural Equation Modeling was utilized to analyze the data and test the hypothesized model. Findings indicated that volatility, an AC variable, coupled with perceived competence and communication apprehension are significant predictors of students' WTC. Results also suggested that hesitation and preoccupation predict WTC indirectly. Findings are used to maintain that Kuhl's AC theory can help with explaining WTC with reference to a new argument, i.e. state and action orientation. The paper ends with pedagogical suggestions.

**Keywords:** willingness to communicate, perceived competence, communication apprehension, preoccupation, hesitation, volatility

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## Introduction

Almost three decades ago, Macintyre et al. (1998, p. 547) defined willingness to communicate (WTC) as “readiness to enter into a discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2”. The ending part of their definition, i.e. *using a L2*, clearly shows how WTC relates to language education as learners with higher WTC levels use L2 more for communication purposes which, in turn, leads to more successful language learning. That some language learners are willing and others unwilling to communicate has attracted the interest of different researchers. In other words, researchers in language pedagogy and psychology have conducted studies in attempts to explain variables directly or indirectly affecting L2 learners’ tendency or willingness, or lack thereof, to initiate communication. Why do some learners seek opportunities to use L2 voluntarily—be it in the classroom or outside it—whilst others prefer to keep silent? One potential explanation is to do with students’ *action control*.

Kuhl (1994) proposed Action Control Theory (ACT) to explain the process of beginning an action including L2 communication. His account of action initiation, maintenance, and completion consists of three basic concepts: hesitation, preoccupation, and volatility. We use an example to explain the terms and how they relate to WTC in a L2. A teacher asks a question and all her/his students are permitted to raise hands and answer. Hesitation acts in the form of a student’s decision to raise his/her hand to speak followed by an inability to translate the decision into action. In other words, the student vacillates between his/her current behavior (silence) and the decision to initiate a new action (L2 use in the form of answering the question). Preoccupation might affect students’ WTC when they are obsessed with the likely unfavorable consequences of initiating an action (raising hand and L2 use) due to unpleasant experiences of similar tasks done in the past. Finally, volatility might exert a negative effect on a student’s WTC if s/he initiates the action but fails to keep focused and complete the task. More specifically, s/he does not have enough persistence and perseverance. Jamarillo et al. (2007) succinctly summarize Kuhl’s (1994) ACT as the (in)ability to initiate an action or a task (hesitation), keep focused on it (preoccupation) and proceed persistently to finish it (volatility).

Dörnyei (2005) uses ACT to account for motivation and individual differences in L2 learning and notes that since L2 learners’ decisions to do a learning task is followed by either success or failure, students with high levels of hesitation, preoccupation, and volatility will be less motivated to initiate it. As far as WTC is concerned, even if equal opportunities for L2 communication are provided and almost all students signing up for a conversation course intend to learn to use L2 for communication, “there is an unfortunate tendency for people in general, and language learners in particular, to fail to act on their intentions” since AC variables are likely to intervene. Kuhl’s AC then provides an alternative basis to explain the motivation or tendency to communicate in L2. Additionally, researchers (e.g. Piechurska-Kuciel, 2021) believe that since AC variables play a role in at least one of the non-linguistic outcomes (e.g. perceived competence & communication

anxiety), it makes sense to investigate how such variables relate to each other in a single model.

In addition to Kuhl's (1994) three variables underpinning his ACT, there are other variables two of which are of prime significance in terms of predicting L2 WTC: students' perceived competence and their anxiety level or communication apprehension (de Saint Léger & Storch, 2009). In fact, in earlier approaches to WTC it was held that the higher students' perceived competence and the lower their anxiety level, the higher their WTC in L2. Macintyre and Doucette (2010) studied action control variables (volatility, hesitation, and preoccupation) in relation to perceived competence and communication apprehension and how the variables collectively relate to L2 WTC and proposed a model in which several interesting relationships were found. Briefly, their findings suggested that ACT has the potential to explain WTC in ESL (English as a Second Language) contexts where students' tendency to communicate is prone to be affected by features associated with such settings (e.g. opportunities to use English outside the class). Additionally, the frequently studied variables relating to WTC, i.e. perceived competence and communication anxiety, were found to be related to AC components.

Motivated by their study, the current study aims at investigating if Kuhl's (1994) three AC variables and WTC antecedents (perceived competence and communication apprehension) predict Iranian EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners' WTC. Our study draws upon Macintyre and Doucette's (2010) research in that our hypothesized model and the relationship between variables are inspired by their findings. It is, however, different in two key respects. First, we exclude *WTC outside the classroom* from the model because of the particular context to which Iranian EFL learners belong. More specifically, unlike ESL contexts where opportunities to communicate via English for daily social activities abound, it is the so-called *dumb English* that prevails in Iran and the extent English is used for communicative purposes outside classrooms is admittedly restricted. Second, they used path analysis whereas we employ Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with the concomitant advantage of moving beyond reporting relationships between the variables; we discuss the predictive power of the variables on WTC and, more importantly, explain how much of Iranian students' WTC is accounted for by which variables thanks to the inherent potential in SEM in general. The study is significant from another perspective. Iranian EFL students' WTC is accounted for with reference to state and action orientation framework inherent in ACT. This takes us to the latest arguments in studies on self-regulation and what teachers can do with students falling on somewhere in state-action continuum.

In the following section, we review studies on WTC in L2 in general to pave the ground for the current study. Next, information pertaining to research methodology is presented. Finally, findings are given and discussed followed by a section on conclusion.

### **Literature Review**

Earlier studies on WTC focused on L1 communication and followed personality psychology to explain individual differences in initiation of verbal

communication. This era is characterized by studies reporting correlations between WTC and an array of personality traits such as introversion (Macintyre, 1994), shyness (Teven et al., 2010), self-esteem (McCroskey & Richmond, 1991), and so forth. Below a review of research on WTC in L2 is given. The review starts with studies pertaining to L2 WTC in general and moves to those addressing variables similar to ours (perceived competence, communication apprehension, and action control variables).

Macintyre et al. (2003) examined the relationship between WTC in L2, age, and gender. They reported that, compared to males, female L2 learners are more willing to communicate and that, with age, the level of WTC increases for the former but decreases for the latter. In two similar studies, Peng (2007) and Hashimoto (2002) investigated the relationship between L2 WTC and motivation and concluded that integrative motivation and L2 WTC are highly correlated. Similar results have been reported with Iranian students (Ghonsooly et al., 2012). L2 WTC has been reported to be related to or affected by a host of other factors such as quality and frequency of L2 contact (Clément et al., 2003), the topic under discussion, interlocutors, and the context of conversation (Kang, 2005), group size, familiarity with interlocutors, and interlocutors' participation (Cao & Philp, 2006), and the topic, the planning time, cooperation and familiarity with the interlocutor, the opportunity to express one's opinions, and the mastery of requisite lexis (Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2018).

More relevant to this study are research investigations addressing the relationship between WTC in L2, communication apprehension (L2 communication anxiety), and perceived communication competence. Perceived competence and communication apprehension are probably the most frequently studied variables relating to WTC. Generally speaking, "perceived competence of a L2 learner entails his or her self-assessment" (Baran-Lucarz, 2021) and for McCroskey and McCroskey (1988), it is regarded as "self-perception of adequate ability to pass along or give information; the ability to make known by talking or writing" (p. 109). The second concept is "connected with anxiety stemming from real or anticipated communication with other people" (Piechurska-Kuciel, 2021).

Numerous studies suggest that higher levels of perceived competence and lower levels of anxiety are positively connected to L2 WTC (Halupka-Rešetár et al., 2018; Fushino, 2010). Macintyre and Charos (1996), for example, conducted a study to find out if WTC in L2 is related to variables relating to WTC in L1 and concluded that anxiety, perceived competence, and WTC in L2 are correlated; lower levels of the first and higher levels of the second predicted the third. Yashima (2002) investigated the relationship between Japanese students' WTC in English and their self-perceived communication confidence. She, of course, conceived lack of anxiety in L2 communication and perceived communicative competence in L2 as one overarching factor and called it self-perceived communication confidence. Her results indicated that it strongly predicts Japanese students' WTC in English. Hashimoto (2002) did another study on Japanese learners and concluded that their perceived competence in English predicts their L2 WTC strongly. In a similar study, Peng and Woodrow (2010) reported similar results with Chinese EFL learners. That

communication competence and communication apprehension are strong predictors of L2 WTC has been reported in Turkey (Öz et. al., 2015) and Iran (Amirian et al., 2020; Shirvan et al., 2019) too. For Piechurska-Kuciel (2021), anxiety might have *disastrous effects* on L2 WTC in real as well as anticipated cases of L2 communication and should be addressed by teachers and students.

Even more pertinent to our study is that of Macintyre and Doucette (2010) who included in their investigation not only perceived competence and communication apprehension but also the three variables (hesitation, preoccupation, volatility) underpinning action control. Hesitation “involves the inability to translate decisions into action” which, in turn, negatively relates to WTC. Hesitant learners vacillate between keeping on with what they do (e.g. an L2 task) and deciding to begin a new one. Preoccupation is the “tendency for intrusive and enduring thoughts to flood a person’s mind after a failure”; prior unpleasant experiences in L2 communication are likely to negatively relate to WTC. Finally, volatility is the “tendency to abandon an ongoing task in favor of another, alternative task” (Macintyre & Doucette, 2010, p.164). Volatile learners lack persistence and, as a result, are expected to be less willing to communicate.

To empirically check such assumptions, Macintyre and Doucette (2010) studied the relationships of these three variables with L2 WTC and suggested that AC variables correlated as expected. In other words, they found a negative path between volatility and WTC; they also reported that hesitation increases communication anxiety and decreases perceived competence which result in lower WTC levels among French-as-a-second-language learners in Canada. They also found a negative correlation between communication anxiety and perceived competence both of which related to WTC in anticipated fashion: the first negatively and the second positively related to WTC.

Despite the fact that ACT is believed to have the potential to account for L2 WTC, no research study has addressed the issue with Iranian EFL learners. This study is an attempt to address such a gap. The gaps this study intends to fill are three. First, how AC variables, hesitation, preoccupation, and volatility relate to Iranian EFL learners’ WTC has not been investigated. We believe studies focusing on AC variables are important and deserve exploration since not only the variables have “strong potential to account for motivation underlying the language learning processes” (Macintyre & Blackie, 2012, p.534) but also they can help us understand why some Iranian students seldom speak English and avoid communication. Few studies, if any, turn to explain Iranian EFL students’ (un)willingness in English communication with reference to the continuum of state vs. action orientation as postulated in the ACT. What adds more significance to the study is the attribution mechanism of Iranian teachers with regard to reticent students in their classes: they have a negative view of such students and attribute their habitual silence to learner-internal causes about which teachers can do nothing (Allahyar, 2021) while this is not necessarily true as we discuss later. Second, most local studies addressing the other two variables of L2 WTC (perceived competence & communication apprehension) use correlation or regression analyses and provide us with what such studies are intended for, i.e. relationships. As noted above, this study is expected to

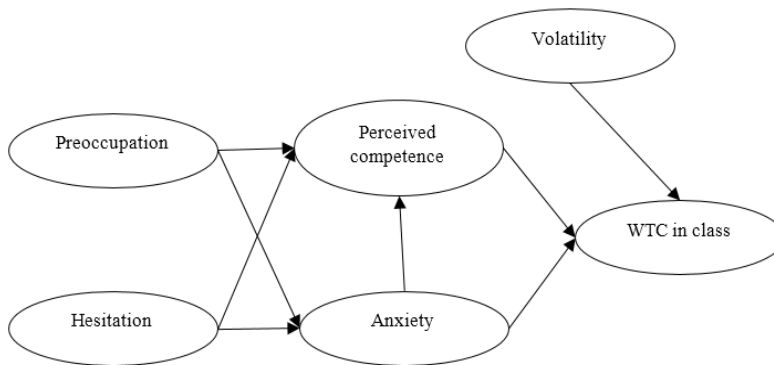
yield a more statistically robust picture of the variables that provides us with predictive value of such variables as intended and explained above. Third, and perhaps more importantly, the two frequently reported WTC antecedents studied by several Iranian researchers are set next to AC variables which is significant as WTC in L2 interacts complexly with such traits. More specifically, the current study helps us understand the nature of classic WTC antecedents, i.e. perceived competence and L2 anxiety, more by investigating how and to what extent such high-evidence predictors of L2 communication are accounted by or related to AC variables. The literature on perceived competence and L2 anxiety as factors relating to and predicting L2 WTC is rich; what we know little is how to account for the factors themselves. We believe one promising avenue of research to account for such relationships is using Kuhl's (1994) ACT as the framework. Our argument is supported by Macintyre and Blackie (2012) who hold that ACT has the potential to deepen our understanding of non-linguistic outcomes (e.g. L2 WTC) as well as language learning in general. Casting light on intricate relationships between and among the five variables and how they, taken together, account for L2 WTC can reveal more with regard to the question raised above: why some Iranian learners seize opportunities to speak English in class whilst others choose to remain habitually reticent.

## Method

### Research Design

This is a correlational study in which SEM was employed. Based on Macintyre and Doucette's (2010) findings (discussed above), we developed the following hypothesized model (Figure 1) to be tested with Iranian EFL learners.

**Figure 1**  
*Hypothesized Base Model*



### Participants

Four hundred eighty-seven students participated in the study but data coming from four hundred fourteen students (178 male & 236 female) were considered for analysis. Their average age was 21 years old and their majors

included Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Translation Studies, and English Literature. They were BA level students from different universities (state, Azad, and Payame-Noor universities) in Tehran, East Azerbaijan, West Azerbaijan, Zanjan, Isfahan, and Fars.

### **Materials and Instruments**

We used six instruments to collect data. A brief account of each is given. As regards the psychometric properties of the scales, Cronbach's alpha was used as a measure of reliability for all instruments. To establish validity, the criterion of 'thoroughly researched' (Barry et al, 2014) was employed to make sure the scales are content and construct valid. More specifically, we used instruments known to include items representing the full domain of the content we intended to measure and, at the same time, documented to appropriately measure the underlying trait of focus. Thoroughly researched instruments help with addressing such issues. The only threat is concerned with external validity of the study as randomization was not feasible.

#### ***WTC in L2 Questionnaire***

Macintyre et al.'s (2001) questionnaire has 27 items to assess the percentage of time a respondent shows tendency to communicate inside the classroom. Each scale comprises 27, 5-point Likert-type items ranging from 1 (almost never willing) to 5 (almost always willing). WTC inside the classroom questionnaire assesses WTC through reading, writing, listening, and speaking within the classroom context. The scale provides information on WTC pertaining to four communication situations, three interlocutor types (strangers, acquaintances and friends), and total WTC. Its internal consistency coefficient was .78.

***Perceived Competence Questionnaire.*** McCroskey and McCroskey's (1988) questionnaire comprising twelve items was used. The internal consistency coefficient was .71

***Communication Apprehension Scale.*** The classic, yet widely used scale of Horwitz et al. (1986) was employed to measure communication apprehension. Its internal consistency coefficient was .82.

***Action Control Scale.*** Kuhl's (1994) action control scale was used. It consists of 36 dichotomous, forced-choice items, which describe a particular situation. The internal consistency coefficient was .76. The items were presented in mixed random order. The subscales are preoccupation, hesitation, and volatility.

As for preoccupation subscale, the 12 items in this subscale describe situations in which thoughts pertaining to unpleasant experiences interfere with one's behavior-changing ability. The internal consistency coefficient was .76.

Regarding hesitation subscale, the 12 items in this subscale describe challenges and difficulties associated with initiating an intended activity. The internal consistency coefficient was .84.

Finally, as regards volatility subscale, the 12 items in this subscale describe one's ability to keep on activities without a sudden shift to alternative activities. The internal consistency coefficient was .88.



## Procedure

Data were collected in 2020 and it took almost seven weeks. Participants were given the questionnaires with some pre-explanations concerning what to do and a general account of research goal. Several arrangements were made with colleagues in six provinces to include a relatively large number of English majors so that we can employ SEM. Each data collection session took approximately 40 to 50 minutes.

## Data Analysis

Before running SEM, the necessary underlying assumptions including screening of data, missing values, multivariate regression, and multi-linearity were checked. SEM went through five stages of model specification, model identification, model estimation, model modification and model evaluation. Then, the overall model was developed.

## Results

### *Descriptive Indices*

Table one gives the mean and standard deviation (SD) of the research variables.

**Table 1**

*Mean and SD of the Variables*

Variables	Mean	SD
Preoccupation	1.1	.52
Hesitation	1.05	.49
Volatility	1.32	.63
Perceived competence	50.1	16.2
Communication apprehension	3.31	1.1
WTC	3.1	1.13

*Note:* WTC = Willingness to Communicate

### *Correlation Matrix of Variables*

Table 2 gives the correlation matrix between the variables. Significant positive correlations were found between preoccupation and perceived competence ( $r = 0.25$ ), hesitation and communication apprehension ( $r = 0.45$ ), and perceived competence and WTC ( $r = 0.60$ ). Negatively significant correlations were observed between preoccupation and communication apprehension ( $r = 0.19$ ), hesitation and perceived competence ( $r = 0.39$ ), volatility and WTC ( $r = 0.21$ ), perceived competence and communication apprehension ( $r = 0.53$ ), and communication apprehension and WTC ( $r = 0.35$ ).



**Table 2**  
*Correlation Matrix of Research Variables*

	Preoccupation	Hesitation	Volatility	PC	CA	WTC
Preoccupation	1					
Hesitation	0.05	1				
Volatility	-0.08	0.05	1			
PC	0.25**	-0.39**	0.04	1		
CA (anxiety)	-0.19*	0.45**	0.05	-0.53**	1	
WTC	0.1	0.08	-0.21*	0.60**	-0.35**	1

Note. PC = Perceived competence; CA = Communication apprehension; WTC = willingness to communicate

\* = significant at level 0.05, \*\* = significant at level 0.01

**Model Evaluation**

Examination of the relationships between action control variables, perceived competence, communication apprehension, and L2 WTC gave the following model (Figure 2).

**Figure 2**

*Model of Relationships Between WTC, Perceived Competence, Anxiety, Preoccupation, Hesitation, and Volatility*

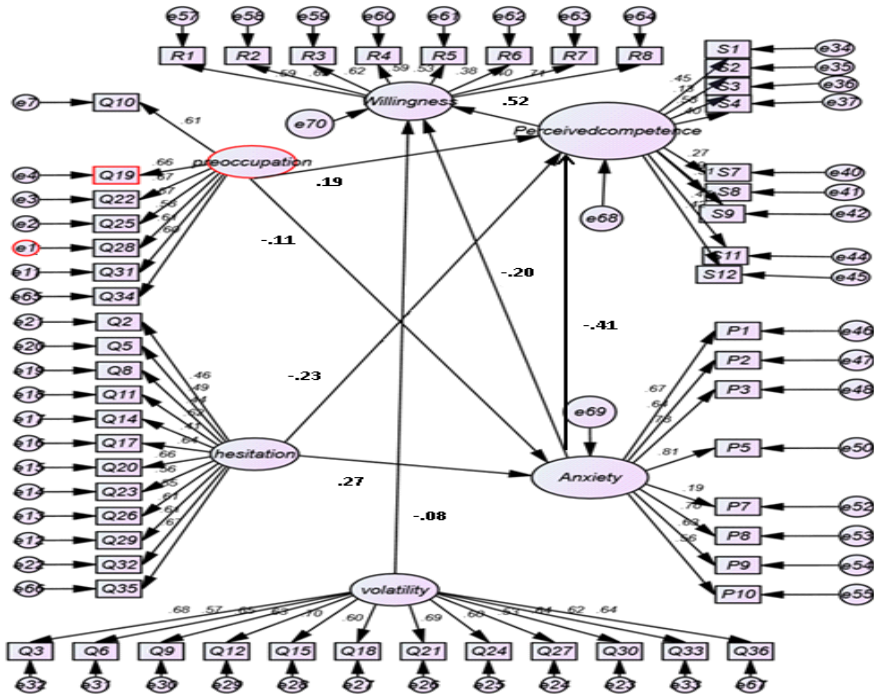


Figure 2 shows that there are *three* directional arrows to the endogenous variable (WTC); volatility and anxiety (communication apprehension) directly, negatively and *significantly predict* the participants' WTC in English whereas the significant relationship of perceived competence on the endogenous variable is positive. As volatility and anxiety increase, WTC in English decreases and WTC in English increases as does students' perceived competence. Statistically speaking, the first two variables have a significantly negative predictive power on L2 WTC ( $\beta = 0.08$  &  $\beta = 0.20$ , respectively) whilst the third, i.e. perceived competence, has a significant positive impact on it ( $\beta = 0.52$ ).

The other two components of action control, i.e. hesitation and preoccupation, predict L2 WTC indirectly. More precisely, hesitation has a positive significant loading on anxiety ( $\beta = 0.27$ ) and a negative one on perceived competence ( $\beta = 0.23$ ) both of which show significant loading over WTC. More hesitation results in more anxiety and less of perceived competence which, in turn, has an adverse predictive power on L2 WTC. As far as preoccupation—one of the exogenous variables—and its relationships are concerned, it negatively predicts anxiety ( $\beta = 0.11$ ) and positively perceived competence ( $\beta = 0.19$ ) and these two, in turn, predict the participants' WTC in English. This is surprising as we expected obsessions with unsuccessful past experiences to increase anxiety and negatively relate to our participants' estimations of their English competence. Potential explanations are given when discussing findings.

Regarding our research focus addressing how Iranian EFL students' perceived competence, communication apprehension (L2 anxiety), and the three ACT variables (preoccupation, hesitation, and volatility) predict their WTC in English, it can be briefly stated that three variables (perceived competence, communication apprehension, and volatility) directly and the other two (hesitation and preoccupation) indirectly predict their WTC in English.

Table 3 shows fit indices of the SEM before and after modifying the model. The results of fit indices which include chi-square ( $X^2$ ), chi-square on degree of freedom ( $df/x^2$ ), comparative fit index (CFI), goodness of fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) are 173.71, 2.41, 0.93, 0.85, 0.90, and 0.09 respectively. In this study, the numerical value of the fit indices for the modified model shows that the assumed pattern needs modification.

**Table 3**

*Fit Indices of the Structural Equation Model*

	$X^2$	df	$X^2/df$	GFI	AGFI	CFI	RMSEA
<b>Before modifying the model</b>	173.71	72	2.41	0.90	0.85	0.93	0.09
<b>After modifying the model</b>	139.07	71	1.95	0.94	0.90	0.97	0.05

*Note.* df = degree of freedom; GFI = goodness-of-fit index; AGFI = adjusted goodness-of-fit index; CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation

According to Hu and Bentler (1999), a cut off value close to 0.95 for CFI, and 0.06 for RMSEA and  $> 2$  for chi-square index on freedom degree and a cutoff value less than 0.90 of AGFI are needed before concluding that there is a relatively good fit between the hypothesized model and the observed data. Therefore, the values of fit indices in our study demonstrate the necessity of modifying a given model to help improve its fit with the observed data. The amount of chi-square ( $X^2$ ), chi-square on freedom degree ( $X^2/df$ ), comparative fit index (CFI), goodness fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness fit index (AGFI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) are 139.07, 1.95, 0.97, 0.94, 0.90, and 0.05, respectively. The numerical values of fit indices for modified model show that the hypothesized model is acceptable.

Table 4 shows the proportion of total variance ( $R^2$ ) in the criterion variable (WTC in English) accounted for by its predictors. Volatility, perceived competence, and communication apprehension, taken together, explain 39% of the endogenous variable. The results show that 20% of communication apprehension (L2 anxiety) is accounted for by hesitation and preoccupation. And, finally, hesitation, preoccupation, and communication apprehension explain 33% of perceived competence.

**Table 4**

*The Amount of Variance Explained by Latent Variables in the General Model*

Predicative Variables	Predicted variables	$R^2$
Hesitation, Preoccupation	CA	.20
Hesitation, Preoccupation, CA	PC	.33
Volatility, PC, CA	WTC	.39

*Note.* PC = perceived competence, CA = communication apprehension

## Discussion

Overall, our findings suggest that Iranian students' WTC is most strongly and directly predicted by their perceived competence, first, and communication apprehension, second. Also, one of Kuhl's (1994) AC variables, volatility, predicts their WTC directly and negatively and the other two, hesitation and preoccupation, predict it indirectly. Findings contribute to our understanding of WTC among Iranian students by, first, revealing the intra-variable relationships between what used to be called the two strongest predictors of L2 WTC in general (perceived competence and communication apprehension becoming mediating variables in Figure 2), and, second, disclosing their individual and joint predictive value on Iranian English students' WTC. The third contribution is the fact that their L2 WTC can be explained not only by two commonly reported variables but also three variables underpinning Kuhl's ACT; they turn to exogenous variables predicting their WTC directly and indirectly.

Before discussing our findings, two points seem to be in order. The three variables directly predicting the endogenous variable (WTC) account for about 40 percent of the participants' WTC in English (Table 4). Given the large number of factors relating to L2 WTC, this amount of variation is considerable and carries theoretical and pedagogical implications that are raised in Conclusion Section below. Second, Table 4 is revealing from yet another perspective: it indicates where from variation pertaining to perceived competence and communication apprehension—two key factors relating to L2 WTC in literature—comes and how much of it is accounted for by which variables. We discuss our findings in two general parts: variables predicting Iranian students' WTC directly and those doing so indirectly.

### **Perceived Competence and Communication Apprehension**

Perceived competence seems to have the maximum direct and positive loading on Iranian students' WTC. This, according to Öz et al. (2015), is *not the objectively measured but self-reported perceived competence*. The implication is that even perceptions of Iranian students concerning how competent they think they are in English best predicts the final step to initiation of communication: WTC (Macintyre, 2007). Those perceiving their English competence higher are more likely to be willing to communicate the ultimate result of which is more interaction and learning. This is in keeping with prior studies (Liu & Jackson, 2008; Donovan & Macintyre, 2004; Macintyre & Legatto, 2011) in which different learners with the feeling that they have the capacity to communicate are reported to be more willing to communicate.

To help Iranian students feel more capable of communicating, hence gain higher levels of perceived competence, teachers can play a role. Macintyre and Wang (2021), for instance, believe that teachers can create conditions in which learners invest emotionally and overcome uncertainty in their ability to communicate. This suggestion takes us to the large negative contribution of communication apprehension (anxiety) to perceived competence (Figure 2). In simple terms, lowering Iranian students' anxiety—be it by teachers' assistance as Macintyre and Wang (2021) and Zarei et al. (2019) suggest or students' self-regulated strategies—can enhance their perceived competence which, in turn, predicts their WTC positively and directly. It is interesting to note that communication apprehension predicts WTC both indirectly and directly; they, i.e. anxiety and WTC, make up the hub of the model. As Figure two suggests heightened language anxiety negatively and indirectly predicts Iranian students' WTC by contributing to their self-perceived competence—as mentioned above—and, negatively but directly as well. This replicates prior studies (e.g. Macintyre, 2007; Kang, 2005) and suggests that as Iranian English learners' anxiety arouses their self-perceived competence declines, so does their WTC level. Given the large negative role of communication apprehension in, and the marked positive loading of perceived competence on L2 WTC, it is safe to argue that McCroskey and Richmond's (1991) three-decade old contention that perceived communicative competence and communication apprehension are *the strongest predictors of WTC*

holds true with Iranian English learners too. This runs counter to Joe et al.'s (2017) study in which WTC was weakly predicted by perceived competence.

Such arguments, however, need to be viewed through a more interpretative lens. First, since perceived competence and lack of anxiety are subsumed under the general category of self-confidence and as self-confidence *in L2 use* is culture sensitive (Zhang et al., 2018), some cultures are more likely to overestimate their skills in the second language and others are more prone to underestimate them. Similarly, Lockley (2013) and Mercer (2011) maintain that self-evaluation, a more inclusive term encompassing one's assessment of his/her L2 competence, is shaped by students' culture and how they have been brought up. Culture dependency of the variables suggests that it remains to be seen if our participants' perceived competence—admittedly tied to notions such as self-confidence and self-evaluation—is prone to such culturally informed over- or underestimations. Of few studies addressing the issue is Liu and Littlewood's (1997) study with 2156 East Asian students who are reported to lack confidence in their English competence resulting in underrating their perceived L2 competence which, in turn, leads to more silence in English classes. Peng (2014) also reported that Chinese students' lower levels of L2 WTC is partially attributable to the Chinese culture which "may predispose individuals not to be assertive" (p. 31). Whether Iranian English learners are similar to or different from East Asian or Chinese students needs further studies. In addition to culture dependency, prior studies suggest that personality factors might also lead to over- and underestimation of perceived competence. For example, Kemper et al. (2008) report that extrovert students tend to measure their competence more optimistically. Finally, with fluctuations in students' English proficiency, their perceptions of their competence are also prone to change (Alemi et al, 2013). Therefore, learners' perceptions of how much competent they are in English should be considered vis-à-vis such factors.

Second, the context of our study is classically described as foreign; Iranian students have limited opportunities to use English for authentic interactions beyond classroom boundaries. Research suggests when English learners find that native speakers are not as critical of their attempts as learners think they are or, more pertinent to this study, when their contacts with other non-native learners show them that the latter group encounters similar challenges, their anxiety lowers and their eagerness to initiate communication and take risks rises (Baran-Lucarz, 2021). The large negative loading—direct and indirect—of Iranian students' anxiety on their WTC in this study needs to be viewed vis-à-vis their limited contact opportunities even with other English learners. More precisely, they don't have the opportunity to take advantage of *feeling to be in the same boat* and, consequently, gain courage to communicate. This argument is supported by findings in other foreign contexts where such opportunities exist; English learners feel less anxious and show more inclination to communicate in L2 when they learn that similar learners in similar contexts make similar mistakes (Lee, 2018).

### **Volatility**

Volatile learners are unable to stay focused on self-initiated activities and do not "continue with the task until it has been completed" (Macintyre & Doucette,

2010, p.163). The tendency to leave communication tasks uncompleted is argued to lower WTC in the long run. In Figure 2, the negative direct path from volatility to WTC suggests that the tendency to abandon ongoing communication tasks negatively predicts Iranian English learners' WTC in class. This accords to the findings of Macintyre and Duocette (2010) with French learners in Canada. In WTC literature learners tending to oscillate between communication task *one* to *two* without following the first through to completion are typically described as state-oriented individuals. Such learners shift from one self-initiated communication task, even if it is pleasant, to another "simply to satisfy a desire for change" (Macintyre & Duocette, 2010, p.163). It makes sense to expect that such fluctuations have an adverse effect on Iranian students' WTC since leaving communication tasks uncompleted lowers their chances of goal attainment and positive feelings following it. Such learners keep swinging from one task to another and, in the long run, end up with piles of abandoned tasks with feelings of no accomplishment revolving around them. Subsequently, they are more likely to be unwilling to communicate particularly in classroom contexts. The above argument is advocated by features associated with the action-oriented pole of volatility: persistence. Persistent L2 learners keep on with the communication tasks until they are completed. According to Macintyre and Duocette (2010), action-oriented persistent L2 learners "are more willing to speak in classroom-style communication activities" (p. 167).

Although Macintyre and Duocette (2010) maintain that volatile learners shift from one task to another just to satisfy their desires for change, we propose that another potential cause for their oscillation might lie in the *challenge load* of initiating communication in L2 particularly in EFL settings. This is supported by Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Pawlak's (2017) argument that L2 communication is a challenging task in general. As a result, a competing explanation for such learners' wavering behavior pertaining to L2 WTC might be the fact that they, unlike action-oriented learners, swing from a given communication task to another once they encounter the challenge inherent in it.

Volatility is an isolated factor in Figure 2 and is not linked to other antecedents of L2 WTC. But when taken to broader psychological notions such as state- and action-oriented individuals and how state- and action-oriented individuals cope with learning in general, its role becomes more apparent. For instance, rooted in literature, one might argue that the role of volatility is not limited to Iranian students' WTC only as volatile individuals, aligned with state-orientation, are likely to be less self-regulatory in goal striving, have lower levels of autonomous motivation (Shi et al., 2018), and struggle to enact (Koole et al., 2012).

## Hesitation

Hesitation predicts our participants' WTC indirectly and negatively; it significantly predicts our participants' anxiety level which, in turn, has an adverse loading on their WTC. Indirect negative predictive power of hesitation on our participants' WTC is further observed in its negative contribution to perceived competence. In other words, hesitations lower the levels of perceived competence and as the latter lowers, so does L2 WTC. Our findings are consistent with those of

Macintyre and Doucette (2010). The combined contributions of hesitation on Iranian EFL learners' WTC, though indirectly, give further credence to Macintyre and Blackie's (2012) contention that hesitation is one of the key elements in explaining English learners' unwillingness to communicate. Given that in Kuhl's (1994) ACT hesitation is deemed as the action initiator preceding the final step of communication initiation, and regarding the intensity of loadings hesitation has on anxiety and perceived competence, our findings bear significant explanatory potential with regard to one of the common concerns and complaints of English teachers in Iran: a good number of students are habitually silent. Their habitual silence is, to a considerable extent, attributable to their *inability to translate their decisions into actions*. As students choosing to major in EFL in Iranian universities, they have presumably decided to learn English and communicate more efficiently in it; however, upon joining communication classes or any speaking-oriented activities, they cannot turn their decisions into actions. The cause for this inability, according to Friederichs et al. (2020), is rooted in hesitant individuals' being state-oriented in trait. State-oriented individuals are "more likely to get stuck in hesitation" (ibid: 2).

The above argument is further supported by Yashima et al.'s (2004) study in which they report that hesitation after making decisions negatively affects Japanese adult students who decide to travel to the US and join American host families to learn to speak English in context for authentic purposes. Despite their initial decisions followed by undertaking the journey, a good number of them could not move into action and had lower levels of WTC. Similar to Friederichs et al. (2020), they turn to action-state continuum to explain findings of Yashima et al.'s (2004). We also believe that our hesitant participants are inclined to the state end of the same continuum and have issues "initiating their intended actions" (Friederichs et al., 2020, p. 2). This, in turn, results in higher anxiety levels and lower perceptions of communication competence, as depicted in Figure 2. This process operates cyclically: some learners hesitate to speak English when it is necessary (e.g. in Iranian EFL settings). As hesitation experiences increase, the same students are more likely to feel anxious leading to keep silent. Keeping silent means their experiences of L2 communication become less and less which bring about feelings of incompetency in English.

### **Preoccupation**

Contrary to our expectation, preoccupation positively predicts the participants' perceptions of communication and negatively predicts their anxiety levels. As the "the tendency for intrusive and enduring thoughts to flood a person's mind after a failure" (Macintyre & Doucette, 2010, p. 164), we expected preoccupation to have a negative loading on perceived competence and a positive one on anxiety since obsession with prior failures in communication tasks or any negative past experiences is expected to increase anxiety and adversely relate to EFL learners' perceptions of competence.

One way to explain this is to refer to the argument Baker and Macintyre (2000) raise concerning the positive and contributory role of negative past experiences in students' language learning process. They found that some students



view such unpleasant and failure-associated experiences as opportunities to learn: such experiences motivate them and make them determined to get involved in more communication activities. It seems, then, prior unsuccessful communication attempts can be productive as learners become motivated to invest more, show tendency to engage in L2 communication activities and, hence feel more competent to communicate. They use *learned lessons* from past failures upon encountering new communication challenges. This interpretation is backed further by Macintyre and Doucette (2010) who propose that students' previous encounters with communication situations decrease their preoccupation levels and result in higher self-evaluation of L2 competence. In other words, it is likely that the items addressing our participants' rumination over negative past communication endeavors are familiar communication contexts they have encountered before and, subsequently, feel more competent the second time around.

Similar arguments can be made with regard to the path from preoccupation to anxiety. While prior communication failures might be theoretically regarded as an anxiety-breeding factor, it is also likely that students' unsuccessful past experiences might bring them a sense of *L2 learning nonchalance* and make them feel *immune to* what initially used to induce communication anxiety. In other words, we speculate that upon facing an L2 communicative task our participants use prior unpleasant communication experiences as an armor helping them feel less anxious since the novelty of such an anxiety-provoking task has worn off in time; they do not feel intimidated any more. We, of course, admit that interview or think-aloud data are needed to learn if such a speculation is tenable.

### Conclusion

Dörnyei (2005) once likened L2 learners' decisions to initiate L2 communication to Crossing the Rubicon as such decisions are likely to be followed by failure or success. A large number of trait and state factors are believed to relate to L2 learners' decisions to initiate conversation in a second language. Given the multitude of such factors, it is almost impossible to include all in a single study (Henry et al., 2021). In this study, we chose to focus on enduring and stable features of L2 WTC and how they relate to Kuhl's (1994) ACT, acknowledging, at the same time, its "multilayered nature as well as its variability over time and across situations" (Nematizadeh & Wood, 2021).

Drawing upon the findings, we believe the three components of Kuhl's (1994) ACT, i.e. hesitation, volatility, and preoccupation, carry explanatory potential with regard to Iranian EFL students' (un)willingness to communicate in classroom settings. Of course, their explanatory power should be seen along with two commonly factors, i.e. perceived competence and communication apprehension, relating to L2 WTC. Three direct loadings from perceived competence, communication apprehension (anxiety), and volatility to L2 WTC and indirect loadings of hesitation and preoccupation on it bear theoretical and pedagogical conclusions.

Theoretically, and given the sizeable contributions of perceived competence and anxiety to Iranian EFL learners' L2 WTC, it is concluded that they



seem unrivaled in predicting “the intention to speak or to remain silent given free choice” (Macintyre, 2020). As regards Kuhl’s (1994) ACT and its three constituent components, his general observation that individuals differ in their processes of action initiation (speaking English in Iranian classes in this study) and that such processes should be seen in light of decision making, the ability to translate decisions into actions, prior unpleasant experiences, and (in)ability to keep focused explains WTC among Iranian EFL learners more comprehensively. In other words, if prior studies reported correlations between L2 WTC and perceived competence or communication apprehension among Iranian students, Kuhl’s ACT casts more light as it reveals that such important variables themselves are predicted by hesitation and preoccupation, though the prediction was different from what ACT suggested for the latter. Following this unexpected finding (preoccupation lowers anxiety and boosts feelings of communicative competence among Iranian EFL students), we tentatively propose that unpleasant communication experiences might motivate students become determined to invest more in L2 communication. This proposal accords with Friederichs et al.’s (2020, p.1) “when tough gets you going” postulation.

Pedagogically, Iranian English teachers can turn to different strategies to help with higher levels of L2 WTC with students who are habitually silent in class. For instance, to lower anxiety, hence increase WTC and perceived competence levels, it has been suggested that group work activities, wait time, and appropriate use of error correction are helpful (Zarei et al., 2019). Similarly, Cao (2011) and Sheybani (2019) hold that positive interpersonal interactions between teachers and students can be equally facilitative. Uncertainty in L2 ability can be addressed if teachers create affordable communication tasks that gradually lead to higher levels of perceived competence and, accordingly, L2 WTC (Altiner, 2017). Finally, Kang (2005) recommends teachers to design plans to deal with their students’ volatility and hesitation tendencies. One such plan is to turn to Parks-Stamm et al.’s (2007) implementation intentions or the so-called *if-then* plans. In such plans, students “identify situational cues that provide them with the opportunity to communicate in their second language and might also be able to identify their hesitations” (p. 169).

Studies focusing on state factors of WTC are valuable but make up one side of the coin only. Further studies are needed to help us understand the intricate, moment-to-moment, and dynamic fluctuations of L2 WTC among Iranian EFL students. Such studies constitute the other side of WTC coin.

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## **Investigating the Effect of Strategic Planning on Upper-Intermediate EFL Learners' Lexical Complexity of Descriptive and Argumentative Writings: Cognitive Theory Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

Considering the overwhelming nature of Pre-Task Planning (PTP) in writing for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, the present study aimed to investigate the effect of a factor of PTP called Strategic Planning (SP) on lexical complexity of Iranian EFL learners. The data collection procedure in this mixed-method research, which took 5 weeks, utilized the Oxford Quick Placement test (OQPT) to separate the sample of upper-intermediate learners. Following OQPT, the participants with a high working memory capacity (WMC), measured by the Operation Span Test (OST), were selected as the members of the final sample. They were categorized into three SP groups: form-focused (FF), content-focused (CF), and no planning (NP). After administering the pre-tests of descriptive and argumentative tasks, each group received a different form of SP guidance, either FF or CF, in two different writing tasks for 4 sessions, whereas the NP group acted as the control group without any intervention. Then the post-tests were run in all three groups. The lexical sophistication of the post-tests was analyzed using the CELEX data center on the Coh-Metrix website. Based on ANOVA tests, FF instruction led to better and highly sophisticated writings in terms of lexis in both descriptive and argumentative tasks. The results can be helpful for syllabus designers, educators, and EFL learners to consider the type of SP in the PTP stage according to the WMC, in the case of different task types.

*Keywords:* strategic planning, working memory, lexical complexity

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## **Introduction**

In learning a foreign language, the prominent role of writing must not be ignored. Not only does it offer various benefits, but it also helps learners retain and organize new information, improve speaking skills, and ultimately enhance overall language proficiency. Through consistent writing practice, learners can effectively store and organize what they have learned, making it easier to remember new vocabulary and grasp complex language rules. It is even more crucial in fields such as academia and the professional world, making strong writing abilities necessary for language learners in these spheres (Mohamedamin & Ghaffar, 2022). Writing in a foreign language aids in language development and cultivates crucial skills like analyzing, arguing, and critical thinking. Therefore, it plays a vital role in language mastery (Suastra & Menggo, 2020). Regarding writing in a second language (L2), one cannot underestimate the crucial factor of lexical complexity. In academic writing, the vocabulary knowledge of the students is of crucial importance which can lead to professional pieces of writing. Referring to this fact, studying lexis and lexical complexity can be mentioned as groundbreaking research areas. Lexical complexity, a sub-component of linguistic complexity, refers to the ability of writers to convey their message in a written text (Ai & Lu, 2010). Text internal measures including lexical density - the proportion of content words to total word, and lexical diversity - the proportion of unique words to total words, and text-external measures, including lexical sophistication-relative frequency / infrequency with which the L2 writers' lexis emerges in the target language, were the focus of research investigating the relationship between lexical complexity and L2 writing performance (Johnson, 2017).

The writing process is regarded as a complex undertaking that requires linguistic proficiency, effective Pre-Task Planning (PTP), and cognitive elements to attain ideal results. In Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), PTP has been recognized as a significant factor in the quality of L2 task performance (Ellis, 2005; Thompson, 2014). As Ellis (2021) lists in his review, there are many different PTP strategies in TBLT literature. Among various types of PTP, Strategic Planning (SP) is considered an essential component of the writing process (Zoghi & Shokri, 2018). Foster and Skehan (1996) proposed that SP in language instruction can be divided into two different approaches: guided planning and unguided planning. As its name mentions, guided planning provides learners with particular instructions or detailed guidance on arranging a task. In contrast, in the unguided planning approach, learners are not engaged in a planning process with such specific instructions or guidance. During guided planning, learners are provided with particular strategies, monitoring techniques, and instructional support to help them effectively plan and execute language tasks. It plays a crucial role in language instruction, using various practical strategies that focus on either language or content (Ellis, 2005). Regarding teacher's SP, form-focused (FF) guided planning involves offering clear instructions and guidance for language forms, structures, and vocabulary to be utilized in a task (De Oliveira et al., 2021). Alternatively, content-focused (CF) guided planning incorporates language learning with the exploration of academic topics like science or social studies, providing a well-rounded approach that promotes the development of both language and content knowledge simultaneously (Langdon & Pandor, 2020). In contrast, unguided planning or no planning (NP) allows learners to process the content and language of their planned production and allows the learners to choose their paths (Khonamri et al., 2017). Ellis

(2005) believes that when learners engage in NP during language instruction, they actively employ metacognitive strategies to control both their learning and language skills. This method involves deliberately using planning as a metacognitive strategy to enhance task performance in language learning. Moreover, NP allows learners to use the chance to prepare for task performance without emphasizing language elements or content. This allows for a more natural and authentic approach to learning. According to the results, utilizing guided planning may result in increased precision and sophistication in language use. On the other hand, NP could potentially impact fluency in writing and the development of oral proficiency in a second language (Foster & Skehan, 1996). For the sake of the present study, guided planning with language and content focus and NP as mentioned by Ellis (2003) will be considered.

Additionally, the connection between cognitive theory and SP in language learning is apparent through using cognitive strategies, such as processing information, organizing it for understanding, and generating mental imagery to enhance language comprehension and production (Wirahyuni & Martha, 2022). When it comes to writing, having a cognitive approach to SP means skillfully arranging and shaping thoughts, ideas, and information with a clear intention (Murtadho, 2021). Working memory (WM) as an element of cognitive theory, which involves storing and overseeing information temporarily, plays a crucial role in complex tasks like writing (Ericsson & Kintsch, 1995). Khonamri et al. (2017) have shown a strong connection between WM and acquiring and mastering writing skills. Its coordinating role in writing has received much attention, highlighting its influence on planning, comprehension, and problem-solving in written work. By allowing for the retention of a limited amount of information in an easily retrievable manner, WM plays a vital role in cognitive growth, learning, and education. Thus, comprehending its impact on the writing process is essential. Furthermore, Shen and Park (2020) have revealed that learners with limited WM capacity may encounter discouraging results when comprehending second-language grammar. This emphasizes the crucial role of grouping learners according to their WM capacity.

Although there has been a significant amount of research examining the impact of SP on L2 writing, there remains a gap in our understanding of how guided SP and NP specifically affect the writing abilities of Iranian upper-intermediate EFL learners across various task types. Additionally, there is a pressing need to approach this topic from a cognitive theory, as Ellis (2021) suggested the researchers should consider the equality of the learners in terms of WM capacity. This study examines how guided SP in terms of form and content and NP impact writing scores for argumentative and descriptive tasks considering the cognitive theory, aiming to elucidate how this theoretical framework can underpin the development of robust writing strategies. It provides an in-depth understanding of how instructors and learners can utilize these perceptions to boost writing proficiency and task performance. For this study, the following research questions were formulated:

RQ1: To what extent does strategic planning in the group of Iranian upper-intermediate EFL learners with high working memory affect lexical complexity in descriptive writing?

RQ2: To what extent does strategic planning in the group of Iranian upper-intermediate EFL learners with high working memory affect lexical complexity in argumentative writing?

### **Literature Review**

The importance of considering multiple areas, such as SP and WM, when assessing writing proficiency is evident (Rad, & Jafarpour, 2022; Vasylets & Marín, 2021). Along these areas as Zhang and Wu (2021) proposed, lexical proficiency is one of the most critical components of linguistic competence in second language (L2) learning and writing which can be affected by these fields variously. Multiple studies have been done to explore these areas, of which the most recent ones will be mentioned in the following part.

#### **Strategic Planning (SP) and Lexical Complexity**

The studies referenced in the literature investigate the effects of guided versus unguided planning on different aspects of language learning, including writing fluency, accuracy, use of relative clauses, task complexity, lexis, and second language oral development. Many recent studies have used SP as a benchmark for L2 PTP writing effectiveness. A meta-analysis by Johnson (2017) revealed that L2 writing quality was significantly improved through planning, particularly accuracy and fluency. However, the length of planning time itself did not always determine writing quality. Instead, the planning quality was of more importance. This study emphasized the advantages of including planning in L2 writing instruction and highlighted the need to emphasize effective planning techniques.

Following this, Rahimi and Zhang (2017) investigated how different levels of task difficulty and planning time affect the development of non-native English speakers' argumentative writings. They found that writing tasks that were more complex with planning opportunities significantly improved one dimension of the syntactic and lexical complexity, content, organization, and writing quality. However, it lessened accuracy and fluency in argumentative essays. These findings suggest that using complex tasks and encouraging planning in EFL classes can enhance argumentative writing abilities in L2 learners.

In addition to planning time, SP can be related to form-focused, content-focused, semantic mapping (also called content-mapping), etc. Aref and Mojavezi (2019) investigated how pre-task instruction (concept-mapping strategy) and task rehearsal affected the writing skills of Iranian students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The study found that the learners' writing became more fluent and complex, but it did not become more accurate. The study's findings suggest that explaining what students need to do before they start writing and allowing them to practice writing the task can help them write more fluently and in more complex ways.

Building upon these studies, Behyar and Nabilou's (2019) research explored how pre- and while-writing planning affect the narrative writing ability of intermediate non-native English speakers. Their findings pinpointed that combining pre- and while-writing planning led to higher-quality writing, especially in accuracy and fluency. However, complexity seemed not to be significantly affected by planning conditions. Additionally, Abdi Tabari (2019) has investigated how varying SP and task structures

impact L2 writing. His study revealed that SP, especially when tasks progress from primary to complex, enhanced L2 written performance in complexity, accuracy, fluency, and vocabulary. The complexity of the task also influenced the complexity of sentences and vocabulary, as well as accuracy, but did not affect fluency.

More recently, Teng and Huang (2021) investigated how metacognitive strategy instruction and collaborative writing affected the quality of writing in terms of complexity, accuracy, and fluency. The results indicated an interplay between metacognitive strategies and collaborative writing with a positive influence on writing accuracy, but not on fluency and complexity. In line with this study, Ellis (2021) exposed in his systematic review of 32 articles related to PTP that lexical complexity was affected inconsistently and minimally by PTP conditions. However, he concluded with a need for more research in this area considering a few revisions, some of which will be mentioned in this article.

Along with Ellis (2021), Abdi Tabari and Wang (2022) explored the influence of task familiarity and SP on students' writings in an American university. This study pointed out that SP had limited effects on lexical complexity. As well, Wu and Ellis (2023) investigated the influence of PTP on computer-based argumentative writing quality. They argued that PTP was not effective in participants' computer-based writing complexity and other measures except for fluency. They suggested that for teachers to achieve fluent writers in computer-based contexts, PTP can be a vital concept.

Moreover, Mujtaba et al. (2023) looked at the impact of combining a sociocognitive-transformative approach with form-focused instruction on learners' writing scores. The results showed that the students improved in fluency, accuracy, and complexity. The fluency improvement was associated with increased focus on content and rhetorical awareness. Accuracy gains were linked to contextualized linguistic item teaching and the students' psycholinguistic readiness. Furthermore, Johnson and Abdi Tabari (2023), by continuing Ellis' (2021) review, in their synthesis and meta-analysis examined the impact of planning on various aspects of written language production, such as syntactic complexity, accuracy, lexical complexity, and fluency. Their findings revealed that planning plays a crucial and positive role in fostering lexical complexity.

### **Working Memory and Lexical Complexity**

Researchers have investigated the relationship between cognitive factors and lexical complexity in writing. Specifically, Zabihi (2017) examined how WM, anxiety, and self-efficacy directly and indirectly influenced Complexity, Accuracy, Lexis, and Fluency (CALF) measures of writing. He found the effectiveness of WM in planning, drafting, revising, and editing written work. Higher WM spans directly predicted higher L2 writing scores regarding complexity and fluency but negatively affected learners' accuracy scores. He also indicated that by causing stress and reducing confidence, anxiety impacted writing quality. Additionally, his study showed that self-efficacy boosted learners' confidence, reduced stress, and improved writing quality. Therefore, all measures of L2 writing were directly predicted by learners' writing self-efficacy; writing self-efficacy affected CALF indirectly through writing anxiety; the direct paths from writing anxiety to all measures of L2 writing were negatively significant.

Through extensive research, we can gain a valuable understanding of how WM affects language learning, which may lead to the creation of personalized instructional methods for learners with varying WM abilities, greatly enhancing their learning experience. Michel et al. (2019) explored the importance of WM in English writing skills for young Hungarian ESL students. They realized that better WM abilities resulted in higher English writing scores, especially fluency and complexity. However, the students' level of English proficiency was recognized as an influential factor in this relationship. This study revealed the intricacies of L2 writing, emphasizing the importance of addressing cognitive abilities like WM to enhance L2 writing proficiency. Moreover, Mavrou (2020) examined how specific aspects of WM and emotional intelligence affect CALF measures of written texts. This research emphasized that affective and cognitive factors play a crucial role in effectively creating proficient writing.

On the other hand, Vasylets and Marin (2021) explored the effects of WM and language proficiency on writing quality. They identified that at low levels of proficiency, WM was associated with higher accuracy, while at high levels of proficiency WM and lexical sophistication were linked positively. In line with this study, De Vita et al. (2021) demonstrated that children with high WM updating performance scored significantly higher than children with low WM updating performance on most of the writing tasks. Moreover, Li (2023) carried out a thorough review of the connection between WM and L2 writing. This study proved that WM plays a vital role in understanding the process of L2 writing. Furthermore, the investigation of WM leads to valuable implications in the case of advancing theories, conducting research, and teaching L2 writing. He summarized that for complexity, verbal WM was a positive predictor of syntactic complexity measured as subordination, and it was correlated with high-level learners' lexical complexity.

To date, there is no evidence of a link between working memory and strategic planning skills. Educators and curriculum designers might benefit from evaluating these elements together. As well, scant attention has been given to the effects of these factors on lexical complexity. This study's objective is to explore how strategic planning influences lexical complexity in high WM EFL learners receiving different types of guided planning in two different writing tasks. The study seeks to provide a more comprehensive comprehension of the interconnectedness of these factors and their impact on EFL writing skills.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The population, from which the sample of 125 male and female participants (25 in each group) was obtained, comprised Iranian non-native EFL learners. The data were collected from four English institutions in Iran. The criteria for selecting participants were centered on convenience sampling. The participants' ages ranged from 20 to 27, and their background languages were Turkish, Persian, and Kurdish. All the participants had the experience of studying English in junior high school and high school. In addition, they were screened by the entrance exam of the institutions, and all of the learners passed some English courses for five to seven years to reach upper-



intermediate levels. Data collection in this study was conducted during regular writing courses held by the researchers.

## **Materials and Instruments**

### ***Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT)***

The OQPT, version 2, was employed in the present study. It comprises 40 questions involving grammar, vocabulary, and writing subtests. The reliability index of the OQPT was estimated in a pilot study as .90, using the KR-21 formula, which is a high-reliability index. Although the participants were considered upper-intermediate learners by the institutions, to select a homogeneous sample in terms of language proficiency levels, the OQPT was administered before the start of the study. Seventy-five learners with a score between the range of 40-47 out of 60, according to the Council of Europe (2009), were selected as the B2 (upper-intermediate) level who participated in the current study. Since the study examines the lexical complexity, it seems this measure is more meaningful in upper-intermediate levels than highly advanced levels, in which learners may not face language defects.

### ***Operation Span Test (OST)***

This test, developed by Turner and Eagle (1989), blends memory and processing demands and evaluates a learner's ability to keep and manipulate information in WM simultaneously. A set of math problems was presented to the learners and they were required to solve each of them while trying to memorize a set of letters. The task difficulty was increased gradually. OST is proven to be a reliable and valid measure of WM by different researchers (Conway et al., 2005; Kane et al., 2004; Melby-Lervåg et al., 2016; Unsworth et al., 2005). Participants whose score was among the highest 25% quartile were assigned to the high WM group.

### ***CELEX in Coh-Metrix***

For measuring lexical sophistication, a computational tool namely Coh-Metrix was used. To analyze the richness and variety of vocabulary used in the text, CELEX in Coh-Metrix is of importance, and many studies such as McNamara et al. (2006), and Polio and Yoon (2018) verified a high validity and reliability for it. This tool is employed in the current research to measure lexical sophistication. The nearer the CELEX value to 6, the simpler the words are.

### ***Writing Tasks***

In the current study, the writing general module task 2 of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) exam was used, and they were analyzed using the database of CELEX in Coh-Metrix. Two experts in the field reviewed and confirmed the validity of the tests. Since the popularity of argumentative, and descriptive genres, they have been chosen for writing productions of the participants. Two topics (one for each genre) were randomly selected from the most recent IELTS tests (2018-2023). These tests, which were about education with equal task complexity and familiar to participants, were accessed through the IELTS website.

