14th VESAL

INTERNATIONAL VISIBLE CONFERENCE ON
EDUCATIONAL STUDIES & APPLIED LINGUISTICS

October 23rd – 24th, 2024
TISHK INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY
ERBIL, KURDISTAN REGION, IRAQ

Balancing Acts: Harmony & Collaboration in Education

In accordance with the UN 17 SDGs

Edited by: Venera Ulker
Soran Mustafa Kurdi
Hewa Fouad Ali

VESAL

CONFERENCE BOOK OF PROCEEDINGS

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Book of Proceedings 2024

The 14th International Visible Conference on Educational Studies and Applied Linguistics

October 23rd-24th, 2024

Erbil, Kurdistan Regional Government, Iraq

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WELCOMING REMARKS

Asst. Prof. Dr. Idris Hadi Salih
Head of Board of Trustees,
Tishk International University

It is a pleasure and privilege to welcome you to this most innovative and forward-thinking venue where you will have time to consider and formulate what higher education will look like as emerging technologies, economy, and policies continue to catapult it into the future. In many ways, one's career during this evolving information age seems more like a foot race. We have been challenged to remain relevant in our disciplines and at the same time are compelled to adopt and use current technologies. The changes have been both exciting and profound and have transformed the way we do business. We now have learning environments that include online classrooms, MOOCs, cellphone response systems, and countless other instructional technologies dramatically changing how we interact and engage with our students and deliver education. As professors, administrators, and public leaders, what do we need to be thinking about as the academy's core missions of teaching, research, and outreach move into the future? To discuss the core mission of education and language teaching and learning, the Faculty of Education at Tishk International University and the College of Education at Salahaddin University-Erbil jointly organize the International Visible Conference on Educational Studies and Applied Linguistics (VESAL), which is entering its 1th year of successful organization. The conference has already become a considerable brand and improving year by year. The aim of VESAL 2024 is to attract the research communities to promote connections between theory and practice and explore different perspectives on the application of research findings into different practices. I kindly welcome scholars coming from the international and local regions as well as experts, educators, linguists, lecturers,

and senior lecturers to Erbil, Iraq. The Conference aims to open channels, pave roads of academic collaboration, and bring experiences together with expertise for further innovative thoughts and more creative research. Dr. Idris Hadi is now the Head of the Board of Trustees of Tishk International University since November 2016. Previously he worked as the first Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Kurdistan Regional Government – Erbil from 2006 till November 1st, 2009. Then he worked as the Minister of Labor and Social Affairs in the first elected government of Iraq – Bagdad between 2005-2006. Dr. Idris Hadi is a founding member of the Human Rights organization in the Kurdistan region and was elected as the president of the organization from 1991 to 1993. During this time, he has actively participated in conferences and workshops related to human rights, women's rights, and children's rights and joint projects with international Human Rights Watch such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Human Rights organization of UN and other organizations. After that, Dr. Idris Hadi worked as the Minister of Transportation and Communication in the first cabinet of the Kurdistan regional government – Erbil in 1992. Then he worked as the Minister of Transportation and Communication in the second cabinet of Kurdistan regional government – Erbil in 1993. Later, Dr. Idris Hadi worked as the Minister of Industry and Energy in the third cabinet of the Kurdistan regional government – Erbil in 1996. Then he worked as the Minister of Municipalities and Tourism in the Kurdistan regional government – Erbil in 1998. Dr. Idris Hadi received his bachelor's degree in Sulaimani University/ Iraq in 1976 and his master's degree in Communication Engineering at Leningrad University in 1982, then he received his PhD Degree in Communication Engineering (Technical Science) at Leningrad university in 1985. Dr. Idris Hadi and his family live in Erbil-Iraq.

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

The Organizing Committee of The International Visible Conference of Educational Studies and Applied Linguistics (VESAL 2024) is composed of distinguished academics who are experts in their fields. The Organizing Committee is responsible for nominating and vetting Keynote and Featured Speakers; developing the conference program, including workshops, panels, and targeted sessions; undertaking event outreach and promotion; recommending and attracting future Organizing Committee members; working with Tishk International University to select PhD students and early career academics for Tishk International University-funded grants and scholarships for teaching profession as careers; and reviewing abstracts submitted to the conference.

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VESAL 2024 CONFERENCE THEME

Dr. Venera Ulker, Head of English Language Teaching Department – Tishk International University, Erbil, Iraq

"Balancing Acts: Harmony and Collaboration in Education" in accordance with UN 17 SDGs

The world is changing with increasing speed – the way we communicate, find information and work has been massively transformed in the past decade. Education systems, however, are struggling to catch up with an overwhelming amount of information at students' fingertips. There is a growing need for soft skills such as empathy and creativity; educators at every level are facing the challenge of reinventing the classroom and reshaping the very system itself. During the changing times, educators should rethink and rebuild the executive education that will help learners to integrate global citizenship and social justice into their lives. A nation that effectively utilizes its resources is closely aligned with the thoughts, concepts, and culture of the individuals who make up the society and with the prudence, foresight, and sincere devotion of those in power. The administrators who are responsible for the level of care given to individuals and their efforts toward becoming a social entity will be an indication of how closely aligned they are with the prophetic principle that "All of you are shepherds, and all of you are responsible for those under your care" and that "being glad about making others happy instead of self-concerns. If the new generations' minds are equipped with the sciences of their time and their hearts are not lit up with breezes from beyond and if they are provided with ample education, with all their needs fulfilled and all opportunities available for them to succeed then they can look forward to a bright future. These future generations will be able to stand up to every kind of obstacle in the struggle of life, they will be able to overcome – material or spiritual – every kind of difficulty and will never give in to despair. All the hardships that we will have encountered along the way in providing our children with a better education will have been worth it.

CONFERENCE GUIDE

Registration and Payment: Oct 23-24, 2024 at 08:30-09:45

REGISTRATION & ACCESS

You will be able to pick up your registration pack and name card at the Conference Registration Desk. The Conference Registration Desk and Publications Desk will be situated in the Tishk International University, Education Building, Entrance Hall) during the conference. When you register for the conference, you will pay the conference fee. If you have any questions or concerns, the Education Faculty staff will happily assist you.

Name Badges

When you check in at the registration desk, you will receive a registration pack, which includes your name badge. Wearing your badge is required for entrance to the sessions. You must wear your badge at all times during the conference.

Certificates

Certificates for the Participants will be delivered during the closing ceremony. A certificate for each Presenter will be delivered at the end of his or her presentations. Certificates for Session Chairs and Organizing Committee members will be delivered during the closing ceremony.

Lunch (Day 1 | 23rd October 2024)- Wednesday, 12:35–13:30

VESAL 2024 is a highly anticipated event held over two days, with the first day dedicated to the speakers and organizing committee at Tishk International University, where they will be treated to a lunch specially arranged for them. The Conference Lunch is a free-of-charge service provided by the conference.

Lunch (Day 2 | 24th October 2024)- Thursday, 12:10–13:30

Lunch on the second day is included in the conference registration fee. Lunch will be provided at Tishk International University, which will serve different local dishes prepared by a talented team of chefs. Lunch service includes drinks (non-alcoholic), a coffee station, and a dessert table. Please remember to bring your name badge with you, as this will act as your lunch ticket. Attendees can look forward to a productive and informative experience filled with engaging discussions, networking opportunities, and thought-provoking presentations.

PRESENTATION GUIDE

Conference Abstracts

The conference abstracts are accessible in hard copy format. The presentation sessions will commence after the opening ceremony on **Wednesday** morning and are typically arranged into concurrent sessions. Each concurrent session comprises three presentations, with two sets of four presentations scheduled for **Concurrent Session I and Concurrent Session II**, respectively. To ensure equal time allocation for each presentation, the session duration will be divided equally among the presenters. For optimal delivery and interaction, we recommend that an Oral Presentation should last no longer than **15 minutes**, with an additional **5 minutes** for **questions and answers**. Should there be any remaining time in the session, it may be utilized for further discussion.

Equipment

All rooms will be equipped with an all-in-one computer, featuring your interactive presentations. We advise you to use the computer provided by plugging in your USB flash drive. We recommend that you bring two copies of your presentation in case one fails and suggest sending yourself the presentation by email as a third and final precaution.

Session Chairs

Session Chairs are asked to introduce themselves and other speakers (briefly) using the provided printouts of speaker bios, hand out the provided presentation certificates at the end of the session, and ensure that the session begins and ends on time and that the time is divided fairly between the presentations. Each presenter should have no more than **20 minutes** in which to present his or her paper and respond to any questions. The Session Chair is asked to assume this timekeeping role. Please follow the order in the program, and if for any reason a presenter fails to show up, please keep to the original time slots as delegates use the program to plan their attendance.

Certificates

All presenters will receive a certificate of presentation from their Session Chair or a member of staff at the end of their session.

Publication

Accepted papers at VESAL 2024 will have the privilege of being published in one of the following prestigious venues:

- International Journal of Social Sciences & Educational Studies (IJSSES): The IJSSES is a reputable scholarly journal that covers a wide range of topics in social sciences and educational studies. It is indexed by DOI (Digital Object Identifier), ensuring the permanence and accessibility of published articles. Authors whose papers are selected will have the opportunity to contribute to the academic discourse in their field through this esteemed journal.
- The VESAL2024 Book of Proceedings: The conference proceedings will be compiled into a comprehensive book. Manuscripts reviewed by the VESAL Editorial Board will be eligible for inclusion in the VESAL2024 Book in cases where the manuscript does not meet the criteria for submission to the IJSSES journal. Manuscripts that do not meet the approval of the IJSSES editorial board will be considered for inclusion in the VESAL2024 Book of Proceedings. Each accepted paper will be assigned an ISBN (International Standard Book Number), making it a valuable scholarly resource. The proceedings book will serve as a reference for researchers, educators, and practitioners interested in educational studies and applied linguistics.

Conference Proceedings

The Conference Proceedings will be published with a DOI number in **November 2024** and can be freely accessed as part of the Faculty of Education's research archive. All authors may have their full paper published in the online Conference Proceedings

A Polite Request to All Participants

Participants are requested to arrive in a timely fashion for all presentations, whether on their own or to those of other presenters. Presenters are reminded that the time slots should be divided fairly and equally between the number of presentations and that presentations should not be overrun. Participants should refrain from talking amongst themselves and ensure that mobile phones are switched off or set to silent mode during presentations.

VISION & MISSION

VISION

To enable the knowledge and information accessible to everyone, Tishk International University in partnership with Salahaddin University-Erbil, holds its annual conference Iraq. The VESAL 2024 conference aims to contribute to the region and educators through international experts and researchers. The VESAL 2024 conference plans to remain

on Educational Sciences and Applied Linguistics. The International Visible Conference aims to gather researchers, practitioners, educators, and scholars with interests in any field of teaching at all levels from around the world. The VESAL 2024 conference is designed to attract the research communities to promote connections between theory and practice and explore different open to educational studies, language teaching, and/or language-education-related topics broadly defined, looking more closely into the current dynamics in the world between old and new trends, local and global tendencies, progressive and conservative views, stabilization and destabilization patterns, national and global identities It is expected that VESAL 2024 conference will

perspectives on the application of research findings into different practices. We kindly welcome scholars coming from the international and local regions as well as teachers and prospective teachers to Erbil, be a magnet for a significant number of front-ranking academics, professionals and policymakers working in the broad areas of Educational Environment.

MISSION

To develop highly qualified individuals who will contribute to the future of the country by making utmost use of the knowledge gained in fields of science, technology, and arts in the light of universal values; offer learning opportunities in the fields of research, education, and service for the benefit of the wider community. Furthermore, our conference aims to foster a collaborative environment that encourages interdisciplinary research and dialogue between scholars, educators, and practitioners in applied linguistics and educational studies. By promoting innovative teaching methodologies and effective language acquisition strategies, we aspire to enhance the quality of education at all levels, nurturing a society that values both local traditions and global perspectives. Through insightful discussions and presentations, we seek to inspire actionable insights that bridge theory and practice.

JOIN US TO HELP TURN THE TIDE IN EDUCATION

SPECIAL THANKS - SESSION CHAIRS

We, at the Tishk International University Faculty of Education, would like to recognize the Session Chairs for all of their hard work in coordinating his/her respective Concurrent Sessions. We know that it is difficult to stop Academicians from presenting the research they love.

Assist. Prof. Dr. Mustafa Altun	Faculty of Education, Tishk International University
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SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

Conference Agenda
Day 1 | 23rd October

TIU	Education Building/#302	
Hour	**Event**
08:30 – 09:30	Registration
Opening Ceremony	
09:30 – 09:45	Conference Introduction
09:45 – 10:00	Plaque Awarding/ Sponsor Speech
10:00 – 10:40	Keynote Speech I: Asst. Prof. Dr. Hawraz Qader Hama- Dean of Education Faculty, University of Raparin, Iraq
10:40- 11:00	Coffee Break
11:00 – 11:40	Keynote Speech II: Dr. Meret Gurban- Dovletmammet Azadi Turkmen National Institute of World Languages, Turkmenistan
11:45 – 12:35	Concurrent Session I
12:35– 13:30	Lunch (TIU Dining Hall)

Conference Agenda
Day 2 | 24th October

Tishk International University	
Hour	**Event**
08:30 – 9:30	Registration
Opening Ceremony	
9:30 - 9:35	National Anthem
9:35- 9:40	Introducing the Conference by Dr. Venera Ulker, Head of the English Language Teaching Department, TIU
9:40- 9:45	Welcome Speech by Dr. Dogan Ozdemir, Dean of Faculty of Education – Tishk International University, Erbil, Iraq
9:45- 9:50	Promotional Video: TIU
09:50 – 09:55	Speech of the KRG Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research
09:55 – 10:00	Welcome Speech by Dr. Idris Hadi, Asst. Prof. Dr. Idris Hadi Salih – Head of the Board of Trustees of Tishk International University
10:00 – 10:05	Welcome Speech by Prof. Dr. Sultan T. Abu- President of Tishk International University
10:05 – 10:35	Keynote Speech III: Prof. Dr. Lynn Rose- Professor of History and Disability Studies, American University of Iraq, Sulaimani, Iraq
10:35– 10:50	Coffee Break
10:50 – 12:10	Keynote Speech IV (Literature): Fatima al Moufridji – Leiden University, Netherland Concurrent Session II
12:10– 13:30	Lunch (TIU DINING HALL)
13:30– 14:30	Concurrent Session III
14:30– 14:45	Coffee Break
14:45– 15:30	Closing Ceremony- Conference Hall- 302

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Enhancing Communication and Collaboration in Microteaching Through Instructional Technology

Asst. Prof. Dr. Hawraz Qader Hama, Dean of Education Faculty, College of Education, University of Raparin, Iraq

In English language teacher education programs, microteaching has been used as an effective technique to bridge theory to practice and prepare the preservice teachers for real classrooms. The potential benefits of a 15-minute microteaching are communication and collaboration among the students and supervisor and reflection on the teaching. However, in many universities in the Kurdistan region, these benefits may not be obtained easily due to some problems such as crowded classrooms and limited class time. Therefore, a web-based instructional learning environment was designed and implemented to explore how it helped the preservice teachers develop communication, collaboration, and reflection in the microteaching process. After collecting both quantitative and qualitative data from 52 preservice English language teachers (i.e. users of the intervention), the results of the data analysis revealed that the web-based instructional learning environment has been highly effective in enhancing communication, collaboration, and reflection among the preservice teachers.

Keywords: Microteaching, Instructional Technology, Preservice Teachers, Communication and Collaboration, Web-Based Learning Environment

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION
Wednesday, October 23rd 11:00 – 11:40 | HALL 302

Enhancing Quality Education (SDG4) through Quality Teacher Training: Developing In-service Teacher Training for English Education

Dr Meretguly Gurbanov
Head - Science (Research) Department and Senior Lecturer- Department of Theory and Practice of Translation, School of English Language and Literature, Dovletmammet Azadi Turkmen National Institute of World
Languages, Turkmenistan

This project directly addresses Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) – ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. This proposal is for a two-year-long in-service teacher-training program. The main purpose of this project is to advance the quality of English language instruction all around the country. Acknowledging the central role of teachers in achieving this goal, the program aims to equip them with the essential pedagogical and area-related knowledge, skills, and best practices to advance the effectiveness of English language learning among their students. This project is planned as an urgent requirement to address the specific needs of teachers. These needs will be identified through a comprehensive needs assessment conducted at the program's beginning through online platforms to increase the number of participants and to save time. The results will help to create training content and delivery methods that are directly connected to the challenges and opportunities encountered by teachers in various parts of the country. The nature of the program promotes continuous professional development (CPD) throughout the teachers' careers. While doing that, it also promotes a culture of lifelong learning, which aligns with the core principles of SDG4 and guarantees the long-term sustainability of the project's influences. By equipping teachers with the essential pedagogical tools and nurturing a culture of continuous learning, this project aims to achieve considerable developments in the quality of English language education (ELE). This will directly lead to improved learning results for students, contributing to a more inclusive and equitable education system and ultimately supporting the broader goals of SDG4.

Keywords: English language education, in-service teacher-training program, continuous professional development, Quality education, SDG4.

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KEYNOTE PRESENTATION
Thursday, October 24ᵗʰ 10:05 – 10:35 | HALL 302

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Universal Design, Education, and Community

Professor Lynn Rose
Professor of History and Disability Studies American University of Iraq, Sulaimani, Iraq

 The principles of UD (Universal Design) and UDL (Universal Design for Learning) are sensible and elegant in their common sense of including everyone in the community. Yet when we even glance at the architectural infrastructure of the built environment or the curriculum design of the learning environment, we can see that significant portions of the population are banned. Access and inaccessibility are statements of who is welcome and who is not. Just as public space was segregated in recent United States history, reflecting a culture of racism and signifying that people of color were unwelcomed, inaccessibility sends a clear message: people with disabilities are not worth including. Architects are not consciously hostile towards people who use wheelchairs when they provide stairs without ramps; teachers are not purposefully punishing students with learning disabilities when they teach in the traditional way that they have been taught to teach. Rather, society as a whole is undereducated about ability and disability. Laws exist that mandate accessibility, but it takes a determined community to enact such laws, which are presently almost completely ignored. Disabled and nondisabled people need to work together as advocates and allies to promote inclusion, and this must begin with pervasive and sustained education. A critical mass of such people who stand behind a universally designed community can be a powerful force.

Keywords: Universal Design (UD) Inaccessibility, Disability Inclusion, Advocacy and Education

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION
Thursday, October 24th 10:50 – 12:10 | HALL 302

The West Meets the Wonders of the East: Early Medieval England's Perception and Attitude Toward the Foreign Other

Fatima al Moufridji - Leiden University, Netherlands

The Wonders of the East (henceforth Wonders) is an Old English text within the Nowell Codex, a manuscript better known as the Beowulf Manuscript. The text creates a narrative of a wonderous, and dangerous East filled with immense wealth and marvelous monsters, including places such as Babylon, Persia, and Egypt. The monstrous beings listed in this text include strange animals like dog-sized ants and exploding chickens amongst many others whilst also narrating in a way that reads like a medieval Pokedex. In the *Wonders*, the East is also shown as a realm of boundless wealth in addition to being a territory brimming with monsters. For example, "The ants dig gold up from the earth […]," and the berries grown there are up to 150 feet and grow like "cende saragimmas" [curious gemstones]. This paper argues that Wonders provides insight into early medieval England's perceptions and viewpoints on the East. The creatures depicted, portrayed as vicious and even cannibalistic, offer insight into early medieval England's perspective of the foreign "other." Therefore, *Wonders* offers an interesting glimpse into how the people in Early Medieval England perceived the world outside their borders.

Keywords: Wonders of the East, Old English Text, Monstrous Beings, Medieval Perceptions, Foreign "Other"

ACCEPTED PAPERS

Classroom Management Challenges Encountered by Novice Teachers: Insights from Experienced Teachers

[1]Bandar Abdul-Qahhar Muhammed, [2]Lana Amanj Mahmood, [3]Muhammad Hidayat Ahmad & [4]Hawraz Rashad Muhammad

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Abstract

Classroom management is one of the most prominent challenges that teachers in general, particularly novice teachers, face in teaching. Classroom management means having an environment in class that is controlled by the teacher and s/he directs the whole class towards a common goal or activity. Many principles for classroom management are proposed by different people. Classroom management can be attributed to "*your attitude, intentions and personality and your relationship with the learners*" (Scrivener, 2012, p.54). The main objectives of the research are to identify some techniques and strategies that teachers use to manage their classes effectively and to shed light on the most prominent challenges in classroom management. A mixed approach of qualitative and quantitative is used to obtain experienced teachers' insights through a questionnaire which is designed and distributed to illustrate how to manage classes successfully. In addition, a semi-structured interview is conducted with novice teachers (who have less than three years of teaching experience). The most prominent findings are: that establishing rapport or healthy relations with students has a positive impact on classroom management, and using reward and punishment techniques for classroom management can set a good standard. It is concluded that for some teachers classroom management means all the students equally participate in and engage with the activities while for others it means all the students sit idly in class.

Keywords: *classroom management, motivation, rapport, reward.*

1. Introduction: Theoretical background

Maintaining control of the classroom is crucial for all teachers. Without it, students' misbehaviors will negatively impact the way of teaching and will distract other students from learning. Effectively managing the classroom enables teachers to organize, manage, and facilitate the learning process. An important part of classroom management involves "your attitude, intentions and personality and your relationship with the learners" (Scrivener, 2012, p.54). In other words, students' misbehaviors might be a result of the teachers' teaching procedures including how they conduct themselves in class.

Classroom management is everything that the teacher does and prepares to organize students, space, time, and materials so that student learning can take place (Wong and Wong, 2009). This is important because "*student perceptions of their learning environment and emotions experienced within the subject*" will result in positive performance and achievement. These perceptions include teacher enthusiasm and elaborative instructions, which will eventually boost students' enjoyment and pride of being and learning in the class (Frenzel, Pekrun & Goetz, 2007, p. 480). In brief, the psychology of the students plays a role in their management in a class. After all, a class can be managed more easily if the students have a positive outlook or perception of it.

As a teacher, you have to abide by some principles to effectively manage your class which entails ensuring a successful process of learning and teaching. The principles are building a good relationship with students, setting rules and procedures, good social relation management, constant vigilance over and monitoring of the students and fostering motivation amongst them (Goetz, et al as stated in Frenzel, Pekrun & Goetz, 2007). In other words, teachers need to create a healthy and safe environment in class and foster motivation and a sense of responsibility along with providing continuous feedback to the students to develop personally and academically.

Everyone wants to be a good and successful teacher. However, very few know the characteristics of effective teachers. Wenglinsky (2000) believed that classroom practices are important to learning. In his research, he found that what happens in the classroom is critical and that how a teacher teaches is important. Practices that promote higher-order thinking and active participation are most successful. The problem is to translate this knowledge into an acceptable evaluation procedure.

Clark (1993) pointed out that "One area that was avoided by most authors was the idea of using student achievement as a measure of effectiveness" (p. 12). Researchers appear to have taken student achievement for granted; they believe that effective teaching techniques would automatically yield positive student achievement. Only recently has research seriously begun to look at achievement data. Both Sanders (1999) and Wenglinsky (2000) asserted that teacher effectiveness is the single biggest contributor to student success. Teacher effectiveness outweighs all other factors, such as class size, socioeconomic status, and gender.

Harmer (2012) proposes eight strategies for successful Classroom Management which are creating an effective learning environment, establishing classroom procedures, creating a motivational environment, making every minute count, keeping everyone engaged, teaching life skills and good learning habits, being creative, and use project design and management techniques. In short, the strategies are about preparation and planning, creating a safe environment, and knowing about teaching and management skills. You can always learn from others' experiences. Consulting a more experienced teacher can give you a lot of options on how to manage your class more effectively.