## **Procedure**

The present investigation is dominantly mixed-method since one phase of the study has been conducted by collecting information quantitatively (through

experimental-control groups) and the other phase used a survey-based design, including the use of OST to measure the WMC. Considering the former phase, the independent variables of the study are strategic planning variables, including FF and CF instructions. Regarding the second phase, this study includes a survey-based design in which WM is compared among participants. However, the dependent variable of this study is the lexical complexity of descriptive and argumentative writings. By delving into a mixed-method approach, this study provides a meticulous understanding of how strategic planning interacts with WM to predict writing measures.

Firstly, the informed consent forms were distributed among the participants. In the second session, OQPT was administered to choose a homogeneous group of participants. The learners with a score between the range of 40-47 out of 60, according to CEFR (Council of Europe, 2009), were selected as the B2 (upper-intermediate) level and participated in the current study. Also, some pilot studies to evaluate the OSP, and the whole research procedure, were used to avoid time and money being wasted on an inadequately designed project, and it was improved upon the study design before the performance of a full-scale research project.

All participants were asked by the researchers to perform the OST individually in the third session. Explicit instruction was provided by the researcher in each step and OST was performed through the laptop of the researcher. Following this, the participants with a high WM were selected. Then they were classified into three groups: FF, CF, and NP. All of these groups received the pre-test of descriptive and argumentative writing in a limited time of 40 minutes in the fourth session.

In the fifth session, the participants in the FF group all received form-focused intervention in descriptive and argumentative writing for four sessions with 30 minutes of break time between each, held in one day to avoid the probable practice effect. In this study, several key strategies were used to highlight the focus on form intervention in descriptive and argumentative writing tasks. These strategies included teaching vocabulary by encouraging the use of diverse descriptive and argumentative words, providing word banks and lists of descriptive and argumentative words, and exploring synonyms and antonyms. The study also focused on sentence structure by teaching different sentence types and analyzing model sentences for practical grammar usage in two tasks. Sentence combining activities and grammar error identification and correction exercises were used to enhance understanding of sentence structure and grammar choices. To incorporate grammar instruction in argumentative writing, the researchers introduced and reinforced academic language and formal tone, addressed common grammar issues, emphasized sentence variety, and guided students in editing and revision. Explicit instruction, modeling, scaffolded writing tasks, error correction, and revision and editing, and reflection and self-assessment were effective strategies for teaching writing with a focus on form. By employing these strategies, the researchers helped the students develop strong and well-structured descriptions and arguments.

Accordingly, in the same week, the ones in the CF group, all received content-based intervention in descriptive and argumentative writings respectively for four sessions with 30 minutes of break time between each, held in one day to avoid the probable practice effect. When teaching descriptive writing focusing on meaning, the researchers employed various strategies to help students effectively convey sensory details and create vivid descriptions. These strategies included engaging students in pre-writing activities that stimulate their senses, analyzing mentor texts and examples of well-written descriptive writing, teaching the use of sensory and figurative language,



guiding students through guided imagery and visualization exercises, encouraging peer feedback and revision, promoting reflection and self-assessment, and highlighting the real-world application of descriptive writing. By incorporating these strategies, the researchers tried to guide the students to develop a deeper understanding of descriptive writing and effectively convey meaning. By incorporating strategies such as pre-writing activities, guided discussions, analysis of mentor texts, connecting to an authentic audience and purpose, peer feedback and revision, reflection and self-assessment, and real-world application, the researchers could effectively teach argumentative writing focusing on meaning. These strategies helped students develop a deeper understanding of the content and purpose of their arguments, convey meaning effectively, engage with the topic, and create persuasive and impactful arguments. However, the participants of NP acted as the control group for whom there was no intervention and guidance before writing. Then after, all the participants in each of the groups were asked to write a writing of 250 words in length for 40 minutes on the descriptive and argumentative topics as the post-tests.

### Data Analysis

This study included three groups, namely FF, CF, and NP, and aimed to investigate the effects of the type of these instructions on the dependent variable, lexical sophistication. The researchers used the SPSS software and the ANOVA test. This test revealed whether different high WM groups in PTP conditions were significantly different in terms of lexical sophistication.

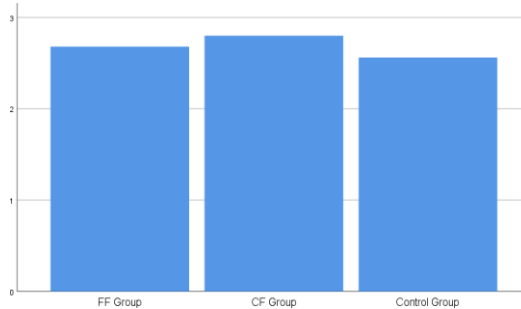
### Results

In this study, the researchers scrutinized the characteristics of the data to determine the appropriate statistical test for performing the data analysis. The interval nature of the obtained data, their independent collection process, and their normal distribution highlighted the fact that they did not violate the assumptions of parametric tests. Consequently, the researchers use one-way ANOVA to analyze the data and to answer the raised questions. Research question one made an effort to determine the degree to which EFL learners' strategic planning significantly influenced their lexical complexity in descriptive writing tasks. Considering this objective, first, the researchers compared the lexical complexity of FF, CF, and control groups on the descriptive writing pre-test to ensure their homogeneity in terms of lexical complexity. Levene's test result ( $p = .189$ ) highlighted the homogeneity of group variances and paved the way for the use of one-way ANOVA. Table 1 provides the relevant results:

**Table 1**  
*ANOVA Test of Results of Descriptive Writing Pretest*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Between Groups</b>	.720	2	.360	.876	.421
<b>Within Groups</b>	29.600	72	.411		
<b>Total</b>	30.320	74			

According to Table 1, there were no significant differences among the pre-test results of FF, CF, and NP groups ( $F(2, 72) = .876, p = .421$ ). Therefore, the groups were homogeneous in terms of the lexical complexity of their descriptive writing pre-test performances. Figure 1 shows the results:

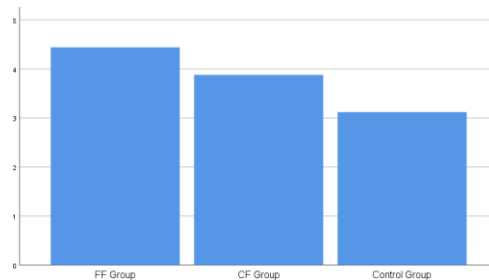
**Figure 1***Descriptive Writing Pre-test Results of FF, CF, and Control Groups*

Consequently, the researchers compared the performances of the above-mentioned groups on descriptive writing posttest. Levene's test result ( $p = .589$ ) highlighted the homogeneity of group variances. As a result, the researchers used another one-way ANOVA to answer the first question. Table 2 provides the pertinent results:

**Table 2***ANOVA Test of Results of Descriptive Writing Posttest*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Between Groups</b>	21.947	2	10.973	51.171	.000
<b>Within Groups</b>	15.440	72	.214		
<b>Total</b>	37.387	74			

As shown in Table 2, the post-test performances of all the groups significantly varied from each other ( $F(2, 72) = 51.171, p = .000$ ). Moreover, the Tukey post-hoc test showed that FF and CF groups significantly outperformed the NP group ( $M = 3.12$ ;  $SD = .332$ ) on descriptive writing posttest. In addition, there were significant differences between FF and CF groups. That is, FF group ( $M = 4.44$ ;  $SD = .583$ ) outperformed CF group ( $M = 3.88$ ;  $SD = .440$ ). Figure 2 shows the relevant results:

**Figure 2***Descriptive Writing Posttest Results of FF, CF, and Control Groups*

Research question two strived to examine the degree to which EFL learners' strategic planning significantly influenced their lexical complexity in argumentative writing tasks. Based on this objective, the researchers scrutinized the lexical complexity of FF, CF, and NP groups on argumentative writing pre-test to ensure their homogeneity in terms of lexical complexity. Levene's test result ( $p = .334$ ) indicated the homogeneity of group variances. Therefore, the relevant pre-test performances were compared using a one-way ANOVA. Table 3 shows these results:

**Table 3**

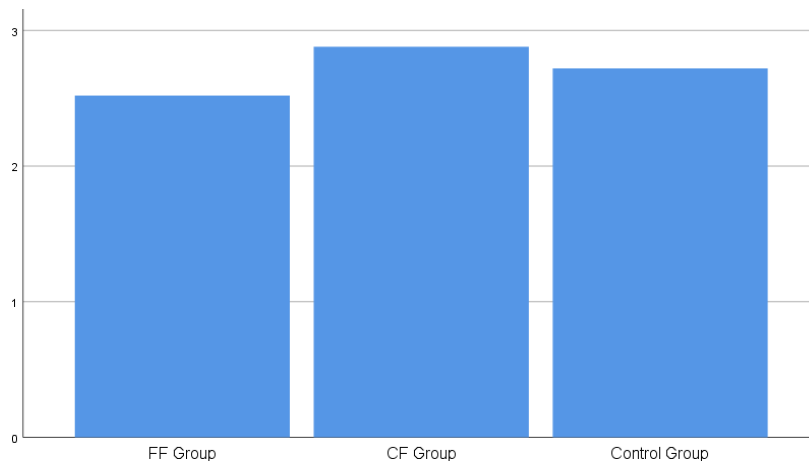
*ANOVA Test of Results of Argumentative Writing Pretest*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Between Groups</b>	1.627	2	.813	.835	.167
<b>Within Groups</b>	31.920	72	.443		
<b>Total</b>	33.547	74			

As shown in Table 3, there were no significant differences among the pre-test results of FF, CF, and NP groups ( $F(2, 72) = .835, p = .167$ ). Therefore, the groups were homogeneous in terms of the lexical complexity of their argumentative writing pre-test performances. Figure 3 shows the relevant results:

**Figure 3**

*Argumentative Writing Pre-Test Results of FF, CF, and Control Groups*

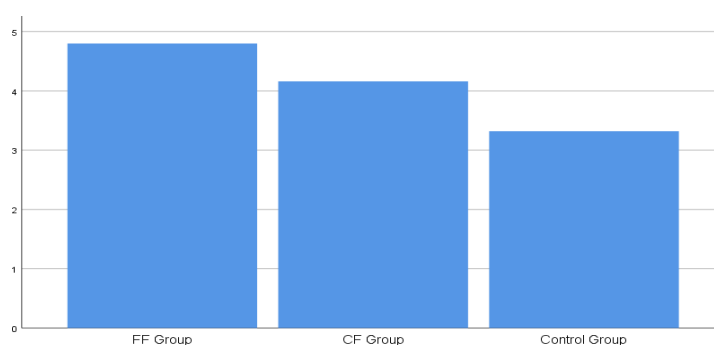


Thus, the researchers compared the performances of these groups on argumentative writing posttest. Levene's test result ( $p = .611$ ) highlighted the homogeneity of group variances. As a result, the researchers used another one-way ANOVA to answer the second question. Table 4 indicates the relevant results:

**Table 4***ANOVA Test of Results of Argumentative Writing Post-Test*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Between Groups</b>	27.547	2	13.773	39.987	.000
<b>Within Groups</b>	24.800	72	.344		
<b>Total</b>	52.347	74			

According to Table 4, the post-test performances of all the groups significantly varied from each other ( $F(2, 72) = 39.987, p = .000$ ). Moreover, the Tukey post-hoc test showed that FF and CF groups significantly outperformed the NP group ( $M = 3.32$ ;  $SD = .476$ ) on argumentative writing post-test. In addition, there were significant differences between FF and CF groups. That is, FF group ( $M = 4.80$ ;  $SD = .764$ ) outperformed CF group ( $M = 4.16$ ;  $SD = .473$ ). Figure 4 shows these results:

**Figure 4***Argumentative Writing Post-Test Results of FF, CF, and Control Groups*

### Discussion

PTP and SP, as a subcategory of it, have been the topic of research for many years. However, there was scant attention to different types of guidance provided in this stage, considering the WM capacity of the learners. The objective of this study was to determine if there was a significant difference between FF and CF SP methods in two different writing tasks among high WM participants. The groups were compared with each other and an NP group, which was a control group. After analyzing the lexical complexity of the groups by CELEX, the results of the ANOVA test indicated that there was a significant difference between the FF groups and CF, and NP groups in both descriptive and argumentative writings in terms of lexical complexity. The learners with a high WM capacity made use of more sophisticated vocabulary when guided by a focus on form instruction in PTP condition. It means that as EFL learners receive FF instruction in the PTP condition, their lexical sophistication develops.

The results of this study were in line with Johnson (2017), who revealed that PTP could improve writing quality. As well, Rahimi and Zhang's (2017) study

approved the current findings by explaining the positive effect of planning on lexical complexity. Aref and Mojavezi (2019) also pinpointed the complexity of Iranian EFL writers through strategic planning. However, they used semantic mapping in their study which was different from the types of instruction presented in this study. On the other hand, contrary to the findings of Behyar and Nabilou (2019), who believed that complexity is not significantly affected by PTP, and Teng and Huang (2021), who showed that metacognitive strategies did not affect complexity, we found out that improving the learners' awareness of the learning process can increase their lexical complexity in writing. The findings of this study tied well with Ellis (2021), Abdi Tabari and Wang (2022), Mujtaba et al. (2023), and Johnson and Abdi Tabari (2023) wherein SP positively affected overall writing proficiency. Consequently, the current article has verified that using SP, as a form of PTP, leads to better performance in lexical complexity, as a measurement of writing.

The findings of the current research were all true of high WM capacity learners. They may be regarded as good and proficient learners. Since Ellis (2021) recommended that it was well justified to consider WM in PTP studies, and to our knowledge there was no study to consider these elements together while investigating PTP. Zabihi (2017) confirmed the findings of this research by explaining that learners with a high WM capacity tended to produce complex writing. As well, Michel et al. (2019) approved that high WM leads to more complex writing. Mavrou (2020) also found out that to write proficiently, one should access a higher-level WM. Vasylets and Marin (2021) explored the effects of WM and language proficiency on writing quality. Their study showed that in high levels of proficiency, there was a positive link between WM and lexical sophistication. Moreover, De Vita et al. (2021) demonstrated that high WM updating performance led to a better score on most of the writing tasks. Furthermore, Li (2023) carried out a thorough review of the connection between WM and second-language (L2) writing. This study proved that WM was correlated with high-level learners' lexical complexity. All these findings support the notion that writing quality in general and specifically lexical sophistication were affected by WM capacity.

### **Conclusion**

The present study set out to investigate whether there existed a statistically significant difference between FF, CF, and NP in PTP conditions among upper-intermediate Iranian EFL learners with a high WM capacity. The findings revealed that FF instruction led to more lexical complexity in both descriptive and argumentative writings, which was statistically significant. By discussing the findings of the present study in comparison with the previous ones, it can be concluded that SP as a form of PTP can lead to higher degrees of lexical sophistication. The beneficial effects of both treatments (FF and CF) can be crucial, because of their ability to guide the learners and facilitate the writing process, which cannot be ignored in TBLT. In the current study, there exist some pedagogical implications for English language teachers, teacher educators, syllabus and task designers, testers, researchers, and learners. It is important to pay attention to the individual differences in the PTP process. Since individuals are different, one strategy of instruction may mislead a group of learners while enhancing others' capabilities. The way learners orient to the writing process affects their writing quality. During PTP, it is crucial to provide an encouraging environment in the classroom which will facilitate cognitive functioning.

The current study was administered in the context of Iran through convenience sampling. However, this can lead to different results in other contexts. As well, it can be used to demonstrate the differences among genders and different proficiency levels, which was not met in this study. Furthermore, this study only considered high WM learners; however, studies in the future can address low WM, or compare the functioning of the categories of high and low WM capacity learners. Additionally, other genres of writing can be employed in future studies to investigate the effects of PTP on learners' writings.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Writing Topics

Descriptive writing topic: Nowadays vocational education is becoming increasingly popular in different countries. What are the advantages of vocational education in the context of this modern world?

Argumentative writing topic: Some parents believe that children should have educational activities in their leisure time as part of their recreation; otherwise, it is just a waste of time for children. What do you think of this notion? Explain the advantages and disadvantages.

## **FF Instructions in Descriptive Writing**

### ***Sample Vocabulary***

1. *Practical Skills*: Emphasizing hands-on learning and practical skill development.
2. *Industry-Relevant Knowledge*: Focusing on specific skills and knowledge needed in various industries.
3. *Employability*: The ability to be employed or find a job.
4. *Career-Specific Training*: Training tailored to specific careers or industries.
5. *Adaptability*: The capacity to adjust to new conditions or changes.

## **FF Instructions in Argumentative Writing**

### ***Sample Vocabulary***

1. *Recreation*: Activities done for enjoyment and relaxation.
2. *Educational Enrichment*: Learning experiences that go beyond traditional academics.
3. *Cognitive Development*: Growth in thinking, reasoning, and problem-solving skills.
4. *Holistic Learning*: Education that addresses intellectual, emotional, and social aspects.
5. *Critical Thinking*: Analyzing information and making reasoned judgments.

## **CF Instructions in Descriptive Writing**

### ***Introduction:***

- Define vocational education and its significance in today's global landscape.
- Briefly mention the increasing popularity of vocational education worldwide.

### ***Body paragraph (Advantages):***

- Discuss the practical skills acquired through vocational training.
- Highlight the relevance of vocational education to current industry demands.
- Explain how vocational education accelerates entry into the workforce.
- Provide examples of countries where vocational education is thriving.
- Compare the advantages of vocational education across different regions.
- Discuss how vocational skills contribute to economic growth and social development.

### ***Conclusion:***

- Summarize the key advantages of vocational education in the modern world.
- Emphasize the importance of vocational training in meeting the evolving needs of industries.
- Encourage further exploration and support for vocational education initiatives.

## **CF Instructions in Argumentative Writing**

### ***Introduction:***

- Introduce the topic and present the notion that children should have educational activities in their leisure time.
- Provide a brief overview of the advantages and disadvantages you will be discussing.

### ***Advantages:***

- Discuss how educational activities can enhance cognitive development and critical thinking skills.
- Highlight the potential for educational enrichment and holistic learning outside of traditional academics.
- Explain how such activities can promote creativity, problem-solving abilities, and self-directed learning.
- Address the importance of parental guidance and skill acquisition through educational leisure activities.

*Disadvantages:*

- Explore the potential drawbacks of excessive focus on educational activities during leisure time.
- Consider the impact on children's free play, social interactions, and overall well-being.
- Discuss the risks of burnout, lack of balance, and limited time for relaxation or creative exploration.
- Touch upon concerns related to screen time, over-scheduling, and pressure on children to constantly engage in structured learning.

*Conclusion:*

- Summarize the key points discussed regarding the advantages and disadvantages of educational activities in children's leisure time.
- Offer a balanced perspective that considers both sides of the argument.
- Encourage reflection on finding a healthy balance between educational engagement and recreational pursuits for children's overall development.

## Appendix B

### Working Memory Operation Span Test

The following pictures are some parts of the operation span test of working

Inquisit

Subject id:  
1

Group number:  
1

Session number:  
1

Run Cancel

P

F	H	J	Now you will practice doing the math part of the task.
K	L	N	A math problem will appear on the screen, like this: $(2 * 1) + 1 = ?$
P	Q	R	As soon as you see the math problem, you should compute the correct answer. In the above problem, the answer 3 is correct.
S	T	Y	When you know the correct answer, you will click the mouse button.

BLANK

click the mouse button to continue.

CLEAR

EXIT

memory:

## **Appendix C**

### **A Sample of Calculating CELEX Log Frequency by Coh-Metrix, Using the Text of First Paragraph of Lexical Sophistication Measures**

After the letter goes away, another math problem will appear, and then another letter.

At the end of each set of letters and math problems, a recall screen will appear. Use the mouse to select the letters you just saw. Try your best to get the letters in the correct order.

It is important to work QUICKLY and ACCURATELY on the math. Make sure you know the answer to the math problem before clicking to the next screen. You will not be told if your answer to the math problem is correct.

After the recall screen, you will be given feedback about your performance regarding both the number of letters recalled and the percent correct on the math problems.

Do you have any questions?

click the mouse button to continue.

### **Results for Subject #1**

**OSPAN Absolute Score: 0**  
**OSPAN Total Correct: 0**

**Math Total Errors: 42**  
**Math Speed Errors: 8**  
**Math Accuracy Errors: 34**

Enter your input

In the contemporary world, vocational education is experiencing a surge in popularity across various countries, offering a myriad of advantages that cater to the evolving needs of the modern workforce. This shift towards vocational education reflects a growing recognition of the practical skills, industry relevance, and career-specific training it provides. Let us delve into the advantages of vocational education in the context of the modern world.

6X061

Type text in the image

Submit

72	SYNSTRUta	STRUta	0.124	Sentence syntax similarity, adjacent sentences, mean
73	SYNSTRUti	STRUti	0.115	Sentence syntax similarity, all combinations, across paragraphs, mean
Syntactic Pattern Density				
74	DRNP	n/a	357.798	Noun phrase density, incidence
75	DRVP	n/a	174.312	Verb phrase density, incidence
76	DRAP	n/a	18.340	Adverbial phrase density, incidence
77	DRPP	n/a	145.789	Preposition phrase density, incidence
78	DRPVAL	AGLSPSVi	36.697	Agentless passive voice density, incidence
79	DRNEG	DIENEGi	9.174	Negation density, incidence
80	DRGERUND	GERUNDi	27.523	Gerund density, incidence
81	DRINF	INFi	0	Infinitive density, incidence
Word Information				
82	WRDHOUN	WOUNi	284.403	Noun incidence
83	WRDVERB	VERBi	110.092	Verb incidence
84	WRDADJ	ADJi	165.138	Adjective incidence
85	WRDADV	ADVi	36.697	Adverb incidence
86	WRDPRO	DIENPRPi	27.523	Pronoun incidence
87	WRDPRP1s	n/a	0	First person singular pronoun incidence
88	WRDPRP1p	n/a	0.174	First person plural pronoun incidence
89	WRDPRP2	PRO2i	0	Second person pronoun incidence
90	WRDPRP3s	n/a	0	Third person singular pronoun incidence
91	WRDPRP3p	n/a	0.174	Third person plural pronoun incidence
92	WRDFRQc	FRCLacm	1.971	CELEX word frequency for content words, mean
93	WRDFRQa	FRCLaewm	2.934	CELEX Log frequency for all words, mean
94	WRDFRQmc	FRCLmcsm	1.010	CELEX Log minimum frequency for content

## Authors' Biographies



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## **Flipping EFL Classroom: Learners' Self-Regulation and the Production of Selected Grammatical Points**

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### **Abstract**

Mobile-mediated flipped scaffolding strategies have been documented as effective for language acquisition in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. This study employed a mixed-methods research design, collecting data through both quantitative and qualitative methods, to investigate the effectiveness of a flipped classroom model in enhancing upper-intermediate EFL learners' grammatical writing skills and self-regulation. Additionally, the study explored the treatment group's attitudes towards the strategy. The Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT) was completed by 74 female upper-intermediate English language learners. 58 subjects (one standard deviation above and below the mean) were selected for the experimental and control groups. The study used a semi-structured interview, the Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SRQ) by Brown et al. (1999), and pre- and post-tests in grammar. The results showed that the treatment group did better than the control group in terms of self-regulation and grammar writing abilities. The interview results corroborated these findings, suggesting that students appreciated the strategy's engaging and educational elements. The study offers insightful proof for the effectiveness of flipped classrooms in addressing challenges faced by EFL learners in Iran. The mobile-mediated flipped scaffolding strategy demonstrates promise for improving grammatical writing skills and self-regulation. The study's implications highlight the importance of equipping learning environments with new resources and Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) guidance, enabling learners to develop autonomy and accountability in their learning.

**Keywords:** mobile-mediated flipped scaffolding strategy, productive grammar, self-regulation, strategy-based instruction

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## **Introduction**

Research on second language acquisition (L2) highlights the significant impact of individual characteristics on learners' behavior (Dörnyei, 2009). However, the role of strategy instruction in enhancing both English skills and personality traits cannot be overlooked (Khani Taher Kermani et al., 2023). Among language sub-skills, grammar acquisition, particularly producing accurate grammatical forms in writing, presents a persistent challenge for EFL learners. Despite exposure to a multitude of explicit language instruction heavily focused on grammar, EFL learners often struggle to improve in this area (Zoubi, 2018). This suggests a potential shortcoming in traditional grammar-focused approaches. Furthermore, research by Chamot (2014) emphasizes the importance of self-regulation, which refers to how learners manage and monitor their L2 learning process. This ability can significantly impact and potentially determine how well a language is learned.

In light of these insights, transitioning to innovative pedagogical methods becomes crucial for addressing these challenges (Green, 2015). One promising strategy for improving EFL learners' grammar and motivation is the mobile-mediated flipped scaffolding strategy, which falls under the umbrella of digital learning (Bansal & Joshi, 2014). This approach combines different instructional methods, allowing learners to take ownership of their learning journey. Through digital tools integrated with computers, learners can explore, construct, practice, and validate new knowledge in collaboration with peers and teachers (Bansal & Joshi, 2014). Consequently, the classroom environment shifts from a teacher-centered format (lectures, information transmission) to one that promotes active learning through discussions and debates (Challob, 2021). Building on this foundation, it is essential to consider the broader implications of such strategies in diverse educational contexts.

This approach, particularly with mobile-mediated and flipped instruction components, holds promise for overcoming language barriers more effectively. For Iranian EFL learners with limited exposure to English outside the classroom, this style of teaching can be particularly beneficial in terms of cognitive and social development (Saffarin & Fatemi, 2015). Furthermore, mobile-mediated flipped scaffolding can be especially impactful in situations where traditional classrooms are unavailable, such as in distance learning contexts. With the rise of technology, increased learner connectivity, and the introduction of modern digital devices in classrooms, the mobile-mediated flipped scaffolding strategy has the potential to significantly influence language learning and teaching, while also fostering self-regulated learning behaviors. As Zimmerman (2002) emphasizes, self-regulated learning is premised on the idea that learners take ownership and actively participate in their education.

The flipped classroom model, defined by Caner (2012) as any combination or fusion of two educational technologies differs from traditional classrooms in a key way. In a flipped classroom, learners are able to get learning materials outside of class, allowing in-class time to be used for active learning activities such as peer discussions, knowledge application, and hands-on tasks (Han et al., 2023). In the context of Iranian EFL learners, this model is particularly relevant as it addresses the



unique challenges they face, such as limited exposure to English outside the classroom and the need for more interactive learning opportunities.

Scaffolding, a valuable teaching strategy often employed within flipped classrooms, refers to temporary support provided by a teacher to bridge the gap between a student's current abilities and the learning objectives (Wood et al., 1976). This support empowers students to focus on manageable elements of the task and gradually develop their own creativity, motivation, and resourcefulness (Bacca-Acosta et al., 2021). As students gain knowledge and skills, the scaffolding is progressively dismantled, ultimately leading to independent learning. Research on the implementation of flipped classrooms in the Iranian EFL context has shown positive outcomes. For example, studies by Saffarin and Fatemi (2015) have demonstrated that this approach can significantly enhance learners' engagement and language proficiency. Additionally, the use of mobile-mediated tools within the flipped classroom can further support Iranian students by providing flexible and accessible learning resources, which is crucial given the constraints of traditional classroom settings in Iran (Ebadi & Bashir, 2020). By integrating these innovative strategies, Iranian EFL learners can benefit from a more dynamic and supportive learning environment that fosters both language acquisition and self-regulation (Abdolrezaipoor & Ghanbari, 2021).

The integration of recent findings further underscores the relevance of these methods in contemporary education (Pérez-Paredes & Zhang, 2022). The teaching environment can significantly impact EFL / ESL student performance (Shyr & Chen, 2018). Flipped classrooms, compared to traditional settings, have been shown to influence L2 achievement and self-regulation levels (Amiryousefi, 2017). Research suggests that flipped instruction and scaffolding strategies can play a vital role in both English acquisition and fostering self-regulation (Chen, 2020; Liu et al., 2018; Shyr & Chen, 2018). However, some studies report mixed results (Korkmaz & Mirici, 2021). Addressing this gap in the literature, the present study investigates the impact of a mobile-mediated flipped scaffolding strategy on EFL learners' writing skills, specifically their ability to produce grammatical points. Additionally, the study explores the self-regulation levels of learners exposed to this strategy and their attitudes towards its effectiveness.

### **Literature Review**

Effective communication, a cornerstone of any language, is the primary goal of foreign language learning. Given the widespread use of English in cultural, political, economic, and scientific domains, strong English communication skills are crucial on a global scale (Ellis, 2016). To effectively communicate concepts and knowledge, learners must develop a range of skills and sub-skills. Research suggests that various instructional strategies, such as scaffolding, can significantly impact English language learning outcomes. Scaffolding, as defined by Walqui (2006), is a "setting up" process that provides learners with resources they can choose from to manage their learning process. Rooted in sociocultural theory and initially developed by Vygotsky and his colleagues in Russia during the 1920s and 1930s, scaffolding remains a topic of keen interest among language educators.

According to Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, social interaction within a learning community produces learning and development (Wertsch, 1979). According to Vygotsky's (1978) theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), scaffolding—help from more experienced individuals—can greatly improve a learner's performance on a task (Vygotsky, 1978, as cited in Wertsch & Sohmer, 1995). Beyond direct human connection, "semiotic artifacts" like books, maps, and diagrams may also be a part of this mediation (Churcher et al., 2014). Knowledge is improved, given coherence, and eventually integrated by means of social mediation (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). In essence, scaffolding can be viewed as a mechanism for transforming external, social activities into internal mental processes.

Research suggests that integrating learning strategies (Cornford, 2002) with technology can positively impact second language acquisition (Day, 2018). The flipped classroom, a form of blended learning that combines two instructional methods, is one such strategy (Chiang, 2017). Flipped classrooms have been shown to increase learner participation, enhance the learning environment, and ultimately improve student success in university settings (Adnan, 2017; Bakla, 2018; Zhou et al., 2024). A key rationale for flipped classrooms is their ability to foster experiential learning and promote active knowledge development (Awidi & Paynter, 2019).

Studies investigating scaffolding and mobile / computer-mediated flipped classrooms demonstrate their positive impact on various aspects of English language learning, academic achievement, and learner perceptions. For example, Moranski and Kim (2016) found that flipped classrooms (IC) were promising for foreign language instruction. Learners in the IC condition reported significantly higher comfort, enjoyment, and confidence in the material compared to the traditional classroom group. Additionally, they outperformed the control group on a grammar test. Chuang et al. (2016) further highlighted the benefits of flipped learning. In this approach, direct instruction occurs outside of class through pre-recorded materials, allowing for in-class time to be used for dynamic activities such as discussions, projects, and problem-solving. Khalifeh et al. (2022) emphasize that flipped classrooms foster a learning community where students actively construct knowledge through collaborative and interactive experiences.

The flipped classroom concept aligns well with theoretical frameworks such as self-regulated learning, student-centered learning, mastery-based learning, and active learning (Zou et al., 2020). Furthermore, research suggests a synergistic relationship between scaffolding and self-regulation in promoting learning. For instance, Ng (2018) found that flipped classrooms facilitated the application of self-learned knowledge by students working individually and collaboratively. While students embraced online learning flexibility, the lack of face-to-face interaction, particularly when encountering difficulties with online content, emerged as a potential drawback.

This study highlights the importance of considering self-regulation principles in the flipped classroom design. Building on this work, Song and Kim (2020) investigated the impact of interactive self-regulation scaffolding on online learners' self-regulation skills, course participation, and learning performance. Their findings revealed that the scaffolded group exhibited significantly greater gains in

self-regulation skills compared to the control group. Additionally, positive correlations were found between self-regulation, course participation, and learning performance. Further exploring the flipped classroom's effectiveness, Khosravi et al. (2023) examined its impact on writing achievement and metacognitive writing awareness. Their results demonstrated that participants in the flipped classroom, employing model-based teaching, achieved statistically higher levels of both metacognitive writing awareness and story writing proficiency compared to the traditional face-to-face teaching group. Collectively, these studies provide strong evidence for the flipped classroom's potential to promote self-regulated learning and enhance academic outcomes. However, Ng's (2018) findings also suggest the need for strategies to address the potential challenges associated with online learning environments.

It is not unusual for educational interventions meant to improve learners' English proficiency and knowledge to have grown recently (White & Frederiksen, 2000). To the best of our knowledge, a great deal of research has been conducted on scaffolding, flipped classrooms, and self-regulation in a variety of instructional situations, including EFL and ESL. Recent studies have highlighted the use of semiotic artifacts and digital tools in scaffolding to enhance language learning. For instance, multimedia resources like videos, infographics, and interactive e-books serve as semiotic artifacts that provide contextualized language input, aiding comprehension and retention (Li et al., 2021). Additionally, mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) tools, such as language learning apps (e.g., Duolingo, Memrise) and platforms like Google Classroom and Edmodo, facilitate personalized and adaptive learning experiences, allowing students to practice language skills anytime and anywhere (Khalili, 2018). Moreover, the rapid evolution of digital tools means that older studies might not reflect the latest technological advancements and their impacts on learning. Furthermore, there can be issues related to the accessibility and usability of digital tools in different contexts, particularly in regions with limited technological infrastructure or internet connectivity (Kusuma, 2022).

Despite these limitations, the growing body of research suggests that the integration of semiotic artifacts and MALL tools in scaffolding can offer significant benefits for EFL learners, particularly in the Iranian context. Recent growth in educational interventions aimed at enhancing learners' English skills and knowledge is not unusual. As far as we know, numerous research has been done on self-regulation, flipped classrooms (Alavi, 2024), and scaffolding in different teaching contexts, including EFL and ESL (Li, 2022). To be hopeful, though, it appeared that there were not many studies outlining the impact of the mobile-mediated flipped scaffolding strategy on EFL students' attitudes toward the mentioned strategy in an EFL context like Iran, as well as their ability to produce grammatical points in writing classes and self-regulation levels. Therefore, our study was an attempt to close this gap. For this reason, the following research questions were formulated:

RQ1: Does implementing mobile-mediated flipped scaffolding strategy have any significant effect on EFL learners' grammar production in writing courses?

RQ2: Does implementing mobile-mediated flipped scaffolding strategy have any significant effect on EFL learners' self-regulation behaviors?

RQ3: What are the attitudes of EFL learners towards (in)adequacy of mobile-mediated flipped scaffolding strategy in writing courses?

### **Method**

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, collecting data through both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data were gathered via pre- and post-tests on grammar and self-regulation, while qualitative data were obtained through interviews.

### **Participants**

The participants were upper-intermediate EFL learners enrolled at Ava private language school in Tehran, Iran. All participants were female, ranging in age from 17 to 24. Based on the institute's learner profiles, all students were classified as upper-intermediate level. A convenience sampling approach was used due to the availability of this specific learner population to the researchers. The sample size was 58, with 29 participants assigned to the experimental group (EG) and 29 to the control group (CG). As stated, in this study, we employed a convenience sampling approach due to time and resource constraints. However, this method has several limitations that need to be acknowledged. Convenience sampling can lead to sampling bias, where the sample may not accurately represent the larger population, thereby limiting the generalizability of our findings. There is a risk of overrepresentation or underrepresentation of certain groups, as the sample consists of individuals who were easily accessible and willing to participate. This non-random selection process can introduce volunteer bias and may result in a more homogeneous sample, reducing variability and potentially affecting the study's outcomes. Additionally, the specific time and place of data collection may further constrain the applicability of our results to other contexts. These limitations highlight the need for caution when interpreting the findings and suggest that further research using more robust sampling methods is warranted (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2009).

### **Materials and Instruments**

The study employed a variety of data collection instruments to gather both quantitative and qualitative data.

#### ***Oxford Quick Placement exam (OQPT)***

In order to determine the participants' overall English language competency and guarantee a representative sample from the upper-intermediate range, the Oxford Quick Placement exam (OQPT) was used as a proficiency test. According to Brown et al. (1999), the OQPT is a standardized test with proven content and face validity. There were grammatical pre- and post-tests given in order to acquire quantifiable data. In addition, participants' abilities in self-regulation were evaluated using the Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SRQ) Scale, which was created by Brown et al. (1999). Interviews that were only loosely structured were used to gather qualitative data.

To assess participants' knowledge of the target grammatical structures and measure potential pre-existing differences, a pre-test and post-test were administered following a pilot run. The pre-test and post-test were identical in format and content to ensure the comparability of results. These tests focused on the specific grammatical points covered in the textbook (*Top Notch*), including conditional type one, active/ passive voice, and the past simple tense used to express habits. Comprised of production tasks and fill-in-the-blank exercises, the tests contained 45 items across the three grammatical rules, with a total score of 45 and a time limit of 50 minutes. Content validity was established through alignment with the textbook content and the treatment intervention. The pilot testing yielded a validity coefficient of .75 and a Cronbach Alpha coefficient for internal consistency.

### ***Self-Regulation Scale***

A 63-item self-regulation measure created by Brown et al. (1999) was employed. In order to answer the questionnaire, participants used a five-point Likert scale that went from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." High self-regulation capacity is indicated by a score above 239, moderate capacity is indicated by a score between 214 and 238, and low capacity is indicated by a score below 213. This study's SRQ had a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.81, indicating strong internal consistency.

### ***Semi-Structured Interview***

Following the intervention, a semi-structured interview explored participants' perspectives on the strategy's impact on their grammatical knowledge and self-regulation skills. As described in the procedures section, interview data were analyzed using Schmidt's (2004) analytical method for qualitative data.

### **Procedure**

To ensure ethical research practices, the participants were informed about the study's goals and the confidential nature of their responses. The participants were assured of anonymity. While students were required to write their names on the tests during administration, these names were not linked to their responses during data analysis.

Prior to the intervention, the Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT) was administered to 74 upper-intermediate EFL learners two weeks before the treatment began. This step aimed to assess learner homogeneity in terms of language proficiency. Based on the proficiency test results, 16 students fell outside the inclusion criteria (scores exceeding 1 standard deviation above or below the mean) and were excluded from the study.

Following the OQPT administration and exclusion of participants outside the criteria, 58 learners remained in the intact classes and continued the study. One week before the intervention, both groups completed a pre-test on grammar production and the Self-Regulation Questionnaire.

The treatment group experienced a mobile-mediated flipped scaffolding classroom approach. As is a characteristic of flipped classrooms, instruction primarily occurred outside of class time, with in-class activities focused on

application and practice. Short, two-minute lecture videos delivered via WhatsApp three days before each class introduced specific grammatical points. Students were expected to watch these videos and independently produce writing that incorporated the target grammar structures. The WhatsApp group platform also facilitated interaction, allowing students to ask questions, provide peer feedback, and share relevant learning materials (videos, audio files, documents). During class time, the teacher focused on paragraph composition, guiding students through the writing process (planning, drafting, revising, editing) and providing scaffolding support via mobile phones at each stage.

- *During the planning stage*, the teacher facilitated brainstorming activities to help students generate ideas and gather information for their compositions.
- *In the drafting stage*, students wrote their initial drafts based on the ideas brainstormed in the planning stage. The teacher circulated among the groups, monitoring student progress and providing guidance as needed.
- *For the revision stage*, the teacher collected students' first drafts and provided limited in-class feedback with handwritten comments. Students then revised their drafts based on the teacher's feedback.
- *The editing stage* involved students closely reading their revised drafts, focusing on grammatical accuracy and mechanics. This phase included final teacher correction, peer correction, and self-correction. Students sent in essays for teacher assessment after finishing each topic.

The conventional scaffolding group served as the control group. In this group, the teacher facilitated peer scaffolding by dividing learners into groups of three. Within these groups, more knowledgeable learners (peers) assisted less knowledgeable peers in applying specific grammatical points to their writing. Peer support involved providing hints and examples to address challenges encountered during the writing process. Additionally, the teacher emphasized the importance of context in using new vocabulary. Students worked collaboratively in class to complete a passage and answer related questions within a 25-minute time limit. The teacher monitored group interactions, providing support as needed. This support included helping students identify text structure and utilize connective words, ultimately facilitating their production of target grammatical structures in their writing.

The treatment spanned eight 70-minute sessions, designed to ensure sufficient time between pre- and post-tests for memory retention. The same instructor led both groups; however, the treatment group received instruction based on different materials, teaching procedures, and strategies. Following the intervention, data were collected from both groups. To compare the scores between the groups and answer the first two study questions, independent samples t-tests were used. Interviews with treatment group members were conducted in order to address the third study question. The interviews were audio-recorded to facilitate accurate transcription and in-depth analysis. The findings from the interviews are presented in the following section. These findings explore the students' perspectives on the strengths and weaknesses of the flipped classroom strategy in relation to

improving their grammatical knowledge and self-regulation skills. Students were encouraged to justify their responses and share their experiences with the instruction.

Individual interviews were conducted with each student in Farsi. Their responses were translated into English and incorporated into the study's qualitative data. To ensure the rigor of the interview data, several steps were implemented. First, the interview transcripts were translated and their accuracy verified by three professors of Applied Linguistics at Shahreza Azad University. Second, two independent raters (a TEFL professor and a PhD holder) analyzed 20% of the transcripts to confirm consistency in interpretation. Finally, to enhance data credibility, a Farsi version of the instruments was used for data collection. Dependability was further strengthened by having two colleagues familiar with the data analysis process re-code 20% of the interviews. The inter-rater reliability coefficient for this process was .95.

### Data Analysis

Quantitative data were examined utilizing SPSS software (version 22). An independent sample t-test was performed on self-regulation surveys. Subsequently, a similar analysis was conducted for the effectiveness of flipped learning procedure. Theme analysis was conducted to scrutinize the focus group interview questions to evaluate EFL learners' perspectives on the flipped learning setting. P-value less than 0.05 was considered significant.

### Results

As mentioned before, prior to the start of our research, a grammar production pretest was administered to the groups. The results of the descriptive statistics of the pretest in grammar are represented in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics of Pre-Test in Grammar Production*

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Skewness
<b>Control</b>	29	8.50	10.00	10.92	1.61	-.317
<b>Experimental</b>	29	9.00	11.00	11.10	1.45	-.272

Table 1 indicates that the means of the treatment group in pre-test ( $M = 11.10$ ,  $SD = 1.4$ ) and control ( $M = 10.92$ ,  $SD = 1.6$ ) group are to some extent the same. Both groups showed moderate variability in their scores, with the control group having a slightly higher standard deviation (1.61) than the experimental group (1.45). This indicates that the scores in the experimental group were more consistent. After the treatment in the form of mobile-mediated scaffolding strategy in the flipped classroom, a posttest in grammar production was used (Table 2).



**Table 2**  
*Descriptive Statistics of Post-Test in Grammar Production*

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Skewness
<b>Control</b>	29	13.50	26.00	21.72	1.24	-.272
<b>Experimental</b>	29	19.00	39.00	34.86	1.53	-.284

According to Table 2, the experimental group's mean score ( $M = 34.8$ ,  $SD = 1.5$ ) was greater than the control group's ( $M = 21.7$ ,  $SD = 1.2$ ). The experimental group had a significantly higher mean score (34.86) compared to the control group (21.72). This substantial difference suggests that the mobile-mediated flipped scaffolding classroom approach had a considerable positive effect on the participants' grammar production skills. However, to determine if this difference is statistically significant, an independent samples t-test was conducted. Both groups showed low variability in their scores, with the control group having a slightly lower standard deviation (1.24) than the experimental group (1.53). This indicates that the scores in both groups were fairly consistent, though the experimental group had a bit more variation. However, an independent samples t-test was performed to see if this difference is statistically significant. The normality of the data is a crucial t-test presumption. The data can be deemed regularly distributed, because the significant values (Sig) in the normality test were larger than 0.05. The results of the t-test are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3**  
*Results of Independent Samples T-Test in Grammar Production*

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				t-test for Equality of Means				
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
<b>Equal variances assumed</b>	1.307	.003	9.21	56	.000	4.166	.42853	Lower 3.3088	Upper 5.0244
<b>Equal variances not assumed</b>			9.21	51.4	.000	4.166	.42853	3.3065	5.0267

The independent samples t-test results are shown in Table 3. There is a statistically significant difference between the groups, according to Levene's test for homogeneity of variance ( $F(1, 56) = 1.307$ ,  $p = .256$ ). The investigation continues, though, because the t-test is typically resilient to deviations from normalcy. The statistical analysis reveals that the mean scores of the two groups on the grammar production post-test differ, as indicated by the significant t-test statistic ( $t(56) =$



9.21,  $p < .001$ ). The treatment group fared better than the control group, as shown by the means (treatment group:  $M = 34.8$ , control group:  $M = 21.7$ ). This finding allows us to reject the null hypothesis, which stated that there would be no difference between the groups in their post-test grammar production scores. In other words, the mobile-mediated flipped scaffolding strategy appears to be effective in improving EFL learners' grammar production skills ( $p < .05$ ).

The second null hypothesis intended to test the effectiveness of mobile-mediated flipped scaffolding strategy on the self-regulation of EFL learners. To this end, two administrations of the self-regulation questionnaire were compared. Table 4 shows the descriptive statistics of the learners on the pretest of self-regulation prior to the main study.

**Table 4**  
*Descriptive Statistics of Pre-Test in Self-Regulation*

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
<b>Pretest Self-Regulation</b>	Experimental	29	199.32	4.32	.681
	Control	29	196.91	4.27	.663

Table 4 shows that both the experimental group's ( $M = 199.3$ ,  $SD = 4.3$ ) and the control group's ( $M = 196$ ,  $SD = 4.5$ ) means are comparable to SR. On the SR pretest, it can be said that the means of the experimental and control groups are quite similar. After the treatment, a posttest in SR was used (Table 5).

**Table 5**  
*Descriptive Statistics of Post-Test in Self-Regulation*

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
<b>Pretest Self-Regulation</b>	Experimental	29	234.11	5.16	.621

Table 5 shows that although the experimental group's SR mean ( $M = 234$ ,  $SD = 5.1$ ) in the posttest is higher than the control group's ( $M = 210$ ,  $SD = 5.1$ ), an independent samples t-test was necessary to preserve the means' statistical significance. One of the underlying assumptions for doing t-tests is the notion that the data ought to be distributed consistently. Based on the results of the normality analysis, it can be assumed that the data was normally distributed in SR because the Sig values are more than the significance threshold (.05). To find out if there was a difference between the two groups, a t-test was used. The results of an independent sample t-test are shown in Table 6.

**Table 6**  
*Results of Independent Samples T-Test in Self-Regulation*

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.	Std. Error Diff.	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
								Lower	Upper	
Equal variances assumed		2.338	.130	1.9	29	.047	21.780	11.27	-.6508	44.212
	Equal variances not assumed			2.3	29	.027	21.780	9.326	2.615	40.945

The self-regulation score independent samples t-test results are displayed in Table 6 (insert real table number here). There is a slight difference between the groups,

according to Levene's test for homogeneity of variance ( $F(1, 56) = 2.33, p = .047$ ). While this suggests potential heterogeneity, the t-test is generally robust to such violations, so the analysis proceeds. The t-test for the pre-test scores is not statistically significant ( $t(56) = .67, p = .508$ ), indicating no initial difference in self-regulation between the groups. However, the post-test scores show a significant difference ( $t(56) = 5.42, p < .001$ ), with the treatment group ( $M = 234$ ) scoring higher than the control group ( $M = 210$ ). This finding allows us to reject the null hypothesis, which stated that the mobile-mediated flipped scaffolding strategy would have no effect on self-regulation in writing classes ( $p < .05$ ). In other words, the intervention appears to have positively impacted learners' self-regulation skills.

The second phase of the research explored the perspectives of learners in the treatment group, who outperformed the control group in both grammar production and self-regulation. The first interview question asked participants to describe their experiences in the mobile-mediated flipped scaffolding class. All interviewed students ( $n = X$ ) commented favorably on the positive and engaging classroom atmosphere. One student, Sarah (19 years old), explained:

*In my opinion, a mobile-based course design likely enhances student engagement (prefers phones) and reduces teacher burden (eliminates textbook exercises).* (Sarah, 19)

This quote implies an interactive classroom setting increased learner motivation and engagement (potentially due to reduced pressure) compared to traditional textbook-based methods.

Another student, Parmida (17 years old), echoed this sentiment:

*The class highlights enjoyment and motivation with the mobile-mediated flipped scaffolding approach in EFL classes. This suggests the strategy's effectiveness in engaging young adult learners (prefers novel tools).*

Furthermore, some students found the mobile-mediated flipped scaffolding method engaging and effective in learning English as a foreign language. This suggests that the program may be successful in promoting positive attitudes towards EFL learning. The responses of two of the students (Melika, 18 years old and Sahar, 14 years old) were as follows:

*The mobile-mediated flipped scaffolding was comprehensive, in my opinion, such courses are also interesting and motivating for children; it is great to have class in your cell-phone.*

*In my idea, this method of instruction was wonderful and useful, especially in the Corona Virus pandemic, when the students had to pass the courses at high schools, institutes, or universities.*

The interviewed participant brought reasons such as comprehensiveness of the course as well as its interesting nature that made mobile-mediated flipped scaffolding useful, especially in Corona Virus pandemic.

All of students found the mobile-mediated flipped scaffolding approach engaging and effective. They reported that it improved their motivation and ability to learn various language skills, such as pronunciation. The interactive and collaborative elements of the mobile platform were seen as particular strengths of the approach.

Overall, the students' perceptions of the mobile-mediated flipped scaffolding approach were positive. They found it to be an enjoyable and effective way to learn English.

### **Discussion**

This study investigated the effectiveness of mobile-mediated flipped scaffolding (MMFS) on Iranian EFL learners' grammar production and self-regulation in writing classes. Quantitative data analyses were conducted to address the research questions. The findings showed that the grammar production null hypothesis was rejected ( $p < .05$ ). On the post-test, the treatment group (MMFS) did better than the control group, suggesting that MMFS instruction significantly improves EFL learners' writing abilities. While this study demonstrates significant positive effects of mobile-mediated flipped scaffolding (MMFS) on Iranian EFL learners' grammar production and self-regulation, it is crucial to acknowledge the study's limitations that may impact the generalizability of these findings.

Convenience sampling, which was employed due to the specific context of a private language school in Tehran, limits the ability to generalize beyond this specific learner population. Iranian EFL learners' familiarity with technology and their preferences for self-directed study may have influenced the outcomes positively but might not be applicable universally. Future studies should consider diverse learner demographics and educational settings to enhance the external validity of these findings. This finding aligns with research suggesting that teacher mediation, when implemented as a scaffolding tool within a mobile learning context, can reduce learner anxiety and enhance performance in sub-skills like grammar. The integration of scaffolding with MALL (Mobile Assisted Language Learning) may

create a supportive learning environment that fosters both cognitive and affective development (socio-emotional learning) (Soozandehfar, 2021). Furthermore, the familiarity of Iranian EFL learners with technology and their potential reliance on self-study may have contributed to the positive outcomes. These findings are consistent with previous studies that highlight the benefits of technology-enhanced learning environments for developing language skills and sub-skills (Kamali et al., 2018; Şendurur & Yildirim, 2018; Wang, 2010). Compared to traditional methods, MALL offers advantages such as learner autonomy and the ability to adjust the pace of learning (Orhan, 2023; Hodges, 2008). Blended learning environments, which combine elements of traditional and online instruction, can empower learners to take charge of their own learning process (Hodges, 2008).

The flipped classroom concept aligns theoretically with self-regulated learning, student-centered learning, mastery-based learning, and active learning (Zou et al., 2020), potentially contributing to the positive outcomes observed in this study. These approaches all emphasize student autonomy and control over the learning process. Several studies within the reviewed literature highlight these features (Bicen & Beheshti, 2019; Shyr & Chen, 2018). However, research also suggests that student success in flipped classrooms can be influenced by individual differences, such as language beliefs, preferred teacher characteristics, and personal circumstances (Hao, 2016).

The second research question investigated the impact of mobile-mediated flipped scaffolding (MMFS) on Iranian EFL learners' self-regulation in writing classes. Similar to the grammar production results, the null hypothesis for self-regulation was rejected ( $p < .05$ ). The treatment group (MMFS) scored significantly higher than the control group on the self-regulation post-test. This implies that learners' self-regulated learning abilities are positively impacted by MMFS education. These results are consistent with studies showing that, in comparison to traditional settings, technology-enhanced learning environments can support self-regulated learning (e.g., Persico & Steffens, 2017). The potential benefits of MMFS for self-regulation may stem from several factors including:

- Increased Learner Autonomy: MMFS can empower learners to take more control over their learning pace and approach (e.g., Hodges, 2008).
- Enhanced Metacognitive Skills: The process of planning, monitoring, and evaluating learning inherent in MMFS may contribute to the development of self-regulation skills (e.g., Zohar & Barzilai, 2015; Zou et al., 2020).

It is important to acknowledge that the familiarity of Iranian EFL learners with technology and their potential reliance on self-study may be additional factors influencing the results. However, further research is needed to explore these possibilities in more detail.

Schunk (2005) emphasizes the contextual nature of self-regulated learning (SRL) development and implementation. When teachers provide learners with training in self-regulation strategies prior to a task and scaffold their learning process, students are more likely to engage in help-seeking behaviors and co-regulation with the instructor. This can lead to enhanced learning gains, particularly

in blended learning environments that integrate web-based resources with face-to-face instruction, when the explicit goal is to foster SRL skills (Bernacki et al., 2011). Traditional learning environments may not adequately prepare students for the high degree of self-regulation demanded in some contexts (Orhan & Ay, 2017). In contrast, online learning and Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) environments offer advantages in this regard. Because students can control the pace and process of their learning in these environments, they are empowered to take charge of their learning (Orhan & Ay, 2017; Hodges, 2008).

Online learning environments inherently require and facilitate student self-regulation. Self-regulation is a critical component for success in web-based learning, as it empowers learners to shoulder responsibility for their own learning (Broadbent, 2017). Learners who develop SRL strategies become more intrinsically motivated, approach challenges more effectively, and are better able to regulate their cognition, motivation, and behaviors (Broadbent, 2017). This ultimately leads to improved learning outcomes. Zimmerman (2002) emphasizes that self-regulated learning is a skill that may be acquired rather than a fixed characteristic. By providing effective teaching strategies and fostering supportive learning environments, educators can help students improve their motivation and learning strategies.

The final research question explored participants' perceptions of the mobile-mediated flipped scaffolding (MMFS) experience. Over 90% of interviewed students found the MMFS course to be useful and engaging due to its interactive and enjoyable atmosphere. This finding is particularly relevant considering the shift to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, some students also mentioned slow internet speed in Iran as a potential disadvantage of the MMFS approach. These student perceptions regarding online learning align with existing research. Several studies (e.g., Dalilan, 2021; Ozudogru & Hismanoglu, 2016) have investigated student attitudes towards online learning environments, finding generally positive perceptions similar to those reported by the students in this study. Additionally, research suggests that students often hold favorable views of web-based language learning (Modhish & Al-Kadi, 2016). In terms of learning outcomes, the current study's findings regarding achievement gains are consistent with research indicating that flipped learning can improve student success (Cleary, 2020; Smallhorn, 2017; Zhang et al., 2019).

The practical implications of MMFS for educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers are substantial. By integrating scaffolding principles with mobile technology, MMFS can foster learner autonomy, engagement, and proficiency development in grammar and self-regulation. Educators can leverage these findings to design blended learning environments that support diverse learning styles and promote independent learning strategies. Policymakers could consider investing in technology infrastructure and teacher training to facilitate effective implementation of MMFS in educational settings, thereby enhancing overall educational outcomes.

To summarize, understanding the potential of various learning environments, as well as how to integrate new technology in a technology-enhanced environment to promote students' independent learning, is extremely beneficial. The findings will be influential and applicable to teachers and stakeholders in order to

equip learning environments with new resources and MALL guidance to help learners develop this essential trait and become more independent and accountable in their own learning. In conclusion, this study contributes to the growing body of research supporting the effectiveness of MMFS in enhancing grammar production and self-regulation skills among Iranian EFL learners. By addressing the identified weaknesses, future research can build upon these findings to further explore the nuances of MMFS implementations, compare them with traditional methods, and deepen our understanding of the theoretical foundations underpinning effective language learning strategies in technology-enhanced environments. Educators and policymakers are encouraged to leverage these insights to foster innovative learning environments that empower learners and optimize educational outcomes in diverse linguistic and cultural contexts.