Classroom management encompasses all the processes and procedures undertaken by a teacher to increase students' learning outcomes and improve their performance. Peace Corps states that " a *well-managed classroom increases learning because students spend more time on task … the classroom is work-oriented, but relaxed and pleasant*" (and, pp. 6-7). So, in a well-managed classroom, the students cooperate with the teacher to facilitate the learning and teaching process and make it more work-oriented.

2. Methodology

To get insights from novice teacher who has less than three years of teaching experience, a semi-structured interview is conducted with 15 novice teachers (teachers who have less than three years of teaching experience at the college level). The objective of the interview was to get their opinion about the main challenges they face in classroom management. In addition, a questionnaire is designed and the items are derived from academic sources on how to manage classes effectively. The tool used for data collection is a questionnaire designed by the researchers. The questionnaire was designed on a Likert scale, i.e. they graded the items on a scale (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree). The items are chosen based on the extensive literature review reading for the most prominent principles of classroom management proposed by other authors and researchers. In addition, we also included an open-ended question in the questionnaire in which we asked experienced teachers to identify the challenges they face when they try to manage their classes. The participants are the English language teachers of the College of Basic Education and College of Education of Salahaddin University – Erbil for the academic year 2024. Their teaching experience ranges from 10 to 25 years. They have been teaching in the English department and their insights might be for language teaching only. Furthermore, to assess the validity and reliability of the questionnaire it was shown to four university lecturers as jury members. They provided valuable notes and modifications to the questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed by using Google Form Office 2010. The link to the Google form was sent to the participants on Viber. Google Forms can analyze the data and give us charts and tables. It also gave us a list of the challenges based on the open-ended question at the end of the questionnaire.

3. Findings

The literature review and the interview with the novice teachers helped in finding some of the items for our questionnaire. The following challenges are identified for classroom management:

1. large classes: it is difficult to manage large classes because adult learning centers around helping adults find their voice. When you have about 50 students, which is the case in almost all the colleges of Salahaddin University – Erbil, it is a challenging task to manage the class easily but it is not impossible.

2. lack of facilities (technological infrastructure): To manage classrooms more effectively, teachers need to use a variety of activities that require technological support and visual aids. Lacking basic technological devices like projectors and visual aid cards is a big challenge for teachers.

3. Groupwork: As a teacher, you want to encourage students to work in small groups. However, one of the drawbacks of group work is losing control over the class. While doing group work, the teacher has to maintain a visual presence in class and monitor the group work activities closely and actively.

4. lack of cooperation with other teachers: classroom management is a difficult task and requires teachers to work together and assist each other. Nowadays, teachers are working individually most of the time and forget that if they cooperate, they can accomplish so much more. Just having another teacher with you, especially when you are doing a group work activity or any other activity, can be of great assistance for you to manage the class better.

5. students' different levels: another challenge of adult learning is the individual differences of the students. As a teacher, we have to take that into consideration when we are delivering a lecture or doing any in-class activity.

In the College of Education, the average number of students per class is (45 – 50). It is very difficult for instructors to manage their classes when they have a large number of students. The students cannot work in groups, are not given enough time to think and participate, and the gap of diversity is even more. All these have negative implications for classroom management by the teachers.

Based on the insights and responses of the participants of the questionnaire, we arrived at the following results and findings:
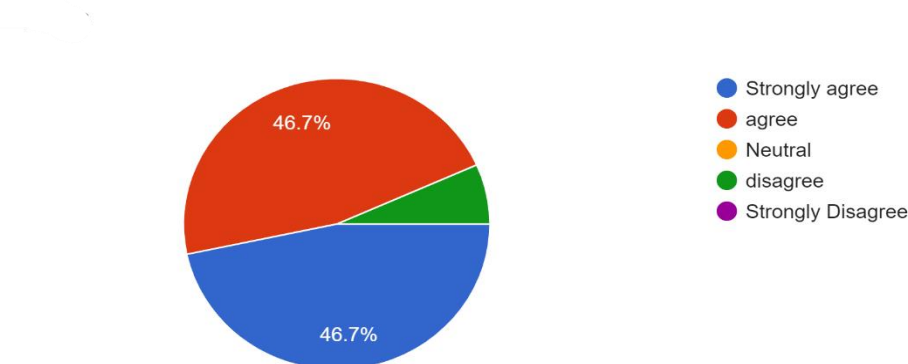

Figure 1 being friendly with students

The majority of the participants (93%) think that being friendly with students and having a good relationship with them can facilitate the management of the class. It makes sense that students respect the class more if the teacher has a strong relationship with them. However, a few of them (7% of the participants) disagree with that view and think that being friendly with students is not helpful for classroom management and even makes the students take advantage of the class and the teacher. As a teacher, you have to draw a line and know the extent to which you can befriend students. The students, on the other hand, need to recognize the lines drawn by the teacher and respect them. In short, teachers are required to keep a professional relationship with the students to arrive at better performance as students would be encouraged to participate more and perform better if they have a good relation with the teacher.

The use of communicative approach, which focuses on students' engagement and participation can help teachers manage their classes better.
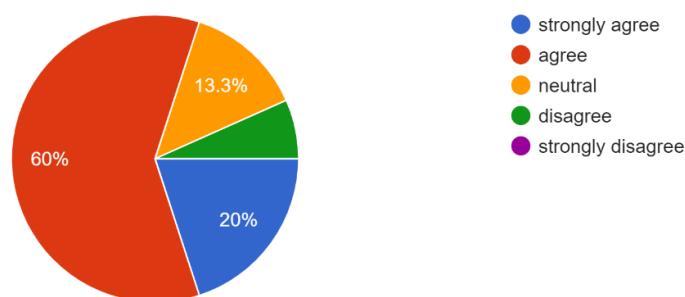
Figure 2 the use of a communicative approach

The results show that % 60 of the teachers agree with the idea that the communicative approach helps them keep students focused on the in-class activities and not give them time to be distracted. When there is nothing to do in class, the students get distracted by other small things like friends. And when two students are talking, the whole class gets distracted. As a teacher, you want your students to feel that they are part of the class. This sense of ownership makes the students feel responsible and pay attention more. However, a small percentage (about 7%) believe a communicative approach cannot help them in their classroom management. There are some modules, like grammar and syntax, that do not necessarily require students' participation that much, though it is up to the teacher to decide what technique he uses in delivering his class. In brief, the communicative approach of teaching focuses on the element of communication which requires active participation of students. The communicative approach is a useful tool; if it is used properly, it can help teachers manage students and the whole class better by engaging all the students with the in-class activities.

If you prepare well, you can manage and control your class well.
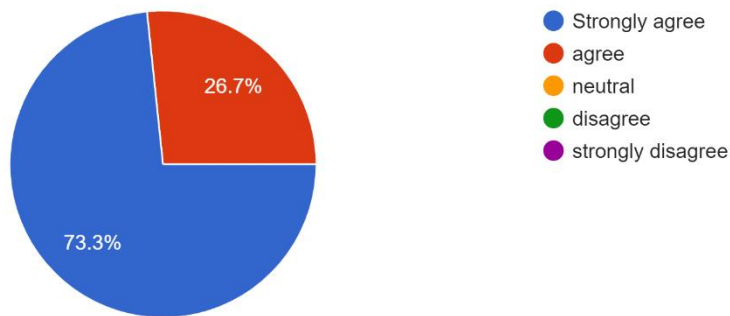
Figure 3 teachers' preparation

All the participants think that the key to successful classroom management is preparation. Preparation by the teachers means having a lesson plan that includes the objectives and activities along with a time management scheme. If teachers prepare well, the class time goes smoothly. The students will have no chance to get distracted. Preparation helps the teacher plan every detail for every minute. On the other hand, if a teacher does not prepare well, his/her classes will be chaotic and students cannot be controlled in a chaotic class. In other words, if a teacher has a clear plan for the class, it can be used as a roadmap and the students will be given a chance to be distracted.

Groupwork is one of the best techniques to get all the students engaged and keep the class under control.
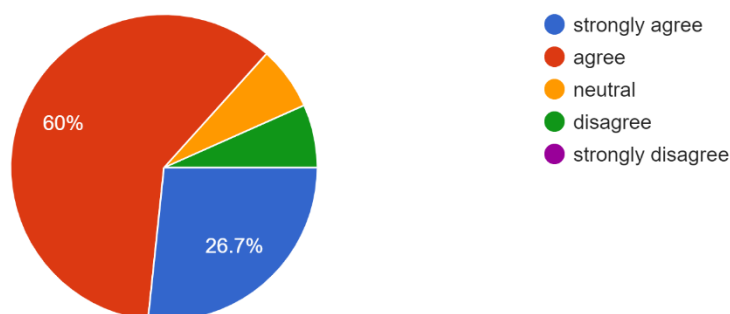
Figure 4 groupwork

Groupwork keeps the students focused and "busy" with the activities. However, the group work needs to be engaging. In other words, the teachers have to plan and prepare the activities well. As a teacher, you have to monitor the students when they are doing the group work as not all the students have the same level of knowledge and even mentality to work in a group. Group work sometimes motivates students to be undisciplined if it is not prepared well and if the students are not monitored and guided

through. That is why some teachers disagree with having group work. In brief, groupwork is a two-way street that leads to creating a controlled classroom environment if it is planned and monitored well by the teacher; or it can result in creating more disruption in class if it is used by the teacher just to kill some time in the class which is usually the case when there is no preparation or plan by the teacher.

Teachers need to build a connection and relationship with students
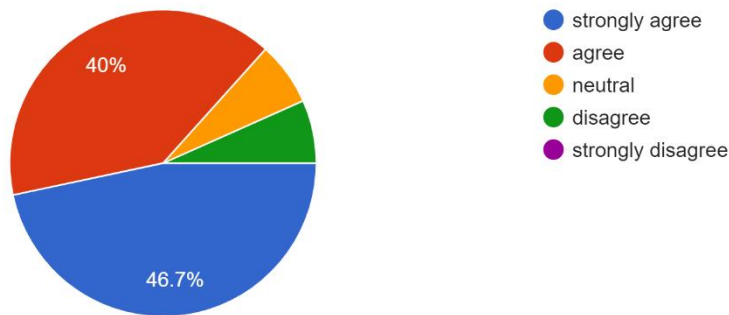
Figure 5 Maintaining a good relationship

It is always good to build a connection and relationship with the students. When there is a relationship, students try to keep and avoid the things that put that relationship in danger. However, as a student and teacher, you have to know the boundaries and try not to cross. The relationship starts with knowing the students' names and something about them. It also extends to outside the class and greetings and some light jokes. In short, teachers are required to build a rapport and relationship with students that can have a positive impact on the whole teaching and learning process.

Teachers have to reward the students who do the required tasks well to encourage others.
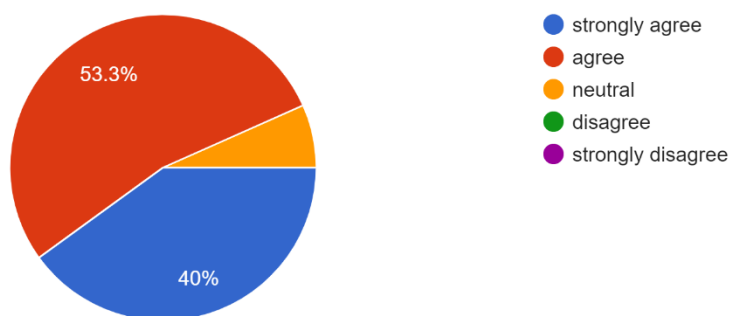
Figure 6 Rewarding and recognizing good work

You want to teach students accountability and taking responsibility. You have to lead by example. Hence, almost all the respondents believe rewards can help in classroom management. Rewarding can be giving marks, a treat, or any other thing. Verbal encouragement and support can be regarded as rewards too. In other words, rewards can take many forms varying from a verbal encouragement to physical gifts and giving extra marks to the students.

Teachers have to hold students accountable for breaking the rules (ground / punish them).
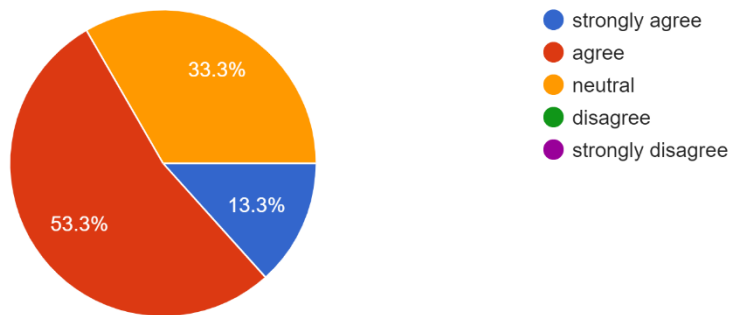
Figure 7 Punishment of misbehavior

Reward and punishment are the two sides of the same coin. When a student gets a reward for doing class activities and having good manners. The opposite is applicable too. He/she gets a punishment for bad manners and not abiding by the rules and class etiquette. However, compared to the reward, fewer respondents believe in the effectiveness of punishment. Interestingly, a third of the respondents (33.3%) were not sure of the effectiveness of the use of punishment as a technique to manage classes better.

The teachers need to give different in-class activities to accommodate for students' different learning styles.
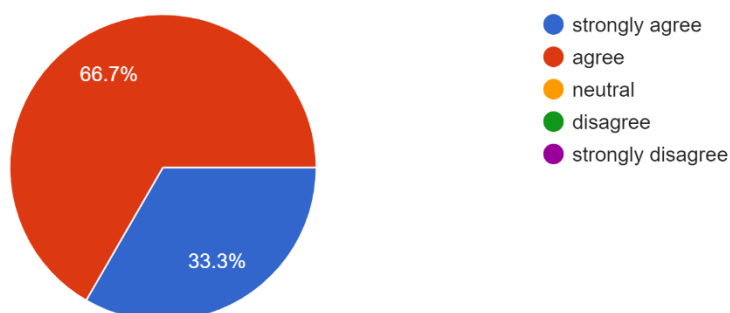
Figure 8 various in-class activities

Sometimes the class is difficult to manage because the students have different levels and different learning styles. It is always a good idea to have a variety of activities in class to keep all or almost all the students engaged in class. It is a lot of hard work for the teacher as it requires a lot of effort and time. However, the result is worth it. The class would be more engaging and the students would be more motivated.

4. Discussions:

Based on the findings of the study, creating and maintaining a good relationship with students can be a good facilitator for classroom management. Like parenting, teachers need to discipline students sometimes, especially when they are not behaving or performing as is expected. Encouragement is another key factor for effective management of a class. It can be verbal compliments, giving candy, giving extra marks, or any other way that motivates the students to do better. Another way to manage the class better is by having group work activities that require all the students to participate. However, group work requires careful planning, execution, and monitoring from the teacher.

5. Conclusions

Throughout this study, the following conclusions have been drawn:

1. Classroom management is an important component of teaching and learning. If the classroom is managed successfully, the teaching and learning process goes productively and successfully.

2. Some strategies can help teachers control and manage their classes better. One strategy is planning, which means the teacher prepares activities for the whole class period. Another strategy is building a professional rapport with the students, but the teacher needs to draw the line of the boundary and respect it. The third strategy is different in class activities.

3. Many challenges can be found that adhere to classroom management. The challenges are: large classes, having not enough time, or poor seating. Groupwork helps teachers to manage their classes, though, the fixed seats can be one of the challenges of groupwork.

4. Talking with the students and giving them rewards and punishments are always good gestures toward building a healthy rapport between the students and the teachers.

5. Classroom management is a skill that can be acquired and nurtured through observation and reading constantly about best practices to manage classes effectively.

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Effectiveness of Direct Teaching of Apology Speech Act Strategies in Improving Kurdish Students' Pragmatic Competence

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ABSTRACT

Grammar rules are essential for acquiring knowledge of any language. In the learning process, the difficult respect is the pragmatic principle of language, which brings about several challenges to language learners. Teachers should look for the most influential approach in instructing pragmatic skills to cope with this issue. To do so, the study aimed to investigate the effect of direct teaching of the apology type of speech act on the Kurdish students' development in apology strategies. A total number of 73 Kurdish students took part in a pretest, treatment, and posttest teaching that was divided into four groups. Two experimental groups of intermediate and advanced levels and two control groups of intermediate and advanced levels. To collect the data, a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) composed of ten open-ended apology discourse scenarios was used. To select the apologetic situations, social and distance status variables were employed. The results showed that direct teaching was effective in facilitating and developing apology strategies and pragmatic competence for Kurdish EFL learners in various contexts.

Keywords: Direct teaching, Apology speech act, Apologetic strategies, Pragmatic competence, Pragmatic expectation, Kurdish students

1. Introduction

Communication is specific to a certain context and dynamic in nature. It has to do with the negotiation of meaning between two or more interlocutors, who understand the scenario and also rely on pre-existing knowledge (Savignon, 1983). In other words, a person's language performance depends on the interaction between their competence and the communicative competence of others (Hymes, 1977). Language competence is classified into "organizational and pragmatic competence" (Bachman, 1990, p.87).

Organizational competence consists of information about linguistic patterns and orders of the rules to make a text. These capacities are divided into two forms: "grammatical and discourse competence". Secondly, communicative competence is classified into "illocutionary and sociolinguistic competence" (ibid)

Insufficient knowledge of vocabulary and grammar makes the speakers to be incapable of producing language functions as native speakers do. These speakers need to gain communicative competence and become conscious of not only the differences of the two languages but also the two

cultures (Rajabi, Azaizfar, and Gowhary, 2015). Hymes (1963) states that speech norms are affected by culture-specific and/or social restraints that assist speakers about "what to say", "to whom", and "under what condition". Consequently, English language pedagogy needs teachers to promote learners' "speech acts" competence in an appropriate pedagogical practice (Takahashi, 1996).

Speech acts are defined as "all the acts we perform through speaking, all the things we do when we speak" and "the interpretation and negotiations of speech acts are dependent on the discourse or contexts." Since a speech act is an expression aimed at achieving the goal of communication, speakers' use is to fulfill communicative purposes Schmidt and Richards (1980, cited in Istifçi, 2009, p.19). So, it is pivotal for EFL learners to know the way speech act sets are produced both in native and non-native languages. Speech acts as "functions" of language, comprising, for example "complaining, thanking, requesting, apologizing, refusing, and inviting" (ibid). There are many more types of speech acts: other examples are predicting, speculating, commanding, etc.

When the speakers' behavior fails to comply with the social norms, the act of apology emerges. Therefore, when an action or expression has resulted from some sort of wrongdoing, the act of apologizing is greatly needed to set things right (Eslami-Rasekh and Mardani, 2010). Leech (1983) argues that the speech act of apology is a noteworthy aid after committing an offense to put back the relationship between participants. The act of apologizing normally needs the presence of two parties who are usually the person who apologizes (apologizer) and the other who receives the apology (apologizee). As a result, it seems essential for teachers to draw the learners' utmost attention to apology speech act rules to let them be qualified in employing apologetic strategies (Rajabi, Azizifar, and Gowhary, 2015). This could be carried out in many ways; chief among is explicit teaching of the aforementioned strategies. In so doing, the current study is aiming to explore the impact of direct teaching of the apology speech act strategies on Kurdish EFL students' pragmatic competence. Therefore, it attempts to answer the following research question.

- Does explicit instruction of the apology type of speech act affect EFL students' pragmatic competence?

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Theoretical Background

Pragmatic competence is a complex term and has many definitions; it is not easy to define (Levinson, 1983). This term mostly refers to the utilization of language in various communication contexts, especially the connection between sentence patterns, situations, and contexts where they are utilized (Mohammed, 2012, p.23). Pragmatics is the speaker's intended meaning (Yule, 1996). It is the study of language users' ability to match a set of utterances with the situation in which they

are suitable (Levinson, 1983). Similarly, Jaszczolt (2002) believes that pragmatics covers the way recipients add on contextual knowledge to the semantic form and how they infer from what is uttered.

The ability of learners to catch the main ideas of what a speaker utters in real communication is known as communicative competence in language pedagogy (Terrell, 1977, p.326). Communicative competence also involves the ability of learners to transmit the main points of their messages adequately to the context of their messages. Tateyama (2001) asserts that instruction is beneficial in the field of pragmatics. For learners who are eager to learn and put into practice the new structures and patterns of communication, classrooms are one of the safe settings. Thus, the learners can participate in the communication and broaden their insights and horizons about the language, culture, and its users.

The appropriate application of speech acts is an indivisible part of pragmatic competence. John L. Austin presented the theory of speech acts in 1962 to refer to the entire context of utterance. He further states that the speech acts theory is not solely used to say things but to perform actions as well. Austin (1962, p.5) divides the utterances into "performative vs. constatives". The former is neither "describe[s]", "report[s]" nor confesses anything and is not correct or incorrect. The latter is a sentence that can be judged in terms of truth in the sense that does not cause actions (Aydin, 2013). Language is used as a medium for using speech act in fulfilling actions. Searle (1976, p.67) systematized Austin's theory and came up with his speech act theory that classified illocutionary speech acts into five categories: "Representatives 'which commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition (paradigm cases: asserting, concluding, etc)' (Searle 1976 as cited in Álvarez, 2005: 696). An example is 'Passengers are hereby advised that the train will be late' (Searle, 1976, p.67). Directives 'which are attempts by the speaker to get the addressee to do something (paradigm cases: requesting, questioning). (Searle 1976 as cited in Álvarez, 2005: 696). To exemplify, 'I order you to leave' (Searle, 1976, p.67). Commissives 'which commit the speaker to some future course of action (paradigm cases: promising, threatening, offering)' (Searle 1976 as cited in Álvarez, 2005: 696) For instance, 'I promise to pay you the money' (Searle, 1976, p.67). Expressives that express a psychological state (paradigm cases: thanking, apologizing, welcoming, congratulating) (Searle 1976 as cited in Álvarez, 2005: 696). For example, 'I apologize for stepping on your toe.' (Searle, 1976, p.67), and Declaratives 'which effect immediate changes in the institutional state of affairs and which tend to rely on elaborate extra-linguistic institutions (paradigm cases: excommunicating, declaring war, christening, firing from employment).' (Searle 1976 as cited in Álvarez, 2005: 696). An example is 'I call him a liar' (Searle, 1976, p.67).

Apology is an expressive speech act that seems difficult for EFL learners' appropriate use. Apology has been defined differently by different scholars. For example, Olshtain and Cohen (1983) found apology as a social act and they thought that its use is when social norms are being violated. Some scholars refrain from the meaning of apology. For example, Owen (1983) restricts the meaning of apology only to expressions such as "sorry" and "I apologize". For Goffman (1967) apologizing is a sort of "remedy". In his study, Holmes (1995) revealed similarities and differences in the way genders perform apologies. Majeed and Janjua (2014) found that in contrast to males, females seem more aware of their face-saving and utilize less hazardous strategies with their family members and friends. Both genders use the same kind of strategies on formal occasions.

Suszczynska (1999) states that speech act theory categorizes and specifies apology patterns on the bases of the felicity conditions that comprises of a verb of apologetic performance and an utterance of remorse. Additionally, apology is related to concurrent functions it may serve. For instance, it can be regarded as a rectifying word used to cure an existing offense to keep up or bring back ruined social harmony (Goffman, 1971) or it is a negative politeness strategy that signifies the speaker's unwillingness to influence the hearer's negative face to preserve the receiver's honor (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.187). Apology is classified into seven prototypical and diverse types of strategies to perform norms of apologizing which are the outcomes of cross-cultural diversities (Blum-Kulak, House, & Kasper, 1989.p.9). To conclude, apologies are of several taxonomies, yet; the linguistic expression of apologies is language-culture specific. Many studies have been done about learners' usage of apology strategies in EFL settings. Here is the review of some of those studies.