### **Conclusion**

This study concluded that mobile-mediated flipped scaffolding instruction has a significant positive impact on EFL learners' writing performance and learners' self-regulated learning skills. This finding aligns with research suggesting that teacher mediation, when implemented as a scaffolding tool within a mobile learning context, can reduce learner anxiety and enhance performance in sub-skills like grammar. Over 90% of interviewed students found the course to be useful and engaging due to its interactive and enjoyable atmosphere. This finding is particularly relevant considering the shift to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, some students also mentioned slow internet speed in Iran as a potential disadvantage of the mobile-mediated flipped scaffolding strategy.

The findings will be influential and applicable to teachers and stakeholders in order to equip learning environments with new resources and MALL guidance to help learners develop this essential trait and become more independent and accountable in their own learning. Pedagogical implications drawn from this study suggest that integrating mobile-mediated flipped scaffolding can significantly enhance both grammar production and self-regulation skills among Iranian EFL learners. Educators can leverage this strategy to create interactive and engaging learning environments that foster independent learning and reduce learner anxiety in language classrooms. Addressing infrastructure challenges, such as internet connectivity issues, will be crucial for optimizing the effectiveness of mobile-mediated flipped scaffolding implementations in diverse educational settings.

There are some limitations to this study. The use of convenience sampling from a specific private language school in Tehran limits the generalizability of the findings to other EFL learner populations in different contexts. Furthermore, participants mentioned slow internet speeds as a potential disadvantage of the strategy, which could have influenced their learning experiences and outcomes. While quantitative data were robustly analyzed, the study could have benefited from a more extensive exploration of participants' perceptions and experiences with this study via different data gathering tools such as questionnaires. Addressing these limitations and pursuing these avenues for future research will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of mobile-mediated flipped scaffolding's applicability, challenges, and potential benefits in enhancing language learning

outcomes among EFL learners. To summarize, understanding the potential of various learning environments as well integrating new technology in a technology-enhanced environment to promote students' independent learning is extremely beneficial.

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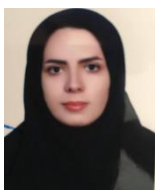
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## **Toward Designing Education 4.0 Competency-Based ESP Curriculum (E4CEC) in the Context of Iranian Education: The Challenges and Opportunities**

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### **Abstract**

Developing students' various competencies and skills of the Fourth Industrial Revolution has posed serious challenges for university students. However, only a few studies have been carried out regarding incorporating project-based learning activities that integrate general education and Fourth Industrial Revolution competencies as an education 4.0 project-based ESP curriculum (E4PEC). Therefore, this exploratory mixed-methods study has been carried out to develop a Medical English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course that is in line with a specific academic institution's curriculum, in order to understand how students perceived the challenges and benefits of studying Medicine based on E4PEC. A total of 64 fourth-year medical majors, 46 females and 18 male students at Najafabad Islamic Azad University in Iran, participated in the study. Cronbach's Alpha test was run to test the reliability of the questionnaires' items in order to explore students' perceptions of the challenges and benefits of E4PEC. Regarding their perceptions of the benefits, it was found that all five categories received the students' positive attitudes. More specifically, most of the students perceived that PBL brought the benefits of fostering language and content knowledge and skills, and enhancement of self-responsibility and personal qualities. The study findings suggest that the E4PEC-based ESP medicine courses were more beneficial than challenging for the students and had the potential to improve students' utilization and development of technology, communication, critical thinking and analysis, creativity, and problem-solving skills. Nevertheless, issues with peers frequently surfaced, including a lack of digital and research skills, as well as difficulties with both hard and soft skills. This study provides implications for the integration of E4PEC into ESP medical classes in Iranian higher education and other similar educational contexts.

**Keywords:** education 4.0, project-based curriculum, ESP, opportunities, challenges

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## **Introduction**

In the twenty-first century, soft skills such as critical thinking, cooperation, communication, and creativity, sometimes known as the four Cs, are in great demand in any setting and for any type of job (Van Laar et al., 2020). As a result, those abilities are critical for people to master, and the most effective way to do so is through educational resources (Lawati & Khan, 2023). Additionally, English teachers are responsible for cultivating critical thinking in learners, beyond helping them progress from one academic level to the next. They should design critical thinking-focused syllabi that lead to the development of critical thinking in language learners (Yazdankhah et al., 2021). Project-based learning (PBL) can facilitate the enhancement of the four C's—communication, collaboration, critical thinking and problem solving, creativity and innovation—essential skills for the twenty-first century, as evidenced by research from the Buck Institute for Education (BIE) (Önür & Kozikoğlu, 2020). This approach aligns with both past and present curricula that prioritize scientific methodologies and the genuine assessment of learning outcomes through techniques such as observation, inquiry, exploration, association, and communication. Although PBL has its genesis in medical education, a brief telescopic view of the literature in the last 30 years reveals that it is now widely used in different disciplines (Alemi et al., 2021). The PBL model can therefore act as a bridge to this. In reaction to this situation, the Education 4.0 Project-Based ESP Curriculum (E4PEC) integrates the 4Cs framework by promoting PBL as a key instructional model for educators.

PBL is strongly advocated as it empowers students to enhance their communication skills, collaborate effectively with peers to accomplish tasks, engage in critical thinking to address challenges, and foster creativity (González- pérez & Ramírez- montoya, 2022). Project-based learning (PBL) is recognized as an effective pedagogical strategy that allows students to assess their skills and competencies. This approach significantly fosters students' creativity and critical thinking abilities (Sumarni & Kadarwati, 2020). As a result, PBL can have a profound effect on students' understanding of various subjects and enhances their preparedness for future employment (Gary, 2015). Furthermore, PBL not only engages students and equips them for higher education, career paths, and civic responsibilities, but it also aids them in fulfilling academic standards and excelling in assessments that necessitate critical thinking and comprehensive knowledge (Dias & Brantley-Dias, 2017). Additionally, research by Manurung (2018) indicates that PBL can significantly boost students' creative learning processes.

At the university level, PBL emphasizes the active exploration and development of knowledge and skills, aligning seamlessly with the fundamental principles of PBL (Lasauskiene & Rauduvaite, 2015). The authors further elaborate that the results of PBL are extensively outlined, addressing various aspects such as student motivation, preparedness for college, career trajectories, civic involvement, and supporting students in achieving their goals while excelling in challenging



assessments. However, based on the authors' observations, implementing PBL in higher education presents considerable obstacles. A majority of students, whether enrolled in undergraduate or graduate programs, tend to be more familiar with traditional educational approaches. These conventional methods often involve tasks such as completing assignments derived from lectures, summarizing content, and engaging in group discussions focused on specific topics or course materials. As a result, students encounter challenges in fulfilling their project requirements as they do not fully engage in realizing their potential (Almulla, 2020).

Moreover, despite the implementation of PBL, the acquisition of English in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classes continues to face several challenges. A significant obstacle is the prevalent use of traditional lecturing methods by educators, which promotes a unidirectional flow of information from the instructor to the students. This pedagogical approach can severely hinder students' proficiency in the English language, as well as their capacity to communicate effectively and with enthusiasm for specific objectives. Teacher-centered instructional methods create barriers for students striving to achieve targeted English language competencies. Therefore, it is essential to prioritize learning activities that focus on the effective and relevant acquisition of English tailored to specific purposes (Marcu, 2020).

PBL distinguishes itself from conventional teaching methods by emphasizing a student-centered, multidisciplinary framework that mirrors real-life scenarios. In the context of ESP, PBL prioritizes a learner-focused methodology that addresses contemporary issues and practices. The objective of implementing PBL in ESP courses is to enhance students' abilities to employ strategies for effectively addressing the complex challenges they face in their daily lives. This pedagogical approach is grounded in inquiry-based methods that cultivate a genuine interest in topics and issues that resonate with the students' experiences (Guo & Yang, 2012). A significant advantage of PBL is its capacity to foster student engagement in self-directed learning, which is customized to align with their individual interests and requirements (Gary, 2015). This perspective underscores the critical role of constructivist teaching and learning in creating a relevant context for acquiring the English language. Such an approach guarantees that the educational experience is interconnected with real-world situations and the everyday lives of students (Anazifa & Djukri, 2017). The exploration of PBL and ESP has been addressed in various studies, including those carried out by Ergül and Kargın (2014), Anazifa and Djukri (2017), Dias and Brantley-Dias (2017), Guo and Yang (2012), Kim (2020), Almulla (2020), Sumarni and Kadarwati (2020), and Hira and Anderson (2021). However, there is a notable scarcity of research specifically targeting university students within English classes, as the majority of existing studies have concentrated on primary school students and other subjects. Consequently, this study aims to bridge this gap by examining the application of PBL in the context of ESP classes, particularly focusing on students' perceptions. As language educators increasingly acknowledge the significance of engaging students in authentic tasks that reflect

real-world professional scenarios, it becomes essential to comprehend students' attitudes and experiences regarding PBL. The importance of this research lies in its capacity to enhance ESP pedagogy and curriculum development, providing valuable insights into the effective integration of PBL into language instruction to better align with learners' needs and objectives. By clarifying the elements that shape students' perceptions of PBL, educators can refine their instructional strategies to improve learning outcomes and create a more engaging and meaningful educational experience.

Furthermore, the findings of the study of Riazi and Aliasgar (2020) about the curriculum of undergraduate nursing in Iran in compared with the top universities of the world's similar curricula, along with some similarities, show significant differences in the curricula. The lack of skills of nursing graduates was the main concern of the participants. They noted that the curriculum could not motivate students and provided graduates with the necessary understanding, attitude, and skills in their careers, despite the efforts of nursing authorities.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to provide valuable insights for ESP pedagogy and curriculum design. It aims to shed light on the effective integration of PBL into language instruction to better cater to learners' needs and objectives. By identifying the factors that influence students' perceptions of PBL, educators can refine instructional practices to enhance learning outcomes and cultivate a more engaging and impactful learning environment (Syarifah & Emiliyasi, 2019).

### **Method**

The study attempted to address the following research questions:

- 1) What are Iranian ESP students' perceptions about the challenges of the ESP course design based on the education 4.0 project-based curriculum?
- 2) What are Iranian ESP students' perceptions about the effects of the ESP course design based on the education 4.0 project-based ESP curriculum?

### **Participants**

The participants of the current study were 64 fourth-year students (46 females and 18 males) from 2 classes majoring in Medicine at Islamic Azad University, Najafabad Branch in Iran. Their ages ranged from 22 to 25. English for Medical Students is one of the compulsory courses they have to complete to meet the requirements of the undergraduate program.

For selecting the participants, the researchers selected those students who were familiar with competency-based curriculum and 4.0 education. Participation in this study was not mandatory.

## **Instruments and Data Collection**

The current study adopts a mixed-methods design incorporating an open-ended questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. It provided an opportunity for considering different aspects of the problem under study (Kothari, 2004).

First, the open-ended questionnaire was used in this study. Five experts in the field of medical ESP and education 4.0 were invited to establish the content validity of the questionnaires' items. The researchers established four intervals based on the interval coefficient, and the data were interpreted using a Likert-type scale with four categories: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree.

In this study, semi-structured interviews with medical ESP students were used. The questionnaire comprised three sections with forty-four items, grounded on the theoretical framework of ACEC and the exploration of previous studies, designed to capture neutral responses using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". The reliability of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach's alpha, resulting in a reliability index of .653 for 14 items measuring scholars' understanding of challenges and .934 for 37 items measuring scholars' understanding of the benefits of E4CEC.

Additionally, ten volunteers from the two classes were selected for interviews. They were asked a set of standardized questions about their experiences, and their responses were systematically recorded for future investigations. Each interview lasted around 20 minutes.

## **Data Analysis**

Quantitative data from the survey questionnaire were analyzed using SPSS 20.0 software, which computed descriptive statistics such as the percentage, the mean, and the standard deviation.

The qualitative data from interviews underwent content analysis, where the responses were categorized, analyzed, and interpreted based on the research questions and themes. Specifically, C1, C2, and C3 represented environmental, teacher-related, and student-related challenges, respectively. Additionally, B1 to B5 represented benefits related to language and cognitive skills, language abilities, plant-related skills, tone-responsiveness, specific abilities, and internal motivation. Finally, the students were assigned codes from SI-1 to SI-10, and interviews were extracted and coded from SJ-1 to SJ-10 to represent the data.

## **Results**

### **ESP Course Design Challenges**

One of the objectives of this study was to identify the challenges faced by students enrolled in an ESP course in Iran. As Table 1 highlighted, there were various challenges related to the academic environment, teachers, students, language proficiency, cognitive skills, plant-related skills, emotional maturity, and personal development. Overall, the majority of students reported positive experiences, indicating the effectiveness of PBL in ESP classes.

A few students reported facing challenges with the textbook they encountered. The difficulties they encountered, however, remain unspecified. It is essential to address these concerns in a timely and effective manner to ensure that all students can benefit from the resources provided to them.

**Table 1**  
*Descriptive Results on Context-Related Challenges*

No		M	S. D
1	To carry out all the activities needed for the project, e.g., choosing the topic, assigning tasks, or discussing the methods, the students were not given sufficient time.	2.14	.687
2	For implementing the whole project, the students were not given sufficient time	2.06	.560
3	Applying project-based learning for learning ESP was not suitable because students face challenges.	2.34	.648
4	Because project-based learning is a new approach, all the steps and activities were unfamiliar to students, and they faced challenges.	2.69	.639
5	The implementation of the project was too difficult for the students.	2.45	.754
6	Some students faced challenges because too much work is required to implement the project.	2.72	.786

### Challenges of the Teachers

As Table 2 shows, most students reported that their teachers were not responsible for the challenges they faced. These challenges included issues with guidance, attitude, and ability to instruct on project implementation, ESP knowledge, communication ability, and evaluation the work of students.

**Table 2**  
*Descriptive Results on Teachers' Challenges*

No	Items	M	SD
7	Students received little guidance from the teacher during the time for executing the project.	1.97	.992
8	Students were motivated in the implementation of the project by teachers' attitudes toward students' work.	1.84	.801
9	The teacher could not instruct on how to carry out the project.	1.70	.634
10	The teacher did not have enough knowledge of ESP.	1.56	.560
11	The teacher was not able to communicate and assess the students' projects.	1.56	.560

The study's findings indicate that the teacher's responsibilities, behavior, teaching ability, knowledge of ESP, communication, and assessment methods did not pose any problems for the students. The teacher was adept at integrating PBL into the ESP courses. The success of PBL is significantly influenced by the teacher's abilities and characteristics. Both teachers and students need to plan carefully for PBL, as stated by Mikulec and Miller (2011). The students recognized that the educator diligently fulfilled various responsibilities, including outlining the course's objectives and how the project could help them achieve their goals. The teacher's role has shifted from an authoritarian figure to that of a facilitator, coordinator, initiator, and guide, working with students to address challenges related to their ESP knowledge and learning strategies. The teacher can impart English language skills and specialized vocabulary, as well as professional competencies such as analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing information from various sources for the project. Furthermore, the teacher can employ various formative assessment techniques to track the students' progress. The absence of any issues between the teacher and numerous students can be attributed to various factors.

### Challenges of the Students

Table 3 outlines three significant challenges faced by students during the project work: skills, English proficiency, and attitudes. The analysis of the average scores for Items 12, 13, and 14 indicates that more than 50% of the students identified these aspects as challenging. The mean scores for skills, English proficiency, and attitudes were 2.56, 2.63, and 2.84, respectively, with corresponding standard deviations of 0.794, 0.678, and 0.912.

**Table 3**  
*Descriptive Results on Students' Challenges*

No	Items	M	S. D
12	Incompleting the project, the students lacked skills such as discipline, teamwork, and initiative.	2.56	.794
13	Some problems among group members were caused by students' different English proficiency levels.	2.63	.678
14	For the completion of the project, the students' different attitudes toward the project caused problems.	2.84	.912

In Table 3, among the three categories of challenges—context challenges, teacher challenges, and student challenges—the mean score for teacher challenges was the lowest ( $M = 1.72$ ), indicating that most students did not attribute the challenges they faced to the teacher. The mean score for context challenges was 2.40, while that for student challenges was 2.67.

### Benefits of the ESP Class Based on E4CC

Question 2 in the study of ESP classes in the Iranian context specifically focused on examining the perceived advantages of E4CC-based ESP classes among students. The results from the survey and interviews were presented and analyzed below.

### Content Knowledge and Language

As Table 4 indicates, the mean values for Items 1, 2, 3, and 4 were 3.27, 3.05, 3.16, and 3.09, respectively, with corresponding standard deviations of 0.718, 0.677, 0.511, and 0.526. A majority of students expressed that they could leverage the E4CC program in the ESP class to create a product in real-world settings and enhance their understanding of the product production process. The mean values for Items 5 and 6 were 2.95 and 3.16, with standard deviations of 0.547 and 0.541. The students' consistent perspectives were further supported by data gathered from their journals and interviews. For example, SJ-4 stated, "I gained knowledge on the correct pronunciation of ESP words and acquired a plethora of new ESP vocabulary." SJ-6 reported, "I was able to enhance my listening and comprehension skills, while mastering new concepts in medical terminology." In addition, SJ-2 stated, "I have expanded my vocabulary and grammar, particularly after completing the class through project work." Similarly, some students mentioned during interviews that they gained substantial knowledge in medical vocabulary. For instance, SI-3 stated, "I believe I gained more knowledge in vocabulary rather than content knowledge and key terms."

**Table 4**

*Descriptive Results on Language and Content Knowledge*

No	Items	M	S. D
15	I enhanced my general English language knowledge, such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, through the project work.	3.27	.718
16	My ESP vocabulary knowledge was enhanced by the project work.	3.05	.677
17	I benefited from the content knowledge of the project work.	3.16	.511
18	My knowledge of how to do things in real-life working environments was enhanced by the project work.	3.09	.526
19	I created a product in real-life working environments through the project work.	2.95	.547
20	My knowledge of the process of producing a paper could be developed through the project work.	3.16	.541

### Language Skills

The findings of the survey presented in Table 5 aimed to assess the scholars' proficiency in the four language skills. The results revealed that the

integration of PBL in ESP classes had a positive impact on the majority of the scholars' reading, speaking, and writing abilities (Items 8, 9, 10). The mean scores of 3.17, 3.17, and 3.03, and standard deviations of .680, .656, and .712, respectively, signify the improvement. In addition, over 50% of the participants experienced an enhancement in their listening skills (Item 7), with the mean score of 2.69 and the standard deviation of .794. The scholars had ample opportunities to apply all four skills.

**Table 5**  
*Descriptive Results on Language Skills*

No	Items	M	S. D
21	I improved my English listening skills through the project work.	2.69	.794
22	I improved my English reading skills through the project work.	3.17	.680
23	I improved my English speaking skills through the project work	3.17	.656
24	I improved my English writing skills through the project work.	3.03	.712

### Skills of the Workplace

Table 6 demonstrates that scholars' proficiency in plant-related abilities is associated with four key skills: communication, cooperation, interpersonal skills, and problem-solving. Notably, the scholars' cooperation skills displayed significant improvement, which played a crucial role in the successful completion of the project. They effectively communicated their viewpoints while engaging with scholars from diverse backgrounds and preferences (Items 11-14), with average scores of 3.14, 3.163, 3.16, 3.13, and standard deviations of .814, .672, .655, .577, respectively. However, they identified the need to enhance their negotiation, persuasion, collaboration, and time management skills to further develop their communication abilities (Items 15-18), with average scores of 2.81, 2.83, 3.12, 2.80, and standard deviations of .664, .656, .745, .694, respectively.

**Table 6**  
*Descriptive Results on Collaboration and Communication Skills*

No	Items	M	S. D
<b>Collaboration skills</b>			
25	My teamwork skills were enhanced through the project work.	3.14	.814
26	A successful outcome of the project was achieved through good teamwork.	3.16	.672
27	I could make decisions when discussing something with my group members.	3.13	.655
28	I had the chance to work with students of different proficiency levels and preferences.	2.98	.577
<b>Communication skills</b>			
29	My negotiation skills with other group members about something in the project were increased by the project work.	2.81	.664
30	My persuasion skills when working in a group were enhanced through the project work.	2.83	.656
31	My presentation skills were developed in public.	3.12	.745
32	I could finish all my tasks on time with satisfying results because I learned how to manage my time.	2.80	.694

The results presented in Table 7 demonstrate unanimous agreement among scholars that the design work provided significant opportunities for collaboration with other groups, utilization of formal and informal English, and communication with fellow group members.

The mean values and standard deviations for each aspect were as follows: 2.56 (0.639) for collaboration, 2.97 (0.689) for formal and informal language use, and 2.70 (0.659) for communication. However, classmates did not consistently support these interactions, with a mean value of 2.44 (0.639) for Item 22. The mean values and standard deviations for problem-solving activities, exchanging ideas, working in groups, and concluding were as follows: 2.84 (0.511), 2.84 (0.570), 2.83 (0.521), and 2.80 (0.540), respectively.

**Table 7**  
*Descriptive Results on Interpersonal Skills*

No	Items	M	S. D
<b><i>Creativity skills</i></b>			
33	I learned to use a wide range of idea-generation techniques (such as brainstorming) in class.	2.56	.639
34	I learned to elaborate, refine analysis, and evaluate ideas to improve and maximize creative effort.	2.97	.689
35	I enhanced my social skills by meeting and talking to other group members and the instructor.	2.70	.659
36	I learned how to demonstrate originality and inventiveness in work and understand the real-world limits to adopting new ideas.	2.44	.639
<b><i>Problem-Solving Skills</i></b>			
37	I learned how to give solutions to problems arising during the implementation of the project.	2.84	.570
38	I learned how to identify problems arising during the implementation of the problems.	2.84	.511
39	I learned how to conclude from the results of the project.	2.80	.540

### **Personal and Self-Responsibility Skills**

PBL was shown to provide numerous benefits to students. Specifically, design work, encompassing Items 27 and 28, was found to notably enhance students' independence, creativity, and active learning. The average scores for these items were 3.33 and 3.28, with minimal standard deviations of 0.506 and 0.576, respectively. Furthermore, the design work was proven to assist students in exploring their interests and abilities, taking charge of their learning, working independently, and cultivating critical thinking skills. These findings were derived from the scores for Items 29-31, which had the average scores of 3.05, 3.05, and



3.17, with standard deviations of 0.653, 0.628, and 0.680, respectively. All ten students who were interviewed reported that they enhanced their autonomy through the assignments given by their teacher.

**Table 8**

*Descriptive Results on Critical Thinking*

No	Items	M	S. D
40	Enhancing students' sense of responsibility through the project work.	3.33	.506
41	Being more independent, creative, and active learners through the project work.	3.28	.576
42	Giving more opportunities for the students to discover their preferences and qualities through the project work.	3.05	.653
43	Learning how to respect others and be a responsible member of mygroup.	3.05	.628
44	Providing students the chance to learn independently and develop critical thinking skills through the project work.	3.17	.680

### Internal Motivation

As it can be inferred from Table 9, the significance of motivation in students' academic performance when learning a foreign language cannot be overstated. The research demonstrated the substantial impact of motivation on students' learning of ESP. Remarkably, over half of the students expressed their eagerness to participate in the project work, despite not being in complete agreement with every aspect.

**Table 9**

*Descriptive Results on the Problems of Internal Motivation*

No	Items	M	St. D
45	My interest was increased by the project work because it was fun, motivating, and challenging.	2.77	.611
46	I could get familiar with a real-life workplace by executing projects, and the classroom brought enjoyment.	2.75	.535
47	My attitudes toward ESP learning were changed by the project work.	2.84	.597
48	To participate in English class activities, the project work made me happy.	2.66	.597
49	learning ESP was not so difficult for me and it was shaped for me by the project work.	2.48	.563
50	I learned something good for my future job from the project work.	3.03	.597

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

The results of a recent study showed that students faced two main challenges when they were adjusting to the PBL approach: getting used to the PBL approach itself and managing the workload associated with it (Items 4 and 6). These findings align with previous research by Devkota et al. (2017), which suggested that students may find PBL difficult because they are more familiar with traditional teaching methods. Despite this, the PBL approach is often considered more interactive and engaging than traditional methods/approaches, and it can improve students' progress in language and technical knowledge, as well as their communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. However, students who are used to traditional teaching may find it less challenging to attend teacher-directed ESP classes than to engage in inquiry-based literacy. In inquiry-based literacy environments, students are expected to take charge of conducting their own investigations/research (Kirschner et al., 2006). These challenges are not impossible to overcome, and the findings of the study support Thomas's (2000) assertion that design work involves complex tasks and that the team-based literacy (TBL) approach requires students to be actively involved in the literacy process and to take responsibility for their own knowledge and skill development (Funke, 2022). The study also revealed that the students received significant support from their teachers and did not encounter any major obstacles during the project. In summary, despite the common occurrence of teacher-related challenges during project work, the students in this study recognized the instrumental role of their teachers' support and guidance in their success. Additionally, the text highlights two students' opinions expressing appreciation for the support they received from their teachers.

Also, the study showed a significant number of the students encountered difficulties related to their competencies, English language proficiency, and attitudes. In ESP courses, students face considerable pressure to produce tangible real-world outcomes, necessitating the acquisition of both linguistic and substantive knowledge and skills. This lack of skills was particularly evident among the students taking the "English for Medical Students" course for the first time. Additionally, differences in English proficiency and inadequate group work skills resulted in collaboration issues for less proficient students when working in groups of four, while more proficient students were at risk of shouldering all the work and becoming discouraged. The study highlighted a lack of awareness on the teacher's part regarding students' self-efficacy, autonomy, learning styles, and skill levels, leading to an inadequately organized class. Among the challenges faced by students were the low English language skills, the lack of skills among peers, and a negative attitude towards PBL in medical course projects.

Based on the quantitative and qualitative data provided, it can be inferred that E4CC's ESP class has significantly contributed to the students' improvement in both general and specialized English knowledge, as well as their content knowledge. Moreover, it has effectively equipped students with valuable skills that can be directly applied in real-world work settings. PBL has been identified as an effective method for promoting the development of language, content, and skills simultaneously, according to the findings of the study cited earlier (Beckett & Slater,

2005; Stoller, 1997). Scholars in the field of ESP recognize the importance of learning through systems to prepare students for the challenges of their future careers in real-life work environments. The study conducted by Huzairin et al. (2018) has revealed that ESP classes based on PBL have a positive impact on students' knowledge and proficiency. Through collaborative group work and problem solving, students engage in language-rich interactions that facilitate content negotiation and co-construction. This process leads to the development of both language and content knowledge, resulting in enhanced learning outcomes.

The study underscores that PBL is an effective approach to enhancing students' language skills, vocabulary, and overall English proficiency. PBL offers abundant opportunities to practice listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English. These findings are consistent with previous research conducted by Farouck (2016) and Efendi (2017). Various PBL activities, such as presenting, interviewing, researching, and answering questions in English, help students gain a better understanding of their language learning needs, as identified by Beckett (2002). Moreover, students' performance in English is reported to be superior in a PBL setting, as indicated by Kelsen (2004). As PBL requires the use of English as the primary language for completing the curriculum, particularly in reading, speaking, and writing, it is a valid approach for enhancing English language proficiency and may be more effective than traditional instructional methods, as supported by Moss & Van Duzer (1998), Thomas (2000), Rousova (2008), and Ke (2010). Nonetheless, the study revealed that students lacked sufficient listening resources beyond teacher lectures and peer presentations. Indeed, the scholars' research significantly contributed to the development of advanced collaboration and communication capabilities. Their project work provided a platform for them to apply and refine their technical skills, which, in turn, enhanced their understanding of complex problem-solving processes. This experience was particularly beneficial in cultivating their ability to thrive in a team-oriented environment, where effective cooperation and communication are vital for success.

In the educational approach known as PBL, scholars employ a constructivist teaching method to collaboratively address and tackle problems. PBL facilitates the acquisition of crucial skills such as communication, problem-solving, cooperation, and interpersonal skills, as demonstrated in the study carried out by Musa et al. (2012). Through group projects or product creation, PBL equips scholars with teamwork capabilities and enhances their cooperation skills. During the design process, scholars have the opportunity to engage in goods exchange, negotiate with peers, and develop other skills that can be invaluable in real-life situations, as evidenced in Rousova's (2008) study. Consequently, ESP classes based on E4CEC impart 21st-century skills such as communication, cooperation, and problem-solving as well as language and content knowledge.

Research indicates that involvement in design work can have a positive impact on researchers' accountability, autonomy, and specific abilities. This conclusion was based on the average scores of five specific areas, as well as the insights from interviews with researchers. The study's claim that the design work can nurture learner independence is consistent with the findings of Yuliani and

Lengkanawati's (2017) research. Researchers engaged in creating plant-related designs tend to become more proactive, self-assured, self-reliant, and productive in generating and articulating ideas. PBL can help researchers progressively enhance their abilities and prepare them for the future, improving both their English language proficiency and social skills, and offering them a wide range of opportunities (Lam, 2011). Through participating in design work, researchers can develop attributes similar to those required in real-world work environments, such as patience, open-mindedness, discipline, and accountability, which can assist them in achieving success in their careers (Fried-Booth, 2002).

The study highlights that PBL plays a crucial role in boosting students' motivation to learn English, in line with the findings of Shin's (2018) study. Participation in PBL can transform students' attitudes toward learning ESP by involving them in classroom activities, inspiring them to create projects with potential future career benefits, and fostering their active engagement in the learning process. The study further emphasizes that integrating PBL in ESP classes offers several advantages for students, including enhanced language and content knowledge, language skills, teamwork, communication, interpersonal and problem-solving abilities, personal responsibility, and internal motivation. The research also aimed to explore the impact of PBL on students' motivation for ESP. The study found that PBL positively influenced students' motivation, with over half of them showing a strong interest in participating in the project work. These results are consistent with Shin's (2018) study, which also emphasized the positive impact of PBL on student motivation. Engaging in PBL can change students' attitudes toward learning ESP, encouraging them to be more attentive in class, actively participate in the learning process, and take pride in creating things that they believe will benefit their future careers. The findings suggest that incorporating PBL in ESP courses has led to various benefits for students, including improved language and content comprehension, language abilities, collaboration, communication, interpersonal and critical-thinking skills, self-reliance, individual attributes, and intrinsic motivation.

The objective of this study was to investigate the benefits, along with the challenges involved in designing an ESP course through the Education 4.0 ESP class in the Iranian context. The study revealed that the students faced several difficulties related to their peers, learning environment, teachers, and fellow learners. However, all groups of the students had positive experiences and believed that PBL improved their language skills, knowledge, responsibility, and other abilities. The teachers found PBL to be an effective teaching approach that enhances students' language and professional skills. ESP courses equip students with both language and subject knowledge, essential for success in professional settings.

Developing an ESP course based on the Education 4.0 faculty-grounded ESP class can be challenging for both educators and students. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers have a clear understanding of the stages, tasks, and criteria to be implemented during the design process. Additionally, students with lower language proficiency should be given adequate support to prevent them from feeling overwhelmed. Furthermore, increased collaboration between teachers and students is highly recommended, as PBL is still new to Iranian learners. Effective

group work and the competencies required for collaborative tasks should be explicitly guided by ESP teachers, as students encountered challenges when working in groups during the design process.

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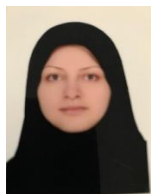
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## **The Impact of Multimodal Feedback on Writing Complexity, Accuracy, and Fluency of Iranian EFL Learners in Flipped and Traditional Classrooms**

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### **Abstract**

This quasi-experimental research examined multimodal feedback impacts on writing complexity, accuracy, and fluency (CAF) of Iranian EFL learners in flipped and traditional classrooms. Hence, 57 Iranian EFL learners from two different language institutes at Babol City were recruited and divided into four groups, including two experimental groups of flipped classroom plus multimodal feedback and traditional classroom plus multimodal feedback and two control groups of a flipped classroom plus monomodal (text-written) feedback and traditional classroom plus monomodal (text-written) feedback. Pretest and posttest were used to elicit information on the learners' writing CAF. Experimental groups received multimodal feedback, and control groups received monomodal feedback during 12 weeks (24 sessions). According to the results obtained from one-way analysis of multivariate (MANOVA), providing multimodal feedback significantly improved students' writing performance. Furthermore, using multimodal feedback via a flipped teaching model significantly influenced EFL learners' writing CAF, suggesting that foreign language educators could effectively employ multimodal feedback primarily via flipped instruction to improve writing performance in intermediate EFL learners. The study results were discussed and some suggestions were given.

**Keywords:** traditional classroom, flipped classroom, multimodal feedback, writing CAF

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## **Introduction**

Although English language learners are exposed to a vast array of written texts, the cognitive demands of producing their own written work often prove to be a formidable obstacle, hindering their progress in writing proficiency development (Hyland, 2019). Additionally, writing involves generating, organizing, and translating ideas into coherent text, which leads to difficulties for many foreign language learners (Faradhibah & Nur, 2017). Despite the various attempts to improve students' writing abilities, there has been no alteration in implementing the traditional writing curriculum in numerous institutions (Wen & Walters, 2022).

There has been a recent development in teaching writing and providing feedback that has demonstrated positive outcomes (Noordin & Khojasteh, 2021). Technology development has greatly affected language instruction and the application of technology-based instruction and feedback has expanded teachers' ability to create inventive approaches and methods to assist language learners' writing skills (Nourinezhad et al., 2021). Technology has also played a significant role in flipped classrooms by preparing interactive activities, problem-solving experiences, and collaboration by facilitating learners' access to pre-recorded materials (Fathi & Rahimi, 2022). Moreover, technology-based instruction is increasingly common in English language classes. It might be safe to say that almost all students possess smartphones and need preparation for technology integration into education and its impact on academic achievement (Kashefian-Naeini & Sheikhezami-Naeini, 2020).

As far as flipped classroom is concerned, it can enable learners to watch videos before class time and again, facilitating the class time allocation to learning activities (Hao, 2016; Lee & Wallace, 2018). Flipped classroom inverts the traditional model by placing learning exercises in the classroom and lectures at home (Wilson, 2013). Flipped classroom, as described by Abeysekera and Dawson (2015, p. 2), revolves around "moving tasks in time and space", indicating that traditional learning activities are rearranged. Lectures typically delivered in class are accessed by students outside of class time. Thus, classroom time is dedicated to activities that solidify their understanding, such as exercises and discussions.

Alongside the innovative flipped classroom model, multimodal feedback has emerged as a modern approach to provide student feedback. The sound, image, text, and animation incorporation empower educators to establish dynamic and engaging learning contexts that foster interactive dialogue. This instructional method offers new possibilities for enriching teaching and learning experiences (Martin, 2020). Multimodal feedback can enhance course design by structuring learning opportunities effectively, improving content clarity for all students, and recognizing the diverse ways students engage with information. This approach values students' varied communication skills and encourages their active participation in the learning process (Martin, 2020). Multimodal choices in modern learning technology sparkles a change in writing. Language learners use images, videos, and emoticons to build meaning (Hafner, 2014).

Even though technology-based feedback is increasing across various fields of study and education, including literacy (Camiciottoli & Campoy-Cubillo, 2018), online language teaching (Satar & Wigham, 2017), and traditional language classroom settings (Engman, 2021), appraising the function of multimodal feedback in writing performance is under-researched (Chang et al., 2017). Although there are studies on the effects of the multimodality of communication through computers on language learners' writing performance (Nourinezhad et al., 2021; Ziegler, 2016), there is inadequacy on how multimodality might help with feedback when teaching writing in a second language (Chang et al., 2017; Mousavi & Kashefian-Naeeni, 2011).

This study sought to fill this gap by studying multimodal feedback effects on foreign language learners' writing complexity, accuracy, and fluency (writing CAF) in flipped and traditional classrooms. Moreover, we intended to demonstrate how the combination of multimodal feedback and flipped or traditional classroom enhance students' writing performance. Considering the previously raised discussion, we embarked on answering the questions below:

1. Does multimodal feedback affect EFL learners' writing CAF significantly in flipped classrooms?
2. Does multimodal feedback affect EFL learners' writing CAF significantly in traditional classrooms?
3. Does applying multimodal feedback make any differences between EFL learners' writing CAF in flipped and traditional classrooms?

## **Literature Review**

### ***Multimodal Feedback***

Multimodal Feedback provides feedback for users in multiple sensory channels such as visual, auditory, and written forms (Jacko et al., 2004). Zhang' (2018) study of EFL learners over an eight-week period through diaries and follow-up interviews displayed that participants expressed favorable attitudes toward screencast feedback application for writing. Additionally, Cavaleri et al. (2019) employed a longitudinal mixed-methods design to investigate the impact of written and recorded audio-visual feedback on second language learners. An analysis of 80 papers from 20 undergraduate students indicated higher effectiveness of audio-visual feedback for 15 students. Written feedback worked better for three students and two benefited equally from both methods. Moreover, a study by Afshinfar and Shokouhifar (2016) conducted on advanced Iranian EFL learners confirmed the significant positive effects of written corrective feedback, with explicit feedback proving more effective than implicit feedback. Also, Sherafati et al. (2020) inspected the computer-generated and teacher-generated digital feedback effects on L2 learners' writing skills, indicating significant improvements in the writing abilities of the experimental groups receiving computer-mediated teacher feedback. In line with

these findings, Sadeghi et al. (2013) also examined the impact of different types of corrective feedback on EFL learners' writing, revealing that direct corrective feedback led to significantly better writing performance compared to indirect feedback.

In a comparative study of audio-visual feedback and teachers' written comments on Iranian EFL learners' essays, Tajallizadeh Khob and Rabi (2014) reported that the audio-visual comments were successful in both boosting motivation and changing negative learner attitudes. More recently, Nourinezhad et al. (2021) studied the audio-visual feedback effects on L2 learners' writing components (e.g., vocabulary, organization, content, sentence mechanics, and language use) in flipped and traditional instruction, indicating advancement on the writing skills, regardless of instructional style. Despite the similarity, however, the flipped group achieved even better results in all writing components and overall performance.

The research presented underscores the efficacy of audio-visual feedback in enhancing EFL learners' writing abilities. Tajallizadeh Khob and Rabi's findings (2014) highlight its positive impact on motivation and attitude, while Nourinezhad et al. (2021) demonstrate its effectiveness in improving various writing components. Notably, the latter emphasizes the potential synergy between audio-visual feedback and flipped classrooms for optimized learning outcomes. These studies collectively suggest that integrating audio-visual feedback into EFL writing instruction can be a valuable strategy for fostering language development.

### **Writing in Flipped and Traditional Classrooms**

A flipped classroom revolves around “moving tasks in time and space” (Abeysekera & Dawson, 2015, p. 2), reflecting the rearrangement of traditional learning activities. Lectures, typically delivered in class, are accessed by students outside of class time, allowing teachers to allocate classroom time to activities that solidify understanding, such as exercises and discussions.

Traditional writing instruction is too rigid and teacher-directed which heavily relies on pre-made materials, such as textbooks and worksheets instead of encouraging creativity and independent learning (Boyras & Ocak, 2017). Moreover, in traditional writing classrooms, teachers pick the skills students learn, often without connecting them to real-world writing situations, which often involves students being physically present together at the same time (synchronous learning) to receive new information (Lee & Wallace, 2018).

Nowadays, students are accustomed to a more engaging and interactive style of education, making traditional methods seem outdated and less effective in capturing their interest (Jony, 2016). Traditional teaching methods often struggle to address the learning challenges of today's generation, suggesting that instructors need to adapt and develop new approaches that cater for students' current interests. This requires exploring alternatives to traditional methods and incorporating innovative elements like video could be a promising way to transform writing classrooms from pen-and-paper environments into engaging and interactive spaces (Mayer, 2009).

On the other hand, flipped classrooms focus on shifting tasks across time and space, seeking to reshape other learning aspects like how instructors deliver content. The theory behind flipped classrooms suggests that social and cultural environments can support or hinder these goals. Specifically, the environment can either promote autonomy and self-motivation in learners, or it can rely on external control. Ultimately, this method seeks to create appropriate conditions to foster a strong internal drive to learn (Nourinezhad et al., 2021).

Fathi and Rahimi (2022) investigated writing skill improvement among Iranian EFL learners in flipped and conventional classrooms. While they found no statistically significant difference in writing complexity and accuracy between flipped and traditional classrooms, their study suggests that the flipped classroom model can enhance overall writing performance by providing students with foundational knowledge through pre-recorded lectures and online resources. This approach frees up valuable class time for collaborative activities such as brainstorming, peer review, and individualized teacher feedback, which can contribute to improved writing skills. However, further research is needed to definitively establish the impact of flipped classrooms on specific writing outcomes.

### **Complexity, Accuracy, and Fluency (CAF) in EFL Writing**

The origin of the CAF goes back to the 1980s, when researchers first distinguished between fluency and accuracy of a second language to understand how well students were developing their L2 proficiency. Brumfit (1984) argued that activities designed for fluency helped students develop spontaneous production, while accuracy-oriented activities focused on the form. In the 1990s, complexity was added to the existing idea of fluency and accuracy based on Skehan (1991) who proposed a model where CAF became the three major L2 proficiency aspects. Complexity reflects the variety and density of structures a learner uses (Ellis, 2009). This can include using a broader spectrum of grammatical structures, even if they are not yet wholly mastered. Examples include using conjunctions to connect ideas and incorporating subordinate clauses into sentences (Skehan, 2009). Accuracy refers to how closely the learners' spoken or written language (interlanguage) matches the target language rules, highlighting their abilities (Skehan, 2009). Finally, fluency indicates the learner's ability to speak or write fluently and naturally, with minimal interruptions. This can involve prioritizing the flow of communication over perfect grammar (meaning over form). Ideally, fluency allows learners to express themselves with native-like speed (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). Many researchers use the concept of CAF to evaluate the impact of different factors on a learner's writing skills. This approach allows them to assess various aspects of writing performance, beyond just grammatical accuracy (Fathi & Rahimi, 2022; Marlowe & Asaba, 2022).

### **The Present Study**

This research has employed the cognitive theory of multimedia learning (CTML) developed by Mayer (2009) to assess the instructional efficacy of videos and images used in writing classes for feedback. Following this hypothesis, based on how the human mind functions, learning can be more effective and meaningful

when it involves multimedia instructions. According to Paivio's (1979) dual coding theory, which forms a critical component of the CTML, a combination of visual and auditory channels would assist learners in learning more deeply than just using words or pictures (Mayer, 2005).

In flipped classrooms, the use of videos and images that students watch would enable writing teachers to make their writing classes more engaging for learners through interaction with each other (Berrett, 2012). According to Mayer's (2009) developed CTML, presentations through monomodal feedback (here, for instance, receiving written feedback) would not have the same impact on learning that multisensory mode teaching would (Coffman, 2011). While some studies (Fathi & Rahimi, 2022; Nourinezhad et al., 2021) praise the flipped classroom method, there are not many resources exploring how effective it is for EFL learners in writing classes while using multimodal feedback.

Learning is not just a product of lectures; it is developed when we receive feedback. Traditional written feedback in classrooms can be limiting. Thanks to the powerful computers and software, students can get detailed spoken feedback outside of class, which can clear up any confusion caused by written comments or marks (Perkoski, 2017). Meanwhile, multimodal feedback goes even further. Imagine an instructor explaining concepts in a video, combining visuals with their voice. This personalized approach, combining visuals and conversational tone, makes learning more engaging, especially for students new to English (Cavaleri et al., 2019).

## **Methodology**

### **The Study Design**

This paper explored the impacts of multimodal feedback on L2 learners' writing CAF through a quasi-experimental design. The multimodal feedback formed the independent variable and EFL learners' writing complexity, accuracy, and fluency made up the dependent variables. Flipped and traditional methods of teaching were moderator variables. The researcher applied one-way analysis of Multivariate (MANOVA) to answer the research questions. Hence, four groups of Kish Air and Safir Goftehan Institutes in Babol were used: experimental group 1: flipped classroom plus multimodal feedback (14 participants), experimental group 2: traditional classroom plus multimodal feedback (14 participants), control group 1: flipped classroom plus monomodal (text-written) feedback (14 participants), and control group 2: traditional classroom plus monomodal (text-written) feedback (15 participants). To achieve the research objectives, the above-mentioned 57 students' writing scores were utilized to investigate multimodal feedback effects on students' writing CAF. Pretest data were collected at the early semester to establish a baseline. Post-test data collection and analysis were conducted following a 12-week period to determine the multimodal feedback effectiveness. The pretest and post-test data collection was conducted utilizing the learners' argumentative paragraphs.

### **Participants**

The participants in this study were 57 male and female Iranian language learners at Safir-e-Goftehan and Kish Air Institutes of Babol city with an average

age of 20 years old. Their proficiency level was intermediate, as assessed by the University of Michigan Examination for the Certificate of Competency in English (ECCE). All the participants were Persian language speakers. All participants provided informed consent before participating in the study and were recruited through convenience sampling (Dornyei, 2007).

### **Instruments**

Five instruments were utilized in this research to gather the needed data.

#### ***University of Michigan Examination***

Sixty-five students enrolled in an intermediate-level English language course were invited to participate in this study. After obtaining informed consent from all participants, 57 students agreed to participate. University of Michigan Examination for the Certificate of Competency in English (ECCE) was administered to all participants to confirm their intermediate English proficiency level. This test consists of 100 items in the form of paper-and-pencil, focuses on vocabulary, grammar, and reading (GVR) sections with one score for every single item (max = 100), and requires 80 minutes for completion. Participants took part in this exam at the outset of the term and prior to the experimentation. No participants were excluded based on their proficiency level, as all were assessed to be at an intermediate level. All 57 participants attended all sessions of the study and there were no instances of participant loss or refusal to continue participation.

#### ***EFL Learners' Writing Tasks***

To gather the pretest data, learners produced an argumentative writing on the topic, "Is there a correlation between excessive social media usage and negative mental health outcomes? If so, what strategies can mitigate these adverse effects?" at the beginning of the semester. After three months (12 weeks), post-test data were collected from the same group of learners, who were then asked to write on the topic, "Is online learning as effective as traditional classroom education and how should it be integrated into the educational system?" The topics were chosen based on their relevance to current societal issues and the participants' familiarity with these topics through their daily lives and media consumption.

The researchers explained to the managers of the institute the importance of writing in learning English and the pitfalls seen in the works of learners in spite of attending writing classes. Therefore, the study was approved by the institution's IRB. Data collection was conducted during regular class time, minimizing disruption to the academic schedule. Collected data was anonymized and securely stored to protect participant confidentiality.

#### ***Weblog Created by the Researcher***

The flipped classrooms utilized pre-recorded video writing tasks as instructional materials, uploaded to a weblog created by the researcher. These videos ranged from 10 to 20 minutes in length. The videos presented specific writing prompts, such as analyzing a short story, writing a persuasive essay, or creating a creative narrative. To complete these tasks, students were instructed to:



- Watch the video: Students watched the video to understand the prompt and any relevant background information.
- Plan their writing: Students developed a plan for their writing, outlining their main points and organizing their ideas.
- Write the draft: Students wrote a draft of their response, focusing on clarity, coherence, and grammar.
- Revise and edit: Students reviewed their draft, making necessary corrections and improvements.
- Submit their work: Students submitted their final draft via email.

The weblog was designed to provide students with accessible learning materials prior to class sessions.

### ***Academic Writing Coursebook***

Zemach and Rumisek (2003) "From Paragraph to Essay" was taught to improve the EFL learners' writing proficiency. The researcher used this book as the coursebook to teach participants how to improve their academic writing skills as EFL learners in all the groups. The book includes a workbook, precise exercises, targeted lessons, and ample practice opportunities, all of which assist students in developing their academic writing confidence. The units' tasks come with grades. Furthermore, this book focuses on students with intermediate level of English proficiency. Students first practiced recognizing and identifying crucial writing structures from sample paragraphs and essays. They then performed quick and short tasks on the structures. Last but not least, they used the structures in their writing. Students had the option of working individually, collaboratively, or in groups. The same materials from the course book and the workbook were administered to the four groups so that each group received parallel writing instruction to guarantee the findings' validity and reliability. In other words, the textbook was held constant for the four groups, so the internal validity of the research was not at risk.

### ***Measures of Writing CAF***

A list of measures presented by Fathi and Rahimi (2022) was employed to investigate writing CAF. The measures are provided below:

**Table 1**  
*Measures for Writing CAF*

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Measures</b>
<b>Complexity</b>	Words per clause (W/C)
	The dependent clause to clause ratio (DC/C)
<b>Accuracy</b>	Error-free Clauses (EFC/C)
	Error-free T-units (EFT/T)
<b>Fluency</b>	Number of T-units (NT)
	T-unit Length (TL)



## **Procedure**

### ***Experimental Group 1: Flipped Classroom Plus Multimodal Feedback***

Students in this group were trained for 12 weeks using the received flipped instruction. They watched the related videos on various writing-related topics from the book “Paragraph to Essay” written by Zemach and Rumisek (2003) at home via weblog created by the researcher and then came to class ready to apply what they learned through activities. Students could discuss the materials and chat online. The instructor of this academic writing course gave the students various writing assignments to complete during class. As part of their task, the students had to write the assignments at home; handwritten assignments were not permitted, and they had to turn in their completed assignments electronically via Email to the researcher. Each student received multimodal feedback from the writing instructor individually through the Eitaa app.

### ***Experimental Group 2: Traditional Classroom Plus Multimodal Feedback***

This group of students received traditional instruction, but they also used the Eitaa app to receive multimodal feedback on their tasks. The traditional method of instruction involved teaching every topic that the flipped group discussed (writing-related topics from the book “Paragraph to Essay” mentioned before). PowerPoint slides were utilized to present video content, rather than videos, followed by providing students with some homework to do at home. They were trained for 12 weeks like the other groups.

### ***Control Group 1: Flipped Classroom Plus Monomodal (Text-Written) Feedback***

Students in this group were trained for 12 weeks using the same instruction as experimental group 1. They watched the related videos on various writing-related topics from the book “Paragraph to Essay”, at home via weblog created by the researcher and then came to class ready to apply what they learned through activities. Students could discuss the material and chat online. The instructor of this academic writing course gave the students various writing assignments to complete during class. As part of their task, the students had to write the assignments at home; handwritten assignments were not permitted, and they had to turn in their completed assignments electronically via Email to their writing instructor. Writing instructor provided monomodal (text-written) feedback to all students separately via Microsoft Word and sent it to them through their Email.

### ***Control Group 2: Traditional Classroom Plus Monomodal (Text-Written) Feedback***

This group was supplied with traditional instruction like experimental group 2 but also received monomodal (text-written) feedback for their assignments via Microsoft Word. The traditional instruction covered similar content with the flipped classroom group (writing-related topics from the book “Paragraph to Essay”). PowerPoint slides were utilized to present video content, rather than videos, followed by providing students with some homework to complete at home. They were trained for 12 weeks like the other groups. Each student received separate monomodal (text-written) feedback by the writing instructor via Microsoft Word and through their Email.

## Results

The main results are reported below while checking and retaining the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variances and covariance matrices. Table 2 shows the four groups' means on pretests of words per clauses (WC) and ratio of dependent clauses to clauses (DCC), based on which the groups showed homogenous means. Both WC and DCC were found to be related to complexity.

**Table 2**

*Mean, Standard Deviation and 95 % Confidence Intervals of WC and DCC Pretests by Group*

Dependent Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
PreWC	Flipped Multimodal	14	8.143	1.562	7.220	9.066
	Traditional Multimodal	14	9.714	1.383	8.791	10.638
	Flipped Monomodal	14	9.071	1.979	8.148	9.995
	Traditional Monomodal	15	8.533	1.885	7.641	9.425
PreDCC	Flipped Multimodal	14	.354	.117	.301	.408
	Traditional Multimodal	14	.294	.128	.240	.347
	Flipped Monomodal	14	.351	.097	.298	.405
	Traditional Monomodal	15	.297	.031	.246	.349

Table 3 further supported the close means reported in Table 2. The results of MANOVA revealed no significant differences between the four groups' means on complexity: a) the WC pretest ( $F(3, 53) = 2.20$ ,  $p = .098$ ,  $\eta^2 = .111$ ) and b) the DCC pretest ( $F(3, 53) = 1.57$ ,  $p = .205$ ,  $\eta^2 = .082$ ).

**Table 3**

*Tests of Between-Subjects Effects of WC and DCC Pretests by Group*

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III SS	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	$\eta^2$
Groups	PreWC	19.644	3	6.548	2.207	.098	.111
	PreDCC	.047	3	.016	1.579	.205	.082
Error	PreWC	157.233	53	2.967			
	PreDCC	.526	53	.010			
Total	PreWC	4651.000	57				
	PreDCC	6.545	57				

Table 4 shows the four groups' means on posttests of WC and DCC. The results of MANOVA (Table 5) indicated significant differences between the four groups' means DCC; however, the mean differences on WC were not significant.

**Table 4**

*Mean, Standard Deviation and 95 % Confidence Intervals of WC and DCC Posttests by Group*

Dependent Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
PostWC	Flipped Multimodal	14	9.786	1.477	8.958	10.613
	Traditional Multimodal	14	10.643	.929	9.815	11.470
	Flipped Monomodal	14	10.214	1.528	9.387	11.042
	Traditional Monomodal	15	9.200	2.007	8.400	10.000
	Flipped Multimodal	14	.425	.099	.364	.486
PostDCC	Traditional Multimodal	14	.422	.170	.361	.483
	Flipped Monomodal	14	.302	.048	.241	.363
	Flipped Multimodal	15	.327	.104	.268	.386

Table 5 presents MANOVA results aimed at probing into the first research question, highlighting significant differences between the four groups' means on DCC ( $F(3, 53) = 4.46, p = .007, \eta^2 = .202$ ). It was however revealed that no significant differences were reported between their means on the WC posttest ( $F(3, 53) = 2.30, p = .087, \eta^2 = .116$ ).

**Table 5**

*Tests of Between-Subjects Effects of WC and DCC Posttests by Group*

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III SS	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	$\eta^2$ Eta Squared
Group	PostWC	16.514	3	5.505	2.309	.087	.116
	PostDCC	.173	3	.058	4.460	.007	.202
Error	PostWC	126.329	53	2.384			
	PostDCC	.685	53	.013			
Total	PostWC	5783.000	57				
	PostDCC	8.587	57				

Before discussing the results of MANOVA for accuracy tests, it is worth noting that the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variances and covariance matrices were checked and retained. Table 6 shows the four groups' means on pretests of error-free clauses (EFCC) and error-free T-units (EFTT), revealing homogenous means on these pretests. Both EFCC and EFTT are directly related to accuracy, as they measure the proportion of error-free elements (clauses and T-units) in the texts.

**Table 6**

*Mean, Standard Deviation and 95 % Confidence Intervals of EFCC and EFTT Pretests by Group*

Dependent Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
PreEFCC	Flipped Multimodal	14	.800	.105	.741	.859
	Traditional Multimodal	14	.785	.124	.726	.844
	Flipped Monomodal	14	.780	.096	.721	.839
	Traditional Monomodal	15	.756	.115	.699	.813
PreEFTT	Flipped Multimodal	14	.546	.054	.519	.574
	Traditional Multimodal	14	.536	.057	.509	.564
	Flipped Monomodal	14	.539	.048	.511	.567
	Traditional Monomodal	15	.529	.048	.502	.556

Table 7 further supported the close means presented in Table 6, highlighting no significant differences between the four groups' means on accuracy: a) the EFCC pretest ( $F(3, 53) = .397, p = .755, \eta^2 = .022$ ) and b) the EFTT pretest ( $F(3, 53) = .270, p = .847, \eta^2 = .015$ ).

**Table 7**

*Tests of Between-Subjects Effects of EFCC and EFTT Pretests by Group*

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	$\eta^2$
Group	PreEFCC	.015	3	.005	.397	.755	.022
	PreEFTT	.002	3	.001	.270	.847	.015
Error	PreEFCC	.649	53	.012			
	PreEFTT	.142	53	.003			
Total	PreEFCC	35.326	57				
	PreEFTT	16.626	57				

Table 8 shows the four groups' means on posttests of EFCC and EFTT. The results of MANOVA (Table 8) indicated significant differences between the four groups' means EFCC and EFTT.