2.2 Previous Studies

There was a socio-pragmatic study to investigate the apology speech act pattern realization in the Persian language, in which a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) questionnaire of 10 fixed discourse scenarios was used to gather the intended data. The respondents were 100 native Persian university students of equal males and females. The study found that similar to other languages, apologies in Persian are formulaic in pragmatic structure. The apology formula mostly used in Persian was the Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID). Also, the findings revealed that there is a relationship between the apology intensifiers of social distance and power (Afghari, 2007). In addition, the result of a study to explore the use of apologies in the cross-culture of Persian and English-British accents carried out by (Chamani and Zareipur, 2010) showed that although English and Persian interlocutors use a fairly similar range of apology strategies, they were significantly different in their preferences. Another study about the use of apology as an expressive type of speech act by Iraqi EFL students was conducted by Mayuuf and Asi (2013). Two groups of participants were recruited. The study

aimed to explore the extent to which these two groups are similar and different in the speech act of apology realization. To this end, two classes of forty foreign language students were recruited among whom 20 were in the level of intermediate and the other half in the level of advanced along with 5 English teachers whose native language was English. The study was conducted at Babylon iBT TOEFL Center. To gather the intended data, 8 apology scenarios were used through a Discourse Completion Test. The participants had been asked to take a placement test and based on their results were assigned to two different proficiency levels. The data were analyzed and the frequencies were driven to compare the groups. The results indicated that in some states the participants in the advanced level used apologies as native speakers did and more than the intermediate group. Both groups were similar in the use of formulas in some conditions, yet different from native speakers. It also revealed that the subjects' native language interference affected their use of apologies.

In another study, Istifçi (2009) studied the extent to which apology type of speech act is used with the sample of an intermediate level class of 20 learners, one advanced English proficiency level class of 20 EFL learners, and 5 English native speakers. The collected data were from DCT composed of eight apology scenarios. According to the obtained results from her study, she claimed that there are similarities and differences between the two groups. The participants' native language had effects on the use of apologies, for the most part, the intermediate-level group of subjects transferred Turkish speaker norms in English.

Discovering the impact of instructing apology strategies with a special emphasis on intensifying ones was a study carried out by Eslami-Rasekh and Mardani (2010) in which sixty subjects participated who were homogenized and grouped into explicit and implicit apology teaching strategies. The results demonstrated that the participants in the group of the direct teaching of apology strategy outperformed the other group, and also, the results indicated that the subjects who got direct instruction of apology strategy used intensifiers more properly in comparison to the subjects without direct apology strategy instruction.

2.3 The Problem Statement

The existing literature on language pedagogy is not evident in the adequate and appropriate use of linguistic competency. Not only linguistic competence and grammatical ''knowledge'', but also socio-pragmatic principles of language are prerequisites for effective communication. The acquisition of the socio-pragmatic aspect of language may be done by contacting native users of English for example, in immersion or exchange programs, but not all students have access to such programs. This study aims to explore the impact of direct teaching of apology strategies on Kurdish students' pragmatic skill development.

3. Methodology

3.1 Design of the Research

The current study was designed around the quantitative method of research. The quantitative approach as stated by Robinson (1981) followed a pretest-posttest experimental design.

3.2 Participants and Setting

This study takes 73 male and female Kurdish EFL undergraduates who were third-year students of two large classes. A convenience sample was used as there were only those numbers of people available for the study (Best & Kahn, 2006) who participated voluntarily. They signed a consent form to participate in their will. They were divided into four smaller classes of 18-19 students each per class at the Department of English Language-Faculty of Education prior to exposing to any test performance whose ages were between 20-23 years old. Gender and age were not considered as a variable. The classes were classified into two experimental and two control groups. They took part in the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) which was taken from (Allan, 2004) at the beginning of the term. The analysis of the OPT demonstrated that two of the students must be expelled from the study as their test scores were below the standards of the OPT scores. Depending on the results of the test, two classes were assigned as intermediate and the other two were as advanced levels who were native users of Kurdish. The research was conducted in the second semester of the academic year (2023-2024).

3.3 Tools and Data Collection

3.3.1 Tools

The two instruments used for the collected data were a verified test "Oxford Placement Test" by Oxford University (Allan, 2004). "Discourse Completion Test" as pre and post-tests in the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Patterns Project (CCSARP) by (Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper, 1989). Although the DCT is not appropriate for studying actual language use, it can supply interesting and informative results (Golato, 2003). The OPT tool helps teachers to know the right place and proficiency level of students at the beginning of the course (Rajabi et al, 2015, p.53). At the start of the study, a DCT was utilized as a pre-test, which consists of a set of defined situations to extract particular speech acts (Varghese and Billmyer, 1996).

3.3.2 Data Collection

The researchers adopted pre-test, treatment, and post-test as the procedure of data collection. In the first place, OPT was administered to 75 learners of two classes at the Department of English Language-Faculty of Education at Koya University. The rest of the students were assigned to the control and experimental groups. To lay out the equivalency of both groups in terms of proficiency before the main phase of the research, i.e., the experimental, comparability of both groups was extracted through comparing the pretest mean scores that shows there was no statistically significant difference between the groups. The DCT contains 10 scenarios that provided participants the chance

to record their speech act preferences at the beginning and at the end of the course in the pre and post-tests. While the control group did not get any treatment, the experimental group received treatment on the speech acts of apology for a total amount of 50 minutes, with 10 minutes allocated for teaching each one, in 24 lectures. The data were collected from an advanced conversation course that the same teacher taught for both groups. While the control group was presented with instruction without any supplementary materials, the experimental one was presented with supplementary teaching activities about the way and the time to use apology speech acts appropriately. Except for the treatment, both groups had the same conditions. Having done with the treatment, both groups took a posttest, yet different scenarios in order to measure expected changes how they use those strategies. Farahian, Razaee, and Gholami's (2012) scoring criterion was used to code and score the data. A four Point Likert Scale for scoring was adopted. The scale of 4 represents 'absolutely appropriate', the scale of 3 indicates 'mostly appropriate', the scale of 2 refers to 'generally appropriate', and the scale of 1 resembles 'completely inappropriate'. The gathered data were coded and entered into (the Statistical Package of Social Sciences) SPSS (version 26) for analysis. To accomplish the aim of the study, not only descriptive but inferential statistics was utilized to analyze the collected data.

4. Results

The primary goal of the study was to find out the effectiveness of direct teaching of the apology speech act strategies in the pragmatic competence development of Kurdish students. In so doing, the collected data were analyzed and interpreted as presented in the inferential statistics in the tables.

Table 1 Pre-test mean score of the intermediate-level control and experimental groups

Percentages

	Scenarios	*(1)*	*(2)*	*(3)*	*(4)*	*Mean*	*Std. Deviation*
Control/ Intermediate	Scenario 1	6.0	83.0	11.0	0	2.06	0.417
	Scenario 2	67.0	33.0	0	0	1.4	0.486
	Scenario 3	28.0	59.8	5.5	5.6	1.9	0.759
	Scenario 4	78.0	22.0	0	0	1.3	0.428
	Scenario 5	6.0	83.0	11.0	0	2.06	0.417
Experimental/ Intermediate	Scenario 1	11.0	74.0	15.0	0	2.05	0.511
	Scenario 2	66.0	34.0	0	0	1.4	0.490
	Scenario 3	25.9	69.1	5.0	0	1.80	0.524
	Scenario 4	80.4	19.6	0	0	1.20	0.411
	Scenario 5	27.8	61.1	5.5	5.6	1.9	0.759

As descriptive statistics shows in Table 1, the control group's performance in the apology speech act, the mean for the first, second, third, fourth, and fifth scenario is (2.06), (1.4), (1.9), (1.3), and (2.06) respectively. The experimental group's performance in apology speech act mean for the first, second, third, fourth and fifth scenario is (2.05), (1.4), (1.80), (1.20), and (1.9). This result indicates that there is no statistical significant difference in the mean scores of both the control and experimental groups at the intermediate level. That is, the mean scores between the two groups were not very much different from one the other.

Table 2 Pretest mean scores of advanced level of both groups

Percentages

	Scenarios	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Control/ Advanced	Scenario1	12.0	64.4	23.6	0	2.2	0.601
	Scenario2	47.2	35.0	6.0	11.8	1.82	1.015
	Scenario3	10.9	77.2	11.9	0	2.00	0.501
	Scenario4	64.5	23.6	5.9	6.0	1.52	0.875
	Scenario5	11.8	76.5	11.8	0	2.00	0.501
Experimental/ Advanced	Scenario1	5.8	55.0	22.8	16.4	2.50	0.858
	Scenario2	32.2	45.6	16.33	5.9	1.94	0.873
	Scenario3	11.3	61.9	26.7	0	2.2	0.619
	Scenario4	65.7	17.6	0	16.7	1.7	1.138
	Scenario5	11.1	61.1	27.8	0	2.2	0.619

The achieved result demonstrates no difference in the means of the two groups at an advanced level. In other words, the mean scores between the two groups were not much different. Yet, the means of inferential statistics should detect it as in Table 3.

Table 3 Independent samples T-test of pre-test of intermediate and advanced level groups

t-test for equality of means

	Mean Differences	Std. Error Differences	95% confidence interval of the differences		*t*	*df*	*Sig. (2) tailed*
			Lower	Upper			
Intermediate/ Control	-.026	0.081	-.192	0.142	-.302	36	0.762
Advanced/Experimental	.158	0.200	-.250	0.565	0.787	33	0.438

Table 3 shows that the p-values are higher than (α .05). The p-value is equal to 0.762 for the intermediate level and it is equal to (0.438) for the advanced level. Thus, at both levels, there is no significant difference in the pretests of both groups. This result shows that both groups had almost the same knowledge of apology speech acts at the beginning of the course.

Table 4 Post-test mean scores of both groups at intermediate levels

Percentages

	Scenarios	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Control/Intermediate Level	Scenario1	17.0	72.0	11.0	0	1.94	0.540
	Scenario2	32.2	67.8	0	0	1.7	0.490
	Scenario3	10.8	82.4	5.8	0	1.94	0.417
	Scenario4	62.1	37.9	0	0	1.4	0.502
	Scenario5	16.6	72.3	11.1	0	1.7	0.486
Experimental/ Intermediate level	Scenario1	7.0	19.4	63.6	9.9	3.05	0.945
	Scenario2	4.0	70.1	20.4	5.5	2.4	0.671
	Scenario3	0	36.0	44.0	20.0	2.85	0.746
	Scenario4	4.0	81.0	15.0	0	2.10	0.448
	Scenario5	7.0	19.4	63.6	9.9	3.05	0.945

As it can be seen in the above table, the descriptive statistics show that the mean scores for all scenarios role played by the control group at the intermediate level are 1.94, 1.7, 1.94, 1.4, and

1.7 respectively. The mean scores for all scenarios performed by the experimental group at the posttest are 3.05, 2.4, 2.85, 2.10, and 3.05 which indicates a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of both the control and experimental groups at the intermediate levels.

Table 5 Post-test mean scores of advanced levels at both groups

Percentages

Speech acts	Scenarios	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Control/ advanced level	Scenario1	10.5	58.7	30.8	0	2.2	0.636
	Scenario2	30.0	65.0	5.0	0	1.76	0.563
	Scenario3	16.9	76.6	6.5	0	1.9	0.486
	Scenario4	46.5	53.5	0	0	1.52	0.515
	Scenario5	46.5	53.5	0	0	1.52	0.515
Experimental/ advanced level	Scenario1	4.5	21.8	55.9	17.8	3.85	0.803
	Scenario2	6.4	34.2	52.4	7.0	2.72	0.895
	Scenario3	0	28.1	51.1	20.8	2.94	0.726
	Scenario4	0	56.6	43.4	0	2.5	0.512
	Scenario5	0	56.6	43.4	0	2.5	0.512

Table 5 illustrates that the means for all scenarios are 2.2, 1.76, 1.9, 1.52, and 1.52 in performing the apology type of speech act at the posttest by the control group at the advanced level. Additionally, the mean for scenarios 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 are 3.85, 2.72, 2.94, 2.5, and 2.5 for the experimental group at an advanced level. This result demonstrates a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of both the control and experimental groups at the advanced levels.

Table 6 Post-test mean scores of groups at both levels

t-test for equality of means

	Mean Differences	Std. Error Differences	95% confidence interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig (2-tailed)
			Lower	Upper			
Intermediate	0.852	0.111	0.621	1.081	7.545	35	0.001

Advanced	0.866	0.098	0.661	1.069	8.67	32	0.001

The post-test results of both the control and experimental groups at intermediate and advanced levels revealed that there were significant in their performance of apology type of speech act as the p-values are not higher than the alpha (α .05). The differences are considered significant.

Table 7 Paired Samples T-test of pre- post-test of both groups at intermediate and advanced levels

Groups		Mean	Paired Differences		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	$df.$	sig. (2 tailed)
			Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper			
Control/ Int.	Pre-post	-.110	0.287	0.067	-.253	0.031	-1.640	17	0.120
Experimental/ Int.	Pre-post	-.986	0.546	0.122	-1.24	-.73	-8.073	19	0.0001
Control/ Adv.	Pre-post	.028	0.440	0.106	-.197	0.256	.274	16	0.788
Experiment/ Adv.	Pre-post	-.721	0.527	0.124	-.984	-.45	-5.804	17	0.0001

As it is evident from table 7, a paired samples t-test is done to compare the pre-and post-test mean scores of groups. The results of the pre-posttests at both levels of control groups show that there is no significant difference because the p-value is higher than (α .05). It is apparent that there is a significant difference between the post-and pre-tests at both levels of experimental groups because the p=.0000

is lower than (α .05). It can be inferred that there is development in the experimental groups' pragmatic competence after taking the treatment.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The goal of the research was to explore the effectiveness of direct teaching of many apology strategies in Kurdish students' pragmatic development. While both the control and experimental groups had equal levels of competency in the analysis of the pre-tests, the post-test analysis showed some differences. The control group post-test analysis did not indicate a meaningful difference regarding the apology type of speech act in comparison to the pretest results. These results showed that students in the experimental group who experienced direct instruction of apology strategy demonstrated higher performance in contrast to the other group. This result confirms the result obtained in the study by Eslami-Rasekh and Mardani (2010) which indicated that the participants in the direct teaching of apology strategy group outperformed the implicit group. These results may be beneficial for EFL teachers in the sense that the findings encourage them to furnish learners with as much knowledge as necessary in pragmatic principles so that their learners do not deliver messages unaware. It is recommended that gender variables and the first language interference should be considered in conducting further studies.

6. Pedagogical Implications

The findings, on the one hand, suggest to language teachers to incorporate activities that lead to promote their students' pragmatic skill awareness and on the other hand, work for raising their own consciousness of behavioral norms and cultural practices of the foreign or second language. Moreover, students should take courses in the manner of appropriately performing various speech acts in different social contexts. The implicit instruction of the apology speech act strategy as a crucial aspect of linguistics should not be forgotten and neglected in the EFL classes. It is also suggested to examine the respondents' performance in a certain speech act using more than 10 speech scenarios.

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Optimizing Classroom Dynamics: Strategies for the Effective Management of Student Behavior

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Abstract

Classroom dynamics as an interplay of multiple variables within a classroom setting, significantly influences the overall school environment, quality of education, and the overall teaching and learning effectiveness. This is why it is necessary to look closer at what influences classroom dynamics the most - misbehavior problems: inside and outside a classroom, how to prevent them, deal with them, and what strategies to apply. The purpose of this study was to reveal the most common types of misbehavior teachers face in classrooms in Erbil city, Kurdistan Region, Iraq, and provide recommendations for educators with a comprehensive list of strategies for misbehavior management in a classroom. To achieve this, a survey was designed and distributed among teachers from schools, universities, and institutes in Erbil. The results show that, first, classroom environment and teachers have a profound impact on classroom dynamics. Second: the most common type of student misbehavior is punctuality; however, teachers also face other misbehavior problems such as talking out of turn and being out of task. This research is expected to be particularly useful for teachers, school principals, and researchers.

Keywords: Classroom Management, Classroom Dynamics, Misbehavior

1. Introduction

1.1 Background Information

Students are the main characters of the learning process, inside and outside of the classroom. This is why lecturers make every effort to improve student's learning experiences, regardless of their age, level, gender, culture, and beliefs. Sometimes, students misbehave in the classroom, which is quite natural, especially in primary, secondary, and high school. However, misbehavior of university students in the classroom is not an expected condition and is considered unnatural, as they are supposed to be mature and old enough to understand how to behave in a different environment, especially in the classes and settings. Unfortunately, university students' misbehavior still can be observed in the classes. This might be because of the lack of training in earlier stages, especially in the schools, school teachers not being able to provide enough opportunities for their students to master their behavior to get ready for their adulthood, and the general environment where the students are

brought up. This is why university lecturers and all other educators should know how to react in case of misconduct to control the class and to avoid conflicts.

There also can be cases of misbehavior that need to be investigated by the disciplinary committee of the educational institution. This is why it is crucial to know how to manage students' misbehavior and the institutional regulations in case of disciplinary issues. In testimony to this, the lecturer teacher, before showing any sudden reactions, must understand the case and know the students well enough to treat them properly because there might be a student with exceptional circumstances that need a specific approach. Otherwise, in trying to solve the problem, the educator can worsen the situation and cause psychological or physical damage. Furthermore, students must be adequately treated to prevent damaging the teacher and students' relationship.

In conclusion, Classroom dynamics whether it is in university or schools refer to the interactions, relationships, and general classroom environment. It includes how students talk to one another, their teachers, and the subject matter. Several factors, including communication styles, group dynamics, teacher-student relationship relationships, and the classroom environment influence this. Effective classroom dynamics encourage active learning, cooperation, and a positive learning atmosphere. Classroom environment - A classroom's physical, social, and emotional climate is called its environment. It includes details like the room layout, seating configurations, lighting, temperature, and classroom materials. Furthermore, social interactions among students and the connection between students and the instructor influence the classroom atmosphere. A healthy classroom atmosphere promotes student involvement, cooperation, and learning.

1.2 Problem Statement

Nowadays, in Kurdistan Region Universities and schools, a range of common misbehavior is frequently observed, adversely impacting the educational process and classroom environment.

Firstly, there are serious issues concerning punctuality. Students often arrive late to classes, disrupting the flow of learning and negatively affecting the effectiveness of the educational session. Secondly, the lecturers often face a lack of the expertise to deal with students in various situations. Thirdly, the lecturer sometimes is not able to choose the right technique/s to reduce misbehavior. If the teaching process is not in a way that the students are satisfied with or engaged with the class, there will be a lot of chaos and misbehavior issues caused by the ill classroom dynamics.

Furthermore, the selection of this topic was motivated by a university candidate. Throughout three and a half years of studying, it was observed that interaction between student-student and student-teacher relationships has a significantly negative impact on students, teachers, and the learning process, both within and beyond the university environment. It is expected that this research

will help improve the training of future educators and act as a guide for students completing graduation research projects in the future who may want to delve deeper into this crucial area of study.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions lead this research:

1. What are the types of students' misbehavior in the classroom?

2. What strategies/tips and techniques can be used to manage student's behavior in the classroom?

3. What is the most common type of behavior in a classroom in Erbil, Kurdistan?

4. What resources do teachers prefer to improve their classroom management?

1.4 Aim of The Research

The purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the most common types of misbehavior in classrooms in Erbil City, Kurdistan. Understanding these common behavioral difficulties will help the study establish a comprehensive set of strategies and approaches that teachers may utilize to effectively control student conduct; The ultimate goal is to provide educators with practical methods for classroom dynamics improving the learning environment and increasing student engagement and academic performance.

1.5 Methods of Research

A mixed method is used in the study. A survey was designed based on the literature review, piloted, improved, and then applied via Google Forms. Eighty teachers from different educational institutions.

1.6 Significance of The Study (Theoretical and Practical Value)

This study will help current and future teachers to use techniques that encourage students to behave appropriately in the classroom and deal effectively with classroom problems when they occur. Furthermore, this research is believed to be helpful for other research students of the faculty ` of education, teachers, and pre-service teachers.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Classroom Dynamics

Classroom dynamics significantly influence the learning environment in educational settings. These dynamics include the interactions, relationships, and behaviors of students, instructors, and the entire class structure. Understanding classroom dynamics is critical to effective teaching and excellent learning results.
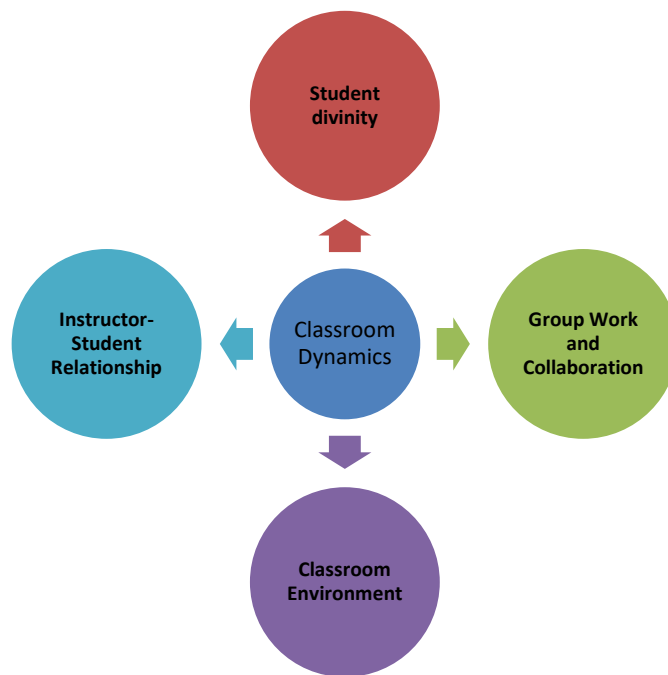
Figure 2.1 Factors influencing classroom dynamics.

According to Smith & Johnson (2022), there are several factors contributing to the dynamics within a classroom (Figure 2.1). The first factor is student variety which focuses on the differences in ethics/cultural backgrounds, learning styles, and talents, the aggregate of which significantly affect classroom relationships. Second, group work and collaboration are related to the activities that foster collaboration, such as projects or conversations, significantly influencing, which are related to the activities that foster collaboration, such as projects or conversations, significantly influencing group dynamics (García & Lee, 2023). Third, the classroom environment deals with the physical layout, seating arrangements, and classroom resources that impact interactions (Brown, 2020).

According to some other scholars establishing the classroom layout requires teachers to be able to plan and run their spaces such that both teachers and students can be creative and feel comfortable while learning there. For instance, how to set up chairs and desks, where to put whiteboards, where to put teachers' desks, and even how to decorate the classroom—all of which need to be tidy.