**Table 8**

*Mean, Standard Deviation and 95 % Confidence Intervals of EFCC and EFTT Posttests by Group*

Dependent Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
PostEFCC	Flipped Multimodal	14	.900	.098	.861	.939
	Traditional Multimodal	14	.889	.089	.850	.928
	Flipped Monomodal	14	.802	.036	.763	.841
	Traditional Monomodal	15	.832	.050	.794	.870
PostEFTT	Flipped Multimodal	14	.603	.053	.563	.643
	Traditional Multimodal	14	.616	.038	.576	.656
	Flipped Monomodal	14	.605	.050	.565	.645
	Flipped Multimodal	15	.507	.122	.469	.546

Table 9 shows the results of MANOVA which compared the groups' means on posttests of EFCC and EFTT in to appraise the second research questions. Table 9 further supported the close means reported in Table 8. The results of MANOVA revealed significant differences between the four groups' means on accuracy: a) the EFCC posttest ( $F(3, 53) = 5.79, p = .002, \eta^2 = .247$ ) and b) the EFTT posttest ( $F(3, 53) = 6.74, p = .001, \eta^2 = .276$ ).

**Table 9**

*Tests of Between-Subjects Effects of EFCC and EFTT Posttests by Group*

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III SS	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	$\eta^2$
Group	PostEFCC	.092	3	.031	5.792	.002	.247
	PostEFTT	.113	3	.038	6.744	.001	.276
Error	PostEFCC	.280	53	.005			
	PostEFTT	.296	53	.006			
Total	PostEFCC	42.083	57				
	PostEFTT	19.677	57				

Before discussing the results of MANOVA for fluency, it is worth noting that the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variances and covariance matrices were checked and retained. Table 10 shows the four groups' means on pretests of number of T-units (NT) and T-unit length (TL), revealing homogenous means on these pretests. Both NT and TL are directly related to fluency, as they measure the quantity and length of language production, with higher values indicating more fluid and sustained speech or writing.

**Table 10**

*Mean, Standard Deviation and 95 % Confidence Intervals of NT and TL Pretests by Group*

Dependent Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
PreNT	Flipped Multimodal	14	17.714	3.074	16.193	19.236
	Traditional Multimodal	14	18.000	2.774	16.478	19.522
	Flipped Monomodal	14	18.357	2.560	16.836	19.879
	Traditional Monomodal	15	19.067	2.915	17.597	20.537
PreTL	Flipped Multimodal	14	15.929	1.207	15.187	16.670
	Traditional Multimodal	14	15.357	1.216	14.616	16.099
	Flipped Monomodal	14	15.500	1.092	14.759	16.241
	Traditional Monomodal	15	15.467	1.846	14.750	16.183

Table 11 shows the results of MANOVA which compared the groups' means on pretests of NT and TL. The analyses were carried out to show that the groups were homogenous in terms of their NT and TL. These results further supported the close means presented in Table 10, highlighting no significant differences between the four groups' means on fluency: a) the NT pretest ( $F(3, 53) = .618, p = .607, \eta^2 = .034$ ) and b) the TL pretest ( $F(3, 53) = .270, p = .847, \eta^2 = .015$ ).

**Table 11**

*Tests of Between-Subjects Effects of NT and TL Pretests by Group*

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III SS	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	$\eta^2$
Group	PreNT	14.925	3	4.975	.618	.607	.034
	PreTL	2.659	3	.886	.463	.709	.026
Error	PreNT	427.005	53	8.057			
	PreTL	101.376	53	1.913			
Total	PreNT	19527.000	57				
	PreTL	13907.000	57				

Table 12 shows the four groups' means on posttests of NT and TL. The MANOVA results (Table 13) highlighted significant differences between the four groups' means NT and TL.

**Table 12**

*Mean, Standard Deviation and 95 % Confidence Intervals of NT and TL Posttests by Group*

Dependent Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
PostNT	Flipped Multimodal	14	21.603	3.184	20.348	22.858
	Traditional Multimodal	14	20.214	1.578	18.959	21.469
	Flipped Monomodal	14	18.429	2.738	17.174	19.684
	Traditional Monomodal	15	18.067	1.438	16.854	19.279
PostTL	Flipped Multimodal	14	17.357	1.447	16.617	18.097
	Traditional Multimodal	14	16.643	1.151	15.903	17.383
	Flipped Monomodal	14	15.286	1.326	14.546	16.026
	Flipped Multimodal	15	15.867	1.552	15.152	16.582

Table 13 shows the results of MANOVA which compared the groups' means on posttests of NT and TL to examine the third research question. Table 13 shows the MANOVA results, revealing significant differences between the four groups' means on NT ( $F(3, 53) = 7.04, p = .000, \eta^2 = .258$ ) and the TL posttest ( $F(3, 53) = 6.03, p = .001, \eta^2 = .255$ ).

**Table 13**

*Tests of Between-Subjects Effects of NT and TL Posttests by Group*

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III SS	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	$\eta^2$
Group	PostNT	115.787	3	38.596	7.042	.000	.285
	PostTL	34.490	3	11.497	6.032	.001	.255
Error	PostNT	290.485	53	5.481			
	PostTL	101.019	53	1.906			
Total	PostNT	22195.334	57				

## **Discussion**

This study compared multimodal feedback effects on EFL students' writing CAF, seeking to discover how the complexity, accuracy, and fluency of EFL students' writing would be altered following multimodal feedback for 12 weeks. The results revealed a significantly greater CAF increase in the writing of learners receiving multimodal rather than monomodal (text-written) feedback. Further, it was indicated that using multimodal feedback via flipped teaching model significantly contributed to EFL learners' writing CAF.

The research findings provide compelling support for Mayer's Multimedia Learning Theory. The significant improvement in writing complexity, accuracy, and fluency observed in the experimental groups can be attributed to the synergistic effects of the multimodal feedback in conjunction with the flipped classroom.

**Cognitive Load:** The multimodal nature of the feedback, incorporating both visual and auditory elements, potentially reduced cognitive load by distributing the processing of information across multiple sensory channels. This allowed learners to focus more on the content of the feedback rather than struggling to process the information itself.

**Dual Coding:** The combination of written comments, audio recordings, and video demonstrations facilitated dual coding, as proposed by Mayer. By presenting information in both visual and auditory formats, learners could create multiple representations of the concepts, leading to deeper understanding and better retention.

**Coherence Principle:** The feedback was carefully structured to ensure coherence and avoid extraneous material. The sequential presentation of information and the apparent connections between the different components of the feedback potentially enhanced learner understanding.

**Modality Principle:** Using both visual and auditory modalities in the feedback was consistent with Mayer's modality principle. By providing information through multiple sensory channels, learners could create more robust mental representations of the concepts.

**Redundancy Principle:** While not explicitly tested in this study, the absence of redundant information in the feedback potentially contributed to the observed learning gains. By avoiding redundant presentations of the same information, learners could focus on the main feedback aspects.

**Spatial Contiguity Principle:** The spatial arrangement of the elements within the feedback may have also influenced learning outcomes. While not explicitly manipulated in this study, future research could explore how the spatial arrangement of visual and auditory elements affects learning.

**Temporal Contiguity Principle:** The temporal synchronization of the visual and auditory elements in the feedback may have contributed to better learning outcomes. By presenting the visual and auditory information simultaneously, learners could more easily integrate the two sources of information.

The first question focused on whether multimodal feedback would affect EFL learners' writing CAF particularly in flipped classrooms. As highlighted by the results of Table 5, the flipped classroom groups considerably outperformed the traditional groups in posttest writing scores. Multimodal feedback employed as a treatment in these groups enhanced the participants' writing CAF, being in tandem



with the finding of Nourinezhad et al. (2021), reporting that learners' writing components, i.e. organization, vocabulary, content, sentence mechanics, and language use, enhanced using audio-visual feedback. However, the difference is that this study has investigated writing CAF not writing components. The results also show consistency with those of Sherafati et al. (2020) who echoed the advantages of using computers to give feedback in writing classes. As revealed, learners had significant enthusiasm for using computer-mediated feedback, but the flipped instruction was not considered in their study.

The multimodal feedback effects on writing CAF in the flipped classroom were significant in this paper. Consequently, the instructor's comments in different modes (text, image, video) were more effective via flipped instruction. These findings corroborate previous research on the efficacy of audiovisual and computer-aided feedback. For example, Mardian and Nafissi (2022) asserted that learners reached self-independence in grammatical knowledge through text-based online chatting. However, they merely focused on grammatical knowledge rather than the writing CAF.

Regarding the second research question, which investigated whether multimodal feedback affected EFL learners' writing CAF significantly in traditional classrooms, as can be seen in Table 9, the results related illustrated higher post-test mean scores for writing complexity, accuracy, and fluency in the traditional group than their equivalents in the pretest, revealing the effective enhancement of the participants' writing CAF using multimodal feedback.

Irrespective of teaching method, these findings align with other studies like Cavaleri et al. (2019) who found that conversational tone, spoken explanations, multimodal style, and personalized feel of the audio-visual feedback would enhance students' involvement in the feedback, especially those who did not speak English as their first language. Tajallizadeh Khob and Rabi (2014) also focused on the audiovisual feedback's significance as a means of providing participants with an incentive medium and boosting their motivation. Iranian EFL learners were given audiovisual feedback instead of the typical textual feedback. The results showed that meaning-focused audiovisual feedbacks were not only good at making students more motivated to write, but also at altering their negative perceptions of writing, which could encourage students to keep up their efforts and advance their English language education.

The third research question focused on whether applying multimodal feedback would make any differences between EFL learners' writing CAF in flipped and traditional classrooms. According to the results depicted Table 13, the flipped classroom groups significantly outperformed the traditional groups in all writing CAF, as measured by post-test scores, endorsed significant enhancement of the students' writing CAF through a combination of multimodal feedback and flipped instruction. In traditional classrooms, students often lack the opportunity to review writing instructors' comments and guidance outside of class time, making it difficult for them to understand the revision process and apply feedback effectively. This study investigated this issue by comparing four groups. The flipped groups consistently performed better, suggesting that additional resources and explanations outside the classroom could significantly improve students' writing skills. Though there are no comparable studies to compare our results with, we can say that the results of our study align with those of Thai et al. (2017), investigating the flipped classroom impact on learning performance not the writing. The results of our third

research question are in line with those of Fathi and Rahimi (2022), examining the flipped classroom effects on writing CAF and showed that the flipped classroom approach to writing enables students to acquire core concepts like essay structure or grammar through pre-recorded lectures or online resources.

### **Conclusion**

This paper examined the multimodal feedback effects on writing CAF among EFL learners in both flipped and traditional classroom settings. The findings revealed that multimodal feedback groups, particularly in flipped classrooms, significantly outperformed traditional text-based feedback groups. Integrating visual and auditory elements in multimodal feedback contributed to a more engaging and practical learning experience, leading to improved writing outcomes.

While the findings were promising, the research also encountered some certain limitations. The small sample size and focus on institute-level learners may limit the generalizability of the results. Additionally, relying on numerical data collection methods may have hindered deeper insights into student experiences and preferences. Future research should consider the following recommendations to address these limitations and further explore the potential of multimodal feedback.

Future research should aim to include larger sample sizes and more diverse populations to enhance the generalizability of the findings across a broader range of learners. Additionally, investigating individual student preferences for various types of feedback can help educators tailor their instructional approaches more effectively.

Multimodal feedback should also be explored in a variety of language learning contexts, extending beyond institute-level EFL learners to encompass other educational settings. To ensure the successful implementation of multimodal feedback and flipped classrooms, professional development programs are essential for equipping teachers with the necessary skills and strategies.

Finally, adequate technological infrastructure and resources must be provided in educational institutions to support these innovative approaches, enabling their seamless integration into teaching and learning practices.

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## **Teachers' Use of Macrostrategies Across Teaching Experience: Impacts on Learners' Motivation**

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### **Abstract**

Although macrostrategies provide a broad framework for effective language teaching, research on how teachers' experience in using these strategies affects students' motivation is scarce. This study aimed to investigate the relationships between teachers' use of macrostrategies and EFL learners' motivation. Meanwhile, it investigated the effect of teachers' experience on the use of these strategies on EFL learners' motivation. To this end, 42 Iranian EFL teachers (21 experienced and 21 novice) and 42 EFL learners were chosen from language institutes in Tabriz and Shahin Dej. The data were collected through the Academic Motivation Scale (AMS) and Macrostrategy Observation Form. The results of the Spearman correlation showed a significant and positive relationship between the use of macrostrategies by teachers and their students' motivation. Meanwhile, Mann-Whitney U test revealed a significant difference in motivational levels between students taught by experienced teachers and those taught by novice ones. These findings have important implications for EFL teachers, EFL students, teacher educators, and syllabus designers, suggesting that teacher experience may play a key role in motivating learners.

**Keywords:** macrostrategies, motivation, teaching experience, experienced, novice

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## **Introduction**

Teachers are active decision-makers whose behavior in the classroom is directly influenced by their underlying knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs (Ma et al., 2022). Research indicates that teachers' instructional methods (e.g., scaffolding, feedback, level of support) can significantly affect students' motivational, cognitive, and affective characteristics (Urhahne & Wijnia, 2021). Therefore, teachers need to use broader strategies to make their teaching adapt effectively to the changing contexts and conditions of the classroom (Salas & Mercado, 2010). Macrostrategies, defined as overarching strategies that educators implement to engage students and enhance motivation, are essential in structuring effective language learning environments (Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998). These strategies include a variety of techniques including establishing a positive classroom atmosphere, promoting learner autonomy, and fostering group cohesion (Schunk et al., 2008). In the macrostrategic framework, Kumaravadivelu's (2001, 2003, 2006) highlights the significance of considering the socio-cultural, political, and contextual factors in shaping and applying language teaching methodologies. Although existing literature emphasizes the importance of these strategies, the ways in which teachers across different stages of their careers employ these strategies remain under-researched.

Macrostrategies are broad strategies that allow teachers to address students' dynamic needs, enhancing their motivation and active engagement in class activities (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Moreover, motivation is the fundamental aspect of learning that determines the success and the rate of L2 achievement (Csizer & Dörnyei, 2005). It is a multifaceted construct influenced by various factors including instructional methods, classroom dynamics, and the individual characteristics of both teachers and learners (Dörnyei, 2001). Studies show that teachers' usage of motivational strategies promotes students' motivation and participation in language learning contexts. Thus, teachers can use particular motivational strategies that fit their students' needs and their pedagogical setting (Karimi & Hosseini Zadeh, 2019).

Teachers play a main role in enhancing students' motivation by establishing an engaging and supportive learning environment (Aseery, 2024). Research suggests that teacher experience significantly influences instructional practices, including the adoption of motivation-enhancing strategies (Burch, 2016; Tsakiridou et al., 2019). According to Levin and Nolan (2015), experienced teachers mostly have a wide range of strategies that they have obtained through years of classroom experience and reflection. Hence, their flexibility and responsiveness to students' needs often yields higher levels of motivation. On the other hand, novice teachers might rely primarily on theoretical knowledge or prescribed methods and lack the practical insights that come with experience (Rahimi et al., 2016).



Although macrostrategies have a pivotal role in affecting EFL learners' motivation (e.g. Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Moskovsky et al., 2013; Pašalić, 2023), there are few studies to investigate how the use of macrostrategies by experienced and novice EFL teachers differently affect the students' motivation. This gap highlights the need for further exploration, particularly in specific cultural contexts such as Iran where some factors such as teacher-centered classrooms, high-stakes exams, and the emphasis on rote memorization may affect the use of macrostrategies by students (Farhady et al, 2010). Meanwhile, sociocultural norms regarding teacher authority and student autonomy may shape the effectiveness of motivational strategies in ways distinct from other contexts (Amory & Becker, 2023; Lamb, 2007). Thus, to address the existing research gap, this study aimed to investigate how the use of macrostrategies by novice and experienced Iranian EFL teachers' influences EFL learners' motivation. Meanwhile, it examined the relationships between teachers' use of macrostrategies and students' motivation in an EFL context.

## **Review of Literature**

### **Review of Theoretical literature**

#### ***Macrostrategies***

Teachers play a main role in defining and redefining the desired learning outcomes. A teacher's approach to teaching through the use of instructional strategies can significantly affect students' attitudes toward learning (Macalisang & Bonghawan, 2024). Instructional strategies are divided into micro and macro strategies. Macrostrategies determine the whole structure of a unit or lesson, creating the sequence of goals and events while microstrategies are particular strategies used by teachers for specific learning objectives (Williams & Clement, 2015).

A macrostrategy is a general guideline that teachers can use to create their own classroom procedures, need-based and location-specific microstrategies (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Kumaravadivelu (2003) proposed a macrostrategic framework that draws on microstrategies from the empirical and theoretical knowledge of L2 learning to assist teachers in becoming strategic thinkers and strategic practitioners. In other words, macrostrategies are implemented in the classroom through the application of microstrategies. Hence, L2 teachers can benefit from the situated microstrategies and macrostrategies in developing their theory of practice (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). The strategic framework proposed by Kumaravadivelu (2003) includes ten macrostrategies. Some of which are increasing learning opportunities, enhancing learner autonomy, promoting language awareness, integrating language skills, raising cultural awareness, activating intuitive heuristics, contextualizing linguistic input, etc.

Macrostrategy concept is derived from postmethod theory, which focuses on the shift from traditional methods of teaching to a more context-specific and

flexible approach (Kumaravadivelu, 1994). The postmethod pedagogy promotes teacher autonomy and values their beliefs and experiences, hence, promotes a learner-centered education that adjusts to the local contexts (Ahmadian & Erfan Rad, 2014). The postmethod pedagogy has three interrelated parameters of particularity, practicality, and possibility. Particularity as the foundation of the postmethod theory addresses the situational comprehension of the social, linguistic, and political uniqueness in the context of language teaching and learning (Kandel, 2019). In practicality, there is a distinction between teachers' theory and experts' theory. According to Kumaravadivelu (2003), teachers who possess a context-specific pedagogic knowledge should be involved in creating their own theory of practice. In the parameter of possibility, it has been asserted that each pedagogy is located in relations of dominance and power. Hence, each education should take into consideration not only the transmission of knowledge to students but also address the gap between linguistic needs, socio-cultural, and socio-political requirements (Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

Macrostrategies entail the selection of a wide range of instructional strategies which are compatible with the learning objectives, styles and personality traits. Hence, these strategies promote effective learning under the freedom of action and thought (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Some of these strategies include discussion-based learning, cooperative learning, and formative assessment. Each of these strategies can enhance students' motivation by addressing their different needs (Tomlinson, 2014). For example, discussion-based teaching engages students in meaningful conversation through maximizing learning opportunities which is the first principle of macrostrategies framework (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Williams & Clement, 2015). This requires an interactive process since learning as a personal construct is dependent on the students' willingness to participate in cooperative learning activities (Fard & Amirian, 2023; Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Meanwhile, cooperative learning promotes peer interaction and collaboration, which can strengthen students' intrinsic motivation (Augustyniak et al., 2016). Studies show that those instructional strategies that promote students' learning-to-learn ideas and active learning improve their motivation and academic achievement (Pašalić, 2023).

### ***Teachers' Experience and Macrostrategies***

Teaching experience plays a main role in the effective implementation of macrostrategies by EFL teachers (Hosseini et al., 2015; Williams & Clement, 2015). Research suggests that experienced teachers often develop a deeper knowledge of their learners' needs which enables them to use need-specific macrostrategies (Ahmad, 2014). Leite et al. (2020) points out that experienced teachers are usually better at creating a supportive learning environment and using their knowledge to motivate students. Meanwhile, they develop several classroom management procedures and react effectively to unexpected problems and situations. By contrast, novice teachers tend to implement macrostrategies more rigidly, adhering to the

prescribed methods without adapting them to their students' needs (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2015). Generally, teachers gain more confidence and flexibility in their practices as they progress more in their careers. This causes experienced teachers to exhibit a nuanced understanding of how to balance content delivery with student engagement, which is critical for maintaining motivation (Day, 2012).

### ***Motivation***

Motivation is one of the psychological elements contributing to language acquisition and academic achievement (Hamimed, 2024). Studies show that one facet of teachers' competence is to know the strategies of motivating students and to maintain their own motivation for teaching (Bieg et al., 2013; Johnson, 2017). Teachers can improve students' learning motivation by supporting their autonomy and self-efficacy, increasing their language and cultural awareness, and establishing social relevance (Johnson, 2017; Schuitema et al., 2016; Sherafati & Ghafournia, 2019) all of these strategies are considered as macrostrategies as proposed by Kumaravadivelu (2006).

The study of second language motivation began in the late 1950s and became significant in 1970s with the work of Gardner and Lambert (1972). They distinguished between instrumental motivation and integrative motivation. Instrumental motivation is driven by functional purposes and practical reasons for language learning while integrative motivation refers to having positive attitudes toward the target language community and being interested in learning another language in order to become a part of the target language culture and community. Hence, integrativeness indicates not only the attitudes towards foreign language learning and L2 community as a whole, but also the learner's preparedness to communicate with the members of that L2 group (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). The second component of Gardner's (2012) theory of motivation is the students' attitudes towards the learning context. Gardner (2012) believes that, in a classroom setting, this term relates to students' attitudes towards the classmates, teachers, class activities, and all other aspects of the context in which language learning is taking place. Therefore, integrativeness and attitudes towards the learning situation collectively enhance the learners' overall motivation to acquire the language, which will also lead to the learners' enjoyment of learning the language (Gardner, 2012).

Motivational strategies refer to teachers' efforts to promote students' learning motivation by using instructional treatments used by the teacher to stimulate and elicit learners' motivation (Cheung, 2018). Therefore, the motivational teaching method developed by Dörnyei (2001) is one of the most popular taxonomies considering motivational strategies in language learning. The model comprises of four macrostrategies (i.e., creating initial motivation, developing the motivational conditions, promoting positive self-evaluation, and protecting and maintaining motivation), that is divided into 102 particular motivational strategies.

This model provides a detailed and comprehensive picture of motivational strategies that teachers can use in the classroom to motivate their learners.

Teachers' motivational strategies has a positive effect on EFL learners' motivational disposition and goal-oriented behavior (Cheung, 2018). Moreover, second language motivation is the main force that causes learners to maintain the continuous effort necessary for language learning (Moskovsky et al, 2013). Thus, every enjoyable and lively language learning experience requires a motivated teacher who can appropriately engage students in the journey of the language learning process (Tavakoli et al, 2016). It should be mentioned that motivated EFL teachers usually use motivational strategies more thoughtfully and frequently (Lin & Lee, 2025). Hence, the impact of using motivational macrostrategies on EFL learners' motivation can be described with self-determination theory which is a psychological theory of motivation. According to this theory, human motivation is caused by three main psychological factors of relatedness, autonomy, and competence (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Lin & Lee, 2025). Thus, teachers who use macrostrategies related to self-determination elements, can deeply affect students' motivation. For example, by establishing a cooperative learning environment, teachers not only create some opportunities for students to collaborate but also establish a sense of community and belonging that enhances relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2022).

### **Review of Experimental Studies**

A growing body of studies are investigating the different dimensions of using macrostrategies in EFL context. Some studies have examined teachers' beliefs on using macrostrategies and their impact on teacher education, learner autonomy, and local varieties of English (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012; Saad et al, 2024). Al-Mahrooqi et al. (2017) conducted a study on students' perspectives on the frequency and kinds of macrostrategies used by their English language teachers. The participants were 65 EFL students at Oman's public university who answered a questionnaire comprising 48 items, each representing a specific motivational microstrategy, categorized into 10 macrostrategies. The participants believed that teachers mostly were using five motivation macrostrategies including fostering self-confidence, making engaging learning activities, and establishing a positive classroom environment which were correlated with increased levels of motivation. In another qualitative study, Abbasabadi and Shakerkhoshroud (2018) investigated 25 Iranian EFL teachers' use of macrostrategies. The results of the thematic analyses revealed that the teachers used six macrostrategies to motivate learners. They included enhancing learner autonomy, increasing their confidence, recognizing learners' effort, classroom atmosphere, teaching values, and teaching styles. Based on their findings, the researchers pointed out that besides making suitable learning conditions, EFL teachers should use both integrative and instrumental motivation for motivating EFL learners. In another study, Najafi et al. (2023) investigated the

postmethod macrostrategies used EFL teachers in an Iranian context. The data were gathered using a semi-structured interview by 18 Iranian EFL teachers from Kermanshah. The results indicated that EFL teachers preferred to use macrostrategies of operating intuitive heuristics, combining language skills, and situating linguistic input. However, they neglected to use the macrostrategies of social awareness and raising cultural awareness. According to this study, teachers should follow the principles of postmethod theory in the classroom.

Although macrostrategies play an important role in EFL teaching, there are some challenges in using them, especially for novice teachers (Nguyen & Tran, 2024). Research indicates that less experienced teachers often have difficulties in controlling classroom dynamics while trying to implement complex macrostrategies (Stough et al., 2015). Meanwhile, the pressure to cover curriculum content and the lack of institutional support can also limit teachers' focus on motivational aspects of learning (Darling-Hammond, 2007). Additionally, the emphasis on standardized testing in many educational systems has shifted the focus toward the content delivery, at the expense of implementing engaging macrostrategies that promote motivation (Au, 2009). Thus, language teaching/learning environments vary across cultures, conditions, and expectations. To further explore teachers' use of macrostrategies across teaching experience and its effect on learners' motivation in the Iranian context, the following research questions were formulated:

1. To what extent are Iranian EFL teachers' use of macrostrategies associated with their learners' motivation?
2. To what extent does experience significantly affect the motivation of Iranian EFL learners?

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The target population in this study were EFL teachers and learners chosen from six language institutes in Tabriz and Shahin Dej. Attempts were made to select institutes in which the same instructional material was being used during the research period. Hence, two groups of participants participated as follows.

The initial number of teacher participants was 59 female Iranian EFL teachers who had already expressed willingness to participate in the study. Because of some practical constraints (e.g., teachers' availability and cooperation), the researchers could recruit only 42 (21 experienced teachers and 21 novice teachers). The teacher participants were selected on the basis of purposive sampling approach to ensure equal number of novice and experienced EFL teachers. Their age ranged from 23 to 33 and had already completed an institutional teacher training course (TTC) course. The selection of experienced and novice teachers was guided by Rafanan's (2024) recommendations, which define novice teachers as having less

than three years of experience, while experienced teachers typically have five or more years of teaching experience. Additionally, ethical considerations were addressed by getting informed consent from all participants.

Furthermore, 42 intermediate EFL learners, within the age range of 18 to 23 participated in this study. They needed to be enrolled in the current academic year and they were selected based on convenience sampling. A placement test (KET, Cambridge PET, or TOEFL PBT) had already been administered by the selected institutes to ensure the participants' homogenous EFL proficiency level. Each experienced and novice teachers was paired with their respective student to facilitate direct correlation analysis. A sample size of 42 was considered adequate based on the guidelines of Fraenkel et al. (2012) and Gravetter and Wallnau (2017) who argue that 30 participants as a conventional threshold can be adequate for sampling in various research contexts, including correlational studies. All the participants took part in the study voluntarily, and it was clearly explained to them that the principle of confidentiality would be maintained.

### **Instruments**

Two instruments were used in this study as follows:

#### ***Macrostrategy Observation Form***

The researchers developed the macro/microstrategies observation form (M-MSOF) with 26 items to assess the type and frequency of macro/microstrategies that novice and experienced teachers use in EFL classrooms. This researcher-made form was informed by Kumaravadivelu's (2003) six macrostrategies, namely fostering language awareness, contextualizing linguistic input, maximizing learning opportunities, integrating language skills, promoting learner autonomy, and facilitating negotiated interaction. The M-MSOF was validated in a pilot study with 43 teachers prior to the research. Meanwhile, the factor analysis confirmed the use of the M-MSOF as a reliable and valid instrument. The reliability of this questionnaire as measured by  $\alpha$  Cronbach equaled 0.711 which is in an acceptable level. Furthermore, the participants rated their answer on a four point Likert scale from zero (no use) to 4 (full use of strategies). The Persian version of this questionnaire was used in this study to assess the participants' use of macrostrategies.

#### ***Academic Motivation Scale (AMS)***

Academic Motivation Scale (AMS) developed by Vallerand et al. (1992) was utilized to measure the participants' perceptions about the learners' different types of motivation in EFL classes. AMS is a measure of students' self-reported motivational beliefs and it consists of 28 items assessing three dimensions of motivation including extrinsic motivation (12 items), intrinsic motivation (12 items),

and amotivation (4 items). The original French version was translated into English by Vallerand et al. (1992). The dimension of extrinsic motivation consisted of three subscales including introjected regulation ( $\alpha=0.81$ ), identified regulation ( $\alpha=0.83$ ), and external regulation ( $\alpha=0.82$ ). The intrinsic motivation consisted of three subscales including intrinsic motivation to know ( $\alpha=0.84$ ), intrinsic motivation to experience stimulation ( $\alpha=0.86$ ), intrinsic motivation to accomplish ( $\alpha=0.85$ ). The  $\alpha$  Chronbach of the dimension of amotivation equaled 0.79 and the reliability of all subscales ranged between 0.7 and 0.9 that indicates a high internal consistency.

1. This questionnaire was validated in Iranian context by Banijamali et al. (2017) and its reliability was calculated as  $\alpha=0.877$ . For comprehensibility by the EFL learners, the researchers translated the English version of the questionnaire into Persian. Both translation and validation involved expert judgments on the content of the AMS. To achieve both semantic and functional equivalence in translation (Behr, 2016; Harkness, et al., 2010), a panel of two English language experts commented on its relevancy and linguistic congruence. Forward (or one-way) and backward translations were applied in the translation process by the researcher. Forward translation allowed for translating the English questionnaire into Persian. The translated Persian questionnaire was compared with the original English version to find out about any possible ambiguities and discrepancies in words, sentences, and meanings.
2. The AMS was pilot-studied with a group of 19 EFL learners who shared characteristics with the research participants. No adjustments were considered necessary, though. The alpha value above 0.80 for the overall scale indicated acceptable internal consistency, suggesting that the items reliably assess the same underlying construct. The participants answered to this questionnaire on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

### **Procedure**

A combination of correlational method and causal relationships was applied in this study. In the correlational method, the direction of the relationships between the use of macrostrategies by Iranian EFL teachers and EFL learners' motivation was identified and in the causal relationship, the impact of teachers' experience on the use of macrostrategies on EFL learners' motivation was determined. First, all the participants were given some information regarding the study's purpose and procedures. Informed consent was taken in writing from all teachers and EFL learners, ensuring understanding and voluntary participation. Teacher participants were selected on the basis of their willingness to participate and their experience level in teaching EFL, distinguishing between novice teachers and experienced teachers. EFL learner participants were selected from the classes taught by the participating teachers. Each group of learners corresponded to the respective teachers' classes. The two questionnaires of AMS and the macrostrategy questionnaire were distributed to 42 EFL teachers and 42 EFL learners. AMS measured students' motivational beliefs and their degree of extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation, and amotivation. After collecting the data, the data was submitted to SPSS 21 software to be analyzed.

## Results

SPSS version 21 was used to analyze the correlation between Iranian EFL teachers' use of macrostrategies and motivation. Each participant's means of the macrostrategy and motivation scores were calculated. Because the data was ordinal, Spearman's rank-order correlation was used for calculating the correlation between the teachers' use of macrostrategies and the students' level of motivation. Meanwhile, the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test was utilized to calculate the EFL learners' motivational levels in both experienced and novice teachers. Table 1 shows the Spearman correlation between macrostrategies used by EFL teachers and EFL learners' motivation.

**Table 1**

*Spearman's Correlation Coefficient between Macrostrategies and motivation*

		Macro	Motivation
Spearman's rho	Macro	Correlation Coefficient	1.000 .667
		Sig. (2-tailed)	. .000
		N	42 42
	Motivation	Correlation Coefficient	.667 1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000 .
		N	42 42

Regarding the fact that the significance level (Sig) in Table 1 was below 0.05 and the Spearman correlation coefficient was calculated as 0.667, the correlation coefficient was statistically significant at 95% confidence level. This indicates that there is a strong positive relationship between teachers' use of macrostrategies and students' motivation. Hence, as EFL teachers use more macrostrategies, EFL learners' motivation tend to increase. Meanwhile, because the coefficient is larger than 0.5, the teachers' use of macrostrategies has a strong effect on learners' motivation. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) of the two variables of macrostrategies and motivation equaled  $R^2=0.445$  which indicates that 44% of the variance in motivation can be predicted by macrostrategies. Table 2 shows the sum of the ranks in Spearman's correlation coefficient.

**Table 2**

*Ranks of Spearman's Correlation Coefficient*

Ranks				
	Var	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Motivation	1.00	21	25.14	528.00
	2.00	21	17.86	375.00
	Total	42		



To investigate the impact of teachers' experience in increasing the motivation of EFL learners, the means of the scores for experienced teachers and novice teachers were calculated (Table 3).

**Table 3**

*Descriptive Statistics Related to EFL learners' motivation*

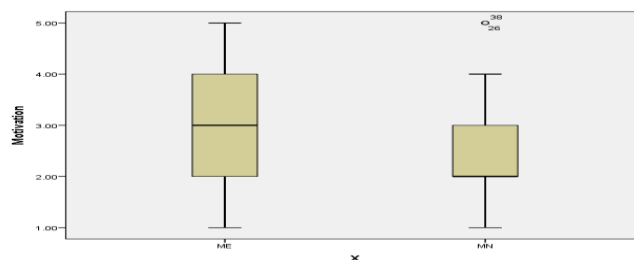
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
ME	21	1.00	5.00	3.2381	1.13599
MN	21	1.00	5.00	2.5714	1.07571

Note: ME=motivation of learners in experienced teachers; MN=motivation of learners in novice teachers

Considering that the mean of the experienced teachers was higher than that of novice teachers, it can be said that experience plays a main role in increasing students' motivation. The box plot related to the motivational level of EFL learners for experienced and novice teachers is shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*Box Plot Related to EFL learners' motivation*



Regarding Figure 1, the median of the EFL learners' motivational scores in the classes of experienced teachers are higher than those of inexperienced teachers, indicating that experienced teachers are more effective in enhancing learners' motivation.

The Mann-Whitney U test was used in this study to examine the significance level of the difference between experienced and novice teachers (Table 4). Non-Parametric Mann-Whitney U test is a non-parametric statistical test that is used to compare the differences between the two independent groups when the data is either ordinal or continuous, and they are not normally distributed.

**Table 4**

*Mann-Whitney U Test for Comparing the Means of motivation in both experienced and Novice Teachers*

	Motivation
<b>Mann-Whitney U</b>	144.000
<b>Wilcoxon W</b>	375.000
<b>Z</b>	-2.001
<b>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</b>	.045

As shown in Table 4, the significance amount (Sig=0.05) is less than 0.05. This shows that the teachers' experience was effective in enhancing EFL learners' motivation at 95% confidence level.

### Discussion

The findings of this study indicated that there was a positive relationship between EFL teachers' use of macrostrategies and EFL learners' motivation. Meanwhile, teaching experience significantly affected the motivational level of EFL learners in a way that the EFL learners taught by experienced teachers had higher levels of motivation. Hence, teachers' use of different kinds of macrostrategies improves EFL learners' motivation (Pašalić, 2023). These results suggest that the deliberate and informed application of motivational macrostrategies, especially when implemented by experienced educators, can play a crucial role in fostering learner motivation in EFL contexts (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). This study aligns with the finding of the studies conducted by Abbasabadi and Shakerkhoshroud (2018) and Moguel et al. (2022) which emphasize the important role of the teachers' behavior and use of macrostrategies in motivating students. According to Ruesch et al. (2012), if language teachers focus on such macrostrategies as creating a positive role model, establishing a supportive classroom environment, increasing students' autonomy, and building a good rapport with students, learners will feel more motivated in the classroom.

Furthermore, the relative effectiveness of macrostrategies can differ on the basis of the teachers' experience because experienced teachers may perform the macrostrategies more efficiently (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Therefore, teachers' experience plays a main role in enhancing EFL learners' motivation through the use of different macrostrategies like maximizing learning opportunities and creating a positive teacher-student relationship (Al-Kadi, 2020; Kumaravadivelu, 2003). According to Patty et al. (2024), a teacher is responsible for fulfilling his duties as an educator in a specific teaching unit based on prior work experience. Meanwhile, teacher effectiveness is highly improved by a combination of motivation and

experience. Kosel et al. (2024) argues that experienced teachers through their improved vision and their elaborated knowledge can identify students' affective and motivational characteristics more accurately than the novice teachers. This, in turn, creates a motivating learning context and leads to an improved student outcome (Ladd & Sorensen, 2017). Therefore, experienced teachers, drawing on their prior knowledge, practical experiences, and deeper understanding of learners, are better equipped to implement the macrostrategies effectively (Can, 2012). Meanwhile, the results of the study conducted by Kaivanpanah and Mohammed (2023) on novice and experienced EFL teachers' beliefs and strategies toward autonomy, which is considered a macrostrategy, showed that teaching experience significantly affects the teachers' attitudes, particularly in relation to psychological factors and the role of students' autonomy in learning. Experienced teachers emphasized more on the importance of improving EFL learners' motivation and confidence. Meanwhile, they took a holistic perspective of learner autonomy and adapted their teaching methods accordingly. This may be attributed to their experience in different contexts in which these factors played a main role in promoting students' achievement and autonomy.

These results support the principles of postmethod theory which puts the teacher at the core of language learning and teaching, and values his/her experience, beliefs, and knowledge (Ahmadian & Erfan Rad, 2014). Hence, postmethod pedagogy acknowledges teachers' experience and prior knowledge, emphasizing their capacity not only to teach effectively but also to behave autonomously within the constraints of institutional policies (Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

The impact of using motivational macrostrategies on EFL learners' motivation can be described with the self-determination theory, which is a psychological theory of motivation. According to this theory, human motivation is caused by three main psychological factors of relatedness, autonomy, and competence (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Lin & Lee, 2025). Therefore, teachers who use macrostrategies related to self-determination elements, can deeply affect students' motivation. By effectively using macrostrategies like increasing students' autonomy, and creating positive student-teacher relationships, experienced teachers can create an environment that meets these psychological needs; hence, they can increase students' motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Kaivanpanah and Mohammed, 2023). Furthermore, by establishing a cooperative learning environment, teachers not only create some opportunities for students to collaborate but also establish a sense of community and belonging that enhances relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2022).

The results of this study are consistent with the finding of the previous studies which show the differences in the use of macrostrategies by novice and experienced EFL teachers (e.g., Fischer & Viens, 2023). In a study conducted by Fischer and Viens (2023) on the experiences of novice and experienced EFL teachers in facilitating short-term language study abroad, they found out that experienced teachers are more possibly to use macrostrategies effectively, thereby

increase students' motivation. Meanwhile, Pašalić (2023) found that EFL teachers' use of some motivational strategies, which were grouped into macrostrategies, correlated positively with students' motivation. He concluded that the macrostrategy of proper teacher behavior was highly correlated with the affective and instrumental motivation of students showing that the student's motivation for learning a foreign language may be increased by a positive relationship between students and teachers (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007).

Macrostrategies in the classroom are broad instructional strategies the teachers use to guide their teaching practice (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Hence, teachers need these kinds of comprehensive strategies to ensure that their instruction adapts effectively to the dynamic conditions and context of the classroom (Sales & Mercado, 2010). Meanwhile, these strategies provide a flexible and structured approach for teachers, causing them to efficiently address the different needs of their students (Al-Kadi, 2020). Experienced teachers often use macrostrategies to effectively manage the classroom in response to students' needs. Hence, macrostrategies provide a framework that helps teachers to adapt their instructional methods and create techniques that aligns with their teaching goals (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). According to Habbah and Husna (2024), effective use of macrostrategies such as classroom management strategies significantly affects students' motivation and engagement by creating a supportive learning environment. Thus, teachers' experience is one of the important factors influencing the quality of the EFL learners' learning experience, that in turn affects their motivation (Ng & Ng, 2015). It should be mentioned that while teaching experience affects the teachers' ability to implement the macrostrategies more effectively, it is not the sole determining factor. Other factors such as classroom dynamics (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011), classroom culture (Aseery, 2024), and student demographics (Ryan & Deci, 2022) play a main role in increasing the motivational levels of students.

### **Conclusion**

The results showed that using macrostrategies in EFL classes will certainly increase the motivation of EFL learners. Meanwhile, the experienced teachers increased students' motivation more than the novice teachers because they used macrostrategies more effectively and focused more on students' psychological factors. These differences in the use of macrostrategies by novice and experienced EFL teachers highlight the importance of teaching experience in enhancing students' motivation.

This study has important implications for EFL teachers, EFL students, teacher educators, and syllabus designers. In order to motivate EFL learners, teachers should use a selection of macrostrategies in EFL classes since quality is more important than quantity. They should act as facilitators to teach motivational macrostrategies and to encourage self-assessment and peer teaching. Explicit teachings of these macrostrategies help students develop these skills and improve

their motivation; hence, they can acquire some competences required for them to be lifelong learners. Moreover, teachers should be engaged in continuous professional development programs to especially understand the different aspects of macrostrategies and their role in improving students' motivation. Teacher educators should develop novice EFL teachers' awareness on how to motivate learners and use motivational macrostrategies in EFL classes. Hence, teachers can use these strategies consciously and more consistently. Meanwhile, syllabus designers need to include motivational macrostrategies in instructional materials and textbooks to improve the quality of EFL learning and teaching.

Some limitations are imposed in this study. This study used self-reported questionnaires with correlational design to identify Iranian experienced and novice EFL teachers' use of macrostrategies and their effect on EFL learners' motivation. Other studies can be conducted to determine EFL teachers' perspectives toward the use of macrostrategies through qualitative methods like using semi-structured interviews, focus group interview and narrative inquiry to get an idea of teachers' use of macrostrategies. Meanwhile, using longitudinal and experimental research with a pretest-posttest design can increase the robustness of future studies. The other limitation of this study was that it only investigated EFL teachers' use of macrostrategies and did not take into consideration the learners' ideas about effective teaching strategies. Further studies could include EFL learners' attitudes toward their teachers' behavior in the classroom and the strategies they can use to enhance their motivation. Another limitation of this study was that it was conducted with a small number of Iranian EFL teachers and learners from language institutions. Other studies could include a larger number of EFL learners and teachers from different educational contexts such as schools and universities to get a broader insight into teachers' use of macrostrategies in improving students' motivation.

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### Authors' Biographies

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## **Informants' Perception of Directives in Research Articles Across Disciplines: Impoliteness Strategies or Engagement Markers?**

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### **Abstract**

This study examines whether the use of directives in academic writing, esp. research articles (RAs) written in social and natural sciences, should be considered as an impoliteness strategy or engagement marker. Eighty RAs from four disciplines (two social sciences and two natural sciences) were analyzed, and 429 directives were identified. Two informants from each discipline assigned functions to the directives, and then rated them on a scale of impoliteness. Findings suggest except for text-external Implication/Suggestion directives in social sciences and Cognitive Warning directives in both social and natural sciences, which may carry shades of impoliteness, the other functions should be viewed as engagement markers. Thus, directives are not impolite strategies in this conservative genre. Furthermore, no significant differences in directive functions were observed between the two branches of science. RA authors often follow the prescriptive rules conventionalized in their fields; however, they also tend to use elements that are less legitimized in academic writing.

*Keywords:* academic writing, directives, engagement marker, impoliteness strategy, research article

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## **Introduction**

A deafening silence can be heard regarding the functions, degree of baldness, and level of engagement of directives in academic writing, which might potentially minimize the formal air of academic style in RAs. Defined as “utterances that instruct the reader to take an action or see things in a way determined by the writer” (Hyland, 2002, pp. 216-217), directives were traditionally (i.e., first wave of pragmatics) perceived as bald-on-record face-threatening acts that can render inequality between interlocutors (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Perceived as such, directives might run counter to the conventionalized peer relationships in academic writing (Swales & Feak, 2012). In the second and third waves of pragmatics (i.e., conversational implicature and relevance theory) (Spencer & Wilson, 2002), however, language realizations are viewed independent of static and traditionally assigned functions. According to these theories, writers or speakers’ communication is relevant to the specific context it occurs in, and the language recipients are naturally inclined to process information that is maximally relevant to their cognitive environment. In this sense, directives can also be perceived as positive engagement markers in academic texts, giving substance to dialogic communications (Hyland, 2002); thus, probably not impoliteness strategies. In fact, more recent publications (Culpeper, 2010; Leech, 2014; Ronan, 2022) on the typology of speech events refute the idea that all directives are bald-on-record face-threatening acts. There are some semantic strategies of directives like indirect (on-record) interrogatives, e.g., ‘Isn’t it hot in here?’ which ought to be interpreted as a directive requesting an interlocutor to take some action, for instance, turn on the AC. Therefore, this hint is an indirect directive, and it can be categorized as off-record with no apparent face-threat involved.

Although directives are utilized widely in RAs (Jalilifar & Mehrabi, 2014), research has not clearly voiced whether they might be perceived as impoliteness strategies (Culpeper, 2010) or solely as engagement markers (Hyland, 2002, 2005). While the former function can be interpreted as a divergent strategy, relegating the readership to a lower status in relation to the RA writer(s), the latter is presumed to be a convergence strategy, through which authors bridge the gap between themselves and the readers. In a corpus-driven study discussing the use of directives across various genres, Ronan (2022) documented that in distance discourse like lectures, where there is little, if any close relationship between the participants, and the language is more public or more formal, interactants use more indirect strategies to sound more polite. However, whether this finding can be extended or generalized to academic written discourse is subject to further examination. This is one of the aims of this study.

This study builds on the tenet that directives are context-dependent tools, aligning with the second and third waves in pragmatics, and integrates recent theorizations in (im)politeness and relevance theories (Culpeper, 2010; Leech, 2014) to shed light on the directives’ disciplinary functions in RAs in light of the dichotomy of engagement markers or impoliteness strategies. Informed by Leech’s (2014) categories of directive strategies (or semantic manifestations), Hyland’s



(2002) classification of the functions of directives in RAs, and Culpeper's (2010) conceptualization of impoliteness strategies, this study aims to reveal what functions lend themselves better to impoliteness strategies and what functions lean toward engagement markers. The study employs manual analysis to identify directives and relies on informants' judgments to determine their functions and degree of impoliteness and/or engagement.

### Review of the Literature

Directives are speech acts that speakers/writers employ to have the hearer/reader do something (Searle, 1976). Searle goes on to classify directive acts: request, command, question, permission and prohibition. This definition has undergone various modifications by Searle's successors; however, one thing has remained constant in all the subsequent definitions: directives concern using speech to get someone to do something. As a general class of speech acts, directives include, but are not restricted to, such acts as coercing, ordering, requesting, demanding, suggesting, recommending, advising, and so on. Based on Leech's (2014, pp. 147-159) model, directives can be semantically realized using the following strategies, as Examples 1 to 7 illustrate.

*(a) Direct strategies (imperatives or performatives)*

- (1) Look at the excerpt. (imperative)
- (2) I am asking you to look at the excerpt. (performative)

*(b) Indirect (or on-record) strategies (declaratives, interrogative, non-essentials)*

- (3) It is necessary to look at the excerpt (declarative)
- (4) Can you look at the excerpt? (interrogative)
- (5) The excerpt on page 45. (This grammatically incomplete form is a directive to ask the readers read further through the text.)

*(c) Hints (or off-record strategies) (declaratives and interrogatives).*

- (6) The excerpt will show you the point. (declarative)
- (7) Did you see the excerpt on page 45? (interrogative)

A few studies have probed into the use of directives in academic writing. For instance, Hyland (2002) points out that authors can achieve the rhetorical purposes of guiding and engaging their readers via directives. Investigating only one of the direct semantic strategies of directives, i.e., imperatives, Swales et al. (1998) found that despite being face-threatening acts (*a potentially impolite strategy*), authors use this strategy for reader engagement, text truncation, or displaying personal style. They concluded that there is no solid evidence that using imperatives is linked to the current trends toward impoliteness in academic writing. They added that the imperative sentence is but one element of a group of linguistic features that allow academic writers to dissociate themselves from an "objectivity-reifying impersonal style" (Swales et al., 1998, p. 118). Having reviewed style manuals and guidebooks on academic writing in the field of linguistics, Chang and Swales (1999) realized that RA authors and journal editors held dismissive attitudes regarding the use of imperatives, as a congruent strategy of directives, in academic writing.

Hyland (2002) studied directives in RAs and maintained that directives perform a variety of functions across genres and disciplines, but they disharmonize the balance between writer-reader relationship and the expository nature of a text.

Using Hyland's (2002) model, Jalilifar and Mehrabi's (2014) carried out cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural comparisons and found intralingual and interdisciplinary variations. They point out that directives are used as a means of persuasiveness in most of the disciplines they investigated. Recently, Ishak et al. (2021) developed a truncated corpus-informed form-function model of directives to compare L1 and L2 writers' corpora. The general findings of their study suggest that directives are used differently in these two corpora, indicating that Indonesian writers do not use directives to engage their readers in developing mental processes of understanding. Non-L1 authors, however, preferred to engage readers mainly by imperatives, reader pronouns + necessity modals, and it is + Adjective + to-clauses.

The major drawback with these studies is that they have not situated using directives within any pragmatic or discourse frameworks. The authors of these studies also tended to associate imperatives with reader engagement, disregarding the notion of impoliteness that might accrue using directives in academic genre. Moreover, most of these studies have only examined direct imperatives, while other less direct or incongruent directives (see Leech' (2014) classification above) have not been considered. In addition, cross-disciplinary comparisons in view of the degree of engagement/impoliteness seem to be few and far between. These drawbacks throw doubts on the functions assigned to directives in academic prose, thus calling for more detailed analysis of various realizations of directives, with the eventual objective to help novice writers apprehend unstated disciplinary conventions.

### **Analytical Frameworks**

#### **Directives as Impoliteness Strategies**

For an utterance to be considered impolite, based on Culpeper's (2005, p. 38) model, two conditions must be met: "(1) the speaker communicates face-attack intentionally, or (2) the hearer perceives and/or constructs behavior as intentionally face-attacking, or a combination of (1) and (2)." However, later, Culpeper (2011) contends that intentionality is not categorical and proposes a socio-cognitive model of impoliteness to account for the relativity of intentions. This revised model depends on societal, situational, and contextual expectations, in addition to personal identities, desires, and /or beliefs. Situated behaviors are considered impolite when they clash with expectations or flout social and institutional conventions (Culpeper, 2011).

Following Culpeper's (2011) idea of situated impoliteness and a more recent theorization of pragmatic and discourse-based (im)politeness (Blitvich and Sifianou, 2019), I argue that determining whether directives bear impoliteness in academic writing entails three levels of analysis. At a macro level, we should consider how the institutional (disciplinary) conventionalization stipulates how RA authors ought to use directives to guide and direct their readership. While Chang and Swales (1999) have made it clear that researchers hold an indifferent attitude toward using imperatives in academic writing, researchers' perception of other types of

directives have remained unexplored. At a meso level, genre-specific norms of directives (i.e., their density, frequency, saliency, rhetorical functions, and move-step realizations in various RA section) should be spelt out in relation to the degree of impoliteness. At a micro level, impoliteness is associated with the actual semantic realizations of directives in the texts. Additionally, in this study, I align with Culpeper's (2011) assertion that for an utterance to be considered polite or impolite, intentionality is not important. Thus, the directives in RAs across disciplines were analyzed through informants' etic perspective.

### **Directives as Engagement Markers**

Engagement markers are used to establish writer-reader relationships and create a gesture of deference and/or reverence in academic texts. Among other interactive metadiscourse markers, directives are recognized as interactive devices which maintain rapport between interlocutors in certain spoken and written genres, however, they may at times contradict this general tendency in academic writing (Swales et al., 1998). Directives used to be considered bald-on-record face-threatening acts (Brown & Levinson, 1987), which apparently breach the harmonious relationship and bring about varying degrees of imposition. This view has been refuted by renowned figures like Leech (2014), who do not perceive directives strictly as such. Swales et al. (1998, p. 117) assert, as a main class of directives, "the presence of imperatives would be seen by peer scholarly readers as a kind of 'manipulative' or face-threatening practice. "Bald-on-record" is by no means an inevitable reading." Swales and his associates conclude that RA authors opt for using imperatives in the main text and endnotes/footnotes in varying occurrences in different disciplines for attaining brevity, stylistic idiosyncrasies, and a need to seize the reader's attention. These functions indicate a detachment from positivist traditions that are set on objectivity and utmost formality.

Recent studies on the use of directives in academic writing have taken prompts from prior attempts at analyzing the lexico-grammatical features of imperatives (e.g., Swales et al., 1998) and then have extended their efforts to identifying the rhetorical and pragmatic functions of these acts (Hyland, 2002; Ishak et al., 2021; Jalilifar & Mehrabi, 2014). In this study, since the intention is to explore whether directives are means of reader engaging acts or not, some notions of Hyland's (2002) original model are employed. This model classifies directives into textual, physical, and cognitive acts. The textual acts include "internal reference" (e.g., see section 1) and "external reference" (e.g., see Smith, 2014). The physical acts include "research focus" (e.g., the duration of the course must extend) and "real-world focus" (e.g., teachers should provide feedback on ...). Cognitive acts involve "rhetorical purpose" (e.g., consider, suppose, let's examine), "elaborative purpose" (e.g., this can be viewed as), and "emphatic purpose" (e.g., it should be noted that ..., remember).

## **Methods**

### **Corpus Selection**

To have a fair sample of disciplines representing social and natural sciences, applied linguistics and psychology were chosen to represent the former,

and physics and biology represent the latter (Morillo et al., 2003). To select the representative disciplines and their related journals, consultation was sought from the heads of departments at the colleges of education, social sciences, and natural sciences in Sultan Qaboos University, Oman. This purposive sample of disciplines would facilitate inter-disciplinary comparisons. To capture the intradisciplinary variations, two journals from sister sub-disciplines were chosen, leading to a total of eight Quartile1 high ranking journals based on the Scimago Journal list. Ten RAs were taken from the last two volumes of the journals in 2021, amounting to a corpus of 80 RAs. Table 1 provides an overview of the corpus.

Since the purpose of the study is to investigate the form, function, and (im)politeness of directives in RAs, regardless of their aims and objectives, the research design and methodology of the RAs were not considered as intervening factors. Moreover, the authors' nationality, first language, and the geographic location from which the RAs originated were not considered overriding factors in the analysis because the effects of these variables are mitigated in the blind review process of the journals. Only experimental RAs, following IMRD/C style, i.e., Introduction-Methods-Results-Discussion/Conclusion, were selected from the social sciences journals. However, in natural sciences RAs with IMRC/D were few and far between, as most of them contained functional headings. Nonetheless, RAs were selected that could be categorized based on IMRC/D structure with some degree of innocuous variations by a skimming review of their contents. To compare RAs from social and natural sciences, the latter were arbitrarily sectioned as IRMC/D in this study.

**Table 1**  
*Corpus Breakdown*

Branches of Science	Disciplines	Journals*	RAs	Word count
Social Sciences	Applied linguistics	<i>International Journal of Applied Linguistics (InJAL)</i>	10	10478
		<i>Applied Linguistics (AL)</i>	10	9432
		<i>Journal of Applied Psychology (JAP)</i>	10	8794
	Psychology	<i>Annual Review of Psychology (ARP)</i>	10	9032
Natural Sciences	Physics	<i>Physics Reports (PR)</i>	10	16332
		<i>Reviews of Modern Physics (RMP)</i>	10	10098
	Biology	<i>Nature Reviews Molecular Cell Biology (NRMCB)</i>	10	11279
		<i>Cell (CL)</i>	10	11698

\*The journal names are presented as acronyms for the rest of the study.

## Participants

This study was basically built upon informants' judgements on the functions of directives in the RAs. To invite the informants, the heads of departments at the colleges of education, social sciences, and natural sciences were

sent emails to inform their faculty members, teaching applied linguistics, psychology, physics and biology, about the purpose of the study to find volunteers. Thirteen university professors volunteered, of whom only eight matched the requirements set for this study: 1) being assistant professor, 2) having five years of experience at least, and 3) having research publications in the disciplines chosen for the purpose of the study (see Table 2). These participants are all L1 speakers of English and work as full-time lecturers in their departments. In fact, no L2 speakers of English were invited in this study to ward off L2 pragmatic influence.