2.2 Influence of Stakeholders on Classroom Dynamics
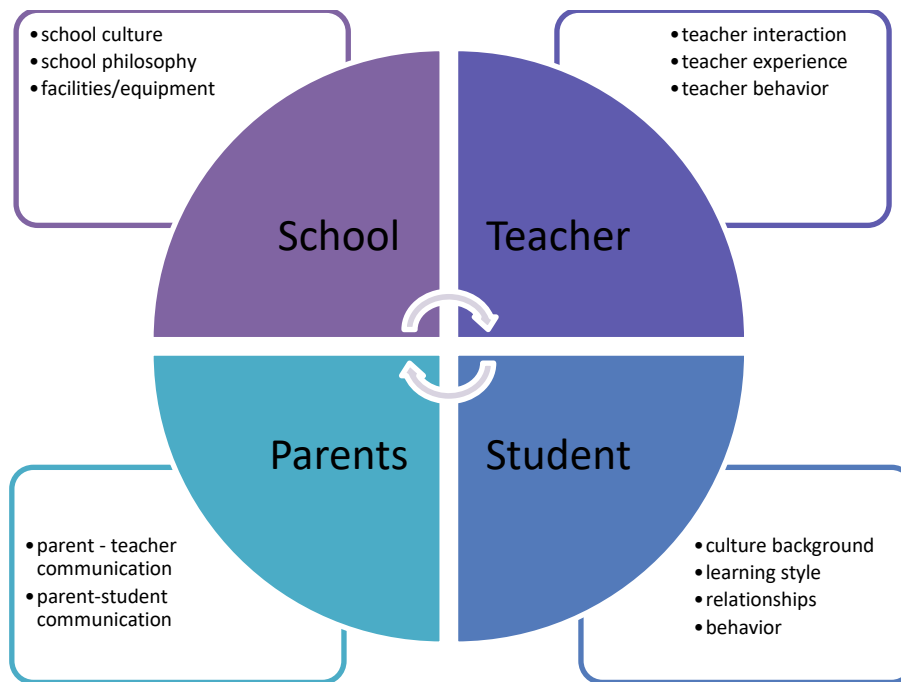

Figure 2.2 The influence of the stakeholders on the classroom dynamics

It is important to understand students' characters, preferences, purpose of being in the class, their characteristics, preferences for being in the class, students' characteristics, preferences, purpose in class, learning styles, etc. According to Chadha (2008), if the teacher knows their students well, there are better chances to promote the achievement of the students' learning goals. Thus, it is highly recommended to spend some time at the beginning of the term/year to get to know students closer to develop the course materials, methods of teaching, and management techniques suitable for the group (Chadha, 2008).

Furthermore (see Figure 2.2, p.16), the researcher influences the stakeholders in classroom dynamics, which include schools, teachers, parents, and students. Schools should focus on school culture, school philosophy, and facilities/equipment. Teachers should focus on teacher-student-parent contracts between parents-teacher contracts, parents-teacher contracts, parents-teacher contracts, and parents-teacher agreements between parents and teachers and Students. Students should focus on culture has an advantageous effect on improving teacher-student-parent interaction, teaching experience, instruction, etc. Parents should focus on the contract between parents and teachers. Students should focus on cultural background, learning style, relationships, and behavior. All of those have an advantageous effect on improving the influence of stakeholders on classroom dynamics; for

example, Stronger teacher-student relationships and higher student achievement are observed in schools that prioritize a strong sense of community and invest in contemporary teaching resources.

2.2.1 Schools

Smith Johnson 2022 and Brown, 2020 underline that schools serve as Johnson 2022 and Brown, 2020 emphasize that schools are the primary setting for classroom interactions. A recent study focuses on the following aspects: Organizational Culture and Resource Allocations. Classroom connections are influenced by the school culture, values, policies, policies, and philosophy. a school that emphasizes inclusivity and student participation to create an environment where every student feels accepted and involved, which will help build strong connections and mutual respect. For example, a school that emphasizes inclusivity and student creates beneficial relationships between the students, teachers, and parents' participation school that emphasizes inclusivity and student participation creates beneficial relationships between the students, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders. Schools that provide enough facilities, technology, and support services foster a positive learning environment. Fair resource distribution enhances classroom experiences.

2.2.2 Teachers

Ghafapour and Moinzadeh (2020) underline that teachers play a vital role in shaping classroom dynamics, and teacher-related factors: Interpersonal interaction, or how teachers interact with their students, significantly impacts the classroom atmosphere. Experienced teachers exhibit predictable and consistent behavior, resulting in a stable classroom environment. Novice instructors' interactions may be more dispersed and entropic. Effective classroom management practices have a beneficial effect on dynamics. Teachers who respond promptly to interruptions, changes, teaching/learning trends, etc., maintain a positive learning environment. Teachers can effectively maintain student attention spans and design learning experiences that align with the targeted learning outcomes. This can significantly reduce student misbehavior when combined with positive student-teacher connections.

2.2.3 Parents

Lee Kim (2022) proves that parental participation goes beyond home and life and affects classroom dynamics. Regular contact between parents and teachers fosters a collaborative environment. Parent-teacher interactions boost student engagement and motivation. Parents' expectations for their children's education influence student behavior. Thus, dynamics improve when parents embrace learning and agree to classroom rules.

2.2.4 Students

Johnson (2022) and Ghafapour and Moinzadeh (2019) believe that each student contributes uniquely to the classroom ecosystem. Students' diverse cultural backgrounds, learning styles, and abilities

enrich relationships. Acknowledging and valuing diversity enhances classroom dynamics. Student motivation influences their participation and engagement. Positive relationships with teachers result in improved overall motivation.

To summarize, a comprehensive understanding of classroom dynamics requires acknowledging the linked responsibilities of schools, instructors, parents, and individual students. Educators may build an ideal learning environment by encouraging pleasant relationships and considering these stakeholders.

2.3 Students' Behavior/Misbehavior

There are diverse types of misbehavior that students can show during the lessons or outside the class. The researcher has developed a table (Table 2.1) to demonstrate the most common types of misbehavior, sample reasons, and recommended strategies for managing them.

Table 2.1. Types of Students' Misbehavior

No	Types	Description	Reasons	Strategies
1.	**Lying** (Tiwari, ResearchGate, 2014)	Refers to the deliberate act of sharing incorrect information or deceiving people during academic instruction.	➢ Not performing the task on time ➢ Not attending the classes ➢ Psychological disorder ➢ Fear	Appointing monitors. Searching for the roots of the problem: psychology, fear, bullying, etc.
2.	**Talking** (Tiwari, ResearchGate, 2014)	Talking badly or negatively with teachers/students during class does not contribute to a pleasant learning environment.	➢ Teachers' unwillingness to acknowledge students' enthusiasm in attending class. ➢ Not interesting topic ➢ Students' knowledge about the topic/subject	Asking questions to inattentive students. Properly planning the lesson so the students are busy working on assignments/tasks during the lesson.

3.	**Inattentiveness** (Tiwari, ResearchGate, 2014)	Refers to a lack of attention or engagement while lessons.	Students are not happy with their teachers' teaching methods, leading to a decrease in attention.	Providing positive reinforcement to students for following class rules/appointing monitors.
4.	**Arguing** (Tiwari, ResearchGate, 2014)	Discussion with tension between people – students to students or between student/s and teacher. Arguing in class can be disruptive and insulting to fellow learners. It can create tension and divert attention away from the goals of the course.	Students' impatience and ego-driven behavior frequently result in fights.	Giving clear instructions. Letting the students to 'cool down' then search for resolution, agreement, etc.
5.	**Shouting** (Tiwari, ResearchGate, 2014)	Raising voice insulting others. Shouting in education is not useful and destructive because it affects learning and disrupts the classroom atmosphere.	➢ Conflict with another student/s and/or teacher ➢ Health issues	Engaging teaching approaches e.g., active listening and clear communication.
6.	**Punctuality** (Alam, 2013)	Coming to class late and leaving early, and completing assignments after the deadline.	➢ Students struggled with timeliness and time management due to personal factors. ➢ peer influence. ➢ parental ignorance.	Creating a clear and streak policy. Reward and punishment strategies.

#				
			➢ unappealing class lectures. ➢ To flexible summation policies or passion.	
7.	**Cheating** (Davis, Drinan, & Gallant, 2008)	Talking to others during the exam, not sitting other articles, lesson plans.	➢ Students cheat because they are afraid of failing. ➢ getting a less-than-ideal grade. ➢ Not enough training.	Train them before the examination. Align learning objectives, course content, and assessment.
8.	**Verbal aggression** (Poling, 2019)	(VA) verbally installing other people.	➢ Stress. ➢ Disrespect. ➢ bulling	Searching for the roots of the problem, such as bullying, unfair treatment, family reasons, etc, can cause verbal aggression.
9.	**Physical aggression** (Uludog, 2013)	Physically installing other people.	Fighting between students, being angry.	Preventing strategies/actions can work well. Talking to the students explaining that it is unethical behavior. Solid and clear policies of reward/punishment. Talking with their parents/ sending students to principals

				in the principal's room.

2.4 Classroom Management Strategies

Every teacher uses different techniques and strategies to manage the classroom, and for sure, every teacher has a different idea to manage it. Scrivener (2012) recommends using the following eight techniques to build rapport with students:

1. **Be welcoming**. Teachers' body language is more influential than words. It is recommended that teachers speak positively to the students and use welcoming body language. For example, a teacher should not sit behind the table, as it conveys power and dominance and may negatively impact the teacher-student report.

2. **Treating every student as an individual**: every student is unique and needs different approaches and pedagogical techniques to learn; this knows; this is why the teacher is highly recommended to learn to understand the student's names, needs, preferences, levels, learning styles, etc. Every student has unique talents and abilities that deserve recognition, regardless of their performance in specific courses. Teachers can empower their students by focusing on their strengths and positive qualities. Moreover, highlighting students' strengths in other areas can boost their confidence and encourage them to persevere in challenging subjects.

3. **Remember positive things about your students**; teachers should focus on positive things, notes about the students, for example (hobbies, family, and the story that they talk about in the class) and create a supportive and encouraging learning environment that fosters student growth and success such as "Students' interests, family histories, and experiences are noted by the teacher during class. By bringing these up in class or during conversations, the instructor fosters a pleasant and encouraging atmosphere that makes students feel appreciated and inspired to achieve.

4. **Empathy is the ability to recognize, understand, and share the thoughts and feelings of another person, animal, or fictional character. It** is a powerful tool when used properly. For example, when a teacher wants to decide something about a student, He/she should put himself/herself in the student's shoes.

5. **A teacher should be a teacher rather than acting like a teacher.** Even though the teaching profession often requires acting, the teacher cannot always act, and the students understand when the teacher's behavior is fake, which can be very frustrating in addition, when students believe that a teacher's encouragement or praise isn't genuine, they may become irritated, feel undervalued, and become less inclined to work hard.

6. **Don't fake happiness or pleasure**. Teachers should not behave artificially with the students because all students know it. For example, if a teacher is sad (because of some personal issues), instead of faking happiness, s/he can tell the students that s/he has had some personal problems and does not feel good, such as when a teacher pretends to be funny or kind without connecting with the students, it might make them feel insecure or unsure. This could impede candid communication and impact their willingness to participate in the educational process.

7. **Be culturally sensitive**. Teachers must be aware of the students' culture so that students do not feel offended and/or discriminated against when discussing culturally sensitive topics in class, while teachers can handle delicate conversations more skillfully if they are aware of the cultural backgrounds of their students. To ensure that everyone feels appreciated and respected, the teacher should, for instance, ask students to share their unique customs when talking about holidays rather than concentrating only on one dominating culture. It will make the students more engaged and love the class more.

8. **Avoid sarcasm**. Educators must be aware of jokes so they do not break someone's heart. For example, a teacher should be cautious with humor in the classroom. For example, if a teacher makes a sarcastic remark about a student's struggle with a subject, it may be intended as a joke, but it can hurt the student's feelings and discourage them from participating in future discussions.

Furthermore, Scrivener (2012) adds some more techniques developed according to Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) to assist rapport: mirroring, pacing, and leading. These three techniques for developing desired behavior are: 1) mirroring a student's actions (like head, arm, and leg positions), 2) pacing through soft synchronization of movements, and 3) leading until the behavior becomes a subconscious habit. Bos and Vaughn (2004) recommend using the following five techniques to prevent and/or reduce the possibility of misbehavior occurrence and, consequently, to build rapport with students:

1. **Instruction Content**: There are a number of ways to control and manage student behavior, e.g., Making activities more interesting, incorporating students' performance, reducing task difficulties or length, providing choices, and developing functional or age-appropriate activities. By controlling those programs, the teacher can understand and manage the students' behavior.

2. **Classroom Schedule**: It is the student's right to know the schedule before coming to school to prepare for the day.