**Table 2**  
*Participating Informants*

Branches of Science	Disciplines	Informants	Gender	Age	Position	Experience
Social Sciences	Applied linguistics	Informant 1	Female	45	Assistant Professor	5
		Informant 2	Female	42	Assistant Professor	9
	Psychology	Informant 3	Male	50	Assistant Professor	8
		Informant 4	Female	42	Assistant Professor	8
Natural Sciences	Physics	Informant 5	Male	42	Assistant Professor	7
		Informant 6	Male	44	Assistant Professor	11
	Biology	Informant 7	Male	51	Assistant Professor	14
		Informant 8	Male	48	Assistant Professor	12

## Research Design and Procedures

This study employed a grounded quantitative-qualitative research design. The quantitative aspect tends to explore a new dimension regarding the (im)politeness of directives in academic writing through quantification (or operationalization) of the concept and the informants' perceptions, the qualitative (thick textual) analysis aimed to confirm, add to, remove, or reject the functions of directives already identified in previous studies. The grounded side of the design refers to the constant refinements and recycling of the identified functions. To identify the form and function of directives, the unit of analysis was the sentence, while to determine their (im)politeness a larger unbounded pragma-rhetorical unit was utilized. In other words, the informants determined whether an instance of directives is polite or not by looking at pre- and post-co-text as well as situational and institutional context. The analysis was carried out as follows.

Firstly, the directives were identified and highlighted using Leech (2014). See section 2 above. Through the pilot analysis, it turned out that academic directives can be realized in four ways: (a) sentences beginning with bare-infinitives, (b) verbs preceded by modal verbs necessitating an action (e.g., You must consider the teacher's interrupting the students' talk to provide oral feedback.), (c) verbs/adjectives followed by a subjunctive indicating obligation (e.g., It is important that the right annotating strategies be used.), and (d) adjectives followed by a to-infinitive phrase requiring the readers to do something (e.g., It is necessary to follow the instructions as put forward by ...).

Secondly, the two informants from each discipline were asked to independently assign the highlighted directives primary functions using their own words and then negotiate their nomenclatures until they agreed on common terms. That is, after the two informants from each discipline analyzed the directives in the RAs, they met (face-to-face or virtually on their discretion) and discussed whether they agreed on the functions they had assigned to the directives. Afterward, the author of the current study combined and renamed the functions that bore similarity. This was followed by subsuming the informants' identified functions into Hyland's (2002) model of text-internal reference (referring to a portion of the same text), text-external reference (referring to a real-world object or phenomenon), and cognitive reference (requiring readers to read, think, consider, or deliberate on something). The informants were not instructed on the functions of directives a priori. They would read the directives and assign them functions based on their own perception. Twenty-three functions were identified by the informants. To minimize the individual discrepancies in the informants' function assignment to directive instances, the terms they coined to refer to the same function were coalesced and/or renamed. For example, the term 'Prior studies' used by the social sciences informants and 'Referring to previous reports' used by the natural sciences informants were merged as 'Reference to previous research.'

Thirdly, the informants decided if they would perceive each instance as polite, neutral, or impolite based on five-point Likert Scale using the three-strata model of macro meso and micro levels of impoliteness (Blitvich & Sifianou, 2019), explained in Section 3.1. A score of 3 and above indicated impoliteness, while scores below 3 were considered neutral or polite, depending on whether the informants found a directive breach the established institutional conventions of the discipline (scales 4 and 5), only violate genre-specific norms (scales 3 and 4), is only realized by incongruent language form (un)intentionally (scale 1 and 2).

Lastly, the same procedure was carried out to decide if each instance of directives leans towards engaging the reader (i.e., being an engagement marker) or distancing the RA authors from their audience, where a score of 3 and above showed engagement, whereas a scores below 3 were perceived as neutral or disengaging in light of the imposition they perceived intuitively based on Hyland's (2002) model of engagement markers, described in Section 3.2, where he argues that the imposition (which implies degrees of impoliteness) increases as one moves from textual toward cognitive acts.

To reduce bias in informants' ratings, I provided them with a brief description of what impoliteness is and a list of examples to ensure they understood what the concept means and how it should be rated in terms of impoliteness. This helped standardize their judgments. Moreover, further discussion rounds in cases of disagreement were conducted among informants ensured reliability in the interpretation of ambiguous cases.

Ten percent of the corpus was piloted through part-of-speech (POS) tagging with TagAnt v. 1.1.2 (Anthony, 2014) and analysed with WordSmith Tools v. 6 (Scott, 2015). However, it turned out that the corpus did not lend itself to

concordancing tagging, as there were many instances that did not fit into the categories of directives defined in this study based on Leech (2014). Therefore, the corpus was analyzed manually, and directives were selected from the main body, footnotes, and endnotes of the RAs. The manual analysis was employed to avoid missing out incongruent, indirect directives. To maintain the reliability of identifying the directives based on Leech's (2014) model, 10% of the corpus was independently analyzed by a colleague, a Ph.D. holder in applied linguistics. An inter-rater agreement of 92% was obtained. Reference lists and appendices of the RAs were excluded in computing RA word counts, resulting in a total of 37736 words in social sciences and 48407 words in natural sciences.

To ward off the inherent fuzziness in discourse and pragmatic categorization, each pair of informants discussed and rated the directives in the 20 RAs of the discipline they affiliate with interactively. This was to secure a satisfactory level of inter-rater agreement. Except for the two psychology informants, who had an 82% agreement, the other three pairs of informants working in the other disciplines showed above-90% level of agreement. The psychology informants were approached again and ambiguities concerning the functions of directives were resolved. Upon a second round of discussion, they reached 93% agreement.

## Results and Discussion

### Forms of Directives in Academic Writing

429 directives were identified, from which verbs preceded by modal verbs had the largest share in both branches of science, whereas adjectives/verbs followed by subjunctives had the lowest frequencies, as Table 3 displays. Since the total word counts for the two branches of science were not equal, the frequencies were normalized. To do so, each frequency was normalized to that of the largest category. For instance, the frequency 11 for directives with initial bare infinitive in social sciences was multiplied by 48407 (the total word count of natural sciences) and then divided by 37736 (the word count of social sciences), which equals 14.

According to Table 3, RA authors in natural sciences use more directives than social sciences. While a minor difference is observed in verbs/adjectives + subjunctive forms like *conditional*, *hope-clauses*, and *wish-clauses* (see Example 8) between the two branches, natural sciences outnumbered social sciences in two linguistic forms, i.e., sentences with initial bare-infinitives, with verbs like *note*, *see*, *consider*, *take*, *bear*, and *look at* (see Example 9) and modal verb like *should*, *must*, *may*, *might*, and *would* + bare-infinitives (see Example 10). The only linguistic form that was used more often in social sciences was adjectives like *important*, *essential*, *noteworthy*, *necessary*, *imperative*, and *critical* + to-infinitive phrase (see Example 11). These findings confirm Hyland (2002), and Jalilifar and Mehrabi's (2014) results, who found minor interdisciplinary variations in the use of directives between hard and soft sciences in terms of frequency. The findings also confirm Ishak et al.'s (2021) finding, who investigated the form-based variations of directives, and found that using modal verb + bare-infinitive directives was the most common type across languages in applied linguistics research.



**Table 3**  
*Linguistic Forms of Directives*

Linguistic Forms	Social Sciences (Word Count: 37736)		Natural Sciences (Word Count: 48407)		Total (Word Count: 86143)	
	<i>f</i>	Normalized	<i>f</i>	Normalized	<i>f</i>	Normalized
Sentences with initial bare infinitives	11	14	72	72	83	86
Modal verb + bare infinitives	97	125	168	168	265	293
Verbs/adjectives + subjunctive	8	10	8	8	16	18
Adjectives + to-infinitive phrase	45	57	20	20	65	77
<b>Total</b>	161	206	268	268	429	474

(8) If the binary fusions were controlled at Specific Gravity 1.02-1.06 and 20° C, you would be able to replicate the process. (Article 67, AL, Natural sciences)

In Example 8, the author directs the reader, who most likely is a member of the physics discourse community and is familiar with binary fusion and controlling lab conditions, to replicate the experiment. This is because the author himself/herself has not carried out the experiment under such conditions. The use of unreal subjunctive mood enables the author to instruct a certain course of action, without subjecting their results to question.

(9) Note the differences in the hedging and boosting devices in the observation reports written by the student teachers and junior counterparts. (Article 12, AL, Social sciences)

In Example 9, the use of imperative, without any apparent vocative, implies that the authors need to direct the readers' attention to a specific point in their data. Other forms of directives could have been used; however, it seems using imperatives, in this example, is the quickest form to obtain the readers' attention.

(10) More generally, it should be pointed out that finding bounds on physical properties ... has enthralled physicists for ... (Article 48, PR, Natural sciences)

In example 10, the expletive subject is followed by a verb in the passive voice only to cast some more weight to the that-clause. This shift of attention from the old information to new information (to use discourse terminologies) could give rise to directed attention. Otherwise, if the sentence had been written without the initial passive phrase, it could not have directed the readers' attention to the fact stated as much. It is important to note that indirect forms of directives (like Example 10) that impose less on the recipient differ from other prototypical directives (like Example 9), where there is a clear call to action to the reader.



(11) It is critically important to videotape the interviews with the parents' consent. (Article 40, ARP, Social sciences)

This linguistic manifestation can be regarded as a clear reminder for the readers who may want to use the same methodology. The verb 'is' in the present tense suggests that the readers, be researchers or psychologists, must bear in mind to follow the instruction if they aim to get better results.

The higher tendency to use modal verb + bare-infinitive verb directives can be because authors can both address their readers to act in a certain way and simultaneously regulate the imposition that might be exerted (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). The infrequent use of sentences with bare-infinitive initials might be ascribed to the general assumption in academic writing that this form of directives bears bald-on-record imposition on the reader, compared to other forms that are more polite, as indicated by Ishak et al. (2021). These findings suggest that not all forms of directives have the same level of appropriacy in academic writing, considering the rapport, intimacy, and engagement they express in the text.

### **Functions of Directives in Academic Writing**

Probable links between the density of directives in each section of the RAs and the functions they perform were scrutinized in this study. Tables 4 and 5 show the distribution of functions of directives in RA sections in social and natural sciences, respectively. Regarding the density of directives in the RA sections in social sciences, directives were used most frequently in the Results and Discussion sections, while the fewest instances appeared in the Introduction sections. Similarly, in natural sciences, the highest frequency of directives occurred in the Results and Discussion sections; however, the lowest frequency was found in the Conclusion sections. The Methods sections in both branches of knowledge witnessed a relatively high number of directives, although fewer than the instances found in the Results and Discussion sections. This suggests that authors use more directives in the middle of RAs than the initial and final sections.

Directives in the middle of RAs are often used to revert to previous research, theories, frameworks, principles, and findings (see Example 12) to construct or justify new methodologies and arguments. These functions, according to the function-based classifications of directives in Table 4, fall more into the text-internal and -external directives, which aim to refresh the readers' memory, link text-bound ideas to entities, and clarify ambiguities. However, cognitive directives emphasize or highlight propositions and prepare readers to anticipate something in the text, as illustrated in Example 13. These findings align with Hyland's (2002, p. 225) results that researchers are more likely to construct facts situated within "larger narratives of citations, providing an intertextual framework for their immediate research findings."

(12) In contrast, non-integral citations do not play any significant evaluative or rhetorical role ... They simply indicate the source of the materials referred to (see Example 8) or "the originator of a concept or a

product”, as you can see in Thompson and Tribble (2001). (Article 4, InJAL, Social sciences)

As Example 12 shows, the reference to Thompson and Tribble (2001) is either to direct readers to a framework introduced in earlier sections of the paper (text-internal), or a study that has not been introduced in earlier sections (text-external) to back up the claim presented.

(13) Concentrations of PRC1 components inside Polycomb bodies are in some contexts below what is thought to be required to support liquid–liquid phase separation, bringing into question whether Polycomb bodies are formed by this process<sup>152,163</sup>. Further study of Polycomb protein condensates and their relevance to Polycomb functions is therefore required. (Article 78, NRMCB, Natural sciences)

In Example 13, the authors call an already accepted proposition into question because in different contexts they got unexpected results. In the last sentence of this excerpt, they request further study be done under specific conditions. The bold phrase at the end of the exception necessitates a certain procedure to be carried out (or reminds) the audience to pay heed to this requirement, which is basically a cognitive function.

Comparing the functions of directives in the Introduction sections of social and natural sciences RAs reveals that authors in social sciences use fewer directives with limited functions in this section, the most frequent of which is reference to an example/illustration, followed by reference to previous research (see Example 14). In contrast, authors in natural sciences use more directives with a range of functions, the most frequent of which is reference to another section of RA and reference to a table/graph/diagram/figure (see Example 15), the function that was absent in the social sciences. The difference lies in the abundance of abstract notions in social sciences, which require exemplifications and illustrations, on the one hand, and the profusion of solidly established entities in natural sciences, which can be shown using graphs and diagrams to introduce already recognized concepts, on the other hand (see Examples 14 and 15).

**Table 4**  
*Functions of Directives in Social Sciences RAs*

Functions		RA Sections				Total
		I	M	R or R&D	D or D&C	
		Normalized f	Normalized f	Normalized f	Normalized f	
Text-internal	Reference to another section of RA	0	8	3	2	13
	Reference to an example/illustration	12	13	17	0	42
	Reference to a table/graph/diagram	0	14	11	2	27

<b>Text-external</b>	Reference to previous research	8	2	15	4	29
	Reference to a theory/framework	6	13	6	0	25
	Reference to a principle/maxim	0	4	2	0	6
	Implication/suggestion	0	0	7	32	39
	Instructions	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Cognitive</b>	Reminding	0	0	7	4	11
	Pondering	0	0	10	1	11
	Warning	0	0	3	0	3
<b>Total</b>		26	54	81	45	206

(14) Most importantly, it requires active strategizing to recognize and work against the culture of power and structures of inequity in which language educators and students are positioned, as well as, assuming responsibility for change (see Liggett 2009; Picower 2009; Maddamsetti 2020 for examples of White teachers' critical self-reflexivity). (Article 17, AL, Social sciences)

The authors have coalesced the reference to previous research with examples in those studies to cast light on the fact that racist pedagogy is abundant and persistent in materials. Although no actual examples can be seen in this excerpt, it is clear the authors needed to refer to examples in other studies to point to the abstract notion of 'critical self-reflexivity.'

(15) Interestingly, this activity was exclusive to vPRC1 complexes and relied on their capacity to ubiquitylate H2AK119 (review part C) (see Fig. 3a). (Article 78, NRMCB, Natural sciences)

To make their point clear, the authors have supported their finding with a reference to an internal section in the study as well as an illustration, where the authors have used a full sentence in the brackets to direct their readers to the relevant part of the study.

Additionally, in both branches of science, text-internal and text-external directives are more common than cognitive directives in the RA Introduction sections, as Tables 4 and 5 demonstrate. This finding lends support to Swales et al. (1998) and Hyland's (2002) findings, who view cognitive directives more relaxed in tone and tenor and tend to lean towards interactional/interactive functions. In addition, it seems pondering directives are used to cast more light on propositions the authors want their readers to invest more attention to.

**Table 5**  
**Functions of Directives in Natural Sciences RAs**

Functions	RA Sections				Total	
	I	M	R or R&D	D or D&C		
	f	f	f	f		
Text-internal	Reference to another section of RA	22	7	24	3	56
	Reference to an example/illustration	2	27	23	0	52
	Reference to a table/graph/diagram	13	3	17	0	33
Text-external	Reference to previous research	12	2	4	2	20
	Reference to a theory/framework	6	12	5	0	23
	Reference to a principle/maxim	5	10	0	0	15
	Implication/suggestion	0	0	0	0	0
	Instructions	2	2	8	0	12
Cognitive	Reminding	2	0	12	2	16
	Pondering	2	5	20	9	36
	Warning	1	2	0	2	5
Total	67	70	113	18	268	

Regarding the Methods sections, it seems reference to previous research, theories, and frameworks are common in both branches of science. The main difference, however, is the reference to examples and illustrations, which is more frequent in natural sciences. Interestingly, reference to tables and diagrams is not among the common type of directives in natural sciences. Moreover, reference to principles and maxims is more typical of natural sciences too, as Example 16 demonstrates. Reliance on established principles and maxims brings more credibility to new arguments in hard sciences, as Hyland (2002) puts it. In Example 16, reference to the principle of fixed rates and the independence of axion frequency acts like a foothold for the authors to build their own new claims and convince their readers, as stated in *as in Eq. (121)* (underlined in the example).

(16) Note that when the search rate is fixed, as in Eq. (121), the number of events per sweep through the axion frequency is independent of  $t$ ,  $t_1$  and  $t_c$ . (Article 55, RMP, Natural sciences)

The reason for these differences could be the need for more detailed textual descriptions, supported by examples, illustrations, equations, and figures, in the Methods sections in natural sciences, while authors in social sciences rely more on tables and diagrams to present overviews of samples, participants, and other logistic information. Other functions such as reminding, pondering, and warning are sporadically seen in natural sciences, but not in social sciences (see Example 17).

(17) ‘Note, however, that some short CDSs ... are conserved across the Eukaryotic Domain.’ (Article 49, PR, Natural sciences)

Authors use pondering directives like Example 17 to engage their readers in the natural mechanisms they are pointing to. In the cognitive category, verbs such as *remember, recall, keep/bear in mind, note, consider, think about, and be careful* can take on one of the three functions of reminding, pondering, or warning, depending on the intention of the authors and the immediate context where these directives appear, as Examples 18, 19, and 20 show. Jalilifar and Mehrabi (2014) and Hyland (2002) corroborate that authors these cognitive functions of directives serve to create a pause in the flow of information to make sure the readers have a deeper understanding of the content or make them note a key point in the text.

(18) We would like you to think about your English language role model: it might be a teacher, a famous actor or singer, a politician, a friend ... (Article 17, AL, Social sciences) (reminding)

(19) Additionally, the score increases for the three accents require careful interpretation. (Article 8, InJAL, Social sciences) (warning)

(20) Consider the case of an employee who assesses COVID-19 as a strong event and experiences depressive symptoms due ... (Article 23, JAP, Social sciences) (pondering)

The decision as to the extent of imposition each of the above examples carries might hinge on directness or indirectness of the directives (Searle, 1976) and the semantic strategies utilized (Leech, 2014; Ronan, 2022). In Example 18, the direct directive displays the least degree of imposition, as the authors have employed an interpersonal modality indicator (i.e., the modal verb *would*), as their semantic strategy, to tone down the directive to a mere reminder. However, the indirect directive expressed via a hinting strategy bears more imposition considering the strong verbal phrase i.e., *require*, and the adjective *careful*. In fact, the hidden side of the matter is what would happen if careful interpretation were not guaranteed. In Example 20, the degree of imposition oscillates in-between the imposition spectrum, where the reader is gently requested to imagine a situation. In this example, the readers do not experience as much imposition as they would from the directive in Example 19. However, what affects the degree of imposition is not only the presence/absence of a modal verb, but also whether there is a direct reference to the readers. Leech (2014) refers to speaker-oriented and other-oriented speech acts; this means orientation can be manipulated in the way a speech event is presented. Similarly, directly engaging with the reader may increase the degree of imposition. Hyland (2002) notes that only through introspective or retrospective recalls one may identify the exact function of the directives in academic writing. Overall, the variations in the functions of directives in the Methods sections in the two branches of science can be attributed to the authors’ intention to use thick descriptions and/or exemplify/illustrate the essential concepts and entities to convince their readers of the rigor exercised in the methodology, or to provide more tables and diagrams to simply give a general overview of the instrumentation and procedures.

Differences can also be observed in text-internal and text-external directives towards the end of the RAs published in social and natural sciences. The most striking difference is the lack of implicational or suggestive directives in

natural sciences. This means, offering directives as implications is not a common characteristic in natural sciences. On the contrary, cognitive directives, especially the reminding and pondering functions, that call for deliberation are found more in natural sciences. Perhaps the length of RAs in natural sciences, with an average of 10800 words, make authors use directives to remind their readers of propositions addressed earlier or later in the text (see Example 21). Directives that require readers to ponder tend to underscore arguments in the Discussion and Conclusion sections or second propositions that might go unnoticed by readers.

(21) The characteristic hourglass appearance (see pp. 676 and 677) was the ultimate criterion used to define vasospasm. (Article 76, CL, Natural sciences)

### Directives as Impoliteness Strategies or Engagement Markers

To determine the (im)politeness of directives in RAs, a score out of 1 to 5 was assigned to each directive. In this way, (im)politeness could be linked to the functions assigned in the previous stage. Directives scored 3 and above were considered impolite; thus, impolite, while directives scored below 3 are regarded as engagement markers. Table 6 presents the details on the impoliteness status of directives in the two branches of science.

**Table 6**

*Directives as Impoliteness Strategies and Engagement Markers in Social Sciences RAs*

Functions		Branches of Science			
		Social Sciences		Natural Sciences	
		Impolitene ss strategy	Engagement marker	Impoliteness strategy	Engagement marker
<b>Text- internal</b>	Reference to another section of RA	0	13	0	56
	Reference to an example/illustration	0	42	0	52
	Reference to a table/graph/diagram	0	27	0	33
<b>Text- external</b>	Reference to previous research	0	29	0	20
	Reference to a theory/framework	0	25	0	23
	Reference to a principle/maxim	0	6	0	15
	Implication/suggestion	19	20	0	0
	Instructions	0	0	0	12
<b>Cognitive</b>	Reminding	5	6	5	11
	Pondering	0	11	0	36
	Warning	3	0	5	0
<b>Total</b>		27	179	10	258

According to Table 6, all directives, realized in various semantic strategies (direct, indirect, and hints), with text-internal functions are recognized as engagement markers in both branches of science. Text-external directives show a mixed picture. In this category, reference to previous research, theory/framework, and principle/maxim (mostly expressed using direct and indirect semantic strategies, but not hinting) are marked as engagement markers in social and natural sciences. However, implicational/suggestive directives in social sciences are split, as half of the instances are considered impoliteness strategies, and the other half are perceived as engagement markers. Upon a closer examination of these cases, I noted that in the implications and suggestions made in the Discussion or Conclusion sections, authors have used strong modality, i.e., modal verbs like *must* and *have to*, as well as *need to + verb*, or strong adjectives such as *incumbent*, *required*, and *necessary*, followed by to-infinitive phrases that address the readers to take a certain course of action. These directives are rated impolite by the informants (see Example 22).

(22) However, they [researchers] need to be mindful of generalizing the findings and instead ... (Article 9, InJAL, Social sciences)

By contrast, weaker modal verbs such as *should*, *ought to*, *had better*, and other verbal phrases indicating a piece of advice or suggestion that offer choices to the reader but do not cause any imposition are rated as engagement markers (see Example 23). Directives functioning as instructions in natural sciences are all considered engagement markers, as Example 24 illustrates, on the account that the best means to describe processes in natural sciences are instructional directives. This suggests that researchers in natural sciences may want to use instructions in their RAs with little or no impoliteness implied.

(23) [Researchers] are advised to guide their students to discover field-specific citation practices in authentic textual discourse of their disciplines. (Article 9, InJAL, Social sciences)

(24) It should be noted that the above derivation is purely phenomenological and detailed microscopic mechanisms are still needed to ... (Article 50, PR, Natural sciences)

In cognitive directives, those functioning as reminders were in the middle of impoliteness/engagement continuum. In both branches of science, some instances were rated as impolite. These include directives with initial imperative verbs such as *remember*, *recall*, and *bear in mind*. Directives of pondering are taken as engagement markers in social and natural sciences, while those performing a warning function like *be careful* or *instructors are advised not to forget ...* are assumed to be impolite.

The total figures at the end of Table 6 indicate that in general directives are considered polite metadiscourse engagement markers in the RAs written in social and natural sciences. However, using appropriate structures to convey these directives can still play a role in making them sound polite or impolite. Therefore, authors are advised to address their readers as peers and should exercise utmost caution not to use forms that are obviously impolite. The findings of this research showed that directives in academic writing are impolite if formulated or situated

unfittingly. Based on these findings, the notion of directives being an impolite strategy in academic writing is rejected. It is perhaps better to consider directives as double-edge swords that can be engaging or impolite depending on the context of use and the linguistic means used.

### Conclusion

This study has been a partial attempt to show whether the use of directives in published RAs in social and natural sciences should be seen as impolite strategy, which detaches the author from their readership, or as engagement markers, which minimizes the social and scholarly distance between them. Findings indicate that the appropriate linguistic means by which directives are expressed and the context in which they are used determine the distinction between their being impolite and engaging. It can be tentatively claimed that authors appear to abide by prescriptive rules in general; however, they also tend to implement a lax view towards using impolite strategies, particularly those that have rather been legitimized in academic writing.

The findings imply that novice writers should avoid bald-on-record impolite forms of directives in their academic writing. This study implies an informed rejection of the futility of contrasting metadiscourse markers and pragmatic concepts. In other words, this corpus-informed analysis of academic discourse proves how intricately pragmatics and textual discourse are intertwined. Moreover, they should pay special heed to the functions of directives in respective sections of RAs in their field of specialty. EAP practitioners and materials developers can raise awareness about the legitimized politeness and impoliteness strategies in academic writing and the required conditions that surround their use. Studies of this type support the view that the intricacy of language should be explored using larger corpora of language data. In fact, investigating pragmatic concepts such as the one in this study, i.e., impoliteness, might seem a far-fetched endeavor, but using carefully designed studies can enable tapping into these concepts even in conservative genres like academic writing. Future research can include a range of other text genres from a variety of disciplines to cast more light on the issue.

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## **On the Validation of Laclau and Mouffe's Theory of Discourse: A Case of a Persian Film**

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### **Abstract**

The present study aimed to validate the usefulness of Laclau and Mouffe's Discourse Theory in discourse analysis through eliciting interpretations of a film provided by a number of Iranian participants from different socio-cultural backgrounds and persuasions. To achieve the objectives of the study, we chose as our data a Persian film which had already been analysed by an Iranian distinguished discourse analyst using Laclau and Mouffe's Discourse Theory. We then asked three groups (five in each) of participants to watch the film and provide us with their open-ended interpretations of the episodes which the analyst had analysed in detail as examples to better illustrate his analyses of the film. Comparisons between the analyst's analyses and the participants' interpretations revealed both convergences and divergences, demonstrating the need to accommodate the alternative interpretations in Laclau and Mouffe's theory of discourse. Pedagogical implications are discussed for those who are interested in analysing different types of discourse.

**Keywords:** discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe, socio-cultural persuasions, interpretations of readers, alternative interpretations

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## **Introduction**

There is not always a one-to-one correspondence between linguistic elements/means and their pragmatic functions. When people use language, they convey through it assumptions and ideologies not always directly stated but indirectly implied. Thus, sometimes more is implied and, in turn, understood from a particular utterance than is said. Fairclough (1992) believes that assumed meanings have particular ideological importance and power structures thrive on meanings accepted as given. These assumptions and ideologies are closely intertwined with power and hegemony. According to Laclau and Mouffe (1985), whatever is produced in a society is influenced by power and is necessarily ideological, constructing particular meanings and putting other meanings to subordinate positions. The concept of ideology in discourse analysis is partly influenced by Althusser's structural Marxist approach. Althusser (1971) argues that the individual becomes an ideological subject through a process of interpellation whereby discourses appeal to the individual as a subject. Althusser (1971) defines *ideology* as a system of representations that masks our true relations to one another in society by constructing imaginary relations between people and between them and the social formation. However, Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) concept of ideology differs from other concepts of ideology. They believe that we cannot liberate ourselves from ideology and there is no hope that we can find a way out of it. In this theory, a society without ideology is unthinkable. Texts (e.g., readers' interpretations) as elements of social events prove as rich sites in which ideologies can be represented and individuals' interpretations are likely to be influenced by their social, political and cultural orientations. Given the significance of ideology in people's interpretations of discourse, the current research aimed at validating the usefulness Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory in discourse analysis through eliciting interpretations of a film provided by a number of Iranian participants from different socio-cultural persuasions.

In the following, we first provide an overview of Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory and critical discourse analysis (CAD) followed by a section that elaborates data selection criteria and procedures. Then, the analyst's original analysis of the film is presented followed by the participants' analysis of the film. The analyst is a Persian discourse analyst who has analysed episodes of the film drawing on the analytical tools provided in Laclau and Mouffe's theory of discourse (see section 2 below). We then move on to comparing the analyst's analyses and the participants' interpretations to examine how far Laclau and Mouffe's theory of discourse acknowledges the audience's interpretations. The article concludes with a brief summary of findings and implications for discourse analysis.

## **Laclau and Mouffe's Discourse Theory**

Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory delineates the idea that social reality is the product of discursive practices and it is always open to interpretation. This provides new avenues for ongoing social struggles hinging on the definitions of identity and society. The theory presents itself as a comprehensive framework,

facilitating the analysis of socio-political discourses. It can reveal how dominant discourses in a society lead to the production of cultural artifacts. Jorgenson and Phillips (2002) compares Laclau and Mouffe's theory of discourse with critical discourse analysis and discursive psychology and point out that they both carry out critical research, analysing power relations and formulating normative perspectives from which a critique of such relations can be made with an eye on the possibilities for social change. However, they have distinctive philosophical and theoretical "understandings of discourse, social practice and critique, which lead to particular aims, methods and empirical focal points' (p. 2).

The theory is informed by both post-Saussurian linguistics and post-Marxist social thought. In this theory, the entire social field is seen as an array of processes in which meaning is constructed. According to Laclau and Mouffe (1985), all social phenomena have discursal and political characteristics. They consider that discourse is a bigger system which has dominance over other social phenomena and systems and shapes them. They point out that it is these political structures that lead us to think and do in a particular way and as a result of which the society is built. In fact, in Laclau and Mouffe's terms, politics is conceived of as a far-reaching concept which refers to the ongoing process by which we construct and structure the social world in ways that we exclude alternative possibilities (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002).

Power, subject and collective identity are three important concepts in this theory. Like Foucault, Laclau and Mouffe believe that power is not something which belongs to one group and is absent in other groups. Rather, power is something that builds the social. Our knowledge, identity and personal and social positions are the products of power. Informed by Foucault (1972), Laclau and Mouffe (1985) believe that subjects are shaped or constructed within discursive practices, hence the constitutive function of discourse. The theory was also influenced by Althusser's (1971) interpellation in constructing the concept of "subject". Interpellation is a process whereby discourses construct social positions for individuals by appealing to them as subjects and making them ideological subjects. Individuals are, therefore, placed or interpellated in certain positions through particular ways of talking. Drawing on Lacan's (1977) insights, Laclau (1993) conceived the subject of an incomplete being which strives to become a "whole" and always attempts to find itself through investing in discourses. It is the discourses which provide the subject with "subject positions".

In this theory, the boundary between the identity of the subject and its collective identity is blurred. They are both shaped as a result of interaction with the world outside. The identity of the subject is constructed as a result of conflicts between its unconscious and the world outside. In the theory of Laclau and Mouffe, fight over the construction of meaning has a pivotal role. No discourses are shaped and stabilized since all discourses attempt to construct reality and present different policies for social actions in conflict with other discourses. Social conflict takes place when different identities reject one another. According to Laclau and Mouffe, this conflict constructs the identity of the artist and manifests itself in all his actions,

discourse and behaviors. It makes him preserve particular meanings and drive other meanings to a margin. Therefore, a key concept in Laclau and Mouffe's theory of discourse is discursive struggle where discourses are involved in an ongoing conflict with each other to gain hegemony establishing their own understandings of language (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002).

In addition to being a theory of discourse in its own right, Laclau and Mouffe's theory of discourse introduced key concepts that were appreciated and advocated by the critical discourse analysis theorists. One of them is articulation, which, according to Laclau and Mouffe (1985), is any practice that creates a relation among elements in such way that the identity of these elements goes under a transformation. Laclau and Mouffe (1985) believe that existing discourses are challenged and reproduced by specific articulations through mixing meanings in particular ways. Therefore, there are always struggles between different discourses to ascribe meanings to the individual signs.

Laclau and Mouffe's theory has been extensively used to analyze different films (e.g., Ravadrad & Aghaei, 2016; Ahangar et al, 2020; Pahlavannezhad, 2022). It has proved to provide discourse analysts with practical tools to analyse films. However, one question which may be raised is whether Laclau and Mouffe's theory of discourse appreciates alternative interpretations of other people at the philosophical-paradigmatic level. By alternative interpretations, we here mean meanings that the audience derive from reading a text as a result of interactions between the text, context and pretext. More particularly, the audience construct meanings of a piece of discourse by conflating what is in their minds, what is in the text and the contextual (socio-political) factors which influence the way the text is interpreted or deconstructed. Therefore, our validation work relates to interpretive validity in which, taking an emic perspective, we aim at studying the phenomena on the basis of the participants' perspectives (Maxwell, 1992). Moreover, in relation to the processes and activities involved in production and consumption, Fairclough (1995) believes the processes of production and consumption have not been effectively transferred into practical methods and calls for further explorations of the circumstances of actual use without which we may obtain a distorted picture of how a discourse functions and how it is interpreted. Also, Widdowson (2004) claims that discourse analysis practitioners leave rarely an alternative interpretation other than what they said a particular text produces. According to Widdowson (2004), interpretations are likely to be influenced through socio-culturally informed schematic preconceptions of readers as well. He suggests ethnographic enquiries which could explore how readers of distinct socio-cultural background and political affiliations actually respond while engaging with textual discourses. Widdowson (2004) quotes Bartlett's (1932) study as an example of the use of this method where he invited subjects to read through a North American folktale story 'The War of the Ghosts', and subsequently reproduce what they remember. Bartlett's analysis indicated that the reproduced versions differed from the original story in some ways, and these differences were interpreted as evidence of how people's socio-culturally

informed schematic preconceptions can shape their interpretation and understanding of a given text.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)**

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) emerged from the work of Roger Fowler and his colleagues, and was later advanced by Norman Fairclough. Over the past 30 years, CDA has been viewed as a form of linguistically-oriented, critical social research in actual social issues and forms of inequality, such as racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and sexism (Reisigl, 2018). The linguistic model that is particularly well-suited for the task is often identified as Halliday's S/F grammar. Kress (1996) argues that CDA aims to bring "a system of excessive inequalities of power into crisis by uncovering its workings and its effects through the analysis of potent cultural objects – texts – and thereby to help in achieving a more equitable social order" (Kress, 1996, p. 15). Also, according to Van Leeuwen (2018), CDA must not only investigate how social practices are represented and evaluated in texts, they must also evaluate these representations and evaluations. In the words of Fairclough (1995), discourse is "constitutive" or "constructive" of social structure, and not merely constrained by it. He differentiates three kinds of "constructive effect" that are caused by discourse: the formation of social self or identity, the formation of social relationships between people, and the formation of "systems of knowledge and belief".

However, Fairclough's approach to discourse analysis has come under criticism. In this approach, only one part of a text or certain linguistic features in isolation from its co-textual connections are chosen for analysis and others are ignored. And almost no criteria for relevance are actually provided. Doing this reduces the whole text to a clause which misrepresents the very nature of the text. Therefore, the question arises as to what motivates the authors' choice of one rather than the other (i.e., sampling)? Also, CDA practitioners fail to bear in mind dependence of meaning on the audience's interpretations. A related objection that Widdowson (2004) has raised about CDA is that the interpretations of discourse have "a privileged status, a unique validity even, because they are based on the analysis of textual facts", (p. 169) paying no or little attention to alternative interpretations. Stated otherwise, interpretations which CDA practitioners come by seem to depend solely on results of analysis of textual facts. Discourse interpretations cannot be derived by way of only an aggregate of lexicogrammatical elements for the reason that different people may come up with different interpretations based on socio-culturally informed schematic preconceptions.

Given that critical discourse analysis fails to acknowledge the dependence of meaning on the audience's interpretations, the present study aims to examine whether Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory acknowledges alternative interpretations. To this end, a Persian film which had been previously analysed by one of the distinguished Iranian discourse analysts was given to three groups of participants, who came from different socio-cultural backgrounds, to watch. The



readers. The analyst had drawn on Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory to analyse parts of the film. The analyst's analysis of the film found support for what the framework claimed the text was written for (See below for detailed analysis of the film by the analyst).

## **Methodology**

### **Participants**

To serve the objectives of the study, efforts were made to choose the participants who came from different socio-cultural backgrounds. To identify their socio-cultural backgrounds, we asked them a number of questions about their education, occupation, political and cultural literacies, and their analytical skills and came up with three groups of socio-culturally and politically different participants. University students ranged in age between 20 and 25 and had got BA degrees. Two of them were male and three were female. High school teachers ranged in age between 27 and 35 and they all had MA degrees in their fields of teaching. Three of them were male and the other two were female. University teachers varied in age from 40 to 45 and they all had Ph.D. degrees. Two of them were male and the other three were female. There were five participants in each group.

### **Data Selection Criteria and Procedures**

A Persian film which had already been analyzed by a distinguished Persian discourse analyst using Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) theory of discourse constitutes the data for the present study. As touched upon earlier, the purpose was to validate the usefulness of discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe (1985) in discourse analysis through eliciting interpretations of a number of Iranian participants. By interpretation we, here, mean background assumptions (or members' resources, to use Fairclough's term (1989) people bring to the process of discourse analysis. Or in other words, people construct meanings of a piece of discourse by conflating what is in their minds, what is in the text and the contextual (socio-political) factors which influence the way the text is interpreted or deconstructed. To this end, following the same procedure suggested by Widdowson (2004) we selected three groups of participants to watch the original Persian film. We asked them to give particular attention to episodes of the film (which had already been analysed in detail as examples to better illustrate his analyses of the film) and give use open-ended interpretations of them. Finally, we compared the analyst's analyses and the participants' interpretations to see how far they differed and were mediated by the participants' socio-culturally informed schematic understandings and preconceptions.

To make comparison valid, the two researchers studied both the analyst's analyses and the participants' interpretations independently. Then, they went over the data some time later. Inter-rater reliability was estimated with Cohen's Kappa at 0.93, which according to Landis and Koch (1977, p. 165), is almost a perfect agreement.



### Summary of the Film

The film retells the story of a combatant, named *Amin Haghi*, who is the chief director of a newspaper. He has returned from the war between Iran and Iraq. Amin tries to publish anti-war memories of his martyr brother who was one of the chief commanders. However, there are some people with vague shadows in the film who attempt to prevent him from publishing the memories. He is severely tortured and prosecuted. Then, he is brought to the court of law when attempts to torture and prosecute him fail. He is kept in prison for two months before his trial. When his wife and friends attempt to bail him out, they are involved in illegal activities. Akbar Haghi (who is his uncle and is affiliated to the conservative party) gets him out of prison. Finally, it is revealed that his uncle who is the election candidate guides what happened to Amin Haghi. At the end of the film, Amin Haghi is killed after it is found out that his wife is pregnant.

### Results and Discussion

The analyst believes that the film “*party*” was produced when there was a debate between two main political wings namely, the “reformists” and “conservatives” in Iran. He points out that this gave rise to the construction of different discourses which represent themselves positively and others negatively. Differentiation involves a distinct boundary that separates an individual or group of social actors from an actor or group who share similarities with them, establishing the distinction between the “self” and the “other,” or between “us” and “them,” as with “others”. This polarization has impacted on the way people behaved in the society especially when it comes to produce cultural products or artifacts. The “*party*” which is a cultural product is no exception. According to the analyst, the self-positive representation has been affected by the dominant reformist discourse. One of the main tenets which the film wants to highlight is “freedom” besides the concepts of “law” and “people”. According to the analytical tools of Laclau and Mouffe’s theory of discourse discussed above, freedom, law and people as nodal points organise the rival discourses of the film, master signifiers act to organise identity of the characters and “the society of Iran” as a social space is organised by myths as key signifiers. Freedom, law and people are floating signifiers which the rival discourses in the film namely “reformists” and “conservatives” struggle to imbue with different meanings to constitute knowledge, reality identities and social relations in the film. The analyst believes that there are instances in the film in which the rival discourses come to maintain hegemonic intervention by being antagonistic with one another towards the nodal signifiers in the film. Also, in the film the rival discourses invested key signifiers with different meanings and link them to different chains of equivalence. What follows are first the analyses of the analyst followed by the participants’ interpretations of some parts of the film which had been analysed by the analyst. Table 1 summarizes the percentages of convergence between the analyst’s analyses and the participants’ interpretations.

**Table 1**

*Percentage of Convergence Between the Analyst's Analyses and the Participants' Interpretations*

Film parts Participants	Convergence with the analyst's analyses (%)						
	Part 1	Part 2	Part 3	Part 4	Part 5	Part 6	Part 7
University student participants	80%	60%	100%	0%	100%	100%	100%
School teacher participants	0%	0%	100%	0%	100%	80%	100%
University teacher participants	100%	100%	100%	20%	100%	100%	20%

### *The Analyst's Analysis of Part 1*

This sentence begins the film “the film is dedicated to those who lift stones to build freedom not to those who lift stones to build tombs” which according to the analyst, indicates from the outset the conflict between the two competing discourses in the whole society (and as a result the discourse dominant over the minds of producers of the film). The discourses which establish a borderline between “we” and “they” or “self” and “other”. Those who lift stones to build freedom are the “we” of the film or the reformists and those who killed the freedom and those who lift stones to build tombs are the “they” of the film or the conservatives. Efforts are made on the part of the producers to present a different definition of the “freedom” from the point of the view of the reformists, the efforts that are made to reject the conservatives’ definition of freedom and continues up the end of the film. Therefore, the film is an attempt to give a particular definition of the “freedom” and “law” on the part of the reformists and at the same time it is an attempt to marginalize the definitions presented by the conservatives.

### *The Participants' Analyses of Part 1*

With reference to the student participants four of the university student participants reported that the purpose of this sentence is to present a different definition of freedom. Definition which is highly valued and reshaped by the producers of the film which belong to the dominant discourses in the society. They all argued that to the film producers, to reach freedom is equal to losing one’s life. Therefore, the new definition presented of the freedom in the film is to highlight the values and thoughts of those who belong to this discourse. Thus, these participants’ interpretations of the film coincide with that of the analyst. Only one of them reported that the sentence beginning the film might have had attracted viewers to keep watching the film up to the end of the film: “As it is a common practice to use a *maxim* or what you may call it an *aphorism* to begin a film to have the viewer on the edge of the bench ...”

With relation to the high school teacher participants, four out of the five participants reported that the purpose of this opening sentence is to present a

definition favored by the producers of the film in that one should go to great pains if one desires to reach it. The participants argued that this way of reaching freedom reflects what the film producers conceive of freedom as is evident in the one of the comments: "Reaching freedom seems to be a hard task in the country and to reach it, you have to go through unexpected frustrations".

Therefore, this definition has been impacted on discourses to which the film producers belong (that is the reformist discourse).). Still, one of the high school teacher participants believed that the main purpose of this sentence is that the job of the press is to free public minds and the media does this as if they carry stones on their shoulders. This does not seem to support nor reject a particular line of thinking. The finding, here, echoes Widdowson's (2004) criticism of CDA, among others, which have not acknowledged alternative interpretations against that of the analysts themselves.

With relation to the university teacher participants, all the participants reported that the opening sentence describes the director's worldview of the freedom. They believed that having knowledge of the unpleasant status of the notion of the freedom in the society, the director of the film presents a new definition of the freedom and believed that there are still freedom seekers who go to great pains and lose their belongings to reach freedom. One of them commented that: "Losing physical belongings is just one from among many of the difficulties you have to encounter due to the current status of affairs in the country".

These interpretations are consistent with that of the analyst who considered that efforts are made on the part of the producers to present a different definition of the "freedom" from the point of the view of the reformists, the efforts that are made to reject the conservatives' definition of freedom and continues up the end of the film. All in all, comparison of the interpretations of the participants with that of the analyst showed some divergence, reflecting the concern raised by Widdowson (2004) that discourse theories, including Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) theory of discourse, that should acknowledge the audience interpretations as well.

#### *The Analyst' Analysis of Part 2*

The notion of "freedom" is present all over the film. The title of the newspaper which Amin Haghi directs is "*nedaye azadi*" or "voice of freedom". Moreover, the name of one of the characters of the film who is sick and seems to be one of Amin's relatives is "Azad" "*free*" in English. Four interesting points about "Azad" is noteworthy. His name is Azad. Azad is sick. Azad has sought freedom in Amin. Azad dies as a result of involvement in activities that the "they" of the film have done. Azad represents "freedom", the freedom that seems to be sick and is in need of attention. The ones who should take care of freedom in Iran are the reformist journalists. However, the conservatives kill Azad at last since they *lift stones to build tombs*. The analyst particularly focuses our attention on one episode of the film in which the inspector inspects Amin.

Inspector: *why have you kept silent while you answer well in your newspaper?*

Amin Haghi: *I prefer to speak where there is a law.*

Inspector: *Heh, heh,.. Law? First, bring down that handkerchief from your eyes (Amin brings it down). Look carefully! Remember me! (Big slap) you now found out that I don't hide myself.*

Amin Haghi: *So the friendly talk means this?*

Inspector: *The friendly talk means this for you who keep talking of the law and don't know its meaning. Dear look, this is your court of law. I am your lawyer, judge and as well as your attorney general. You are right, there is freedom of speech. But the shape of friendly talk is different for such rubbish people as you who do flirtation with the name of freedom of speech and spread dirt in a few papers in your newspaper and call it enlightenment. For you there is not something after freedom of speech. My dear look at me otherwise I'll beat you within an inch of your life. You think that you can do anything now that your brother is a martyr.*

Amin Haghi: *Who are you?*

(Again Amin is given another big slap and he is featured while falling down to the ground.)

According to the analyst, the above conversation between Amin Haghi and the inspector is centered around two different lines of ways over the two notions: "freedom" and "law". Amin Haghi says that *I prefer to speak where there is the law* which means that there is no law here and the "they" of the film has violated the law.

### *Participants' Analysis of Part 2*

One university student participant reported that by frequently using freedom in the film the director wanted to express his concern over freedom which was the main concern at the time at which the film was produced.

Another believed that the director wanted to imply that people are free to express their opinions and they should not be punished for expressing their ideas as commented below: "Being punished there in the film is one instance of freedom violation. It doesn't matter who and how violates it. I think that it shouldn't be done under any condition".

However, two of the student participants reported that by using freedom more frequently in the film the director wanted to convey the message that characters (belonging to different rival discourses) in the film seek freedom but freedom means different things for each: "I think that there in the film is the scene of rival discourses competing with one another to gain power and control over the other and over general audience."

With reference to high school teacher participants, all participants reported that by employing the concept of the "freedom", the director wanted to imply that "freedom is not sought only by the people who have religious face. Unveiled women

(referring to Mrs. Ariani who, in some parts of the film, showed little inclination to wear scarf as a religious index) can also work towards freedom. This is an opposition on the part of the director against the conservatives who think that unveiled women cannot be good candidates for spreading freedom". Therefore, as these interpretations revealed the concept of freedom is defined and constructed differently by different discourses (here, the two rival discourses do not agree on the concept of freedom) lending support to Laclau and Mouffe' theory of discourse that each structures reality in different ways and compete to define what is true (here, freedom) within the particular aspect of the social life in Iran (hence truth being discursively created). However, this finding demonstrates that like CDA, Laclau and Mouffe' theory of discourse doesn't appreciate alternative interpretations.

The university teacher participants reported that the main concern of the director over the frequent use of the concept "freedom" is to express that freedom is not paid attention in the society. Only powerful people can express. They believed that "*Nedaye Azadi*" (Voice of Freedom) is one piece of evidence highlighting the necessity of establishing and maintaining the right for people to have freedom. The boy "Azad" (meaning free in English) is another piece of evidence towards freedom as indicated in the following comment: "The prosecutor is everything there in the film. He is the judge, the lawyer and the attorney general (as we see the prosecutor saying these), violating the right of Amin to have his own lawyer to defend."

#### *Analyst's Analysis of Part 3*

According to the analyst, the director of the film has tried to employ linguistic items to show that the film is extremely violent. Such pejorative terms as "*do flirtation with the name of freedom of speech*" "*I'll beat you within an inch of your life*" and "*rubbish people*" which the inspector keeps using during the interrogation whereas we never see Amin Haghi use such expressions. According to the analyst, this aims at winning the audience's sympathy with the "we" of the film and developing a sense of rancor and hatred towards the "they" of the film.

#### *The Participants' Analysis of Part 3*

With reference to the university student participants, we found they believed it shows the true nature of the inspector and the association to which he was affiliated. They pointed out the inappropriacy of the inspector's behavior towards Amin Haghi. They added that the inspector belonged to those people who view a prosecution session as being atrocious and cruel towards the accused. They reported that the director has intentionally inserted this part as a means of collecting sympathy towards Amin and the association to which he belonged. Therefore, it raises a sense of sympathy towards "we" of the film and develops a sense of rancor and hatred towards the "they" of the film. One of them said that: "I felt some sort of emotional I saw the inspector's behavior towards Amin Haghi. It was unacceptable."

The high school teacher participants reported that the director of the film has employed these linguistic items in order to show that the "they" of the film are cruel, impolite, angry, prejudiced, and illogical. They also pointed out violence and the inappropriacy of the behaviour of the "they" of the film with cultural activists.

Therefore, the “we” of the film is represented in positive ways and encourages the viewer to sympathize with Amin and indicate their hatred and rancor towards the inspector (who is affiliated with the “they” of the film): “If I had been the prosecutor, I wouldn’t have treated him like that. It was so cruel and inhumane. I felt sympathetic with Mr Haghi.”

The university teacher participants reported that the way the inspector treats Amin Haghi represents the dictatorial discourses which are always pregnant with contempt and insult. The freedom and value of people are downgraded in these discourses. Injecting a sense of hatred and dislike into the viewer is the main purpose of this episode. Therefore, there seems to be a convergence in the way the student, high school teacher and university teacher participants interpret this episode of the film with that of the analyst. They all reported that the “we” of the film wins the sympathy of the viewer by negatively representing the “they” of the film: “Using any instances of these types of linguistics expressions by anyone is really offensive and it doesn’t matter who has used them. I think it just develops a sense of hatred in the audience.”

#### *The Analyst's Analysis of Part 4*

Discourses can be manifested not only through language, but also through other semiotic forms. In addition to the fact that the film uses linguistic items to represent the “we” of the film positively and the “they” of the film negatively, it also uses veritable semiotic devices such as pictures, colour and background music to help both make meaning and highlight the “we” of the film and driving the “they” of the film to the margin. During the whole interrogation, the interrogator is in the dark and is never seen by the film viewer. In contrast, Amin Haghi who represents the “we” of the film is kept appearing in the screen with big views. Highlighting the “we” of the film and marginalizing of the “they” of the film continues up to the end of the film. Most of the characters that we see in the film belong to the “we” of the film and only one or two of the characters of the film belong to the “they” of the film. These become much more obvious when we pay attention to how music is used in the film. According to the analyst, music plays a significant role in the film in that wherever it is present in the film, it intends to highlight the presence of “we” of the film and its absence makes the “they” of the film remain on the sidelines. No music is heard until the interrogation ends with this sentence “who are you?”. Music is played as the title of the film appears on the screen and accompanies it and the cast.

#### *The Participants' Analysis of Part 4*

With reference to the student participants, they all reported that the absence of music during the inspection and when it is played as the title of the film appears on the screen and accompanies it and the cast arouse the curiosity of the viewers and keep them in the suspense to see what will happen in the rest of the film. This episode of the film does not seem to win the viewers’ sympathy towards Amin, the “we” of the film. Therefore, there seems to be divergence between the analyst and the student participants in the interpretation of this episode of the film: “During the

inspection, I just wanted to know what will happen now that there is no music. My guess was that there was going to something unpleasant to happen.”

With reference to the high school teacher participants, there found to be varying interpretations among them with one of them expressing that “freedom seekers won’t sit still. They might be controlled for a time but will make the voice of freedom louder and louder”.

Another high school teacher participant reported that the purpose here is to “encourage and induce the viewer come close to the director and feel sympathy with him. Probably, this music is the voice of the freedom-seekers which is not turned off with torture and suppression”.

Still another high school teacher participant reported that the purpose here is to “inject fear and silence into the audience and attract the attention of the viewer to follow what is going to happen in the film”.

These interpretations go against that of the analyst where he believed that the music fulfills the function of highlighting the presence of “we” of the film and its absence allows the “they” of the film to remain on the sidelines (hence bringing to attention discourse analysts’ no or little attention (if any) to the audience’s alternative interpretations.

With reference to the university teacher participants, one participant reported that the absence of the music is to “show the calcification and silence that even the music daren’t express itself. It shows the top end of sheer dictatorship and bloodsucking”. Or another university teacher participant believed that by this the director wanted “to show that freedom is suppressed in the society. The absence of music in the inspections is indicative of suppression of freedom in the society”.

These reports are inconsistent with that of the analyst. However, only one participant interpreted the absence of music in almost the same way as the analyst in that like the analyst this university teacher participant believed that the presence of music is to arouse a sense of sympathy towards the “we” of the film and a sense of hatred towards the “they” of the film: “Silence can show loneliness, absence of the music creates silence which can show that Amin is alone in reaching his goal. When it is inserted, it can show a film towards the goal”.

#### *The Analyst’s Analysis of Part 5*

There are some other concepts that are challenged in the film. When the reformists came to power, their political rivals i.e., conservatives used such concepts as “cultural aggression”, “Islamic and republic values” to convey the idea that the reformists will spread the western cultures to the whole society and the Islamic republic values will lose their significance. To respond to these allegations, the reformists try to present their definitions of these notions so as to both challenge the conservatives’ misinterpretation of them as well as drive them to the margin. According to the analyst we see instances of this in the film where Amin Haghi is freed alone and blind in an unknown place. In response to his wife’s question, Negar Aryani, “who has done this to you”, he says:



They were those whom I spoke on the phone several times. For this reason, I got into their car. First I thought they were my war friends that have problems with me and my writings. I thought that if I talked to them for hours we could sort out the misunderstandings. Halfway through the talk I found out that I have made a rough guess ... [the scene of Amin falling to the ground is replayed with music in the background and big view]. People have changed. My eyes were closed and I did not understand what happened till I arrived home. They were not the children of the war.

In this episode, the “we” of the film has been represented in a way that they were of those people who have fought in the war and belonged to the group of children of the war. According to the analyst, that Amin is a war combatant and his brother is a martyr is an attempt to define the “we” of the film based on the values and concept that are strongly accepted in the society of Iran. This reflects that the “we” of the film is not “western” and is not only a threat to the Islamic and republic values but the “we” of the film is the strong defenders of those values. At the same time, this episode of the film is an attempt on the part of the director to redefine the “they” of the film in ways that the “they” of the film are kept away from the Islamic and republic values. Consequently, Amin Haghi says at the end of the episode “*They were not the children of the war*”.

#### *The Participants' Analysis of Part 5*

One university student participant reported that “the director wants to come closer to the children of the war and say that we belong to their group”. Another participant believed that “they were not the children of war”, the director wanted to bring to the attention of the viewer “those who have not fought in the war but are the main beneficiaries of the war”.

The high school teacher participants showed convergence with those of student participants where they reported that the director wants to differentiate between those who really fought for the country and those who did not fight but made misuse of the name of the real fighters (combatants). They also reported that only the children of war have the right to inspect not those who do not have any right on the shoulder of the martyrdom. One of them said that: “In the director’s opinion, the inspector carries just the title of the children of the war. They aren’t the war combatants. They are there to misuse whatever you might imagine to reach their own personal interests”.

All the university teacher participants converged on the idea that by “they were not the children of the war” the director refers to people who have used other people’s intentions (people who have lost their lives to reach freedom) to reach their wishes. Stated otherwise, they believed that the children of war came from people and understand people. However, these people begin to annoy other people instead of listening to them. They are mercenaries.

#### *The Analyst's Analysis of Part 6*

A form of positive presentation of self and negative presentation of others influences every other aspect of discourse. Over the past years one of the main



concerns of the reformist party in Iran was to acquit themselves of any affiliation to the western values given the fact that they have been accused to be transferring western cultures and values to the Islamic and republic values by their political rival i.e., conservatives. In the film discussed so far, this internal disagreement between the two political parties is evident and the producers who belong to the reformist party choose discourses which show their positions explicitly when Amin Haghi interviews with a BBC correspondent:

BBC Correspondent: *We want to have a telephone conversation with you in pursuance of publication of the last volume of your newspaper and reflection of your martyr brother's manuscript.*

Amin Haghi: *Excuse me, I don't want to interview.*

BBC Correspondent: *We have only some short questions about the present situations and limitations of the Iranian journalists and how you think about the way the court of press deal with the Iranian journalists in general.*

Amin Haghi: *Well. Yeah. But these short questions constitute an interview which I said that I don't want to interview. Besides, I don't want anyone to make political misuses of my brother's manuscript.*

BBC Correspondent: *you know that press crimes are not political nowhere in the world whereas yours are political.*

Amin Haghi: *I know. You don't need to remind me of that.*

BBC Correspondent: *Mr Haghi! How do you think the reformist party have written about the way the court of press behaves towards the journalists?*

Amin Haghi: *Look! It is a duty for all of press and media to protect their rights. And if you see that one particular newspaper (no matter to which political party it belongs) defends me or condemns my call for the court does not mean that they defend me but they criticize the way the press is being treated.*

BBC Correspondent: *But it seems that after the publication of the brother's manuscript and opposition outside the country, a particular political party tries to ...*

Amin Haghi: *First, these manuscripts do not show anything except that a war combatant thinks that he should not fight exactly at a time when he decides to fight for the benefit and expediency of his country. Second, you and people like you don't have the right to consider me like those people who come and talk in your radio. Neither am I a combatant nor my aim is to put down the country. And If I have any complaints, I will pose them in my country. Not like those people I go abroad and make ... there.*

BBC Correspondent: *We think alike. I didn't expect ...*

Amin Haghi: *Look Sir. Neither do I want to nor did I want to interview with you. You made our talk reach this point. Tell me do we think alike? Sir, my thoughts and opinions are in no ways similar to yours.*

According to the analyst, some point should be paid attention. According to the BBC correspondent Amin Haghi has been accused of a political crime. Amin Haghi insists that his crime is not political and has not intended to make political uses of his brother's writings. According to the analyst, the reason why this point has been stressed in the film is that within these years the conservatives have tried to show that the reformists' activities are political and by means of this they can prevent the reformists from doing any activities.

#### *The Participants' Analysis of Part 6*

All the student participants reported that Amin looks for creating an environment in which people including media can have freedom of speech since there was no or little freedom of speech in Iran. Their intentions are not subversion. For instance, one participant reported that "If something is published in the newspaper and it is against the policies of the dominant, it is considered a crime and its agents should be punished".

Four of the high school teacher participants reported: "Amin differentiates between his compatriots (though he is opposed to him) and the foreigners (though they support him). This emphasizes that Amin's crime is not political and the correspondent wants to make political use of this". One high school teacher participant appeared to interpret this episode in a different way saying that "the BBC correspondent wanted to stimulate Amin to oppose Iran".

All the university teacher participants reported that this part of the film wants to show that journalists are given no or little freedom to media activities. For example, one university teacher participant believed that the purpose of the director of the film in including this episode is to say that "In Iran, there is no or little freedom of speech and whoever tries to think of reaching freedom or bringing freedom to other people are accused of committing political crimes". Another reported that:

It shows that in other parts of the world, media crimes are investigated by a related court. However, the film shows that it is not obeyed in Iran and instead of media courts groups affiliated to the power investigate this issue and oppress and suppress people for expressing their ideas.

Almost all these interpretations on the part of student, high school teacher and university teacher participants corresponded to that of the analyst indicating that there are constraints on the activities of media.

#### *The Analyst' Analysis of Part 7*

Finally, with reference to Amin Haghi: *Look Sir, my thoughts and opinions are in no ways similar to yours.* According to the analyst, attempts are made in the film so as to highlight the point that the "we" of the film or the reformists are in no

ways affiliated to the west or to those Iranians who have sought freedom in foreign countries and now stand against the country.

### *The Participants' Analysis of Part 7*

All the student participants converged on the idea that the inclusion of this sentence in the film showed that Amin differentiated between himself and the BBC correspondent and his corporation. They reasoned that foreign mass media try to look for what they think they have to find. All the high school teacher participants reported that Amin says that although he is critical of the country, this does not mean that he disagrees with the totality of the law in the country. They also reported that the inclusion of this part helps Amin to differentiate between the self and those who are enemies to Iran and he will not cooperate with those opposing Iran. According to one university teacher participant:

This is where the complex notion of freedom is defined. Freedom does not mean betraying to the country and back to people and the martyrs. Freedom is not putting hands to hands with the enemies of Iran to kill people.

A different interpretation comes from a university teacher participant who believed that: "Amin in fact calls on the opposing party to stop fanning the flames by saying "we should be united. BBC and the like seek to plant seeds of conflicts between us".

Here, there seems to be a divergence between the university teacher participant and the analyst. The analyst believed that in this episode attempts are made to highlight the point that the "we" of the film makes a boundary with the opposing party whereas the university teacher participants believed that the purpose here is to reduce the tension rather than fan the flames.

### **Conclusion**

The present study was an attempt to validate the usefulness of discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe (1985) in discourse analysis through eliciting alternative interpretations derived from a number of Iranian participants of different socio-cultural persuasions. All in all, the analyses revealed that although there were some convergences in the interpretations of the analyst and the participants in some parts of the film, there were some divergences as well reflecting the need to accommodate the alternative interpretations in Laclau and Mouffe's theory of discourse. Therefore, the present study brought to the forefront the importance of background assumptions (or members' resources, to use Fairclough' term (1989) people bring to the process of interpretations meaning that people construct meanings of a piece of discourse by conflating what is in their minds, what is in the text and the contextual (socio-political) factors which influence the way a text is interpreted or deconstructed. More particularly, the present paper underscored the usefulness of Laclau and Mouffe's theory of discourse in analysing political discourses revealing how dominant discourses in a society lead to the production of cultural products. Using this theory, we found that such concepts as "law" and

“freedom” as instances of reality were defined and constructed in the film which in fact mirrored how these concepts are defined and constructed in the society of Iran.

The rival discourses that were competing to acquire hegemony over one another in the society left imprints of themselves in a cultural product i.e., film. Stated otherwise, throughout the film we were witness to the fact that the two rival discourses pie for dominance within a given aspect of the social sphere. The film maker's understanding of these aspects was certainly influenced by the ongoing struggle between the two rival discourses, with perceptions and interpretations of the people in the society (e.g., the participants) and their identities are always subject to new redefinition since meanings are continually renegotiated and reconfigured as a result of being in contact with rival discourses.

Our participants and the analyst as members of this society influenced by both their individual experiences and collective frames of perceptions converged on some aspects and diverged on the other aspects reflecting Foucault's (1972) assertion that ‘discourse is not the majestically unfolding manifestation of a thinking, knowing, speaking subject’ (Foucault, 1972, p. 55). Rather, in a process referred to as ‘interpellation’, Althusser (1971) and Foucault (1972) suggest that language serves to create and impose on individuals a particular social position which impacts on how they and act. Therefore, the results raised the significance of including the interpretations of lay readers of different socio-political and socio-cultural backgrounds in any theory of discourse. Since this is the first study in an Iranian context examining the usefulness of Laclau and Mouffe's theory of discourse in analysing political discourses the results should be treated with caution. Consequently, further studies are needed to confirm whether it is indeed an effective and appropriate methodological framework for conducting discourse analysis research in other modes of discourse such as written texts. In fact, even Fairclough (1992) admits that ‘texts are open to different interpretations depending on the context and interpreter’ (p. 28) and calls for carrying out rigorous research to establish some empirical evidence for how texts are to be interpreted by people of different socio-cultural backgrounds.

As for the limitation of the study, it is to be noted that we had access to only student, high school teacher and university teacher participants. Although the participants provided us with their interpretations of the film, we suggest that seeking people's interpretations, belonging to other socio-cultural backgrounds would consolidate our results. Therefore, this opens up future research to invite participants from different socio-cultural backgrounds and political persuasions to interpret discourses (interalia, films) previously analysed by discourse analysts employing models of theories of discourse. This line of research should tell us whether theories of discourse analyses appreciate alternative interpretations of the laymen other than the ones reached at by distinguished discourse analysts. In addition to providing the discourse analyzer with analytical tools to analyse and interpret the discourse, we argue that each theory of discourse should take into account readers' interpretations of the piece of discourse as well.

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## The Normative I / Eye of the Postcolonial Disability in Octavia Estelle Butler's "The Evening and the Morning and the Night"

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### Abstract

Differently formed bodies are treated as negatively marginalized in ableist, normative societies that intend to homogenize them. This study explores the intersection of postcolonial theory and disability studies through an analysis of Octavia E. Butler's (1991) short story entitled "The Evening and the Morning and the Night" (2001). The main objective of this study is to address the problem of societal marginalization and control mechanisms applied to disabled individuals, analogous to colonial oppression. The research methodically develops the argument by first outlining the societal unease and stigmatization of disabled bodies, comparing it to racism and colonialism. It then examines Lynn's journey and her experiences at Dilg, highlighting how the facility's operation mirrors colonial control systems. The findings suggest that Butler's narrative deconstructs the binary opposition between healthy (non-DGD) and unhealthy (DGD), presenting a hybrid identity that challenges dominant societal norms. Major conclusions show that the story critiques the social structures that label and control differently formed bodies, emphasizing the fluidity of disability and the complex interactions between power, identity, and autonomy. Finally, the results contribute to the broader discourse by demonstrating how science fiction can be a powerful medium for social commentary, indicating the dynamic nature of disability that resists a static, limiting definition.

**Keywords:** ableism, disability studies, hybrid identity, Postcolonial theory, societal control

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## Introduction

When it comes to disabled bodies, society frequently feels uneasy toward them. Due to the fear of contamination, “healthy” and “normal” individuals often demean and stereotype those with disabilities, causing them to suffer from negative perceptions of difference. This has societal repercussions comparable to racism and colonialism. In 1987, Octavia E. Butler (1947-2006), the American science-fiction author whose works deal with the mentioned concepts (Knutson, 2023), penned her critically acclaimed short story entitled “The Evening and the Morning and the Night” which succeeded to receive the Science Fiction Chronicle Reader Award in the same year. The story starts years after a cancer treatment was discovered. The children of those who used it suffer from “Duryea-Gode Disease” (DGD), a hereditary, fictional illness characterized by severe insanity, obsessional self-mutilation, occasionally mutilating other people, unstable states, and even self-cannibalism. This genetic condition is more likely to run in a family if it affects at least one parent. The terrible consequences of this painful disorder appear inevitable, and even for those who follow a very strict diet and lifestyle, the onset is only slightly postponed (Butler, 1991, p. 477). Some second-generation patients, however, question the value of these efforts due to the severe social isolation they endure and the knowledge that the advent of symptoms is undeniable.

The main character, Lynn Mortimer, a young woman, is a double DGD, meaning that she inherited the sickness from both of her parents. Offsprings whose parents had treatment for cancer with a novel medicine are genetically predisposed to develop the disease by middle age. Lynn has fought to learn how to cope with the disease as well as the inequality that she has experienced ever since she was a child. When she goes to Dilg, a well-funded retreat facility with a good reputation where DGD carriers who are out of control are kept, she gets a firsthand look at what these individuals are capable of doing. At Dilg, the patients are not physically bound; instead, they are making art and coming up with new technologies. The story is not essentially about racial diversity in the conventional sense, even though it does touch on issues of marginalization and identity. The text instead looks at more complex, postcolonial ideas that go beyond race differences. The narrative explores how society creates and upholds “normalcy” and “otherness” categories, emphasizing how people are alienated more because of their medical and mental health issues than their race or ethnicity. This story’s underlying meaning is about how racism and ablism, two societal diseases, impact the characters’ lives, rather than being about the impairments they are physically suffering from.

The present study highlights the dialectic between colonizers (from a postcolonial perspective), or “able subjects,” and colonized people, or “disabled subjects,” in “The Evening and the Morning and the Night.” This reading seeks to explore how individuals marginalized by specific disabilities align themselves with the broader concept of the “Other,” in a manner analogous to the relationship between the colonized and the colonizer. At its core, this study argues that the emergence of a degraded “Other” is a prerequisite for the emergence of the able-bodied rational subject, which is the all-pervasive agency that establishes the parameters of the dominant discourse.



### Literature Review

In the realm of science fiction, according to Elisabeth Anne Leonard (2003), a significant portion of the genre addresses the issue of race by omitting it, which is evident from how the races of the characters are superfluous to the plot. In her understanding, such omissions can be interpreted as an attempt to envision a cultural community where “a non-racist society comes into being” (p. 254). She is on point in asserting that race is not openly acknowledged in the majority of science fiction. The issue with her statement, however, is that many publications in science fiction do not aspire to convince readers that human beings have moved beyond the era of colonization and racism. Instead, such works, like the short story at hand, highlight how other criteria are increasingly becoming decisive in allowing those in power to encode and constrain differently formed bodies (either physically or mentally), that is, new racial structures are showing up. In believing so, not only does a “non-racist society” continue to be out of touch, but this also makes it more difficult to define what constitutes racism since, after all, is not ableism just another form of racism in which health comes before color?

According to Florian Bast (2013), the narrative of this short story balances the development of the self through linguistic strategies, such as shifting we-versus-they distinctions within the first-person perspective, to underscore the narrator’s agency. Beyond that, this paper argues that as a way to fight the dominant discourse, this time the first-person narrator fights normative bodies by calling the latter “they,” centralizing the bodies who have been regarded as outcasts in this fictional, though realistic society. Yet, more significantly, this “we-versus-they” is also called into question, given that the primary objective of postcolonial theory is to deconstruct such dichotomies (Bhabha, 1994). As will be demonstrated in the discussion section, even this previously thought “we” of DGD patients emerges to form a new plurality that cannot be homogenized into a unity of agency.

Similar to Bast (2013), Isiah Lavender (2014) argues that racial identity is an important component of Butler’s (1991) narrative and that her writing brings racist themes to the forefront by focusing on the we-versus-they dichotomy, as well as the desire Alan, Lynn’s fiancé who is also a double DGD individual, expresses to eliminate a disabled person’s reproductive potential. Remarkably though, Lavender (2014) points out that the dread associated with DGD is that it transforms its patients into terrifying “self-mutilating monsters” (p. 71) that might unprovokedly attack those who are not affected arbitrarily. Interestingly, historical racist and sexist discourses have frequently used the word “monster” to describe “people with congenital impairments” (Garland-Thomson, 2002, p. 8). The manner in which the ableists in this narrative are treating the DGD population is reminiscent of how colonists, for centuries, have characterized the colonized as “uncivilized,” in need of being “humanized,” educated, and civilized.

In certain respects, Lavender’s (2014) argument resembles another put forth by Cindy Marie LaCom (2002), which posits that colonized individuals frequently endeavor to attain liberation by establishing a “new category of monsters—the disabled, the deformed, the mad” (p. 141). Disabled bodies are

doubly alienated in this context since they are denied by both the colonizers and the colonized, as LaCom (2002) puts it. The idea of the disabled body's being double times alienated has not been addressed in the previous readings of this short story which will light up a new understanding of the text.

Prior research has mostly focused on Dilg as a productive environment where patients live in safety and comfort and remain creative as opposed to other hospitals mentioned in the story where patients are treated like prisoners (Green, 1994 & Bast, 2013, among others). Dilg is further seen in a positive light by Sami Schalk (2017), who describes it as "an alternative to state institutions, as an engagement with the deinstitutionalization movement" (p. 143; emphasis added). This view describes Dilg as a venue that promotes empowerment and self-determination for the patients. Nevertheless, this viewpoint will be called into question in the present study when Dilg is analyzed as a type of reinstitutionalization instead, for despite its apparent lack of brutal severity, it practically sustains comparable systems of oppression that are prevalent in more conventional institutional environments. Consequently, the question is whether Dilg is indeed "better" than other facilities that house disabled bodies, or if it is just a new, alternative method of regulating them. As the present research will demonstrate, Dilg signifies the transition from the disciplinary approach of sovereign societies to the monitoring and encoding method of control societies, which is just as harsh, if not more so, though ornamented with fancy emblems.

### **Method**

With ideas from both postcolonial theory and disability studies, this paper takes a qualitative approach to examine the text. The purpose of this multidisciplinary approach is to augment knowledge about how disabled bodies realize their potential power over normative, colonial bodies within the story. The postcolonial framework will be utilized to investigate themes of identity, power relationships, and resistance at Dilg. In addition, disability studies will offer a prism through which to view how society constructs normality and how difference is embodied. "Normate" was initially coined by Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (2017, p. 8), who is a well-known disability studies scholar. Garland-Thomson (2017) developed this concept to describe society's perception of the non-disabled body as the standard. The notion is crucial for understanding how cultural standards and views of "normal" bodies may marginalize and exclude people with disabilities. Now, cultural traits serve as the main target of discrimination instead of physical traits.

As noted by Michael Foucault (1976), the act of observing (referred to as "glance") holds a position of authority when it comes to ascertaining the truth regarding a disease; in other words, the "truth" is determined by the glance. Thus, to be unhealthy is to be looked at and dreaded as "Other" before learning, if at all, what is different. In Butler's (1991) short story, when the media's promotion of dread of the DGD population leads to the realignment of social borders to protect "healthy people" (p. 479), the same Foucauldian worldview becomes applicable. This is how ableists label a body experiencing an unfamiliar disease as what Timothy Morton

(2010) has called “the strange stranger” (p. 42). Describing the strange stranger, Morton (2010) writes it is “something or someone whose existence we cannot anticipate” and one would “never know them fully” (p. 42).

Disability “is not really a fixed category most clearly signified by the white cane user or a crutch user. Rather it denotes a fluid and shifting set of conditions” (Ghai, 2003, p. 32; emphasis added). This viewpoint appeals to the Deleuzian concept of “becoming” as fluid and the more general concerns in postcolonial theory. First, it needs to be made clear what “postcolonialism” means in this study. The goal is not to examine historical events that occurred after colonialism ended, hence the term “post-colonialism” does not apply. Leaving that hyphen aside, postcolonialism is not a term that refers to the end of colonialism, but rather to new ways of opposing colonial control and its legacy (Loomba, 2015). Postcolonial criticism can be defined as an analysis of the dynamics of dominance that exist both among and within territories, ethnicities, or cultures, and acknowledges that these systems of dominance have their origins in the historical context of colonialism (Moore-Gilbert, 1997).

According to Anita Ghai (2003), identities and social norms are not seen as static or rooted in a single tradition, but rather as evolving, influenced by numerous overlapping histories, cultures, and systems of power which aligns with postcolonial emphasis on hybridity and multiplicity. In addition, rigid classifications and hierarchies, including attitudes toward and approaches to disability, have frequently been prescribed by colonial powers. In accordance with postcolonial critiques of the repercussions of colonialism, acknowledging disability as fluid challenges these imposed structures. Following the same manner of thought, the present textual analysis adopts an interdisciplinary critical approach that connects disability studies and postcolonial theory.

### **Identity, Exclusion, and the Othering of DGD Individuals**

Both healthy and unhealthy persons are assigned to distinct categories, each with its own membership. According to the legislation, individuals suffering from DGD are taken out of their home neighborhood and put in an isolated setting where they are made to feel like outcasts and confined in their world, treated like the “subaltern,” a term developed by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Morris, 2010) which means to be excluded from hegemonic power framework. Lynn goes into great detail about her experiences as a DGD carrier, including the marginalization that follows. She even labels those who experience it as “DGDs” and those who are normative bodies as “non-DGDs” (Butler, 1991, p. 478). This demonstrates how the prevailing, majoritarian discourse that governs society ends up encoding, otherizing, alienating, and further suppressing the bodies that deviate from its predetermined standards. In other words, DGD persons, like colonized “Others,” are classified in such a manner that they are perceived as part of a jumbled, confused, and unnamed collectivity, rather than as members of the regular human society. Furthermore, when these patients are addressed by the name of the disease they suffer from, it becomes clear that ableist ideology not only reduces their identities to the “negatively” different aspects of their bodies but also implies how dangerous these

single-functional bodies are. Besides, the fact that Dilg is the only retreat where research is conducted in addition to patient care and that the majority of the personnel are DGD individuals (Butler, 1991, p. 492) speaks much about how closely patients are watched over there.

The focus of disability studies mainly lies not in the disabilities themselves, known as impairments, but rather in the social, cultural, and environmental obstacles that people with disabilities must overcome (Oliver, 1990). When she is about to walk through a corridor and see offices where DGD carriers are working, Lynn knows that "[s]cars didn't bother [her] much. Disability didn't bother [her] much. It was the act of self-mutilation that scared [her]" (Butler, 1991, p. 484). Indeed, Lynn's dread of self-mutilation presents a more complex view of bodily autonomy and the difference between intentional body modification or injury and inherent differences in human bodies (such as those resulting from impairment or scars). Stated differently, what is terrifying is not the impairment itself, but rather it becomes so the moment that a disabled body interprets any deviation from the norm or differences as "bad" or inferior and turns into a masochistic body.

Lynn is explicitly identified as racially distinct due to her disease, as she does not like "the way people edged away from [her] when they caught sight of [her] emblem. [She]'d begun wearing it on a chain around [her] neck and putting it down inside [her] blouse, but people managed to notice it anyway" (Butler, 1991, p. 478). Interestingly, her biological race is not mentioned in the story, which depicts how now medical conditions, mixed with genetics, are coding people into certain classifications. As a result, the colonizer is no longer only white, European, and a member of the nuclear family in an able-bodied society, but also a genetically dominant variant. Of course, by being dominant, I do not mean numeric dominance, but rather qualitative dominance in terms of those who wield power regardless of their numbers. What makes Lynn's biological race being unmentioned more intriguing is that white readers would be just as invested in her experience as non-white readers, putting everyone on the verge of futilely trying to empathize with her. This supports Alice Hall's (2015) view that "[w]hile the uneven dynamic of pity is possible, the reciprocal relationship of empathy remains . . . unavailable" (p. 35). The realization that the definition of a disabled body and the criteria for its classification are not easily discernible makes the readers more invested and alert. As Lynn points out, the diagnosis of DGD is "only a matter of when: now or later" (Butler, 1991, p. 477). In other words, each individual is either a disabled person already or has not yet become one. In the words of Hall (2015), "everyone is 'temporarily able-bodied' (TAB) or not yet disabled" (p. 6). In fact, Lynn's statement emphasizes this indeterminacy of what a "healthy" body is.

At the midpoint of the narrative, Alan and Lynn visit Dilg, the elite private DGD facility overseen by Dr. Beatrice Alcantara. There, every patient is an "out-of-control" DGD (Butler, 1991, p. 478). Originally spelled Alcántara, Alcantara is a Spanish surname, and it is not implausible that she had altered the form of her name to Anglicize in order to obtain financing for the property in Los Angeles (Lavender, 2014). From a postcolonial perspective, her act might be recognized as what Bhabha

(1994) refers to as “mimicry” (p. 56), which refers to the times when the observer is observed, i.e., the colonizer feels threatened by the discourse begun by themselves. The return of the image in the form of a parody, which allows the colonized to copy the colonizer, is what worries the colonizer (Bhabha, 1994). This act of return breaks racial supremacy in the sense that the colonized people can emulate the colonizers’ conduct and become like them. This is how the ambivalence of imitation is shown in the last name of Dr. Beatrice.

Dr. Beatrice believes a “haven” is created in Dilg where patients intend “to be very territorial” (Butler, 1991, p. 490), and DGD individuals use their differences to create art as therapy there. Considering this situation, two questions might be raised: First, how beneficial is it for people with DGD to develop a sense of territoriality? Second, is Dr. Beatrice trustworthy in her role as the matriarchal supervisor in charge of maintaining the establishment’s positive reputation?

In response to the first question, it is necessary to direct one’s attention towards Dilg as a building that is characterized as “an elaborate old mansion” (Butler, 1991, p. 482). A postcolonial perspective identifies three meanings of a grand mansion: 1) the presence of enslaved labor in the masters’ big residences; 2) the possibility that enslaved individuals who resided in the grand mansion had the chance to narrate their experiences (Eldar & Jansson, 2023), and 3) the persistence of colonial hierarchies of power in the postcolonial setting (Kloo, 2009). Alan and Lynn, the two new visitors to Dilg, initially perceive it as a place of refuge because they are unable to believe that DGD patients are capable of engaging in activities other than self-harm as if they have reclaimed their lives (Butler, 1991, p. 483). Nevertheless, this utopian image is disrupted by noticing Dr. Beatrice and Lynn’s capacity to influence others through their scents. Readers are left wondering if these patients have really learned to control themselves or if they were tricked into thinking they had. Furthermore, despite the fact that these “out-of-control DGDs create art and invent things” (Butler, 1991, p. 483), Dr. Beatrice mentions that if they get distracted, it will “be breaking [their] routine” (Butler, 1991, p. 488), which seems quite paradoxical to find creativity as a routine, given that, logically, creativity is meant to lead one free of a routine. Dr. Beatrice is contradicting herself, which answers the second question about how trustworthy she is.

Dr. Beatrice’s age is an additional factor raising questions about her reliability. She seems to be around sixty years old, which Lynn finds shocking because DGD patients do not live to that age (Butler, 1991, p. 483). It is highly possible that Dr. Beatrice is not a DGD patient at all, but rather claims to be one to win the empathy of these disabled bodies and gain their confidence so that she might enter their territory to control them. Doing so, she eventually achieves her goal when she informs Lynn that they are the only two female members with double DGD due to a confluence of factors including the disease’s hereditary nature and the sex-linked chromosomes who possess the ability to exercise authority over others (Butler, 1991, p. 490). Whether she is being truthful or not, she is able to navigate her way through the hearts of those who have been colonized.

Aging, as defined by Garland-Thomson (2002), is “a form of disablement that disqualifies older women from the limited power allotted to females who are young and meet the criteria for attracting men” (p. 19). Women typically endure growing marginalization and invisibility as they get older and deviate from society’s standard definitions of beauty, which is similar to what happens to persons with disabilities. This serves as more confirmation of the claim that everyone is, or will eventually become, somewhat disabled. Dr. Beatrice is sixty years old, and she may have experienced some type of disability as a result of not only her age but also the perception of her power and influence within the DGD community. This may be the reason she is enticing Lynn, a young woman, to follow her profession.

Particularly pertinent to Alan’s character and his DGD situation is the idea of double alienation. Alan, similar to his fellow DGD patients, encounters a sense of detachment within society at large, where healthy colonizers could be interpreted metaphorically as the dominant majoritarian bodies (Butler, 1991, p. 481). Nonetheless, this feeling is not limited to this one societal layer for him, as Alan additionally encounters a secondary form of alienation, which is present within the DGD community, specifically at Dilg. Alan is further marginalized due to the absence of a specific pheromone-induced scent linked to the disease in women who are double DGDs, such as Dr. Beatrice and Lynn (Butler, 1991, p. 490). His divergence from the “new” norm establishes him as an outcast in his own community. As Dr. Beatrice notes, “[t]here aren’t enough of [their] kind to know what’s normal for [them]” (Butler, 1991, p. 491). In this scene, the narrative delves into the multi-faceted nature of becoming different. Therefore, even within marginalized groups, there is the potential for hierarchies and forms of exclusion to emerge as soon as they have the opportunity to do so.

Being double DGD carriers makes Lynn and Dr. Beatrice what Homi K. Bhabha (1994) refers to as a “hybrid identity” (p. 38). These individuals are able to transcend both their native identities (DGD patients who take the disease from just one of their parents) and their colonizers’ identity (normative), existing in a space that is in between the two and incorporating aspects of both. A third space, a positive, affirming new identity that is similar to the Hegelian synthesis and a combination of the positive aspects of both their identities, the colonizer and the colonized, is created by going beyond this binary opposition of healthy vs. unhealthy. This synthesis, in the instance of double DGD carriers, is a new identity that combines elements of normative society (the colonizer aspect) with the resiliency and experiences of living with DGD (the colonized aspect).

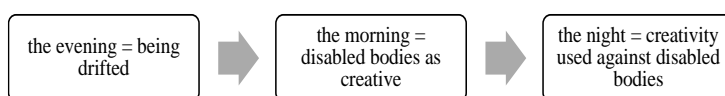
Similar to how the colonized mirrors the opposite of everything the colonizer embodies, each negative attribute is projected onto the differently formed bodies. Furthermore, the colonizer may experience a proud sense of generosity if the colonized are treated “kindly” out of sympathy. In the narrative, Dr. Beatrice makes the same observation as a colonizer noting that “[w]e offer DGDs a chance to live and do whatever they decide is important to them” (Butler, 1991, p. 493; emphasis added). One might inquire as to who determines the validity of the term “important” and what standards an action must meet to be labeled “important.” It is undoubtedly

predictable that Dr. Beatrice, in her position of authority, would hold such a decision-making and rule-establishing stance as the “wise” one.

Connecting the previous discussion to the short story’s title reveals that the second-generation DGD carriers are predisposed to the disease as the “evening” of their lives progresses, anticipating the arrival of the night. However, the title defies our expectations by tying the evening to the “morning” rather than the night. This is how things appear at Dilg: the pretense of encouraging patients’ creativity hides the unpleasant truth, making it look as bright as the “morning,” which becomes apparent at “night” when it becomes clear that the patients’ so-called creativity is nothing more than a routine, not creative in the abstract sense, but rather like the way days go by in a monotonous routine. The process is depicted in the figure below.

**Figure 1**

*The Evening and the Morning and the Night” of the Bodies at Dilg*



Upon witnessing DGD carriers producing art and technology artifacts, Alan expresses astonishment and says he “expected to find them weaving baskets or something” (Butler, 1991, p. 484). This point in the narrative emphasizes how ableist views about disability and a colonial ideology overlap. This ideology, which has its roots in imperialism, tends to undervalue the abilities and contributions of colonial populations, limiting them to basic or menial labor. Consequently, Alan’s presumption is shaped by both society’s prevalent belief that people with disabilities can only perform basic, unsophisticated activities and the imperialistic worldview, which views the colonized as primitive, uncivilized human beings incapable of handling more complex tasks. Their goal is to instill self-loathing in these bodies. The outcome of internalizing racism is Alan’s self-loathing and bitterness (Butler, 1991, p 480). It is apparent that having this condition generates psychological issues that arise out of societal perceptions of the health conditions rather than the patient’s regular experience of the biological illness. Thus, this concept of internalization serves as an indicator of what W. E. B. Du Bois (2015), an influential African American civil rights activist, calls it “double consciousness” (p. 5).

With this presumption, the disabled have been informed on multiple occasions that they are deficient, such as when Lynn refers to herself and those who are afflicted as the “victim” rather than the “sick” (Butler, 1991, p. 477), since the former connotes the presence of an aggressor, whereas the latter does not convey any accusation. This leads to the Otherized being so thoroughly dehumanized that the only thing left to become is an object or a tool to further the interests of the colonizer. Dr. Beatrice regularly mentions that her “people” (Butler, 1991, pp. 483, 487, 491, 493), by which she means the patients, work in glass offices, implying that they are always under her dictatorial gaze. In this case, within the realm of non-disabled individuals, the fundamental aspiration is for the disabled to exist to serve



the interests of the colonizer, that is, to undergo a complete transformation into harmless colonized beings. The entity that is colonized ceases to exist as an independent subject and only retains characteristics that are absent from the colonizer. When Dr. Beatrice tells Lynn and Alan that one of the patients at Dilg has devised "the p. v. locks" (Butler, 1991, p. 483) that secure the institution, she does so with a sense of pride. However, she does not discuss the mechanism behind the invention in any greater detail. Alan does not experience the lock's terrifying effects until later when he gets trapped in the same p. v. lock (Butler, 1991, p. 492). It is strikingly similar to how the colonizers eventually utilized the labor of the colonized to their detriment when they stopped being purely obedient.

However, the postcolonial body has been described as "an incalculable object, quite literally difficult to place" where "the demands of authority cannot unify its message nor simply identify its subjects" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 62; emphasis added). The body does, in fact, transcend the idea of an object as defined in relation to a subject since it is incalculable and unplaceable. When Alan's mother Naomi breaks her usual routine to visit her son, this is what occurs in the narrative. As it is, after all, a facility for out-of-control DGD patients, Dr. Beatrice is presently apprehensive and speaks forcefully to Naomi out of concern that her "gentleness could turn in an instant" (Butler, 1991, p. 490).

In the previous sections, en passant there was a reference to the transition from disciplinary societies to control societies. DGD cases that are under control are housed in hospitals that are similar to prisons because it is much simpler to treat them according to the standards of discipline. Such hospitals are practically "reminiscent of early nineteenth-century Bedlam" (Link, 2013, pp. 1-2). Lynn emphasizes that DGD carriers are required to wear badges that resemble "a chain around [the] neck" (Butler, 1991, p. 478) to encode them. In general, chains evoke associations with constraints, limitations, and dominion. The symbol functions as a continuous reminder of the person's "fixed" identity as a DGD carrier in this particular context, an identity that is imposed by society and from which they are unable to break free. They may potentially face societal disapproval, discrimination, dread, pity, or "stupid generalizations and short attention spans" as a result (Butler, 1991, p. 479). This reductionism is a widespread issue in the case of persons with disabilities, as they are frequently viewed solely in terms of their impairment, rather than as complex human beings with various identities and experiences. Furthermore, an association can be drawn between this and the methods by which colonizers bound and label their victims. On the other hand, cases that are not under control are not homogeneous, the same, or united, which makes it more difficult to have their bodies obedient. The unpredictable nature of these DGD carriers makes them more dangerous and subversive since colonists cannot forecast the moment of subversion, therefore they cannot control or prevent it. This is how the colonized wield power over the colonizer.

When DGD bodies that are out of control cease temporarily behaving as the system intends, they resemble what Graham Harman (2012) refers to as the "broken hammer" (p. 187). To go beyond this, Harman's (2012) concept of the broken



hammer serves as an example of how things have a hidden functioning that is revealed when they break or fail to operate. A hammer is typically regarded as a mere implement, and its very existence is determined by the purpose it serves for humans. When it breaks, though, it demands attention all of a sudden, as a thing with an existence and attributes of its own apart from its use to humans. Comparably, in the field of disability studies, bodies that do not conform to conventional or anticipated classifications of functionality and aptitude are referred to as impaired, non-normal, or “broken” bodies. These bodies, like the broken hammer, show depths and intricacies that defy accepted knowledge. In this narrative, the DGD bodies show the limitations of Dilg, a society built on specific ideas of productivity and aptitude by deviating from normative expectations. Ultimately, “Dilg” is a term that sounds a lot like “dig,” a word that is used several times in the story to paint a graphic picture of how these disabled individuals rip their own skin. Now, considering that the name of the organization is so close to the function that it is bound to restrict, one could ask if Dilg is essentially the same as digging into bodies from the exterior this time, with a little bit of a decoration added to it. Thus, there are parallels established between “broken” bodies and “broken” civilizations.

A disabled body is described as an abject figure in the story “tearing . . . through skin and bone, digging . . . to reach [the] heart, . . . half their faces ruined, . . . bit [one’s] own arm, [and] tore at the wound . . . with the nails of the other hand” (Butler, 1991, pp. 477, 485-486). In approaching the abject, as Julia Kristeva (1982) has it, “[i]t is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, and rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite” (p. 4). Following this definition, these “disgusting,” abject images also seem unappealing to the reader, much more than they do to Lynn and Alan, because the community they grow up in has been differently formed, not that it is an inherent feature of DGD carriers’ bodies and act that is disturbing. Had these images been comprehensible and known to the reader, one would have identified the familiar image. This adds more interest to why Butler has not chosen an already existing disability but has come to create a realistic one.

### **Conclusion**

This study shed light on the intricate relationships between colonizers and colonized, able and disabled bodies, and how these categories are deconstructed and reinstructed differently within the narrative. As seen by the emergence of a hybrid identity that subverts prevailing discourses on colonialism and disability, DGD carriers in Butler’s (1991) novel, especially through the personas of Lynn and Dr. Beatrice, transcend conventional limits and subvert the system though they become identified differently soon and an absolute freedom remains inaccessible. Dr. Beatrice and Lynn exemplify Bhabha’s (1994) idea of hybrid subjects, particularly when they transcend traditional cultural forms associated with either DGD or non-DGD carriers to reach the ultimate point of difference. As stated, their identities and experiences move through a liminal space that lets them act authentically. In

contrast, Alan's encounter diverges from theirs in that he contends with an unresolved form of double consciousness.

Deeper insights into institutional control and autonomy have been gained from examining Dilg as a system that simultaneously empowers and constrains DGD carriers. The results of this research emphasize how important it is to see disability as a dynamic, changing experience that interacts with larger sociocultural and political processes rather than as an inflexible category. By employing science fiction as a vehicle to critique ableist and colonialist ideologies, the narrative offers a potent commentary on the persistent obstacles encountered by marginalized communities. For future research, it would be insightful to apply this multidisciplinary approach to Butler's and other science fiction authors' works, analyzing how different narratives connect with and challenge the conceptions of disability. Furthermore, examining how innovation and technology function in this narrative may provide clues into how societies of the future may deal with concerns of power, ability, and diversity.

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## **“Being kind toward everything alive”: Aldo Leopold’s Land Ethic in Richard Powers’ *Bewilderment***

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### **Abstract**

Encouraging a transformative perspective that nurtures a harmonious bond between humans and Nature has been the most important concern in ecocriticism and among its proponents. One enduring concept throughout human history, and the subject of harsh criticism in this regard, is “anthropocentrism”, which prioritizes human welfare over nature. Aldo Leopold’s “land ethic” theory vehemently rejects this human-centered stance and advocates for the moral inclusion of non-human natural beings in all human-made decisions about nature. In this light, as a literary call to active environmentalism, Richard Powers’ *Bewilderment* (2021) directly challenges anthropocentric ideologies by arguing for environmental equity and underscoring the inherent worth of all living entities. Drawing upon the anthropocosmic ethical approach of the “land ethic” theory, this study adopts an interdisciplinary approach to question anti-environmental behaviors that build upon the so-called anthropocentric human supremacy over non-humans. It argues that *Bewilderment* vividly criticizes the ethos of industrialized societies that exploit the Earth for immediate gain, ignoring the long-term consequences of anthropocentrism and degrading the natural rights of animals as co-architects of the human realm.

**Keywords:** Aldo Leopold, anthropocentrism, *Bewilderment*, land ethic, Richard Powers

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## Introduction

As long as humanity continues to consider Nature and its non-human inhabitants as the Other and mere resources at its disposal, it is unlikely to find a viable solution to the current environmental crises. What environmentalists call "environmental injustice" and the irreversible depletion of "nonrenewable resources" highlight a fundamental flaw in our relationship with Nature (Hailwood, 2015, p. 1). Additionally, there is a prevailing belief that human alienation from Nature is the primary cause of such crises.

In this sense, it is crucial for humanity to strive towards establishing a harmonious and balanced relationship with nature, recognizing all its components as integral parts of creation that possess inherent value. In other words, it is imperative to acknowledge equality among the various inhabitants of the Earth. This requires humanity to diligently preserve the health and well-being of all its settlers and understand that if Nature continues to be abused, irreparable harm will befall human existence. As Aldo Leopold, the environmentalist, states in a 1992 essay, there exists "between man and the earth a closer and deeper relation than would necessarily follow the mechanistic conception of the earth" (1992, p. 47)

The emergence of ecocriticism as a scholarly movement has shed light on the detrimental effects of anthropocentrism—that human beings alone possess intrinsic value above all creatures—on the present environmental crises or the "Anthropocene". The term stands for the beginning of human disastrous impact on Earth since 1800 up to the present day (Steffen et al., 2007). However, certain archaeological studies reveal that "anthropogenic changes result[ed] from early agriculture in Eurasia, including the start of forest clearance by 8000 years ago and of rice irrigation by 5000 years ago" (Ruddiman, 2003, p. 261). It could have also begun "from the onset of Neolithic agriculture and gradual rise in carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) since ~6000 years ago and methane since ~4000 years ago" (Glikson, 2013, p. 89). As such, it is the main cause for "a precipitous rise in worldwide GDP, fertilizer consumption, paper consumption, foreign direct investment, international tourism, and population" (Di Leo, 2023, p. 314).

Just as humans are social beings sociologically, no one can deny that, ecologically, they are merely a fraction of nature, dependent on it for survival while contributing to its totality and systematic consistency. Advocates of this green perspective argue that to address current and future environmental challenges, we must decisively reject anthropocentrism and develop a symbiotic relationship with nature. No hierarchy should exist within the chain of being.

A breakthrough theory providing necessary guidelines for this relationship is Aldo Leopold's "land ethic" theory, which helps us recognize our ethical responsibilities towards non-human beings. In *Sand County Almanac* (1968), Leopold foregrounds the essential harmony in Nature through poetic language, highlighting the interconnected relationships within the network of nature. In this network, humans are only one organ of a coordinated whole, dependent on the survival of others like soil, atmosphere, mountains, and forests.

Leopold argues that each being, out of instinct or acquired wisdom, is a small fraction of a united community on the land. However, humanity often transgresses its own rights, seeking dominance in this community. The “land ethic” imposes constraints on humans’ treatment of nature, reviving the lives and rights of all ecosystem members and expanding the community to embrace soil, water, plants, and animals (1968, pp. 203-204). Leopold calls for a “new ethic” to address humans’ association with the Earth and its inhabitants, especially animals and plants (Leopold, 1968, p. 203). His scrutiny of human relations with the Earth is considered “the first systematic presentation of ecocentric ethics,” marking him as “the first person to call for a radical rethinking of ethics” by integrating ethics and ecology (DesJardins, 2013, p. 179).

Leopold emphasizes the importance of practicing a spiritual path that acknowledges the inherent rights—or what Leopold calls “biotic right[s]” (1968, p. 211)—of all earthly beings, against utilitarian and libertarian-based approaches to land: “A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise” (pp. 224-225). By recognizing and embracing our interconnectedness with nature, we can cultivate a deep sense of respect and reverence for all forms of life to harmoniously coexist with the ecosystem. Such ecological themes, including climate change and the loss of biodiversity, provide humanity with effective strategies and play significant roles in forming the sociocultural consciousness of environmental crises in recent eco-fiction. The rise of such narratives in recent decades has greatly influenced policymaking and public concerns about the perils threatening our Earth.

For Richard Powers, the novelist, in an interview about the publication of *Bewilderment* (2021), “the real-world consequences of catastrophic planetary change have become more real and more present and more immediate” (Wolfson, 2021). In this regard, his *Bewilderment* scientifically explores how the disconnected relationship between humans and Nature has so far negatively affected both. Through his science fiction, Powers presents us with imaginative explorations of “the implications of present-day contemporary scientific theories and technologies” (Taylor, 2013, p. 75). *Bewilderment* is a particular case in point in which Powers introduces Nature as a therapy for the ill modern mentality that has abused it. It shows how, as a character in the story says, “There’s something wrong with us” in treating Nature throughout history (2021, p. 109). By choosing a small boy “on the spectrum” (p. 11) as the protagonist who takes refuge in Nature for treatment, Powers suggests that “everyone alive on this fluke little planet” is “on the spectrum” due to the “syndromes linked to the billion pounds of toxins sprayed on the country’s food supply each year,” as the boy’s father reflects (pp. 10-11). In other words, Powers suggests how human beings still lack what Leopold calls “ecological conscience”. Such awareness is “a conviction of individual responsibility for the health of the land” (1968, p. 221), developed over decades, perhaps since H. D. Thoreau’s (1854) “emphasis on physical materialism, ecological connectedness, and the implications of humanity and its actions within the natural world” (Reno, 2022, p. 116). This concern evolved “most fully in the late 1940s as the land ethic” that helped with a great change of worldview from considering “nature as having only

instrumental value" to Nature as having "an intrinsic worth" (DesJardins, 2013, p. 180).

This article aims to demonstrate how, through Leopold's theory, Powers' concern with humanity's feeling of bewilderment on Earth—understood as public ecological ignorance—can lead to environmentalist activism for the preservation of Nature and the balance between all species. To this end, the theoretical underpinnings of Aldo Leopold's "land ethic" theory will be explored to investigate how ecocriticism addresses anthropocentrism and its impacts on environmental literature. Examining Powers' *Bewilderment* through this lens will provide new insights into how adopting a land ethic in contemporary eco-fiction can aid in revising environmental policies and practices.

### Literature Review

Research on *Bewilderment* is currently limited due to its recent publication. However, several studies illuminate certain ecological concerns and explorations of the interaction between humans and Nature as depicted in the novel. To begin with, Heil (2016) explores how Powers integrates ecological themes into his narratives, examining the relationship between humans and the natural world. Her book highlights Powers' interest in the non-propositional aspects of cognition, which includes understanding ecological and environmental concerns through the mediation of fictional narratives. Meanwhile, Byers (2009) notes that a significant feature of Powers' fictional technique is his use of alternating narration between two separate stories. These stories might share a common protagonist, concern intersecting lives of disparate figures, or explore chains of cause and effect, as seen in *The Overstory* and *Bewilderment*. Salami and Asaadi (2022) depict *Bewilderment* as envisioning a dystopian future marked by environmental disasters, portraying Powers' view of human life disconnected from nature. Their study argues that Powers uses Bergenmar and Jakob von Uexküll's notion of *Umwelt*—a unique sensory world—to reinterpret the strengths of neurodiverse populations. Additionally, Thomas Armstrong's analogy between the human brain and the ecosystem informs their analysis of *Bewilderment* as "a revisionist neuronovel," offering a unique perspective on the ecosystem. A relevant study further explores the ethical dimensions of human interaction with nature. Song (2023) offer an intriguing viewpoint on posthumanism and ethical issues in *Bewilderment*. They emphasize the characters Alyssa and Robin, mother and son, who demonstrate a deep bond with plants and animals, showcasing the novel's exploration of interspecies communication and the idea of 'ecstasy'—a state that goes beyond mere existence to embrace the presence of others. This issue is further analyzed by Mirza and Ahmad (2024), as they apply the concept of "biophilia" to *Bewilderment*, exploring themes of "solastalgia and eco-anxiety." They argue that the characters' love of Nature soothes them during turbulent times (p. 78). Altogether, while these studies contribute to understanding Powers' ecological perspectives, they fail to address the core issue of anthropocentrism. This study thus delves into the ethics of land, a philosophical question that anthropocentrism has historically overlooked.



## Method

In our era, the Anthropocene, human activity on Earth has negatively affected the ecosystem, making it “necessary to declare a new epoch to signify this impact” (Trexler, 2015, p. 1). This involves an attempt by humans to see Nature in itself. The main question here is, “How does it feel to live in the Anthropocene?” A “humanist approach to the Anthropocene” can thus better help us comprehend living in a time of climate change and crisis, as “we are asked on a daily basis to respond to a barrage of often conflicting information and stimuli” by capitalist systems around the world” (Reno, 2022, p. 6). Consequently, many ecocritical approaches concentrate mainly on the practical or economic benefits of conservation, which, in action, face conflicts of interest, since the basic challenge of the Anthropocene “is that we must channel dissonance into ethical action” (Reno, 2022, p. 22). That is why Leopold’s “land ethic,” by introducing an ethical obligation to the cause, targets the essence of environmental activism. Moreover, it has a holistic approach that emphasizes the interconnectedness of all natural elements and their symbiosis.

The present paper applies a content-based analysis of *Bewilderment* in light of Leopold’s “land ethic” theory. The research method, which is library-based and conducted through a thematic analysis, undertakes an interdisciplinary approach to read Powers’ latest novel under ecocriticism. This highlights its environmental message as a serious warning against anthropocentrism. Regarding the nature of Powers’ fictional contribution to environmentalism, this paper foregrounds the realistic basis of Powers’ concerns and the truth-value of his eco-friendly solutions for environmental crises.

## Discussion

### Challenging Anthropocentrism: The Necessity of Reviving Leopoldian Land Ethics

Human awareness of environmental crises has narrowed down over the recent century as capitalists have progressively controlled each individual’s identity and contributions in industrial societies. In other words, the industrial power structure has either blinded humanity not to see how Nature is being exploited or it has brainwashed humanity to see the exploitation of Nature as beneficial for public good. That is why challenging anthropocentrism serves as the core principle of environmentalism against the unjust belief in human superiority on Earth. Val Plumwood (1994), the Australian environmentalist, criticizes all forms of “hegemonic centrism”, including “Eurocentrism”, “androcentrism” and other types of “centrism” that oppress cultural norms. Anthropocentrism, in particular, defines Nature as “the Other” solely for the sake of human interests and reinforces the rejection of any genuine emotional connection between humans and Nature (1994, pp. 141-142). For the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess (1973), who coined the concept of “deep ecology” (Krabbe, 2010, p. 530), traditional environmentalism is inherently anthropocentric as it is concerned with preserving land, not for “the intrinsic value” that traditional environmentalists grant it but for the benefits humans can have from it. Naess’s “deep ecology” challenges the “industrial technology” that has historically asserted control over Nature and exploited it for humankind (Moore,

2017, p. 6). Naess (1973) believes that environmentalists should adopt a holistic perspective that considers moral and legal rights for the entire environment as a whole. In fact, environmentalism is better to seek to establish an ethical framework in which humans set aside all traditional worldviews about various forms of "centrism" and wholeheartedly embrace the eternal truth of life based on equality among all species. That is why ecocriticism mainly tries to challenge the approach of those environmentalists who aim to protect the ecosystem solely for the benefit of humankind. It is thus necessary to foster greater awareness of human-nature interdependence by rebuilding connections between humans and the natural world, a fact requiring a comprehensive vision to include all natural beings, or what environmentalists, according to Varner (2002), call "practical" and "ethical" holism in environmental studies. While the former addresses ecosystems and biotic communities as intricate systems requiring comprehensive management, the latter ascribes inherent value to those entities. For Varner, environmentalists, either philosophers or activists, argue that addressing the "ecological crisis" requires a profound shift in our collective mindset towards a comprehensive environmental ethic. They believe that only by embracing such a holistic approach can we effectively tackle the environmental challenges we face. Looking for such an ethic is traced to Aldo Leopold, called the "patron saint" of environmental ethics (p. 10), who defined morally right actions as those that "tend to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community" (Leopold, 1968, pp. 224-25). He stressed that "land ethic . . . implies respect for [one's] fellow members [of the biotic community], and also respect for the community as such" (p. 204). As Soleimani et al. (2024) assert, to practice the ecological ethics that recognizes the diversity of all species in nature, "human beings need undergo a fundamental change and transformation in their way of thinking and their belief" (p. 237). In this sense, adopting Leopold's "land ethic" is seen as essential for fostering a deep respect for all members of the biotic community and ensuring the integrity of the ecosystem.

Leopold's "land ethic" theory aligns with "ethical" holism as he attributes intrinsic value to ecosystems. In *Sand County Almanac*, a great work in green theory, Leopold argues that the developing environmental movements of his time are the beginning of a public affirmation of a "land ethic" theory that

simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land . . . [A] land ethic changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow-members, and also respect for the community as such. (1968, p. 204)

Leopold emphasizes the importance of preserving the "integrity", "stability" and "beauty" of the biotic community as the most effective approach to nurture Nature as a whole (1968, pp. 224-225). The "land ethic", under his care, entails respecting both the members of the biotic community and the community itself. He further considers this "land ethic" as both an "evolutionary possibility" and an "ecological necessity" (pp. 203-204). It is necessary to recall that his theory is a form of "ethical holism", that is, the concepts of "right and wrong are a function of the well-being of the community, not of its constituent members". In other words,

it is ethically allowed to kill an individual animal as long as the “integrity, stability, and beauty” of its population is conserved (DesJardins, 2013, pp. 183-184). Therefore, harmony in Nature for Leopold means the ecological balance that must exist between all the members within the community of nature. Furthermore, the coral value of Nature as the subject of ultimate obedience and respect on humans’ part connects Leopold’s theory to “anthropocosmic environmental ethics”, according to which humans form a “microcosm” in relation to the “macrocosm of the universe” (Tucker, 1998, p. 410). For Mickey (2007), in all anthropocosmic approaches to nature, humanity is “intimately intertwined” with nature. Instead of valuing such tendencies as anthropocentrism that marginalize nature, anthropocosmic approaches to land ethic try to smooth “the mutual implication of humanity and the natural world, thereby affirming the[ir] interconnectedness and mutual constitution” (p. 226). Therefore, these approaches emphasize a harmonious coexistence where humanity and Nature are deeply interconnected and mutually sustaining.

Ecocriticism basically invites humans to acknowledge “biophilic” natural sentiments which are “nonmoral emotional reaction[s]” to the community of Nature as part of our “genetic constitution” (Ouderkirk & Hill, 2002, p. 4). For Leopold, such biophilia is respecting all the natural resources by keeping the balance in nature: “individual members of that community can still be treated as resources as long as the community itself is respected” (DesJardins, 2013, p. 181). It is an undeniable fact that human beings depend upon Nature for survival, but there is a major difference between their perspectives on Nature when they consider themselves as either a part of Nature or its master. For Leopold, the land is a community where members have predefined roles and duties. To ethically care for nature, we must acknowledge the vital significance of every living being, regardless of their benefits for humanity in maintaining stable and healthy ecosystems. We need to shed prejudice and conceit to accept ourselves as equal members of the land community. That is how the “land ethic” theory opposes anthropocentrism by supporting equal rights among all living things. As part of a united community, each entity’s existence contributes to the community’s stability, health, and beauty (1968, pp. 203- 208).

For DesJardins (2013), building upon Leopold’s theory, “in a harmonious and stable relationship”, every community member provides for others’ survival (2013, p. 183). However, for Di Leo (2023), the question is “how one negotiates the anti-realist, anti-humanist, and anti-essentialist positions of many literary and cultural theorists with the realism, humanism, and essentialism of ecotheorists such as Leopold”. In other words, for most of the green theorists, Nature is neither a social construction nor a discourse to be “deconstructed”; Nature has “essence and is real” and must “be saved” (p. 307). Depriving Nature of its inherent rights is to cut the flow of vital energy that runs through it: “Land,” Leopold states, “is a fountain of energy flowing through a circuit of soils, plants, and animals” (1968, 253). In this light, recognizing and preserving the inherent rights of Nature is imperative to maintaining the flow of vital energy that sustains all life within the ecological community.

### **Land Ethics as Essential Kindness Toward Living Species in *Bewilderment***

The idea of the Anthropocene, as Trexler (2015) elaborates, sheds light on the surge of climate change fiction. Initially, these novels explored the theoretical changes in global climate through concepts like terraforming, nuclear winter, or geological processes. During the 1970s and 1980s, concern for human-caused global warming grew, but it was often treated in fiction alongside other environmental issues such as deforestation, urban sprawl, toxic waste, and ozone layer depletion. In the early 1990s, speculative fiction about climate change started to surface, growing throughout the decade in tandem with solidifying scientific evidence and increasing international calls for climate policy. The 2000s saw intense scientific demands for action, met with equally stubborn international politics. To date, most Anthropocene fiction grapples with the tension between the reality of catastrophic global warming and the failure to act. In this context, fiction has served as a platform to explain, predict, implore, and mourn (2015, pp. 9-10). Climate change fiction has thus evolved to reflect the ongoing tension between the scientific reality of global warming and humanity's failure to address it effectively.

In the 21<sup>st</sup>-century context of climate change fiction, the Earth is not well in *Bewilderment*: summer floods have contaminated the drinking water of millions of people, "spreading hepatitis and salmonellosis across the South"; heat stress in the West is killing older people; jungle areas are on fire (Powers, 2021, p. 139); "the stem rust that had killed a quarter of the wheat harvest in China and Ukraine had been found in Nebraska"; the water from the melting Arctic is flooding into the Atlantic; and "a hideous infection" is hitting the cattle in Texas (p. 224). These signs of global climate change are in fact what environmentalists worry about in reality when the ever-increasing effects of the Anthropocene is concerned: "humanity's probable impacts on geophysical and biological systems for millennia to come" (Trexler, 2015, p. 1). Powers' storytelling in *Bewilderment* is a magnificent display of the ability to capture the essence and profound significance of the Anthropocene in light of Leopold's theory. Powers skillfully weaves together the intricate tapestry of the natural world, drawing attention to the delicate balance that exists in Nature and the consequences that arise when humans ignore or abuse it. Via his cautionary tale, he warns us of the dire implications of human ignorance of the environment, vividly illustrating the far-reaching impact of our actions against the ecosystem that sustains us. With each page turned, Powers unravels the intricate web of interconnectivity, revealing how disruptions in Nature can reverberate through the intricate fabric of our own existence, especially when the rights of other species like animals and plants are concerned. It is in this light that the "land ethic" theory advocates the inherent rights of animals, recognizing them as human allies instead of properties. Just as it rejects discrimination based on intelligence, emphasizing a democratic framework rooted in inherent worth, Powers acknowledges animal intelligence, highlighting interconnectedness in all ecosystems where every being has a purpose.

As a "Science-fiction ecological catastrophe" fiction – a genre that "peaked in the early 1970s, in the wake of many public environmental disasters and the establishing of the Environmental Protection Agency" in the USA (Moore, 2017, p.

222) – *Bewilderment* recounts how, in the near future exposed to environmental degradation, the widowed astrobiologist Theo Byrne tries to save his nine-year-old son Robin, who is “in trouble with this world” (Powers, 2021, p. 7), from the effects of the Asperger syndrome, obsessive–compulsive disorder (OCD) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), specifically after his mother’s death that has left the child emotionally down. Resisting any psychoactive treatment for Robin recommended by his school, Theo turns instead to an experimental therapy to help his son. He decides to take Robin to the wild on a camping trip. Experiencing pure Nature provides them with a chance to grow out of the grief they currently face. Sleeping the night in the woods in their “special trip[s]” under the Milky Way’s “four hundred billion stars” bestows them with ultimate pleasure (p. 9). Back to civilization, when they have to, “Robin would be back in a school he hated, surrounded by kids he couldn’t help spooking” (p. 32). With the help of his late wife’s friend, Theo uses artificial intelligence and his expertise to enable Robin “to attend to and control his own feelings, the same way behavioral therapy does, only with an instant, visible scorecard” (p. 89). It helps him to remember and maintain only his mother’s positive qualities, which were eco-friendly as well. This sort of behavioral training helps Robin so much, so that he follows his mother’s environmental activism and vegan lifestyle – he even despises his own birthday cake as it is not “vegan” (p. 15). Theo’s treatment of his son highlights the fact that our problems originate from our mentalities and our mentalities are open to positive change. The loss of Robin’s environmental activist mother, as it resembles the possible loss of the Earth in case of human environmental ignorance, is substituted by Robin’s awareness of the human condition and the environmental miseries endangering it. Although both father and son are equally passionate about climate change, it is the son who stands for the spirit of the young 21st century that must take action for a better future of the Earth. For Powers, as reflected by Theo, “Nine [Robin’s age] is the age of great turning. Maybe humanity was a nine-year-old, not yet grown up, not a little kid anymore. Seemingly in control, but always on the verge of rage” (2021, p. 54). In Powers’ words, children “feel the magic of the living world”; they are “pantheists” and “connect to the nonhuman”. That is why “any adult with an active, engaged, intense, intelligent child now is going to have a hard time answering their questions about what’s happening. ... ‘Is this really what’s happening and why are you letting this happen?’” Moreover, Power continues in his interview, “What I’m seeing in children is a lot of anger and a lot of frustration. But I’m also seeing a huge upsurge in activism and engagement” (Wolfson, 2021). For Theo, “ten thousand children with Robin’s new eyes might teach us how to live on Earth” (Powers, 2021, p. 162). People of the Earth, in other words, need such eyes to see the miseries of their planet and try to save it.

In *Bewilderment*, Robin as an environmental activist, whose name was given to her by his mom after her “favorite bird” (Powers, 2021, p. 17), represents a segment of the society that is deeply concerned with the environmental concerns unfolding worldwide. Growing up in a family where his father is an astrobiologist and his late mother was a lawyer and animal rights activist, Robin is exposed to the importance of Nature and the consequences of human actions against the environment. Influenced by his mother’s values, Robin embodies a deep

commitment to environmental causes and animal welfare, setting him apart from his society. His admiration for his mother, as if she is Mother Nature, even inspires him to become an advocate for the environment, aspiring to make a positive impact on the world. He even falls in love with "the world's most famous fourteen-year-old", the environmental activist Inga Alder who "shame[s] the Council of the European Union into meeting the emissions reductions they had long ago promised" (p. 110). "She's like me, Dad," Robin once reflects (p. 111). She seems to have been modeled after Greta Thunberg, the Swedish environmental activist known for challenging leaders around the world to take immediate action against climate change, who is also Powers' subject of discussion in an interview about *Bewilderment* (Powers, 2019). For Theo, "Inga Alder opened my son's feedback-primed mind to a truth I myself never quite grasped: the world is an experiment in inventing validity, and conviction is its only proof" (p. 102).

Robin's distinct behavior and mental challenges defy a straightforward diagnosis, with his complex condition posing a challenge to physicians. "I never believed the diagnoses the doctors settled on my son," his father reflects. "There's something wrong" with Robin's condition as it has "three different names over as many decades" with "two subcategories to account for completely contradictory symptoms" as "the country's most commonly diagnosed childhood disorder" for which "two different physicians want to prescribe three different medications" (Powers, 2021, p. 10). One interpretation suggests that Robin's profound ecological consciousness shapes his unique perspective and struggles, deeply influencing his experiences and actions. Powers emphasizes the societal differences arising from Robin's eco-consciousness and immersion in Nature that offer a contrast to the fast-paced urban life, reflecting the modern generation's mental state or, better say, bewilderment in the face of ecological crises. In this light, *Bewilderment* illuminates the contrast between those with an ecological awakening and others drawn to modern indulgence, reflecting individuals like Robin who seek solace in nature. As Powers, before the first chapter opens, quotes from the biologist Rachel Louise, "Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts" (p. 5).

For Powers, the dominant sense of bewilderment, or "eco-anxiety" (Mirza and Ahmad, 2024, p. 85), that has haunted humanity proves that our species has lost something foundational – "There's something wrong with us," Robin holds (2021, p. 109) – necessitating a thorough revolutionary critique against global policies and the implementation of remedies. In Moore's view, in contrast to anthropocentrism, "ecocentrism (ecosystem-centered ethics)" emphasizes the "intrinsic value" of all forms of life. "Biocentrism," an approximately relevant concept, also propagates "a life-centered ethics" (2017, p. 6), which, for the environmental philosopher P. W. Taylor (1986), accounts for "the obligations and responsibilities we have with respect to the wild animals and plants". These responsibilities originate from specific "moral relations" between humans and nature, not being there "simply as an object to be exploited by us" (p. 12). The ultimate solution to address this problem lies in overcoming our alienation from nature, as reflected in environmental philosophies like "deep ecology", "eco-feminism", and "bioregionalism" that



directly link the problems faced by humanity to social and political causes. These philosophies foreground the human-nature interconnectedness, emphasizing the need for a holistic approach to address the current environmental crises (Hailwood, 2015, p. 2). In *Bewilderment*, Theo challenges the scientific methods of treatment prescribed for Robin and applies a natural treatment instead, that is, taking refuge in nature. “Watching medicine fail my child,” Thei says, “I developed a crackpot theory: Life is something we need to stop correcting. ... Every one of us is an experiment, and we don’t even know what the experiment is testing” (Powers, 2021, p. 11). On his trips to the wild, Robin acts like a reporting camera, just as he is sketching constantly, recording every animal and plant in details with his childish curiosity and enthusiasm: “Wildlife bingo. His new favorite game” while crowded places full of people “unnerve” him, making him “wince” (Powers, 2021, p. 12). Such delight in the very Nature away from the human-made places is what is missing for the modern humanity. In this sense, even “the sight of the road through the trees . . . the cars, the asphalt, the sign listing all the regulations” crushes Theo; “after a night in the woods,” he reflects, “the trailhead parking lot felt like death. I did my best not to show Robin” (p. 36).

Modern urban lifestyle and the capitalism at work pose significant barriers to establish a meaningful and functional connection with nature; the often-denatured essence of urban living tends to distance individuals from the natural world. However, for ecological maintenance, “Human disturbances should not exceed the spatial and temporal scales of natural disturbances” (Ouderkirk & Hill, 2002, p. 97). Theo, a scientist himself, has become aware of this essential fact and his revolutionary decision to treat his son according to Nature is controversial as it is against the very norms of the society that has helped him to become a scientist. For Theo, as for his late wife, civilization often undermines the vitality of life by promoting an artificial existence wherein individuals struggle to perceive the presence of Nature and their deep affinity with it. “Why is it so hard,” Theo once wonders, “for people to see what’s happening?” (Powers, 2021, p. 119). According to Thoreau (1854), whose *Walden* “powerfully affected” environmentalists like Leopold who greatly admired him for his “concerns about the natural habitat” (Levine et al., 2017, p. 952), “Men have become tools of their tools” (Thoreau, 1854, p. 37). That is to say we find ourselves under the influence of human-made objects that dictate norms and mediate our interactions with nature. Powers criticizes technology when, in fact, human beings have gone too far to even ignore their intuition and intrinsic value. “In this place,” Theo complains, “with such a species, trapped in such technologies, even a simple head count grew impossible. Only pure bewilderment kept us from civil war” (Powers, 2021, p. 216). For Theo, in other words, people are more involved with their devices than meaningful human interactions.

Robin’s association with Nature is not taken as something exposed to him out of psychotherapy for his emotional breakdown but as some essential feature of being human; he wholeheartedly considers himself as a part of nature. “I’m inside everything,” he addresses his dad, “Look where we are! That tree. This grass!” (Powers, 2021, p. 162). The problem here is, according to Leopold, “man the

conqueror versus man the biotic citizen" (1968, p. 223). Nature is therapeutic for Robin; he is the one true habitat wherein the human spirit meets other members of the biotic community and expresses his sense of belonging. Mother Nature allows Robin to explore his true self and express his emotions freely without the fear of judgement. In this natural environment, he exudes creativity, tranquility, and a genuine eagerness to learn about the environment. Powers suggests that by reconnecting with nature, not only we can find solace and inner peace but also we may gain insights into the purpose and meaning of life.

By promoting a non-anthropocentric perspective in *Bewilderment*, Powers envisions a humble, democratic society that values Nature as a whole. He presents Buddhist virtues and meditation practices as advocates for the well-being of all living beings, as mediated through Robin's mother Alyssa's deep connection with Nature through her Buddhist beliefs. Women who "have valuable experiences in sustainable management of nature ... can work to shape an ecological culture of equality." They, therefore, "emerge as cultural agents who debase the essentialized dichotomy of nature/culture" (Mohammadi Achachelooei, 2024, p. 180). As Theo reflects in the novel, Alyssa "was a dynamo, cranking out fully researched action plans for one of the country's leading animal rights NGOs every other week" (Powers, 2021, p. 50). The reverence for all forms of life in Buddhism underpins her commitment to non-harming measures towards Nature and ultimately shapes her impassioned advocacy for animal rights: "May all sentient beings . . . be free from needless suffering," Theo and Robin's thus reflect the Buddhist "Four Immeasurables" of "Being kind toward everything alive. Staying level and steady. Feeling happy for any creature anywhere that is happy. And remembering that any suffering is also yours" (p. 28). Contrasting anthropocentrism with biocentrism, Grayling (2010) prompts the idea that that "all life is valuable, not just human life". He believes that holding unto an anthropocentric worldview is "to see everything as having humankind . . . as the measure . . . to think that nothing has greater value than human beings, . . . that everything else can legitimately be bent to the service . . . of humanity" (2010, p. 27). This philosophy converges with Leopold's "land ethic" theory, emphasizing the implementation of limitations in human interactions with Nature to recognize our role as a part of the ecosystem rather than its master. Criticizing yearly hunting games throughout the country as she witnesses "[p]ickup trucks filled with carcasses" that "pulled up and unloaded their mounds onto the scales" to award "those who had bagged the most poundage over four days" with "guns, scopes, and lures that would make next year's contest even more one-sided" (p. 54), Alyssa once openly announces her complaint in a public lecture. For her, these hunters ignore the "[e]ffects of lost animals on ravaged ecosystems" since only two percent "by weight of animals left on Earth" were wild animals, the rest being either *Homo sapiens* or their harvested food. For her, the few remaining wild animals need "a little break" (p. 54). This protest is best reflected in one of her announcements about human relationship with animals:

The creatures of this state do not belong to us. We hold them in our trust.  
The first people who lived here knew: all animals are our relatives. Our



ancestors and our descendants are watching our stewardship. Let's make them proud. (pp. 54-55)

To ethically treat nature, we must respect equality among all the members of the land against any form of anthropocentrism. Alyssa's affection for nature, and the legacy she leaves for Robin, further reveals an inherent symbiosis between humans and animals, a fact that lies at the core of Leopold's theory. According to Schultz (2002), when an individual feels a high affinity with Nature as part of his / her identity, it is called "human-nature connectedness". This "psychological model for inclusion with nature" has three parts, each revealing an aspect of the association between humans and nature: "cognitive (connectedness), affective (caring), and behavioral (commitment)" (p. 61).

The first one is "the core of a connection with nature" and stands for the extent to which each human being includes Nature within his / her "cognitive representation of self". By one's self, Schultz refers to one's speculations and feelings about their selfhood (p. 67). Theo reveals this aspect of human Nature when he confesses that "a person had ten times more bacterial cells than human cells and how we needed a hundred times more bacterial than human DNA to keep the organism going" (Powers, 2021, p. 64).

The second part, "affective (caring)", is how much a person cares about Nature or how much a person feels intimate with nature. For Schultz, "Intimacy involves a sharing of oneself with another, and a deep level of knowledge about the other" (Schultz, 2002, p. 68). This is deeply reflected by Robin in his slogan prepared for a green protest: "HELP ME I'M DYING" (Powers, 2021, p. 114), as he represents animals under extinction. Then, the "behavioral component" involves one's motivation "to act in the best interest of nature" (Schultz, 2002, p. 68). In this light, Alyssa's steadfast dedication to animal rights and her extensive time in Nature epitomize the profound impact of what Schultz calls "human-nature connectedness". This worldview challenges the dichotomy implied from the intrinsic conflict between environmentalism and animal right activism. As Varner (2002) argues, "conservation" as the main objective of environmentalists commonly refers to the "intelligent use of resources in the service of human wants", whereas "preservation" for animal rights activists commonly refers to "leaving nature alone for its own sake" (2002, p. 123). Nonetheless, Alyssa proves otherwise. When Alyssa was alive, she considered herself an inseparable part of the natural world, deeply affected by any harm inflicted upon it. Similarly, Robin's heightened sensitivity to environmental events and human interactions with Nature stem from a deep cognitive connection with nature. "I feel like I belong here," Robin reflects in his excursions to the wild (Powers, 2021, p. 26). It is in Nature that Robin, following his mother's ideals, feels at home; it is Nature and all its members with which Robin falls in love via his childish romantic aspiration; and it is Nature to which he dedicates all his attention. On all their trips to the wild, according to Theo, Robin knows what he achieves. He has bargained with Theo for a digital microscope to display magnified images of natural elements on the screen of their laptop. Robin spends all mornings "trying out pond scum, cells from inside his cheek, and the underside of a maple leaf" under that microscope. He just feels "happy looking at

samples and sketching notes into his notebook" throughout their vacations (p. 15). He even tries to sell his paintings at school to donate the money to the animal cause: "Thousands of creatures are going extinct every year. And so far I've raised zero dollars and zero cents to help them" (p. 108). As a child and an empty medium ready for his mother's ideas, Robin stands for the ideal humankind to treat nature. But for the adults, as Theo believes, "We don't need any bigger miracle than evolution" (p. 56).

The only viable solution within the current state of the Earth involves a shift in our mindset to foster ecological awareness. As long as humans perceive themselves as the divinely appointed rulers of the Earth, as androcentric ideologies hold, neither technology nor science can enact any meaningful change to save the planet. However, a transformative evolution of thought guided Alyssa to dedicate her life to animal rights and fostered her deep affinity with nature. Similarly, it instills ecological consciousness in Robin not to tolerate the brutality inflicted by humans on animals: "They [animals] must really hate us. We stole everything from them," he tells Theo once they witness mistreatment of animals (p. 38). As O'Brien (2022) states, Robin's perspective presents us with "the tragedy of climate change and species loss" that imply "a betrayal of the future of the next generations, but also a threat to the singular beauty and value of creation for its own sake" (2022). In other words, the ongoing climate crisis not only jeopardizes the well-being and future of younger generations but also diminishes the intrinsic beauty and value of the natural world. By viewing these issues through the perspective of Robin, a child deeply affected by these changes, Powers emphasizes the urgency and moral imperative to address environmental challenges for both human and ecological preservation.

Powers delivers a sharp critique of anthropocentrism by using the term "Ponzi scheme", which stands for a fraudulent investment in a nonexistent enterprise to dupe investors of their money, to ironically draw attention to the impact of industrialism on natural resources and ecosystems (2021, p. 33). This is reflected in the discouraging news Theo and Robin listen to on one of their trips: "U.S. and Chinese fleets were playing nuclear cat-and-mouse off Hainan Island. An eighteen-deck cruise ship named Beauty of the Seas exploded off St. John's, Antigua, killing scores of passengers and wounding hundreds more" (p. 41). In other words, investing in what seems to be beneficial for humanity under anthropocentrism ultimately turns out to be catastrophic. As a result, Theo reveals, "Half the world's species were dying" (p. 142). This critique highlights the consequences of humanity's disregard for environmental well-being and the interconnectedness of all life forms. "If some small but critical mass of people recovered a sense of kinship [with nature]," Theo wittily remarks, "economics would become ecology" (p. 162).

As Nature serves Robin as a source of maternal comfort, reminding him of his mother, he embraces the idea that Alyssa is intertwined with the natural world: "She went back into the system," Theo tells Robin to euphemize her death. With his digital microscope as a tool, Robin delves deep into nature, spending extensive hours to forge a spiritual bond to feel a profound kinship with her. He even speculates upon Einstein's theory that energy cannot be created or destroyed; that it can only be changed "from one form to another"; that his mother is not dead

altogether. This anthropocosmic approach to Nature is the primary reason why Nature becomes Robin's sole refuge where he can experience a profound sense of belonging. For Mirza and Ahmad, Robin's "unwavering enthusiasm and active engagement in identifying and observing wildlife reflect his joy and satisfaction in immersing himself in the world." It is consequently evident that "for Robin, nature is not a source of worry or sadness but rather a refuge from emotions" (2024, p. 86). Recalling Leopoldian ethics, humans are seen as integral components of the ecosystem, with nothing being truly destroyed in Nature as they are transformed into something new. Theo's reply to Robin's question about her mother's whereabouts highlights such change of form and energy: "She became other creatures" (Powers, 2021, p. 57).

*Bewilderment* highlights the treatment and regard humans have toward animals, emphasizing the need for acknowledging their rights. Once Theo recounts Daniel Keyes' *Flowers for Algernon* (1965) – a novel that illustrates the cruelty of using animals for laboratory experiments – for Robin only to evoke his strong opposition to such violations. Curious about his mother's perspective on animal cruelty, Robin has realized that animals hold intrinsic moral worth beyond their usefulness to humans. Such treatment of animals transcends mere kindness and protection, as it entails respecting their fundamental rights, abstaining from meat consumption, prohibiting their exploitation in medical practices, and overriding their freedom. Robin and Alyssa's advocacy of a similar democratic world in which inflicting pain on animals is forbidden reflects Leopold's call for a democratic system in Nature for all beings. As a guardian of the animal realm, Robin regards animals as integral members of a community of various species and opposes their exploitation for experimentation, food, entertainment, and rituals. Rather than attributing human loneliness to inherent solitude, he attributes it to their self-centeredness and refusal to acknowledge their place within the biotic community: "We stole everything from them, Dad. We deserve to be alone" (Powers, 2021, p. 38). Robin even questions the ethical foundations of any religion that mandates inflicting pain on living beings as an expression of devotion. When it comes to the Thanksgiving, it is impossible to coerce him into eating Turkey: "I don't eat animals. Don't make me eat animals" (p. 93). His worldview underscores his empathy for animals and his disapproval of human exploitation, promoting a more modest and harm-free treatment of them.

For Heise (1997), "literary visions of nature as inherently creative, harmonious, and peaceful" are part of what makes them environmentalist (1979, p. 6), and Powers' vision thus envisions a world where living in harmony with Nature is scientifically possible. Powers has both granted and challenged "the notion of humans as the main drivers of the ecology of the earth" (Di Leo, 2023, p. 305), a notion developed under the concept of the Anthropocene. In fact, as Leopold argues, our educational and economic systems are the main reasons that raise obstacles against generating a "land ethic". Understanding ecology is one of the necessities for an ecological apprehension of land, not obtained through education as ecological notions are deliberately ignored in education (1968, pp. 223-24). In this sense, via

Theo and Robin's transcendental linkage with nature, Powers suggests that human beings have misunderstood Nature throughout history.

For Powers, Robin "opens up and transcends his own fury and his own frustration and finds a way of being that's almost religiously transcendent, and it's a great source of inspiration to the adults who see him as he's developing these capacities" (Wolfson, 2021). Being the most intelligent creatures, humans have begun their own demise since the very moment they exploited Nature by taking more than it could offer as a consequence of the lack of true eco-friendly education. By allowing Theo to mentor Robin on his own terms, Powers strongly criticizes the educational system, asserting its alignment with capitalist interests and its role in perpetuating materialism. He argues that individual responsibilities rather than shifting blame to specific organizations are the key to address environmental crises. In an interview Powers reveals that he has always been "conscious that every decision created a million deaths," implying each decision on the global level must take into account the responsibilities that follow (Powers and Fuller, 2003, p. 98). For Robin, "Inga [Alder] doesn't even go to school anymore. She says why bother to study how to live in a future that" teaches children to mistreat Nature (Powers, 2021, p. 117). In DesJardins' terms, "Until we . . . understand nature from a wider and longer-term perspective, we are doomed to mismanage natural ecosystems" (2013, p. 180). Powers thus urges immediate action to protect endangered animals, emphasizing the need to safeguard the future for succeeding generations. He advocates nurturing ecological consciousness in the younger generation to bring about a significant shift in public attitudes.

By directing education within an eco-friendly context, he believes humans can understand the urgency of protecting the planet and its inhabitants, ultimately sparking a societal revolution. As Bentham (1907) prophesied in the late eighteenth century, "The day may come, when the rest of the animal creation may acquire those rights which never could have been withholden from them but by the hand of tyranny" (1789 / 1907, p. 311). It is thus meaningful to speculate how Powers has intentionally chosen *Bewilderment* as the title for this novel to refer to the mental aberrance of the modern generation whose sole experience of Nature is confined to artificial green areas around. Only those who experience ecological awakening struggle with this kind of bewilderment, while others try to deny this confusion by living ignorantly under capitalism. For Moore (2017),

if we had a more complete understanding . . . we would not trash our planet, we would be more concerned about the effects of burning fossil fuels, we would do as much as we could to save the few remaining wilderness areas for posterity. (p. 5)

Part of this awakening is "the understanding that there are laws governing the universe", laws that "can help alleviate eco-anxiety by giving us a feeling of order and predictability in the midst of shifts while also supporting biophilia" (Mirza and Ahmad, 2024, p. 85). Although "a completely non-anthropocentric view is finally impossible" in the human realm (Moore, 2017, p. 6), Powers proposes a moderate solution that moves in line with Leopold's theory, that is, a balance

between human interests and a healthy natural environment with all its biotically diverse species safeguarded. As Allysa used to say in her prayers, “May all sentient beings be free from needless suffering” (Powers, 2021, p. 60).

### **Conclusion**

In essence, committed writers like Richard Powers aim to explore where humanity stands and where it should head. They scrutinize our defined roles on this planet and challenge us to rethink them. Powers embraces Aldo Leopold’s “land ethic” theory, advocating for a paradigm shift away from anthropocentrism towards recognizing the intrinsic value of all species and fostering equality and respect among them. This perspective urges us to view our relationship with Nature not as a master-slave dynamic but as one of symbiosis and interdependence. Powers’ *Bewilderment* promotes ecological consciousness, equality among species, and a symbiotic relationship between humans and nature. It calls for a profound shift in our mindset, urging us to adopt an ecologically conscious approach and reevaluate our place in nature. Criticizing modern civilization, education, and socio-political policies, *Bewilderment* incorporates scientific facts and psychological insights to highlight the need for environmental ethics against capitalist dominance. Although capitalism and anthropocentrism may not vanish overnight, Powers believes that individuals must reestablish their connection with the environment as active members of the biotic community. The novel reminds us that civilization’s so-called blessings are often curses, necessitating urgent action for human survival and ecological stability. By redefining our relationship with nature, Powers argues, we can transform future generations’ understanding of its importance. He advocates for animal rights, biodiversity preservation, and responsible actions on Earth and beyond.

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## **Reading and Reimagining Post-Brexit London: A Theoretical Exploration of Ali Smith's *Seasonal Quartet* Through Gurr and Iser**

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### **Abstract**

Ali Smith's attempt at doing a time-sensitive experiment in the post-Brexit urban landscape has given rise to *Seasonal Quartet* in which formal experimentalism assists in rendering the complex post-Brexit reality and the moral engagement of her reading public. Utilizing Jens Martin Gurr's (2021) framework from "Charting Literary Urban Studies: Texts as Models of and for the City", the study argues that Smith's novels serve dual functions: they textualize complex urban realities and shape perceptions of the city, suggesting conceptual possibilities for different urban futures. Gurr's theory posits that literary texts not only depict external urban realities but also invite intervention by using experimental narrative techniques like allusion. Integrating Gurr's ideas with Wolfgang Iser's reader-response theory, this study examines how Smith's recourse to Charles Dickens's works deprivatizes familiar Victorian contexts, inviting readers to envision solutions to contemporary urban issues. These allusions enrich the text's semantic potential, capturing the complex nature of post-Brexit London and engaging readers in imaginative re-conceptualizations of the city. This dual function—descriptive and prescriptive—illustrates how literature can reflect urban experiences and inspire transformative thinking. Ultimately, the research contributes to literary urban studies by highlighting the transformative power of literature in urban studies and political discourse, demonstrating how literary analysis can influence both understanding and envisioning more inclusive and dynamic urban futures.

**Keywords:** Brexit fiction, allusion, descriptive, London, prescriptive

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## Introduction

The elusive entwinement of cities of words and brick can be traced back to “myths and legends that fashioned the identity of city-states” (McNamara, 2014, p. 1). The presence of cities in literature has been conceptualized in various ways from its origin to the present time in a way that texts began treating cities more than settings and symbols of ideals, leading to a more recent area of research called literary urban studies. Unlike classical literary urban studies which dealt with flâneur and God’s-eye views, postclassical literary urban studies show a renewed interest in the actual city, which has been called the tentative return of the real in literary studies (Boxall, 2019); this paradigm shift informed by the material turn highlights “the importance of phenomenology in the spatial humanities” (Ameel, 2022, p.6). This return to the real, thereby, raises interest in how actual readers reconstruct the literary city through their prior knowledge to build their own experiences of the city.

As an emerging field, postclassical literary urban studies pursues to view material and literary worlds as intertwining, which entails thinking about literature as a reflection on and an intervention into the world (Gurr, 2021). Any analysis of cities immediately reveals that they cannot be viewed as static objects but as complex organisms always in process not only in terms of their physical attributes but also in terms of the ways they are conceptualized (Michael, 2018). In charting this burgeoning field, the German theorist of postclassical literary urban studies, Jens Martin Gurr attributes double functions to literary texts: “descriptive” in representation of the city and “prescriptive” in allowing for directions for a different city. This dual nature is also evident in the fact that literary texts not only represent an external urban reality but also contribute to shaping perceptions of the urban to underscore that a different city is at least conceptually possible (Gurr, 2021), which is quite in line with the empowering quality of postclassical texts for their readers.

In postclassical treatments of urban concepts, Britain’s approach to conceptualizing the city appears indispensable. In particular, London’s position is of utmost significance. As Peyma and Aliashrafy (2013) believe, “London with its heterogeneous character is symbolized as a place of social encounter and cultural intermixture, a decentered place that stimulates the exploration of transnational models of identity” (p. 73). This unique “decentered” significance of London should be regarded next to the changes in the new millennium’s political aspects that have significantly altered British cities. This alteration, alongside the destruction of Britain’s colonial power, are two major forces behind the 2016 referendum in which the majority voted to leave the EU, indicating further retrenchment and an increase in reactionary policies (Michael, 2018). Brexit as a political outcome is deeply intertwined with economic issues, history, culture, and literature. More than any other city in the Brexit climate, London’s complexity turns it into an unfathomable labyrinth in the process of becoming to the extent that the probability of restoring the complex reality of the city to a human scale is questioned. This article explores how the literary allusions in Ali Smith’s *Seasonal Quartet* textualize the complexity and density of post-Brexit London. Additionally, it examines how these allusions enable readers to envision a conceptually different London, drawing on Gurrian theoretical perspectives.

Written in a post-Brexit landscape, Ali Smith's *Seasonal Quartet* offers a sustained mediation on the annus mirabilis that radically changed the landscape of the twenty-first century, embedding the EU referendum and textualizing a cyclical process that cannot be over no matter the outcome of the referendum. In order to make the urban landscape narratable through her Brexit fiction, Ali Smith deploys multiple postmodernist narrative techniques that not only mimic the complexity of post-Brexit London but also give way to "subjective experience of reality shaped by imagination" (Alessio, 2020, p. 155). Therefore, for her to successfully meet the challenge of the complexity of urban space, and enable exploring urban worlds, Smith, through her experimentalism, not only represents the urban reality of London but also contributes to shaping perceptions of urban reality.

The present study argues that while embedding the contemporaneous events of the referendum within the cyclical process of history, Smith's novels reflect the complex realities of London and place readers in the London climate to conceptualize their own version of reality through imagination. In order to develop this argument, Jens Martin Gurr's (2021) ideas from "Charting Literary Urban Studies: Texts as Models of and for the City" will be utilized. In presenting the dual functions of texts, he argues that literary texts not only represent external urban reality but contribute to shaping perceptions of the urban to highlight that a different city is at least conceptually possible, in a way that city literature not only reflects urban reality but also invites an intervention into it. In order for city literature to function like this, Gurr (2021) asserts, it deploys experimental narrative techniques like allusion to mimic a picture of the city and invite various conceptual possibilities. Therefore, since the political quartet of Ali Smith is rife with literary allusions, a Gurrian reading of the novels will prove to be quite fruitful as Gurr's double function seems to be quite in line with Smith's political vision of rendering the complex post-Brexit reality and the moral engagement of her reading public.

### Literature Review

Ali Smith's *Seasonal Quartet* has garnered significant scholarly interest in the relatively short time it has been part of English literature. Much of the research centers on its political dimensions, positioning the quartet within the trend of post-Brexit fiction and exploring Smith's vision through their complex narratives. While these political readings are insightful, it is also crucial to recognize the importance of Smith's experimentalism, which captures the intricate reality of the post-Brexit metropolis and allows for further conceptualizations. Numerous articles and theses on Smith's quartet emphasize her literary techniques and formal experimentation. Although these works may not provide a literary urban reading, one capturing the relationship between text and city, they all highlight the significance of the Brexit climate and the role of the writer's craft in rendering the nature of the status quo.

According to Monica Germanà, Smith (2017) resorts to simultaneity in both form and content to enhance the nonlinearity of the story and allow for different planes of stories to coexist. Similarly, in her chapter, "BrexLit", Kristian Shaw (2018) argues that what complements the divisive atmosphere of the referendum is "the collage-like, disjointed temporality of the narrative structure" which foreshadows the subsequent fracture of the society (p. 21). Akin to the

previous two studies, in her thesis, Anna Janíková (2020), in analyzing the stylistic features of literary postmodernism, traces two elements of postmodern fiction and elaborates on the way they are deployed to offer a criticism of consumerism, cultural recycling, and manipulating power of the mass media: first, how narrative fragmentation thematizes the issues of chaos and disorientation, and second, how literary references serve to render the cultural memory of the society. Although the aforementioned articles and thesis do consider the significance of Smith's literary craft in rendering the chaotic post-Brexit climate, they do not examine how Smith, through resorting to her literary predecessors, establishes a relation between the texts and the metropolis to mimic the complex texture of London.

Daniel Lea, in his case study of Smith, elucidates that Smith regards storytelling as an instrument to counteract the authoritarian proclivity to "objectify and decode" literature, producing narratives that allow the reader to "live in and through the stories that they encounter and create, continuously repurposing them for the different challenges that life offers" (Lea, 2019, p. 403), highlighting Smith's desire to engage her readers with the text. Similarly, in her article, Laura Schmitz-Justen argues that encounters of the reader with ekphrastic objects like collages in Smith's quartet not only reflect the state of affairs but also propose various responses to it, enabling interpretation beyond hegemonic narratives, and therefore, make a multidimensional conceptualization of the contemporary aura a possibility (Schmitz-Justen, 2022). The studies above, thus, are enlightening in showcasing how Smith's fiction, through her experimental formalism, relies on the reader's engagement and his or her further conceptualization of the current climate; however, none of them offer a detailed study of how Smith's references to her literary predecessors encourage the reader to envision a conceptually different metropolis in the post-Brexit era, which is in line with Gurr's prescriptive function of urban novels.

All the aforementioned theses and articles considered many aspects of Smith's narrative craft in either rendering the complexity of post-Brexit reality or assisting readers in giving a response to the current climate. Nevertheless, no research study has been carried out as to how Smith's references to great works of English literature textualize the complexity of post-Brexit London while foregrounding the role of the reader in shaping a conceptually different metropolis. Gurr's literary urban approach and the double functions he attributes to texts can be illuminating in capturing Smith's visions in her *Seasonal Quartet*, where she promises those trying to cope with troubling realities that "another world is possible [even] when you're stuck in the world at its worst" (Smith, 2020, pp. 176-77).

### Method

In his "Charting Literary Urban Studies", Gurr (2021) presents a challenge to the verbal representation of the overwhelming complexity of urban experience. Literary urban studies entail perceiving literature not merely as a representation but as an intervention into the world, acted out through literary tropes and techniques (Salmela et al., 2021). However, texts set in different time periods, deploy different experiential techniques to represent complexity and stage density of urban spaces. Postmodern literary explorations of the city attempt to render the city itself legible

as a text so as to mimic urban complexity and allow for different conceptualizations of the city (Gurr, 2021). As a postmodern author, Smith, through employing incisive allusions in her quartet, provides additional levels of meaning, which suggestively allows for an extreme multiplication and condensation of meaning appropriate to the representation of complexity in the metropolis (Gurr, 2021). Moreover, Smith's employment of literary allusions, "stripped of their original context", invites the reader to explore in fiction a different urban landscape or potential solutions for key issues following the referendum (Iser, 1978, p. 79).

In order to fulfill Gurr's descriptive and prescriptive functions in Ali Smith's *Seasonal Quartet*, this study explores the way Smith's recourse to her literary predecessors enables the texts to mimic the complex fabric of the metropolis (descriptive) while integrating the reader, trying to cope with troubling realities, to imagine a conceptually different city (prescriptive). To elucidate how allusions can not only capture urban complexity but also invite different conceptualizations of the city, Gurr resorts to Wolfgang Iser's understanding of literature as "depragmatized" behavior in rehearsal in which literary allusions, as part of the "repertoire", lose their familiar context and give way to the new context of the new literary work, thus offering new answers to the reader (Iser, 1978).

This study aims to explore the way Iser's reader-response theory and his conceptualization of the literary allusions inherent in the "repertoire" of the text assist in fulfilling the Gurr's descriptive and prescriptive qualities in *Seasonal Quartet*. Before getting into Iser's model, it needs to be mentioned that "reader response theory [...] highlights that the way materials are understood, the role of the reader, and the active role of reader in understanding and cajoling meaning out the text as well as meaning construction all depend on the readers' previous experience of the text and his or her interpretation procedures." (Rahimipour and Khodadust, 2021, p. 205)

Now, turning to Iser, one could assert that in his model, the "repertoire", the collection of cultural norms and literary references, assists in concretizing the text's potential meaning through the reader's engagement and imagination. Compared to cultural norms, which expose the "deficiencies of a prevailing system", literary allusions, the focus of this study, "assist in producing an answer to the problems set by these deficiencies" (Iser, 1978, p. 79). In essence, the allusions or the negation of allusions acts as a catalyst for depragmatization; through fulfilling or disrupting the expected meaning allusions create interpretive gaps compelling the reader to conduct a creative examination of the text (Iser, 1974). The depragmatization of literary allusions, Iser argues, does not mean that the original context disappears altogether; instead, it becomes a virtual background against which the new subject matter can stand out distinctly (Iser, 1978). Having pushed the familiar context to the background, the depragmatized literary allusions, through creating blanks cause the reader to reevaluate familiar ideas from a new, often critical perspective, forcing the audience to see the alluded-to concept or cultural expectation in a fresh light that invites possibilities of connection and enables the reader to imagine the correction of the current deficient realities through his or her strategies (Iser, 1978).

In Ali Smith's *Seasonal Quartet*, there are numerous allusions to renowned works of English literature whose incorporation into new context allows for a

contemporary look at the answers that they provided to the problematics of the metropolis. The most striking of these allusions are to Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* (2007b), *A Christmas Carol* (2007a), *Hard Times* (2007c), and *David Copperfield* (2004) that are layered upon each of the quartet's novels respectively. This study, thus, considers the literary allusions, present in the repertoire of Smith's text, responses to the issues at the heart of the metropolis which can be recontextualized once the reader engages with the texts and its familiar elements to finally build up a new meaning and bring about new answers to the post-Brexit climate of London. The study undertakes a reader-oriented approach to study how readers, through allusive references or their negation, are able to fill the gaps, build new meanings, and subsequently effect changes in their post-Brexit landscape throughout the whole process of reading in the *Seasonal* novels, making it above and beyond studying passing ironic references which often expose limitations or contradictions without considering an active part for the reader to bring about a changed meaning / landscape.

### Discussion

#### The Autumnal Split in Post-Referendum London: *Autumn's* Narrative of Detachment

Initiating her quartet in the complex atmosphere dominant after the 2016 referendum in London, Ali Smith endeavors to vividly portray her despair of the wasteland through her narrative. In doing so, Smith skillfully incorporates literary allusions to Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* (2007b) into the first season of the cycle to allow for multiplication and condensation of meaning appropriate to the representation of complexity in post-referendum London (Gurr, 2021). Along with the descriptive quality of Dickensian allusions, the prescriptive function finds its tangible manifestation once the deprivatized literary allusions entice readerly engagement (Iser, 1978), and the imaginary correction of deficiencies of the metropolis. References to *A Tale*, therefore, allow for a contemporary look at the split between the two camps of Leave and Remain, and what it will probably lead to if the issue is not addressed properly.

The most striking literary allusion in "Autumn" is the first sentence: "It was the worst of times, it was the worst of times," (Smith, 2017, p. 8) which plays on the opening sentences of a celebrated English novel, *A Tale* (2007b): "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness . . ." (Dickens, 2007b, p. 17), lacking the verbatim quotation—"the best"—to firmly insist on the adverse conditions prevailing in contemporary London. Moreover, the allusions to *A Tale* are not limited to the opening chapter. The parallel between the two novels further reverberates when Elisabeth is mentioned to be reading Dickens's historical novel, *A Tale*, as her comatose friend Daniel advised her to always be reading something, or there is no other way to read the world (Smith, 2017). These incisive allusions throughout the novel conjure several of *A Tale's* themes in the background while the newer themes of "Autumn" are foregrounded against the background of these familiar allusions in order for "the new subject matter [to] stand out in clear relief" (Iser, 1978, p. 80). Set to fit the new context, the "deprivatized allusions", while "stand[ing] out in clear relief"



encourage the reader to imagine a city stripped of its deficiencies. Also, through a few words or quotations, all the themes and associations connected to *A Tale* are imported into “Autumn” and add to its “semantic potential”, effecting extreme condensation of meaning appropriate to post-referendum London (Gurr, 2021, p. 58).

The explicit references to Dickens’s urban novel call for more implicit parallels between the two texts. Anna Janíková, in her analysis of “Autumn” (Smith, 2017), presents the dichotomy that both “Autumn” and *A Tale* (2007b) attempt to invoke (Janíková, 2020). *A Tale*, as the name suggests, showcases the duality between London and Paris as representatives of their thought systems: “England, the country of relative peace contrasts with revolutionary and bloodthirsty France and the noble idea of human liberty is set against the brutal and ruthless killing brought about by the French revolution” (p. 52). This dichotomy is also manifested in the divide between the two worlds of the wealthy aristocracy and the world of the famished commoners in Dicken’s metropolis. In Smith’s first installment, another duality—Leave or Remain—can be seen as the result of the 2016 referendum. The issues that have emerged during Brexit are well enunciated in strongly contradictory statements:

All across the country, people felt it was the wrong thing. All across the country, people felt it was the right thing. All across the country, people felt they’d really lost. All across the country, people felt they’d really won. All across the country, people felt they’d done the right thing and other people had done the wrong thing. (Smith, 2017)

The contradictory images effectively capture the autumnal split in the society of London and echo *A Tale* describing the period after the French Revolution:

It was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair. . . . (Dickens, 2007b, p. 17)

Through this allusion, the duality at the heart of Dickens’s novel is “depragmatized and set in [the] new context” of the divided London of Smith where the Leavers rejoiced and the Remainers lamented (Iser, 1978, p. 79). Smith, however, without taking any sides, seems more concerned with rendering this chasm through her allusive recourse to *A Tale* to “create a blank which, at best, offers possibilities of connection” to the reader (Iser, 1978, p. 184). These blanks allow the reader to grasp the significance of those allusions within a new literary context to warn him / her to be wary of the consequences of this split in post-referendum season in order to enable him / her to long for and reimagine a conceptually different London.

Accordingly, the Dickensian allusions in “Autumn” work as a virtual background against which “Autumn”’s main theme of post-Brexit societal and urban split is foregrounded, whereby the reader is summoned to evaluate what is stored in his or her repertoire and indeed achieve the goal of “imaginary correction of deficient realities” in post-Brexit metropolis (Iser, 1978). For instance, to describe

the post-Brexit London where things are falling apart Smith mentions: "Hunger, want and nothing. The whole city's in a storm at sea and that's just the beginning. Savagery's coming. Heads are going to roll," (Smith, 2017, p. 110) to evoke the same dark feeling in the reader that Dickens's broken cask of wine did in *A Tale* (Dickens, 2007b). This allusion to Dicken's classic calls for the reader to reshape the familiar past experiences (the original context) in the repertoire and adapt to the new vagaries of his or her time following Brexit to be able to imagine "correction[s] of deficient realities" (Iser, 1978, p. 79). The reader embarks upon this path since it is only through meaningful engagement with the past crises that the present fracture can be avoided (Sumner, 2023). The reality of the autumnal split in London, therefore, can be reshaped once the reader is aware of the detrimental consequences of the division and the urgency of transformation.

This way, the depth of the autumnal split in London is illuminated through the literary allusions to the work of "the first great English novelist of the city" where social issues are mirrored in urban settings (Eagleton, 2005, p. 143). Multiple allusions to *A Tale* (Dickens, 2007b) import various themes into "Autumn" (Smith, 2017), allowing for condensation of meaning appropriate to the complexity of the city; rather than elaborating on and detailing how the division and detachment is ravaging the entire landscape and devouring the city, in only a few references all the themes and their associations are captured in the novel, fulfilling Gurr's descriptive function of texts in rendering the complexity of urban contexts (Eagleton, 2005). In "Autumn", allusions to Dickens's urban novel, *A Tale*, which, in Iserian terms, is in the "repertoire" lose their familiar context, that of Victorian London, or are "depragmatized" in order to take on the new context, the split in post-referendum London, creating a blank for the reader to entice his or her engagement. Being enabled to see the current urban split between the Leave and the Remain in a new light thanks to the Dickensian allusions, the reader begins exploring the deficiencies of the post-Brexit urban reality (Iser, 1978) and longs for reconciliation and transformation of the metropolis to try out in fiction potential solution for key issues in the city (Gurr, 2021).

### **Towards Promises of Reconciliation in Post-Referendum London: *Winter's* Christmas Narrative**

Published in 2017 when post-referendum London was experiencing a total sense of despair, the second installment, through literary references to Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* (2007a), once more attempts to mimic urban density while associating moral degradation with this complex urban landscape and the urge for a true reconciliatory Christmas season replacing the Brexit one. Gurr's prescriptive function is also fulfilled when Dickensian allusions go beyond being merely imitative by losing their original context and creating a blank that "offers possibilities of connection" to the reader in order to assist him / her to produce an answer, that of reconciliation, to the problems of detachment in the metropolis (Iser, 1978).

Like the first installment, "Winter" (Smith, 2018) is replete with references to various works of art, music, and literature, the most striking of which is to Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* (2007a). While "Autumn" (Smith, 2017), through multiple references to *A Tale* (2007b), developed its theme of division and the need for transformation, "Winter", through allusions Dickens's Christmas story, attempts



to drive its point of reconciliation home through featuring a group of characters tied together by familial bonds, and the setting is a family reunion during Christmas, which is quite parallel to *A Christmas Carol*, developing an appealing theme and a reconciliatory message. The first chapter of “Winter” opens with “God was dead: to begin with” echoing Dickens in *A Christmas Carol* (Smith, 2018, p. 7): “Marley was dead, to begin with” (Dickens, 2007a, p. 9). Just like the case with *A Tale* and “Autumn”, allusions to *A Christmas Carol* are not a one-off reference highlighting only one particular theme at a time but function as “the foundation to the [narrative]” to the extent that “Winter” is viewed, Boxall (2013) asserts, as “a story of Christmas redemption that works as a retelling of *A Christmas Carol* (p. 288).

Set in an unexpected family Christmas reunion at Sophia Cleves’s place, “Winter” (Smith, 2018) begins recounting Sophie’s unsettling experience of seeing strange spots at the side of her vision, which gradually get bigger and take the form of a “disembodied head” reminding her of a “head of a child” which is following her everywhere, even “floating by itself in mid-air” (p. 11). No later, Sophia is followed by a vision of a child’s merry head to which she tells Christmas stories to lull it to sleep. Similarly, Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol* (Dickens, 2007a), visited by three spirits on Christmas Eve, feels disturbed and is eventually transformed into a more congenial man who shows empathy towards his fellowman. Appearing as a Scrooge-like character, Sophia Cleves, the strict Leaver who feels no empathy towards immigrants, is expected to be transformed, taking a more lenient stance on the current division. Through this allusion, the need for a Christmas season and transformation in Dickens’s novella is “depragmatized and set in [the] new context” of the post-referendum London that calls for a Christmas season that brings about a true reconciliation between denizens who have fallen apart (Iser, 1978).

It is through *A Christmas Carol* (Dickens, 2007a) that Dickens attempts to capture the zeitgeist of the early Victorian period when the Londoners explored and re-evaluated past Christmas traditions and did their utmost to revive carols, family gatherings, and festive spirit in celebrating the Christmas season in order to promote a type of social connection lost in the modern landscape. By incorporating Dickens’s Christmas story into her wintery narrative, Smith appears to cast doubt on the possibility of restoring social connection in the landscape merely through reviving Christmas traditions, as no Scrooge-like transformation is traced in the character of Sophie. The presence of Dickensian allusions in “Winter” (Smith, 2018), stripped of their original Victorian context in Iserian (1978) terms, “acts as a virtual background” against which Smith’s Christmas narrative, “Winter”, “stands out in clear relief” (p. 80). This depragmatization creates blanks for the reader to reevaluate past experiences contained within the repertoire and thereby allow adaptations in order to correct the deficiencies (Iser, 1978). This way, the reader, faced with the split London, realizes that although “the earlier answer”, reviving Christmas traditions, “offers a form of orientation” for the present predicament, it does not work for post-referendum London where things are falling apart (p. 79). What contemporary London truly needs, the reader concludes, is a reconciliatory Christmas that promises a kind of connection or solidarity that is not merely an “empty gestural” but lasts longer, aligning it with what makes Lux wonder: “Okay in any way, to be wishing everybody peace, peace on earth, goodwill to all men,

merry, happy, but just for today, or only for these few days a year? . . . What's the point of Christmas, otherwise?" (Smith, 2018, p. 119), once more highlighting the necessity for a reconciliatory Christmas season that is not just an "empty gestural" but one that lasts longer.

Ergo, the call for reconciliation is well illuminated through literary references to Dickens's Christmas story of transformation and connection. As a retelling of *A Christmas Carol* (2007a), in Boxall's (2019) words, "Winter" in a few explicit references to Dickens invites more fundamental parallels between the two novels that lead to different levels of meaning, that of revival, transformation, connection, and reconciliation, being channeled into Smith's narrative adding to its "semantic potential", thereby enabling the text to mimic the complexity of post-Brexit London and fulfill Gurr's (2021) descriptive function. Along with the descriptive function, Gurr's prescriptive function is also fulfilled once Dickensian allusions to *A Christmas Carol* lose their familiar context in the repertoire, that is the need for transformation which is the revival of Christmas traditions and social connection in the metropolis, and begin to take on the new context of post-Brexit call for a reconciliation which is not an empty gestural, as it is in Dickens's narrative, but one that brings about true connection to the split London. Put another way, the revival of Christmas traditions used to be the "reaction to past historical problems" of Dickens's Victorian period, answers which are no longer valid for the contemporary rupture of the city (Iser, 1978). This de pragmatization, therefore, gives way to the reader to connect with the urban text and imagine a conceptually different London, one deficient of the current split moving towards reconciliation. The transformation, withheld from the character of Sophie, is placed on the reader whose contemporary look at "the earlier answers" to the problem, Dickensian allusions, will offer new answers, enabling him / her to formulate "directions or options for a different future city", one deficient of the current detachment and can bring about a settlement and hope to the split London. (Iser, 1978; & Gurr, 2021).

### **The Rejuvenation of Hope in Post-Brexit London: The Hopeful Spring**

Ensuing "Autumn" and "Winter", expected to breathe new life into the whole quartet, the third installment with a bleaker atmosphere than its predecessors, strike readers as appalling. The gloominess reverberates across the novel through the Dickensian allusions, which greatly illuminate the hard times following the referendum. References to Dickens's (2007c) *Hard Times* in "Spring" (Smith, 2019a) well capture the complexity of the city where denizens' souls are harshly industrialized. Being de pragmatized and set in the post-Brexit context, the Dickensian allusions function as an answer by revealing the deficiencies of the current spirit of the metropolis to the reader enabling him / her to imagine a metropolis devoid of its present predicaments, one that promises glimmers of hope in "Spring".

In the same vein as "Autumn" (Smith, 2017) and "Winter" (Smith, 2018), "Spring" (Smith, 2019a) opens with a Dickensian allusion that parallels the third installment in its main theme of the industrialization of the soul with overemphasis on facts: "Now what we don't want is Facts. What we want is bewilderment" ironically negating *Hard Times*'s already ironic opening: "Now, what I want is, Facts. What we want is repetition. What we want is repetition. What we want is

people in power saying the truth is not the truth.” (Smith, 2019, p. 11; & Dickens, 2007c, p. 5), referring to Dickens’s anti-utilitarian sentiments. According to Iser, the negation of allusions works to create indeterminacy in order to simulate the imagination of the reader:

Expectations aroused in the reader by allusions to the things he knows or thinks he knows are frustrated; through this negation, we know that the standards and models alluded to are somehow to be transcended, though no longer on their own terms. These now appear to be, as it were, things of the past; what follows cannot be stated, but has to be realized. Thus, negation can be seen as the inducement to realization—which is the reader’s production of the meaning of the text. (Iser, 1974)

This negation of already ironic allusion catalyzes the de pragmatization through generating indeterminacy for the reader to conduct a creative production of meaning and thereby imagining a different future landscape. In *Hard Times*, Dickens caricatures the “cold-hearted fetishism of facts” that the Utilitarians championed through the character of Gradgrind (Eagleton, 2005, p. 158). The “what I want is, Facts,” which opened the novel, was an ironic echo of the Utilitarian mentality that pervaded the Victorian system at that time. If Dickens’s opening sentence was ironic, so is Smith’s very negation of that sentence, which is her reaction to her own reality. Facing the negation of Dickens’s ironic statement, the reader comes to the realization that Smith is dealing with a different urban reality in the twenty-first century, a landscape which is undergoing a mess of confusing, sometimes contradicting sentiments and ideologies: “What we want is outrage offence distraction. What we need is to say thinking is elite knowledge is elite what we need is people feeling left behind disenfranchised what we need is people feeling” (Smith, 2019, p. 11). Thus, the negation of the ironic allusion induces the reader to realize that Dickens’s Manchester school of utilitarianism in SA4A-run Immigration Removal Center (IRC), the manifestation of the Leave-oriented immigration policies, where the detained immigrants are viewed as the *other* that are not privileged enough to deserve the same right as other denizens (Dickens, 2007c). In disapproving of a post-Brexit landscape in which the system, in its attempt to maintain an effective immigration apparatus, has mechanized its people, including Brittany who gradually becomes indifferent to the plights of the detainees, Smith incorporates the legendary Florence, untainted by the evils of the system, into the narrative to “reawaken characters’ dormant imaginations and emotions, break the frozen sea within”, which is what parallels her character with *Hard Times*’s Sissy Jupe, the savior of the Gradgrind’s family (Jordan, 2019).

The corporate institution of Dickens loses its familiar context of utilitarian philosophy of the Victorian period in the repertoire and readily yields to IRCs in post-Brexit London. This de pragmatization offers possibilities of connection to the reader (Iser, 1978) to probe the deficiencies of the current spirit of the metropolis where an inhumane ideology is instilled into machine-like DCOs as well as the detainees who are not privileged enough to have their own privacy (Smith, 2019). Probing the deficiencies of the city through allusive recourses to *Hard Times* (Dickens, 2007c) offers an opportunity for the reader to seek an answer for the current bleak atmosphere. This way, the reader discovers what finally liberated the

Gradgrind family from the “cold-hearted fetishism of facts” and utilitarian philosophy was the presence of a child, Sissy Jupe, who through her imaginative power caused hope to rejuvenate in their city (Eagleton, 2005, p. 158); in the same vein, the reader regards Florence Green in the novel as the potential for “transform[ing] that which looks fixed” (Smith, 2019, as cited in Armitstead, 2019), connecting her with the hope present at the heart of “Spring” (Smith, 2019a) who manages to convince the head to get the toilets cleaned, or free the trafficked women in a south-east London sex house, or even transform Brittany’s fixed worldviews toward the end of the novel (Smith, 2019, pp. 127, 201). Therefore, faced with the post-referendum London where its denizens are forced into inhumane ideologies, the reader, in communicating with the urban text, is enlightened on the fact that “the earlier answer” in Dickens’s *Hard Times*, which is the presence of a child from the land of imagination does not work for the contemporary London (Iser, 1978). However, the present metropolis, the reader concludes, is in need of agents of change like Florence, who believing that “a shift towards hope will come at the darkest,” takes drastic actions to restore balance and hope to the city (Smith, 2019b). Hope, in *Hard Times*, comes to fruition once the members of the school abandon fact-oriented philosophy and gradually lean toward Sissy’s fancy-oriented philosophy; whereas, in “Spring” hope rejuvenates toward the end of the novel when Brit’s mindset goes through change: “That was Brit in autumn. It’s spring now” (Smith, 2019a, p. 206); although her attitude has undergone changes thanks to Florence, Britany is *still* working at the IRC. This way, the reaction to the current inhumane, fixed ideology, elucidated through Dickensian allusions, would be for the reader to take corrective actions like Florence’s in order to defeat the seemingly fixed ideology that mechanizes people and otherizes the immigrants in London, where they are deprived of inscribing their voice into the urban fabric (Groes, 2011, pp. 14-15). The rejuvenation and thereby fruition of hope becomes possible once the reader takes serious actions to balance out the current deficiencies.

The call for rejuvenation of hope in “Spring” (Smith, 2019a) in the autumnal darkness is well manifested through negation of allusions. It is through these Dickensian allusions that the main theme of resistance to fixed ideologies, achieved through the figure of children who are the harbingers of hope, is imported to Smith’s third installment; in only a few ironic references to *Hard Times*, all the paralleled themes along with their associations are thrust into “Spring”, yielding a condensed text appropriate to the representation of complexity in post-Brexit London, fulfilling Gurr’s (2021) descriptive function. Through these allusions and the parallels that they invite, the reader, facing the inhumane ideology and the urgent need for hope in the new context of post-referendum London, reevaluates what is previously stored in the repertoire, that is post-industrial utilitarian philosophy and the need for a balance between fact and fancy in Dickens’s work, and adapts it to the present ideology implanted in the denizens’ minds which is marginalizing minorities, and hence stealing hope from them all. “To formulate directions or options for a different future city,” (Gurr, 2021, p. 4) the reader needs to accomplish what Florence could partially achieve resistance in the face of seemingly fixed ideology through taking firm actions in order to reconnect denizens and effect a conceptually different city where hope is rejuvenating.

### Heroism on Command in Post-Referendum London: *Summer* as the Culmination of the Seasonal Cycle

Smith's *Seasonal Quartet* began with the split London after the referendum and moved toward the possibility of reconciliation in "Winter" (Smith, 2018). In the heart of darkness of "Spring" (Smith, 2019a) hope was lurking to bring about human connectedness. Expected to bring the split and cycle to a close, "Summer" (Smith, 2020) accomplishes this human connectedness, leading not to rejuvenation but fruition of hope in the metropolis. In order for this hope to come to fruition, through Dickensian allusions to *David Copperfield* (2004), the call for heroism is underscored. Just like its precedents, "Summer", through incorporating allusions and paralleled themes along with their associations, renders a condensed text appropriate to the urban landscape. As well as the descriptive function, the prescriptive one is also well fulfilled when the Dickensian concept of heroism loses its original context and is set in the post-Brexit context of London; this de pragmatization creates blanks for the reader to connect with the text and fill in the gaps, through which new concept of heroism is born as a reaction to the current issue of disconnection and marginalization, which withhold hope from fruition and the emergence of a different city, one that Gurr expects.

Near the beginning of the final season, the moment Sacha and her mom are arguing about Sacha's essay on "Forgiveness", the theme of heroism in *David Copperfield* (2004) is established when Grace starts wondering whether she "shall turn out to be the heroine of [her] own life" (Smith, 2020, p. 10), which is a clear reference to the opening chapter of Dickens's *David Copperfield* where David prefaces the story of his life with a question of heroics: "Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show" (Dickens, 2004, p. 13). Over the course of penning his life story, David, endowed with close observation and remarkable memory, begins rekindling his early childhood recollections, reflecting on his marriage with Dora, and revoking an image of his angelic second wife, Agnes, all of which provoke pleasant feelings in Dave that leads to his being immersed in his past memories in so far as the narrator, like readers, forgets that it is a lived past not a present that is occurring at the moment, which makes Dave impotent to move forward. Although Dave's truthfulness and fairness assist him in navigating through the moral uncertainties of the time, and ultimately render him a Victorian hero, his fascination with his own recollections incapacitates him to move forward in the present.

Throughout the fragmentary narrative of "Summer" (Smith, 2020), as a memory novel, several characters evoke their recollections: Daniel invokes his flee from Nazism into a British internment camp with his loving father and his relationship with his sister Hannah (Smith, 2020); Grace, still struggling with her separation, constantly shuttles backward in memory evoking her summery old days with her ex-lover, her heyday as an actor in the summer of 1989, both of them to ascertain that they used to be the hero / heroine of their own lives. In a way, akin to David, they are immersed in their past memories so much so that they narrate their memories in the present tense to reinvent and embroider their heroic years. Living in a dysfunctional family, Sacha rekindles the days her parents lived together, or the time swifts were in their city, or the climate was not this extreme. However, just like

Florence of "Spring" (Smith, 2019a) who resists the strict ideologies of her time, the sixteen-year-old Sacha of "Summer" is not trapped in those memories, instead, she wears a shining armor against the landscape she finds unbearably dark believing that the meaning of heroism has changed and that "the modern sense of being a hero is shining a bright light on things that need to be seen" (Smith, 2020, p. 146): Sacha appears to find modern heroism in voicing the plight of the immigrants, like Hero, in detention centers or in being Greta Thunberg in the face of climate change.

This way, approaching the Dickensian allusion, the reader would see that the familiar concept of Victorian heroism within the repertoire loses its "original context" and is "set in the new context" of post-referendum London where citizens are experiencing detachment and isolation, bolstered by the COVID-19 pandemic (Iser, 1978). Assuming that the "earlier answer," the Victorian concept of heroism, is no longer valid for the current spirit of the city, the reader attempts to seek a new definition for heroism as a reaction to the current split in the metropolis (Iser, 1978). In search of a new concept of heroism appropriate to the contemporary London, the reader would see how Smith's narrative develops a Generation Z character, Sacha, who presents the modern sense of heroism in which we need to be in command: Victorian truthfulness and fairness need to be armed with taking action against the adversities of the contemporary landscape rather than being trapped in heroic concepts of the past, that is the pursuit of moral self-improvement. Therefore, this readerly engagement enticed by deprivatized allusions offers the opportunity to correct the current deficiencies of London by giving a new meaning to heroism that, in Gurr's terms, can bring about a conceptually different city (Gurr, 2021).

As the culmination of the seasonal cycle, "Summer" (Smith, 2020) is expected to bring about the fruition of hope in the city through commanding heroism, manifested through allusions to Dickens's *David Copperfield* (2004). It is through these allusions that the main themes of the Victorian concept of heroism, the importance of arming moral self-improvement with action, and appreciating the present rather than being immersed in the past heroic deeds are imported into Smith's text; in only a few words of quotation or allusion all these themes are thrust into the text which adds to the "semantic potential" of the novel, enabling the text to be the representation of London in 2020 (Gurr, 2021, P. 4). The Gurr's prescriptive function is also fulfilled once the reader faces the deprivatized allusion whose familiar context, Dickens's Victorian period, is backgrounded in favor of its new context, Smith's post-Brexit landscape. In adapting the Victorian definition of heroism to the post-Brexit landscape, the reader, through the character of Sacha, comes to the realization that in order for the denizens to reconnect, and hope to thrive in post-Brexit London, all they need is to wear shining armor against this obtuse landscape and take heroic actions, which will thereby promise "directions or options for a different future city," a city where unity replace division (Gurr, 2021, P. 4). This envisioned future city is one where individuals are empowered to enact change, fostering a sense of collective hope and renewed purpose in the face of contemporary challenges. As human connectedness is the major theme that Smith is developing in "Summer", the narrator proceeds to pose its antithesis as the problem:

I mean, I could spend my whole life listing things about, and talking about, and demonstrating with sources and graphs and examples and statistics,



what history's made it clear happens when we're indifferent, and what the consequences are of the political cultivation of indifference, which whoever wants to disavow will dismiss in an instant with their own punchy little. (Smith, 2020)

As Iser (1978) points out:

[l]iterature endeavors to counter the problems produced by the system, . . . . Through it, we can reconstruct whatever was concealed or ignored by the philosophy or ideology of the day, precisely because these neutralized or negated aspects of reality form the focal point of the literary work. (p. 73).

Therefore, it is indifference that is posed as the failure of the contemporary landscape to which Smith is reacting. Since hope for change operates at the basis of Smith's *Seasonal* quartet, the reader is prompted to seek the alternative to this prevalent indifference, which is human connectedness, throughout the reading process of "Summer".

### Conclusion

This study elucidates the dual function of Ali Smith's *Seasonal Quartet* in depicting and transforming post-Brexit London. Integrating Gurr's (2021) framework with Iser's reader-response theory demonstrates how Smith's novels serve descriptive and prescriptive purposes. Gurr's notion of literary texts as models of and for the city underscores that literature reflects and shapes urban realities. Smith's use of Dickensian allusions examines London's complexity while simultaneously inviting the reader to engage with the text and reimagine the city. Reading London is, thus, realized through Dickensian allusion that thrust different layers of meaning into the quartet, textualizing the complex nature of London following the referendum. The prospect of a more inclusive urban future can be reimaged through the literary allusions or their negation that generate Iserian blanks, giving way to the reader to develop a different meaning and reality in post-Brexit London.

The Dickensian allusions in each installment of the quartet textualize the complexity of London. In the first installment, references to *A Tale* (2007b) facilitate a condensation of meaning; rather than offering a lengthy exposition of how societal divisions are fragmenting the urban landscape, Smith employs these references to textualize the complex dynamics representative of the intricate nature of post-Brexit London. In "Winter" (Smith, 2018), the echoes of *A Christmas Carol* (2007a) reveal the inadequacy of reviving past traditions to address modern divisions, emphasizing the need for more substantive reconciliation beyond superficial gestures. Through a few references, various layers of meaning are thrust into this narrative—revival, transformation, connection, and reconciliation—enhancing its semantic complexity to reflect the complexity of London grappling with its post-referendum identity. "Spring" (Smith, 2019a) further enriches the quartet through references to *Hard Times* (Dickens, 2007c), evoking themes of rigidity versus flexibility and the potential for transformation through harbingers of hope, leading to the importation of different layers of meaning to the text. Finally, "Summer" (Smith, 2020), through the lens of *David Copperfield* (Dickens, 2004), hosts key themes such as the Victorian concept of heroism, the importance of pairing moral self-improvement with action, and the value of appreciating the present rather than dwelling on past

heroic deeds. By embedding a few quotations, these themes are seamlessly integrated into the text, enhancing its semantic complexity, which allows the novel to mimic the complexities of London. The quartet as a whole, therefore, through Dickensian allusions encapsulates the complex nature of post-Brexit London, rendering a text that textualizes the complexity of contemporary London, serving Gurr's descriptive purpose.

Smith's allusions go beyond being merely representative, inviting readers to engage with the text and envision potential solutions to the urban and societal deficiencies. Iser's reader-response theory is crucial here in which deprivatized literary allusions allow the familiar elements of Dickens's works to resonate within the new context of Smith's narratives, prompting the reader to imagine a more reconciled urban reality. This call for a true reconciliation is gradually placed on the reader throughout the quartet to reimagine a different urban landscape. In the first season, through the divide present in *A Tale* (Dickens, 2007b) in the background, the contemporary split in London stands out, thereby creating a "blank" for readers to fill with their interpretations and solutions. By viewing the current divide through Dickensian allusions, readers are prompted to explore the deficiencies of the post-Brexit urban reality and consider how these transformations could be actualized in the metropolis. Smith's adaptation of Dickens's Christmas narrative in "Winter" reveals the inadequacy of reviving past traditions to address modern divisions. In post-Brexit London, these references are deprivatized and take a fresh significance, symbolizing a call for genuine connection amidst the city's divisions. "Spring" (Smith, 2019a) further underscores the necessity of hope amidst adversity, drawing on *Hard Times* (Dickens, 2007c) to highlight the contrast between the harsh post-Brexit realities and the potential for rejuvenation through imagination. The deprivatized allusions to *Hard Times* create blanks for the reader to reassess Dickens's critique of utilitarianism and adapt it to present ideologies that marginalize minorities. The goal is to conceptualize a different city where hope is renewed and all denizens feel included and optimistic about the future. Achieving this future city requires redefining heroism through *David Copperfield* (Dickens, 2004). By adapting Victorian heroism to the contemporary setting, the reader, through Sacha's character, learns that reconnecting the city's inhabitants and revitalizing hope in post-Brexit London requires individuals to take heroic actions, offering directions for a different future city, where unity replaces division and despair.

This study demonstrated how literary techniques contributed to urban studies and political discourse. By combining descriptive and prescriptive functions, Smith depicts post-Brexit London and empowers the reader to envision and potentially realize a more inclusive urban future. Ultimately, through the lenses of Gurr and Iser, this study underscored the importance of literary analysis in addressing urban issues and highlighted literature's transformative potential in urban contexts.

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**Book Review: Raya, Manuel Jiménez, Vázquez, Borja Manzano, & Vieira, Flávia (Eds.). *Pedagogies for Autonomy in Language Teacher Education: Perspectives on Professional Learning, Identity, and Agency*, Routledge, 2024, vi-223 pages, ISBN 9781003412021**

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Teachers are invaluable assets to the education system, particularly in a post-method era that not only redefines their role but also expands their responsibilities. Within this evolving educational landscape, the concept of “teacher autonomy” has gained significant recognition as a vital factor influencing the development of learner autonomy in second language acquisition. This relationship underscores the idea that when teachers are empowered to exercise their autonomy, they can foster more independent and motivated learners. This understanding of teacher autonomy is crucial because it has significant implications for the language teaching profession and the dynamics within the language classroom. As individuals enter the English language teaching profession or seek to advance in their careers, it becomes increasingly beneficial to engage with the various interpretations and dimensions of teacher autonomy encountered in our field. Recognizing these different aspects is essential for professional growth, as it helps educators to understand how autonomy can enhance their instructional effectiveness, ultimately enriching the learning experiences of both teachers and students. To better understand and develop these concepts, *Pedagogies for Autonomy in Language Teacher Education: Perspectives on Professional Learning, Identity, and Agency* systematically examines how autonomy can be cultivated within language teacher education programs. This work explores diverse lenses including theoretical, reflective, collaborative, and technological perspectives, demonstrating how teacher autonomy can be integrated into various pedagogical frameworks. The chapters, organized thematically, illustrate the dynamic and relational nature of autonomy across different educational contexts, featuring specific contributions from different authors.

### **Overview of the Contents**

The opening chapter by Manuel Jiménez Raya, Borja Manzano Vázquez, and Flávia Vieira lays the theoretical foundation for integrating autonomy into teacher

education, highlighting the persistent gap between theory and practice and advocating for innovative pedagogical strategies. This theme continues in Chapter 2, authored by Borja Manzano Vázquez, who provides a meta-analysis of language teacher education initiatives aimed at promoting learner and teacher autonomy. Vázquez synthesizes key findings from prior programs, examining their strengths and challenges, particularly emphasizing the necessity for institutional support. Chapter 3, by Juan de Dios Martínez Agudo, also explores the emotional and cognitive dissonance encountered during teacher training, illustrating how these experiences can serve as catalysts for developing both identity and autonomy in educators. Following this discussion, Chapter 4 returns to practical applications, where Jiménez Raya presents case writing as a reflective tool to align theory with practice, providing concrete methods for teacher education programs.

In Chapter 5, Flávia Vieira examines inquiry-based practices in practicum settings, demonstrating how reflection on real-life teaching experiences fosters autonomy among primary English teachers. This practical focus is complemented in Chapters 6 by Marcella Menegale, who discusses the interplay of teacher identity and autonomy, conceptualizing autonomy as a two-way process where both teacher educators and student teachers engage in reciprocal learning.

The theme of collaboration is pivotal in Chapters 7 and 8. In Chapter 7, Yunus Emre Akbana and Kenan Dikilitaş advocate for collaborative teacher autonomy in contexts involving young learners, emphasizing shared responsibility and professional growth. Building on this notion, Chapter 8, authored by Masaki Kobayashi and Emi Kobayashi, explores the role of post-practicum feedback discussions in fostering autonomous participation, framing these dialogues as opportunities for critical reflection and collective learning.

Chapters 9 and 10 address transformative practices and systemic challenges. In Chapter 9, Mira Kim and Bosheng Jing discuss how teacher educators revisiting their roles can gain fresh insights into autonomy development. In Chapter 10, Aysegül Okay and Cem Balçıkanlı examine how novice teachers navigate institutional pressures during their transition from university to school, revealing how autonomy is negotiated within rigid professional environments.

Chapter 11, by Larissa Dantas Rodrigues Borges and Walkyria Magno e Silva, emphasizes strategies for empowering pre-service EFL teachers to “learn how to learn,” positioning lifelong learning as central to autonomy. The examination of technological dimensions is explored in Chapter 12, where Bruna Quartarolo Vargas, Christine Nicolaides, and Junia Braga discuss how digital self-reflective tools can enhance agency and autonomy in pre-service teacher education, although the chapter’s focus on specific tools may limit its generalizability. The book

concludes with Chapter 13, which synthesizes the main insights from the earlier contributions while providing a forward-looking discussion of critical issues and future pathways for autonomy-focused teacher education.

One of the book's primary strengths is its systematic organization, which offers a multifaceted exploration of autonomy in language teacher education. By integrating themes such as reflective practices (Chapters 4 and 5), collaborative learning (Chapters 7 and 8), and identity development (Chapters 3 and 6), the volume provides a comprehensive view of how autonomy is cultivated across different contexts. This thematic diversity, further enriched by the inclusion of global perspectives, offers insights applicable to varied sociocultural and institutional settings. Particularly notable is the relational approach to autonomy, highlighted in Chapters 6 and 7. By framing autonomy as a process involving mutual growth among teacher educators, peers, and student teachers, the book challenges traditional individualistic conceptions of autonomy and underscores the importance of professional relationships in fostering agency. Furthermore, the practical tools presented in Chapters 4 and 12 demonstrate how autonomy can be operationalized in teacher education programs, effectively bridging theory and practice.

Despite these strengths, the volume has notable limitations. The thematic repetition regarding reflective practices across Chapters 4, 5, and 8 reduces the novelty of individual chapters. While reflection is central to autonomy, greater diversification in examples or case studies would have strengthened the overall impact. Additionally, while the theoretical discussions are robust, the lack of empirical rigor in some chapters, particularly Chapters 3 and 13, suggests that they would have benefited from more detailed empirical evidence or longitudinal studies to validate their claims. The discussion of technology in Chapter 12, while innovative, remains underdeveloped relative to the growing importance of digital tools in education. A broader exploration of technological advancements, such as AI-supported learning or virtual collaboration, would enhance the book's relevance to contemporary educational challenges. Furthermore, the geographic focus of the book is skewed towards Western contexts, with limited engagement with non-Western educational environments. This restricts its applicability for educators and researchers in regions where autonomy is shaped by different sociocultural dynamics.

In summary, while *Pedagogies for Autonomy in Language Teacher Education* offers a significant contribution to the field by presenting autonomy as a dynamic and multifaceted construct, its limitations in empirical grounding and contextual diversity reduce its overall applicability. The relational framing of autonomy in Chapters 6 and 7 is particularly commendable, yet the absence of

critical engagement with sociopolitical constraints, such as standardized testing or rigid institutional policies, weakens its practical implications. Overall, the book provides a comprehensive exploration of autonomy in teacher education, offering both theoretical insights and practical strategies. However, its limitations suggest areas for improvement, inviting further critical engagement with unresolved challenges in the discourse on autonomy in professional learning contexts.

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## Persian Abstracts:

### یادگیری معکوس و نقش آن در کنترل اضطراب حضور در کلاس زبان خارجی از طریق برنامه شاد

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## چکیده

مطالعات پیشین نشان داده است که یادگیری معکوس در بهبود یادگیری موثر است. با این حال، این بهبود ممکن است هزینه داشته باشد. از آنجایی که مسئولیت آماده‌سازی به دانش آموزان منتقل می‌شود، خطر افزایش اضطراب فراگیران نیز وجود دارد. این مطالعه تلاشی برای بررسی تأثیر یادگیری معکوس از طریق کاربرد برنامه شاد بر اضطراب کلاس درس زبان خارجی در زبان‌آموزان ایرانی انگلیسی بوده است. ۱۲۰ نفر از زبان‌آموزان پسر در سطح پیش از متوسط زبان انگلیسی شرکت‌کنندگان اصلی این مطالعه بودند. شرکت‌کنندگان بر اساس عملکرد در آزمون تعیین سطح به طور تصادفی در یک گروه کنترل و سه گروه آزمایشی قرار گرفتند. روش تدریس ارائه شده برای گروه کنترل، آموزش متعارف بود، در حالی که گروه آزمایش اول یادگیری معکوس سنتی، گروه دوم یادگیری معکوس مبتنی بر نمایش، و گروه آزمایش سوم یادگیری معکوس دوسویه را به عنوان روش تدریس دریافت کردند. جمع‌آوری داده‌ها از طریق پیش‌آزمون و پس‌آزمون اضطراب انجام شد. نتایج ANCOVA در مورد اضطراب کلاس درس زبان‌های خارجی نشان داد که هر سه نوع یادگیری معکوس تأثیرات مثبت بیشتری نسبت به آموزش‌های متعارف بر کاهش سطح اضطراب زبان‌آموزان داشتند. با این حال، هیچ تفاوت معنی‌داری بین سه نوع یادگیری معکوس وجود نداشت. نتایج این مطالعه ممکن است برای زبان‌آموزان و معلمان انگلیسی، نویسندگان کتب درسی، و توسعه‌دهندگان برنامه درسی ارزشمند باشد.

**واژگان کلیدی:** یادگیری معکوس، اضطراب حضور در کلاس زبان خارجی، برنامه شاد

## اطلاعات مقاله

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## اشتیاق به برقراری ارتباط و کنترل عملکرد در دانشجویان زبان انگلیسی در ایران

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### چکیده

برقراری ارتباط یکی از عناصر کلیدی یادگیری زبان دوم می‌باشد. از این روی، پژوهش‌هایی که به موضوع اشتیاق برای برقراری ارتباط می‌پردازند و یا عوامل موثر بر آن را واکاوی می‌کنند دارای اهمیت نظری و آموزشی می‌باشند. هدف از این پژوهش بررسی تاثیر سه عنصر تشکیل دهنده نظریه کنترل عملکرد کوهل (درگیری ذهنی، تردید و بی‌ثباتی) و دو عامل توانش درک شده و اضطراب ارتباط بر اشتیاق برای برقراری ارتباط بین دانشجویان زبان انگلیسی در ایران است. برای گردآوری داده از ۵ ابزار استفاده شد: پرسشنامه‌های اشتیاق برای برقراری ارتباط در زبان دوم، توانش درک شده، اضطراب ارتباط، درگیری ذهنی، تردید و بی‌ثباتی. چهارصد و چهارده دانشجوی زبان انگلیسی به پرسشنامه‌ها پاسخ دادند. برای تحلیل داده‌ها، از مدل معادلات ساختاری استفاده شد. یافته‌ها حاکی از آن است که توانش درک شده، اضطراب ارتباط و بی‌ثباتی به شکل مستقیم بر اشتیاق برای برقراری ارتباط تاثیر دارند ولی این تاثیر برای اولی مثبت و برای دو مورد دوم منفی می‌باشد. نتایج همچنین نشان می‌دهد تاثیر تردید و درگیری ذهنی بر اشتیاق برای برقراری ارتباط غیر مستقیم است. در پایان، یافته‌ها مورد بحث و بررسی قرار گرفت و راه‌آوردهای نظری و آموزشی ارایه گردید.

**واژگان کلیدی:** اشتیاق برای برقراری ارتباط، درگیری ذهنی، تردید، بی‌ثباتی، توانش درک شده و اضطراب ارتباط

### اطلاعات مقاله

#### مقاله پژوهشی

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## بررسی تأثیر برنامه‌ریزی راهبردی بر پیچیدگی لغوی نوشتار استدلالی و توصیفی زبان آموزان سطح متوسط رو به بالا از دیدگاه شناختی

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### چکیده

با توجه به ماهیت دشوار برنامه‌ریزی قبل از نوشتن متن برای زبان‌آموزان انگلیسی، هدف مطالعه فعلی بررسی تأثیر برنامه‌ریزی راهبردی به عنوان زیرمجموعه‌ای از برنامه‌ریزی قبل از نوشتن، بر روی پیچیدگی لغوی زبان-آموزان ایرانی می‌باشد. روند جمع‌آوری داده در این مطالعه ترکیبی که ۵ هفته به طول انجامید، از آزمون تعیین سطح سریع آکسفورد برای جداسازی نمونه‌ای از زبان‌آموزان سطح متوسط رو به بالا استفاده کرد. پس از این آزمون زبان‌آموزانی که دارای درجه بالایی از حافظه کاری بر اساس نتایج آزمون حافظه کاری بودند، به عنوان اعضای نمونه انتخاب شدند. بر اساس نوع برنامه‌ریزی راهبردی، زبان‌آموزان در سه گروه مختلف قرار گرفتند. در گروه اول آموزش برنامه‌ریزی راهبردی پیش از نوشتن متن، متمرکز بر ساختار و در گروه دوم متمرکز بر محتوا بود؛ در حالی که گروه سوم (گواه) هیچ گونه آموزشی دریافت نکرد. پس از اجرای پیش‌آزمون‌های متون استدلالی و توصیفی، هر گروه شکل متفاوتی از آموزش برنامه‌ریزی راهبردی را به مدت چهار جلسه دریافت نمودند. سپس، پس از آزمون‌هایی در سه گروه انجام پذیرفت و پیچیدگی لغوی با استفاده از عامل سلکس در وبسایت کومتریکس تحلیل گردید. بر اساس نتایج آزمون‌های انووا، آموزش برنامه‌ریزی راهبردی متمرکز بر ساختار منجر به ایجاد نوشتارهایی با پیچیدگی لغوی بالا در هر دو نوع نوشتار شد. نتایج می‌تواند برای طراحان برنامه درسی، مربیان و فراگیران زبان انگلیسی جهت ملاحظه نوع برنامه‌ریزی راهبردی در مرحله برنامه‌ریزی پیش از نوشتن بر اساس ظرفیت حافظه کاری مؤثر باشد.

**واژگان کلیدی:** برنامه‌ریزی راهبردی، حافظه‌ی کاری، پیچیدگی لغوی

اطلاعات مقاله

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## کلاس درس زبان انگلیسی معکوس: خودتنظیمی زبان آموزان و تولید نکات گرامری منتخب

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### چکیده

راهبردهای حمایت آموزشی معکوس به واسطه موبایل برای فراگیری زبان انگلیسی به عنوان روشی موثر شناخته شده است. پژوهش حاضر با استفاده از روش پژوهشی ترکیبی و گردآوری داده از طریق روش‌های کمی و کیفی به مطالعه اثربخشی مدل کلاس درس معکوس در بهبود مهارت‌های نوشتاری دستوری و خودتنظیمی زبان‌آموزان زبان انگلیسی سطح بالاتر از متوسط پرداخته است. علاوه بر این، این مطالعه نگرش گروه آزمایشی را نسبت به کاربرد این راهبردها مورد بررسی قرار داده است. آزمون تعیین سطح سریع آکسفورد (OQPT) توسط ۷۴ زبان-آموز دختر انگلیسی تکمیل گردید. از میان آنها ۵۸ نفر (یک انحراف معیار بالاتر و پایین‌تر از میانگین) برای دو گروه آزمایش و شاهد انتخاب شدند. ابزارهای مورد استفاده شامل مصاحبه نیمه ساختارمند، مقیاس پرسشنامه خودتنظیمی (SRQ) براون و همکاران (۱۹۹۹) و پیش‌آزمون و پس‌آزمون دستور زبان بود. نتایج نشان داد که گروه آزمایش از نظر توانایی‌های خودتنظیمی و دستور زبان نوشتاری عملکرد بهتری نسبت به گروه شاهد داشت. نتایج مصاحبه، ضمن تأیید این یافته‌ها نشان داد که زبان‌آموزان از عناصر جذاب و آموزشی راهبردهای آموزشی معکوس استقبال می‌کنند. این مطالعه شواهد امیدبخشی برای تأثیر کلاس‌های درس معکوس در پرداختن به چالش‌های پیش روی زبان‌آموزان زبان انگلیسی در ایران ارائه می‌دهد. راهبردهای آموزشی معکوس با واسطه موبایل، می‌تواند نویدبخش بهبود مهارت‌های نوشتاری گرامری و خودتنظیمی باشد. نتایج این مطالعه بر اهمیت تجهیز محیط‌های یفراگیری زبان در ایران به منابع کمک‌آموزشی جدید و راهنماهای آموزشی فراگیری زبان به کمک موبایل تأکید می‌کند که فراگیران را قادر می‌سازد در یادگیری خود از استقلال و مسئولیت‌پذیری بیشتری برخوردار شوند.

**واژگان کلیدی:** راهبرد حمایت آموزشی معکوس، فراگیری زبان انگلیسی به کمک موبایل، دستورزبان تولیدی، خودتنظیمی، آموزش مبتنی بر راهبرد

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تاریخ تصویب: شنبه، ۵ آبان ۱۴۰۳

تاریخ انتشار: سه شنبه، ۱۲ فروردین ۱۴۰۴

تاریخ آنلاین: شنبه، ۵ آبان ۱۴۰۳

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## در راستای طراحی برنامه درسی مبتنی بر شایستگی زبان تخصصی (E4CEC) در حوزه آموزش ایران: چالش‌ها و فرصت‌ها

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### چکیده

انقلاب صنعتی چهارم نیاز به نیروی انسانی برای توسعه شایستگی‌ها و مهارت‌های مختلف را به وجود آورده است. ادغام آموزش عمومی و شایستگی‌های انقلاب صنعتی چهارم در فعالیت‌های یادگیری مبتنی بر پروژه می‌تواند به تحقق این الزامات کمک کند. هدف این پروژه طراحی یک دوره آموزشی انگلیسی پزشکی برای اهداف خاص (ESP) است که با برنامه درسی یک موسسه دانشگاهی خاص (از این پس E4CEC نامیده می‌شود همسو باشد. اجرای این برنامه درسی جدید دانشجویان را قادر می‌سازد تا ابزارهای لازم برای انجام تحقیقات و برآورده کردن نیازهای نیروی کار آینده را به دست آورند. مطالعه اکتشافی حاضر به منظور بررسی چگونگی درک دانشجویان دانشگاه آزاد اسلامی نجف آباد در ایران از چالش‌ها و مزایای تحصیل پزشکی بر اساس E4CEC انجام شد. این مطالعه از سه روش جمع‌آوری داده‌های اولیه، یعنی مصاحبه با دانشجوی، پرسش‌نامه و یادداشت‌های روزانه توسط ۶۴ دانشجوی پزشکی ESP استفاده کرد. نتایج مطالعه نشان می‌دهد که دوره‌های پزشکی ESP مبتنی بر E4CEC برای دانشجویان سودمندتر و چالش‌برانگیز بود. E4CEC پتانسیل افزایش استفاده از فناوری و توسعه، ارتباطات، تفکر انتقادی و تجزیه و تحلیل، خلاقیت و مهارت‌های حل مسئله را دارد. با این حال، مشکلاتی از جمله فقدان مهارت‌های دیجیتالی و پژوهشی، و همچنین مشکلاتی در مهارت‌های سخت و نرم برای دانشجویان وجود دارد. یافته‌های این مطالعه بر اهمیت E4CEC در آموزش عالی تاکید کرده و دانش موجود در مورد E4CEC را تکمیل می‌کند.

**واژگان کلیدی:** آموزش ۴/۰، برنامه درسی مبتنی بر پروژه، انگلیسی برای اهداف ویژه، فرصت‌ها، چالش‌ها

اطلاعات مقاله

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تاریخ تصویب: سه شنبه، ۹ بهمن ۱۴۰۳

تاریخ انتشار: سه شنبه، ۱۲ فروردین ۱۴۰۴

تاریخ آنلاین: سه شنبه، ۹ بهمن ۱۴۰۳

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## تأثیر بازخورد چندوجهی بر پیچیدگی، دقت و روانی نوشتاری زبان آموزان ایرانی زبان انگلیسی در کلاس‌های درس سنتی و معکوس

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### چکیده

این تحقیق شبه آزمایشی به بررسی تطبیقی و تجربی تأثیرات بازخورد چندوجهی بر پیچیدگی، دقت و روانی نوشتاری زبان آموزان ایرانی زبان انگلیسی در کلاس‌های برعکس و سنتی پرداخت. از این رو، ۵۷ زبان آموز ایرانی زبان انگلیسی از دو مؤسسه زبان مختلف در شهر بابل انتخاب و به چهار گروه شامل دو گروه آزمایشی کلاس درس معکوس به اضافه بازخورد چندوجهی و کلاس درس سنتی به همراه بازخورد چندوجهی و دو گروه کنترل کلاس درس معکوس به اضافه بازخورد تک وجهی (نوشتاری) و کلاس درس سنتی به اضافه بازخورد تک وجهی (نوشتاری) تقسیم شدند. پیش‌آزمون و پس‌آزمون برای استخراج اطلاعات در مورد پیچیدگی، دقت و روانی نوشتاری زبان آموزان استفاده شد. گروه‌های آزمایشی بازخورد چندوجهی و گروه‌های کنترل، بازخورد تک وجهی را طی ۱۲ هفته (۲۴ جلسه) دریافت کردند. با توجه به نتایج به دست آمده از تحلیل یک طرفه چند متغیره، ارائه بازخورد چندوجهی به طور قابل توجهی عملکرد نوشتاری دانش آموزان را بهبود بخشید. علاوه بر این، استفاده از بازخورد چندوجهی از طریق آموزش معکوس به طور قابل توجهی بر پیچیدگی، دقت و روانی نوشتاری زبان آموزان زبان انگلیسی تأثیر گذاشت که نشان می‌دهد که مربیان زبان خارجی می‌توانند به طور مؤثر بازخورد چندوجهی را عمدتاً از طریق کلاس‌های معکوس برای بهبود عملکرد نوشتاری در زبان آموزان ایرانی زبان انگلیسی با سطح زبانی متوسط به کار گیرند. نتایج مطالعه مورد بحث قرار گرفت و پیشنهاداتی ارائه شد.

**واژگان کلیدی:** کلاس درس سنتی، کلاس درس معکوس، بازخورد چندوجهی، پیچیدگی، دقت و روانی نوشتاری

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مقاله پژوهشی

تاریخ دریافت: یکشنبه، ۱۵ مهر ۱۴۰۳

تاریخ تصویب: یکشنبه، ۲۶ اسفند ۱۴۰۳

تاریخ انتشار: سه شنبه، ۱۲ فروردین ۱۴۰۴

تاریخ آنلاین: یکشنبه، ۲۶ اسفند ۱۴۰۳

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## استفاده معلمان زبان انگلیسی از کلان راهبردها بر اساس تجربه تدریس و تأثیر آن بر انگیزش فراگیران

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### چکیده

کلان راهبردها چارچوب وسیعی برای تدریس مؤثر زبان فراهم می‌کنند؛ لیکن تحقیقات درباره تأثیر تجربه معلمان در استفاده از این راهبردها بر انگیزش زبان‌آموزان بسیار اندک است. این پژوهش به بررسی رابطه بین استفاده معلمان زبان انگلیسی از کلان راهبردها و انگیزش فراگیران می‌پردازد. بدین منظور ۴۲ معلم زبان انگلیسی (۲۱ معلم با تجربه و ۲۱ معلم مبتدی) و ۴۲ زبان‌آموز از موسسات آموزش زبان در شهرهای تبریز و شاهین‌دژ انتخاب شدند. سپس عملکرد دو گروه معلمان (با تجربه و مبتدی) از حیث بکارگیری کلان راهبردها از یک سو و میزان انگیزش زبان‌آموزان از سوی دیگر مورد بررسی قرار گرفت. داده‌های مربوط به کلان راهبردها از طریق فرم مشاهده و داده‌های مربوط به انگیزش از طریق مقیاس انگیزش تحصیلی گردآوری شدند. نتایج همبستگی اسپیرمن نشان داد که رابطه‌ی معناداری بین استفاده معلمان از کلان راهبردها و انگیزش زبان‌آموزان وجود دارد. علاوه بر این، نتیجه آزمون مان ویتنی یو نشان داد از لحاظ انگیزشی بین دانش‌آموزانی که تحت تدریس معلمان با تجربه بوده‌اند و آن‌هایی که توسط معلمان مبتدی تدریس شده‌اند، تفاوت بارزی وجود دارد. این یافته‌ها می‌توانند نقش مهمی در تدریس زبان خارجی، برنامه‌ریزی درسی و افزایش میزان انگیزش زبان‌آموزان ایفا کنند.

**واژگان کلیدی:** کلان راهبردها، انگیزش، تجربه تدریس، با تجربه، مبتدی

### اطلاعات مقاله

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تاریخ انتشار: سه شنبه، ۱۲ فروردین ۱۴۰۴

تاریخ آنلاین: شنبه، ۳۰ فروردین ۱۴۰۴

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## ادراک مصاحبه‌شوندگان از دستورات در مقالات پژوهشی در رشته‌های مختلف: راهبردهای بی‌ادبی یا نشانگرهای تعامل؟

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### چکیده

این مطالعه بررسی می‌کند که آیا استفاده از دستورات در نوشتار آکادمیک، به‌ویژه مقالات پژوهشی (RAs) نوشته‌شده در علوم اجتماعی و طبیعی، باید به عنوان یک راهبرد بی‌ادبی در نظر گرفته شود یا یک نشانگر تعامل. هشتاد مقاله پژوهشی از چهار رشته (دو علوم اجتماعی و دو علوم طبیعی) تحلیل شدند و ۴۲۹ دستور شناسایی شد. دو مصاحبه‌شونده از هر رشته، کارکردهایی را به دستورات اختصاص دادند و سپس آن‌ها را در مقیاسی از بی‌ادبی رتبه‌بندی کردند. یافته‌ها نشان می‌دهد که به جز دستورات تلویحی/پیشنهادی برون‌متنی در علوم اجتماعی و دستورات هشدار شناختی در هر دو علوم اجتماعی و طبیعی، که ممکن است سایه‌هایی از بی‌ادبی را به همراه داشته باشند، سایر کارکردها باید به عنوان نشانگرهای تعامل در نظر گرفته شوند. بنابراین، دستورات در این ژانر محافظه‌کارانه، راهبردهای بی‌ادبانه نیستند. علاوه بر این، هیچ تفاوت معناداری در کارکردهای دستوری بین دو شاخه علم مشاهده نشد. نویسندگان مقالات پژوهشی اغلب از قوانین تجویزی متعارف در زمینه‌های خود پیروی می‌کنند؛ با این حال، آن‌ها همچنین تمایل دارند از عناصری استفاده کنند که در نوشتار آکادمیک کمتر مشروعیت دارند.

**واژگان کلیدی:** نوشتار آکادمیک، دستورات، نشانگر تعامل، راهبرد بی‌ادبی، مقاله پژوهشی

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تاریخ تصویب: پنجشنبه، ۲۱ فروردین ۱۴۰۴

تاریخ انتشار: سه شنبه، ۱۲ فروردین ۱۴۰۴

تاریخ آنلاین: پنجشنبه، ۲۱ فروردین ۱۴۰۴

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## اعتبارسنجی نظریه گفتمان لاکلا و مووف با استفاده از یک فیلم ایرانی

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### چکیده

هدف از پژوهش حاضر، اعتبارسنجی تئوری گفتمان لاکلا و مووف (۱۹۸۵) است که از طریق برداشت تفسیرات خوانندگان که از طبقات مختلف سیاسی-اجتماعی جامعه ایران بودند، انجام شد. برای این منظور، فیلمی ایرانی را انتخاب کردیم که قبلاً توسط یک تحلیل گر گفتمان معروف ایرانی با استفاده از تئوری گفتمان لاکلا و مووف (۱۹۸۵) مورد تجزیه و تحلیل قرار گرفته بود. سپس، از سه گروه خواننده (هر گروه شامل پنج نفر) خواستیم که فیلم را ببینند و تفسیرهای خود را از صحنه‌هایی از فیلم بازگو کنند که تحلیل گر آن‌ها را قبلاً در مقاله خود تجزیه و تحلیل کرده بود. بعد از دریافت برداشت‌های خوانندگان از بخش‌های خواسته شده، آنها را با تجزیه و تحلیل تحلیل گر مقایسه کردیم و به این نتیجه رسیدیم که علیرغم وجود تشابهات در تفسیرهای تحلیل گر و خوانندگان در برخی از قسمت‌های فیلم، تفاوت‌هایی نیز وجود داشت که نشان‌دهنده لزوم توجه به تفسیرهای جایگزین در تئوری گفتمان لاکلا و مووف می باشد.

**واژگان کلیدی:** نظریه گفتمان، تفسیرات خوانندگان، رویکرد های سیاسی-اجتماعی، تفسیرهای جایگزین

### اطلاعات مقاله

#### مقاله پژوهشی

تاریخ دریافت: پنجشنبه، ۳۱ خرداد ۱۴۰۳

تاریخ تصویب: یکشنبه، ۱۶ دی ۱۴۰۳

تاریخ انتشار: سه شنبه، ۱۲ فروردین ۱۴۰۴

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## مفهوم من هنجارمند در ناتوانی پسااستعماری در داستان کوتاه

### «غروب و صبح و شب» اثر اوکتاویا ای. باتلر

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#### چکیده

جامعه‌های توانمندگرا و هنجارمند به دنبال یک‌دست‌کردن بدن‌های اقلیتی و متفاوت با خود هستند. پژوهش حاضر به بررسی نقش هم‌آمدن نظریه پسااستعماری و مطالعات ناتوانی در داستان کوتاه «غروب و صبح و شب» اثر اوکتاویا ای. باتلر می‌پردازد. هدف اصلی این مقاله واکاوی مسئله اقلیتی‌بودن در اجتماع و رویکردهای کنترلی است که - مشابه سرکوب استعماری - در این داستان کوتاه بر افراد ناتوان اعمال می‌شود. ابتدا، ناامنی اجتماعی و بدنامی بدن‌های ناتوان آن‌ها با نژادپرستی و استعمار مقایسه می‌شوند. سپس، بررسی بازدید لین و تجربه‌های او در دیلگ نشان می‌دهند که چگونه کارکرد این مرکز نمایان‌گر نظام‌های کنترلی استعمارگر است. یافته‌های پژوهش نشان می‌دهند که روایت باتلر ساختار دوگانه میان سالم (غیر دی. جی. دی) و ناسالم (دی. جی. دی) را تجزیه می‌کند و هویتی دوگانه را ارائه می‌دهد که ساختار غالب جامعه را متزلزل می‌کند. یافته‌های پژوهش نشان می‌دهند که این داستان ساختارهای اجتماعی که بدن‌های متفاوت را کدگذاری می‌کنند نقد می‌کند و بر سیال‌بودن ناتوانی و تعامل‌های پیچیده میان قدرت، هویت، و خودمختاری تأکید دارد. در نهایت، یافته‌ها نشان می‌دهند که چگونه داستانی علمی-تخیلی می‌تواند رسانه‌ای تأثیرگذار برای تفسیر دغدغه‌های اجتماعی باشد، تا به گفتمان‌های گسترده‌تر و ذات‌پویای ناتوانی - که در برابر تعریف ثابت و محدود مقاومت می‌کند - کمک کند.

**واژگان کلیدی:** توانمندگرایی، مطالعات ناتوانی، هویت دوگانه، نظریه پسااستعماری، کنترل اجتماعی

#### اطلاعات مقاله

##### مقاله پژوهشی

تاریخ دریافت: پنجشنبه، ۱۰ خرداد ۱۴۰۳

تاریخ تصویب: سه شنبه، ۹ بهمن ۱۴۰۳

تاریخ انتشار: سه شنبه، ۱۲ فروردین ۱۴۰۴

تاریخ آنلاین: پسه شنبه، ۹ بهمن ۱۴۰۳

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## "تسلط بر اصول حرفه": اجتناب زبانی در نمایشنامه «اولئانا» اثر دیوید ممت مهربانی به هر آنچه زنده است: بررسی مفهوم «اخلاق سرزمین» در اندیشه آلدو لئوپولد در داستان بلند «سرگشتگی» اثر ریچارد پاورز

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### چکیده

ترویج دیدگاهی دگرگون‌کننده که پیوندی هماهنگ میان انسان و طبیعت را پرورش دهد همواره از مهم‌ترین دغدغه‌ها در حوزه بوم‌نقد و در میان طرفداران آن بوده است. در این میان، مسأله «انسان‌محوری» در طول تاریخ بشر به طور دائم موضوع انتقاد شدید بوده است، چرا که رفاه انسان را بر حفظ طبیعت اولویت قرار داده است. نظریه «اخلاق سرزمین» از آلدو لئوپولد به شدت با مواضع انسان‌محوری مخالف بوده و از گنجاندن حقوق اخلاقی سایر موجودات در تمام تصمیمات انسانی درباره طبیعت حمایت می‌کند. در این پرتو، به عنوان ندایی ادبی در امر محیط‌گرایی فعال، داستان بلند «سرگشتگی» (۲۰۲۱) از ریچارد پاورز مستقیماً ایدئولوژی انسان‌محور را در بحث در برابری‌های زیست‌محیطی میان انسان و سایر موجودات به چالش می‌کشد و بر ارزش ذاتی همه موجودات زنده تأکید می‌ورزد. این مطالعه با تکیه بر نظریه «اخلاق سرزمین»، رویکردی میان‌رشته‌ای را در به چالش کشیدن رفتارهای ضد محیطی انسان در داستان مذکور به کار می‌گیرد. بر این اساس، بحث اصلی این مقاله بر آن است که داستان سرگشتگی به وضوح از اخلاق جوامع صنعتی که با نادیده گرفتن پیامدهای درازمدت انسان‌محوری و تحقیر حقوق طبیعی حیوانات به عنوان معماران قلمرو انسانی، از طبیعت برای سودآوری بهره‌برداری فرسایشی دارند انتقاد کرده و خواستار روشنگری‌های زیست‌محیطی در این زمینه است.

**واژگان کلیدی:** آلدو لئوپولد، اخلاقیات زمین، انسان‌محوری، ریچارد پاورز، «سرگشتگی»

اطلاعات مقاله

مقاله پژوهشی

تاریخ دریافت: یکشنبه، ۷ مرداد ۱۴۰۳

تاریخ تصویب: پنجشنبه، ۲ اسفند ۱۴۰۳

تاریخ انتشار: سه شنبه، ۱۲ فروردین ۱۴۰۴

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## خواندن و بازسازی لندن پس از برگزیت: خوانش گوری و ایزری

## از «چهارگانه فصلی» الی اسمیت

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## چکیده

کوشش الی اسمیت برای خلق اثری درخور زمان در لندن پس از برگزیت، به خلق «چهارگانه فصلی» منجر شده است که در آن ارجاعات دیکنزی به ثبت واقعیت های پیچیده لندن معاصر کمک می کند و خوانندگان را ترغیب می کند تا مناظر شهری متفاوتی متصور شوند. این مطالعه با استفاده از رویکرد ینس مارتین گور از «تمودار مطالعات شهری ادبی: متون به عنوان مدل های شهر و برای شهر» (۲۰۲۱)، استدلال می کند که رمان های اسمیت کارکردهای دوگانه دارند: آن ها واقعیت های پیچیده شهری را در متن منعکس می کنند و ادراکات شهر را شکل می دهند، و دموکراسی از مفهوم سازی های ممکن از شهر را نیز فراهم می سازند. نظریه گور بیان می کند که متون ادبی نه تنها واقعیت های شهری را به تصویر می کشند، بلکه با استفاده از تکنیک های روایی مانند ارجاعات ادبی، دعوت به مداخله نیز می کنند. با ادغام رویکرد گور و نظریه خواننده محور ولفگانگ ایزر، این مطالعه بررسی می کند که چگونه استناد اسمیت به آثار چارلز دیکنز رویدادها را از بافت ویکتوریایی خود خارج کرده و خوانندگان را دعوت می کند تا راه حل هایی برای مسائل شهری معاصر بیابند. این ارجاعات ادبی پتانسیل معنایی متن را غنی تر می کنند که پیچیدگی های لندن پس از برگزیت را به تصویر می کشند و خوانندگان را درگیر بازآفرینی های خلاقانه از این شهر می سازند. این مطالعه نشان می دهد که رمان های اسمیت، از طریق ارجاعات دیکنزی، به طور مؤثری پیچیدگی های زندگی شهری را به تصویر می کشند و در عین حال موجب درگیر شدن و مداخله خلاقانه ی خوانندگان می شوند. این عملکرد دوگانه —توصیفی و پیشنهادی— نشان می دهد که چگونه ادبیات می تواند تجربه های شهری را بازتاب دهد و تفکر تحول آفرین را الهام بخشد. در نهایت، این تحقیق به مطالعات شهری ادبیات کمک می کند و قدرت تحول آفرین ادبیات در مطالعات شهری و گفت وگوهای سیاسی را مورد تأکید قرار می دهد، و نشان می دهد که چگونه تحلیل ادبی می تواند بر درک و تصور آینده های شهری جامع تر و پویاتر تأثیر بگذارد.

واژگان کلیدی: ادبیات پس از برگزیت، توصیفی، لندن، تجویزی

## اطلاعات مقاله

مقاله پژوهشی

تاریخ دریافت: یکشنبه، ۲۱ مرداد ۱۴۰۳

تاریخ تصویب: پنجشنبه، ۲ اسفند ۱۴۰۳

تاریخ انتشار: سه شنبه، ۱۲ فروردین ۱۴۰۴

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## اعضای هیأت تحریریه بین المللی



دانشگاه شهید مدنی آذربایجان

### دو فصلنامه زبان‌شناسی کاربردی ادبیات کاربردی: پوشش‌ها و پیشرفت‌ها

صاحب امتیاز:

دانشگاه شهید مدنی آذربایجان

مدیر مسئول:

دکتر داود امینی

سر دبیر:

دکتر کریم صادقی

مدیر داخلی:

دکتر رضا یل شرز

نشانی:

کیلومتر ۳۵، جاده تبریز- مراغه، دانشگاه شهید مدنی آذربایجان، دانشکده ادبیات و علوم انسانی، دفتر دو فصلنامه.

تلفاکس:

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کد پستی:

۵۳۷۵۱۷۱۳۷۹

آدرس سایت نشریه:

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شماره انتشار:

سال سیزدهم، شماره اول

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بها: ۵۰۰۰۰ ریال

شمارگان: ۱۰۰ جلد

این دو فصلنامه با مجوز شماره ثبت ۹۱/۳۴۷۱۵ وزارت فرهنگ و ارشاد اسلامی چاپ و منتشر می‌شود.

شاپای الکترونیکی: ۲۸۲۱-۰۲۰۴

شاپای چاپی: ۲۸۲۰-۸۹۸۶

پروفسور جین ماتیسون اکستم	استاد ادبیات انگلیسی، ادبیات کانادا و فرهنگ بریتانیا	دانشگاه آستفولد، نروژ
پروفسور لوردس اورتگا	استاد زبان‌شناسی کاربردی، دوزبانگی و فراگیری زبان دوم	دانشگاه جورج تاون، واشنگتن، ایالات متحده آمریکا
پروفسور گری بارکوزن	استاد زبان‌شناسی کاربردی، مطالعات زبان و زبان‌شناسی	دانشگاه اوکلند، اوکلند، نیوزیلند
پروفسور پل جان ثیبالث	استاد زبان‌شناسی کاربردی	دانشگاه آگدر، کریستین ساند، نروژ
پروفسور شمیم رافیک گالا	استاد زبان‌شناسی کاربردی و آموزش زبان انگلیسی	دانشگاه سه گی، پتالینگ جایا، سلانگور، مالزی
پروفسور لوئیس وان فلوئو	استاد مطالعات ترجمه	دانشگاه اوتوا، اوتوا، کانادا
پروفسور سورش کاناگاراچا	استاد زبان‌شناسی کاربردی، زبان انگلیسی و مطالعات آسیا	دانشگاه ایالتی پنسیلوانیا، استیت کالج، ایالات متحده آمریکا
پروفسور کلنیر جین کرمش	استاد بازنشسته زبان‌شناسی کاربردی	دانشگاه کالیفرنیا در برکلی، کالیفرنیا، برکلی، ایالات متحده آمریکا
دکتر سعید کریمی اقدم	دانشیار آموزش زبان انگلیسی و زبان‌شناسی کاربردی	دانشکده علوم تربیتی و علوم انسانی، دانشگاه نورد، لوانگر، نروژ
پروفسور جیمز پی لاتتولف	استاد آموزش زبان و زبان‌شناسی کاربردی	دانشگاه ایالتی پنسیلوانیا، استیت کالج، پنسیلوانیا، ایالات متحده آمریکا
پروفسور پل کی ماتسودا	استاد زبان انگلیسی و مدیر برنامه مهارت نوشتاری زبان دوم در دانشگاه ایالتی آریزونا	دانشگاه ایالتی آریزونا، تمپه، آریزونا، ایالات متحده آمریکا
دکتر جاکارا موکاندان	استاد انگلیسی بعنوان زبان خارجی	گروه زبان و آموزش علوم انسانی، دانشکده مطالعات آموزشی، دانشگاه پوترامالزی
پروفسور آری هوتا	استاد زبان‌شناسی کاربردی و سنجش زبان	مدیر مرکز مطالعات کاربردی زبان، دانشگاه بیواسکیلا، بیواسکیلا، فنلاند
پروفسور ماریولین ورسپور	استاد زبان‌شناسی کاربردی	دانشکده دکتری چندزبانگی، دانشگاه پانونیا، وزیرپیه، مجارستان
پروفسور لی وی	استاد زبان‌شناسی کاربردی	دانشگاه کالج لندن، لندن، انگلستان



دانشگاه شهید مدنی آذربایجان

دو فصلنامه زبان‌شناسی کاربردی ادبیات  
کاربردی: پوشش‌ها و پیشرفت‌ها

صاحب امتیاز:

دانشگاه شهید مدنی آذربایجان

مدیر مسئول:

دکتر داود امینی

سر دبیر:

دکتر کریم صادقی

مدیر داخلی:

دکتر رضا یل شروزه

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کیلومتر ۳۵، جاده تبریز- مراغه، دانشگاه  
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تلفاکس:

۰۴۱-۳۴۳۲۷۵۵۹

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شماره انتشار:

سالسیزدهم، شماره اول

تاریخ انتشار: سه‌شنبه: ۱۲ فروردین ۱۴۰۴

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شمارگان: ۱۰۰ جلد

این دو فصلنامه با مجوز شماره ثبت ۹۱/۳۴۷۱۵  
وزارت فرهنگ و ارشاد اسلامی چاپ و منتشر  
می‌شود.

شاپای الکترونیکی: ۲۸۲۱-۰۲۰۴

شاپای چاپی: ۲۸۲۰-۸۹۸۶



اعضای هیأت تحریریه داخلی

دکتر داود امینی	دانشیار آموزش زبان انگلیسی	دانشگاه شهید مدنی آذربایجان
دکتر علی اکبر انصارین	استاد آموزش زبان انگلیسی	دانشگاه تبریز
دکتر بیوک بهنام	دانشیار بازنشته آموزش زبان انگلیسی	دانشگاه شهید مدنی آذربایجان
دکتر بهرام بهین	دانشیار آموزش زبان انگلیسی	دانشگاه شهید مدنی آذربایجان
دکتر کریم صادقی	استاد آموزش زبان انگلیسی	دانشگاه ارومیه
دکتر فرهم فرخی	استاد آموزش زبان انگلیسی	دانشگاه تبریز
دکتر پروین قاسمی	استاد بازنشته ادبیات انگلیسی	دانشگاه شیراز
دکتر کاظم لطفی پور ساعدی	استاد بازنشته زبان‌شناسی کاربردی	دانشگاه تبریز
دکتر احد مهروند	دانشیار ادبیات انگلیسی	دانشگاه شهید مدنی آذربایجان

اعضای مشاور هیأت تحریریه

دکتر فریده پورگیو	استاد بازنشته زبان و ادبیات انگلیسی	دانشگاه شیراز
دکتر علیرضا جلیلی‌فر	استاد زبان‌شناسی کاربردی	دانشگاه شهید چمران اهواز
دکتر ثلاثیه چلا	استاد زبان‌شناسی کاربردی	دانشگاه USM مالزی
دکتر ابوالفضل رمضانی	استادیار زبان و ادبیات انگلیسی	دانشگاه شهید مدنی آذربایجان
دکتر مهناز سعیدی	استاد آموزش زبان انگلیسی	دانشگاه آزاد اسلامی واحد تبریز
دکتر مینو عالمی	استاد آموزش زبان انگلیسی	دانشگاه آزاد اسلامی واحد تهران غرب
دکتر رضا عبدی	استاد آموزش زبان انگلیسی	دانشگاه محقق اردبیلی
دکتر سید محمد علوی	استاد زبان‌شناسی کاربردی	دانشگاه تهران
دکتر بهروز عزبدفتری	استاد بازنشته زبان‌شناسی کاربردی	دانشگاه تبریز
دکتر جواد غلامی	استاد آموزش زبان انگلیسی	دانشگاه ارومیه
دکتر سعید کتابی	استاد زبان‌شناسی کاربردی	دانشگاه اصفهان

ویراستاران انگلیسی: دکتر ابوالفضل رمضانی و شهلا ناظری

صفحه‌آرا و حروفچین: مؤسسه آیشن کامپیوتر