3. **Classroom Rules** help students accept rules in the classroom and remember what will happen in class. For instance, when students know that raising their hands is required before speaking,

they are more likely to remember this rule, leading to a more organized and respectful classroom environment.

4. **Room Arrangement: the arrangement of the** classroom layout can show the students' behavior. Good arranging class, good teaching and good learning if the desks are arranged in small groups, it encourages collaboration and discussion among students, leading to more engagement and active learning. Conversely, if desks are placed in straight rows facing the teacher, it may result in passive learning and less interaction."

5. **Peer Interactions** create a classroom in the same level, age, social skill, and students with and without disabilities to increase students' behavior.

Furthermore, Oleson (2023) identifies six strategies for reducing the influence of biases in the classroom:

1. **Personal growth** One of the best aspects of teaching is helping students grow personally because it encourages them throughout their work and helps them develop perspective.

2. **Motivating** students while achieving their goals makes your classroom more entertaining.

3. **Awareness of Bias**, Teachers must be sensitive to every detail of their students' identities, histories, and experiences in order to be conscious of bias. This knowledge enables teachers to meet individual needs and lessen any biases in their teaching methods while fostering a more welcoming and encouraging learning environment.

4. **Participate**, as a teacher, it is essential to model positive behavior and encourage students to develop their talents, such as speaking language, music, and sports.

5. **Implementation strategies: Teachers should create detailed plans that include activities that students truly enjoy in order to** increase student engagement. This can involve employing of various instructional strategies, such as group projects, practical experiments, and interactive conversations based on real-world situations. For example, using project-based learning enables students to work with others to examine topics of interest thoroughly. Learning can also be made more engaging and fun by utilizing technology, such as online resources or educational games. Teachers can create a more dynamic classroom atmosphere that motivates students and improves learning results by adjusting their techniques to their preferences and interests

6. **Feedback** plays an important role in the classroom; teachers motivate students to improve themselves through feedback. However, teachers should give feedback in a way that does not demotivate students.

   Thus, the strategies can be divided into three categories: preventive strategies, and strategies to be applied. At the same time,/when the case of misbehavior takes place, misbehavior occurs,

and post-misbehavior strategies (See Figure 2.3). Furthermore, it is essential to mention that these strategies very often can be used at more than one stage, for example, social activities can help with both – the prevention of misbehavior and post-misbehavior management. The division was done based on the literature review.
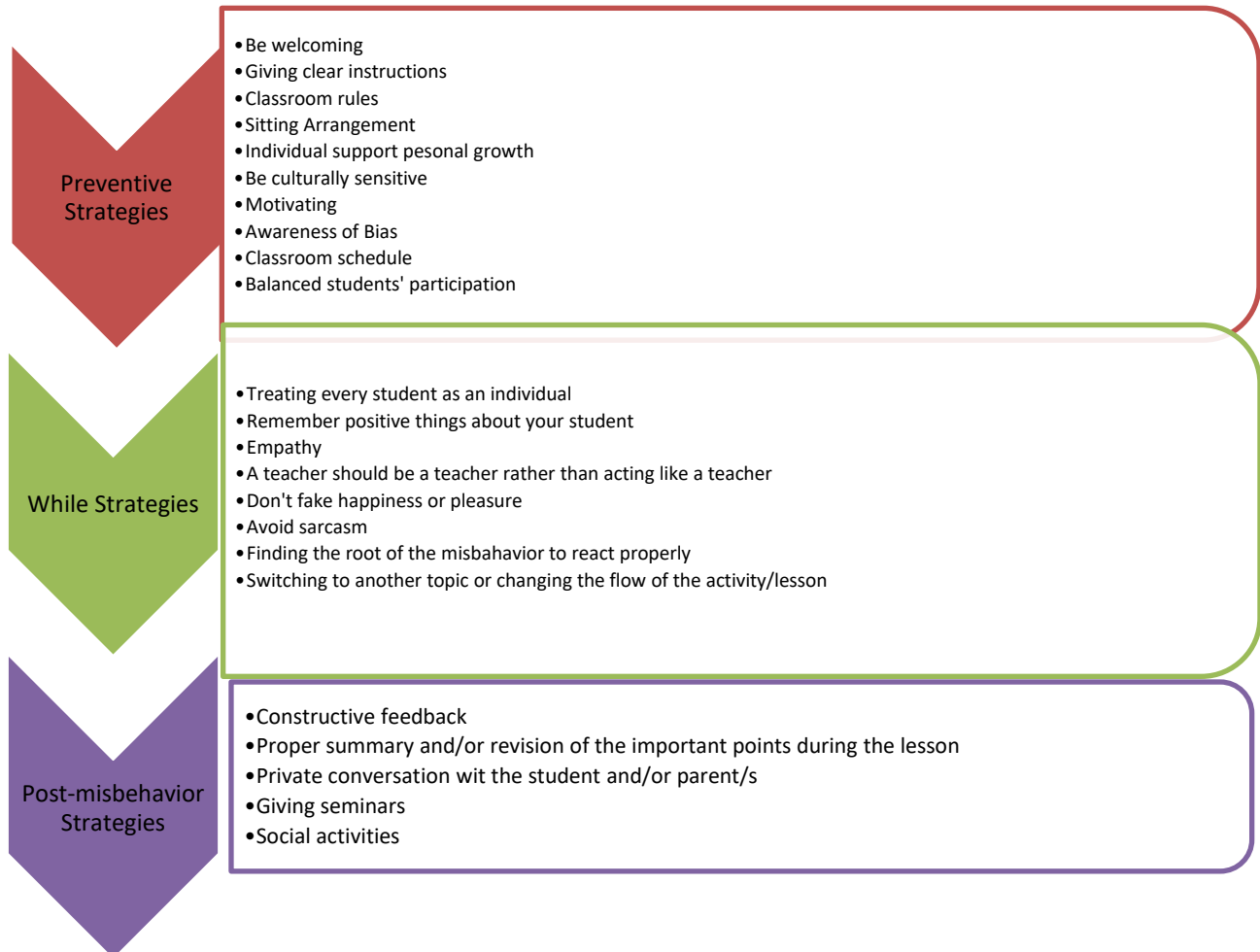
Preventive Strategies
- Be welcoming
- Giving clear instructions
- Classroom rules
- Sitting Arrangement
- Individual support pesonal growth
- Be culturally sensitive
- Motivating
- Awareness of Bias
- Classroom schedule
- Balanced students' participation

While Strategies
- Treating every student as an individual
- Remember positive things about your student
- Empathy
- A teacher should be a teacher rather than acting like a teacher
- Don't fake happiness or pleasure
- Avoid sarcasm
- Finding the root of the misbahavior to react properly
- Switching to another topic or changing the flow of the activity/lesson

Post-misbehavior Strategies
- Constructive feedback
- Proper summary and/or revision of the important points during the lesson
- Private conversation wit the student and/or parent/s
- Giving seminars
- Social activities

Figure 2.3 pre-, while-, and post-misbehavior strategies

In summary, teachers should know the techniques and when to use them so they do not teach and manage students randomly. Thus, every teacher should find the classroom's techniques suitable for his/her group of students.

In conclusion, it is important to understand the dynamics of classroom, school, and community. So, the teachers and educators in general can develop the strategies and methods to deal with that particular setting. First, educators should understand the gaps to find/develop strategies, pilot them, see what works better for them, and choose the most appropriate strategies to solve the problems.

Furthermore, there are many strategies for managing the class, school, and learning process; however, not every strategy is suitable for every situation. It is important to understand the reasons,

the root of the problem, and the possible suitable solutions and choose the one that is the best fit for the situation. This is why teachers and all educators should be aware of class dynamics and classroom management techniques.

3. Methodology

This chapter focuses on the methods of data collection, analysis of the findings, and conclusions based on the results of the survey conclusions based on survey results. The study implemented quantitative research.

3.1 Survey design

The survey was designed based on the literature review by the researcher. Each chapter focused on the types of misbehavior and their management, so the survey questions were inspired and designed based on the literature review chapters.

The questionnaire consists of fifteen questions: three demographic questions the first section is demographic information. The other questions aimed to answer the research questions of the study. The survey was imported to Google Forms, an online survey platform. To increase the objectivity of the study, the researcher used different types of questions: short answer, multiple choice questions, multiple choice scale (the participants were asked to rate the items from 1 – least important to 5 – most important), checkbox scale (rating items from 1 – never, to 10 always), checkboxes (choosing all that apply). To add dimension to the survey, the option 'other' was added to the questions so the participants could share their experiences and contribute to the data collection.

3.2 Survey application

The questionnaire was distributed through online platforms. The survey was distributed to students and teachers within Erbil city. The survey was distributed in the institutions that focused on educating young learners. Eighty surveys were collected for the data analysis.

3.3 Participants

The first question of the survey aimed to collect information about the participant's gender.
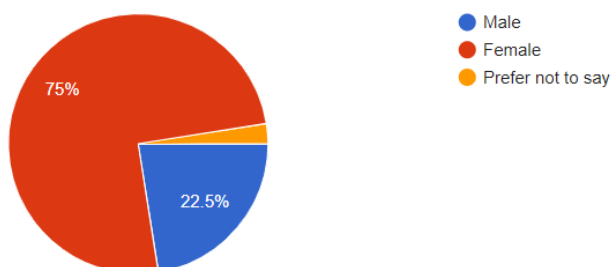

Figure 3.1: Participations' Gender

The figure (Figure 3.1) above demonstrates the participants' gender. Among eighty participants: 75% are female, 22.5% are males, and 2.5% prefer not to say. The majority of the respondents are females, and this can be explained by the popularity of the teaching profession among females.
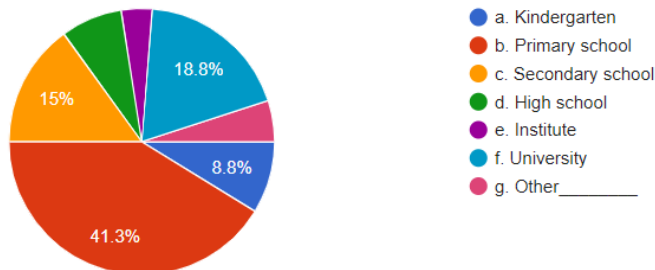

Figure 3.2: Workplace of the Participants

The variety of participants according to the place they currently work is represented in Figure 3.2. Most of the respondents are primary school teachers 41.3%, 18.8% are university teachers, the rest of the respondents are secondary school teachers 15%, kindergarten 8.8%, high school 7.5%, institutes (3.7%. And 5% of the participants are from other educational institutions.
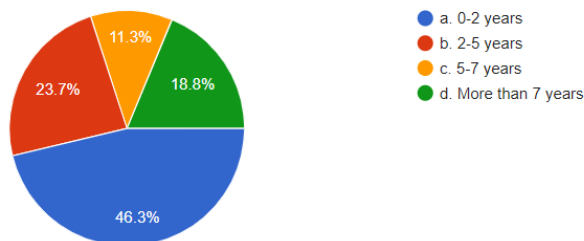
Figure 3.3: Years of Experience

To see the different viewpoints between teachers, the question related to the years of experience working as a teacher was included. Most of the respondents 46.3% were teachers who their working experiences is between 0-2 years, 23.7% were between 2-5 years, 18.8% were more than 7 years, and 11.3% were between 5-7 years experiences.

Figure 3.4: Teachers' relationship with students

Teacher relationship with the students has a big role in the education and learning process, because through their relationship, misbehaviors can be avoided according to the data collection most of the respondents have an excellent relationship with their students, 40% believe they have a good

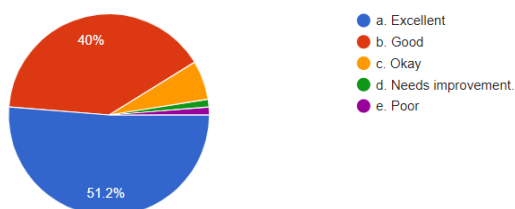relationship with their students, 6.3% claim to have an average relationship with their students, and 1.2% of responses stated that they have poor relationships with their students that needs improvement.
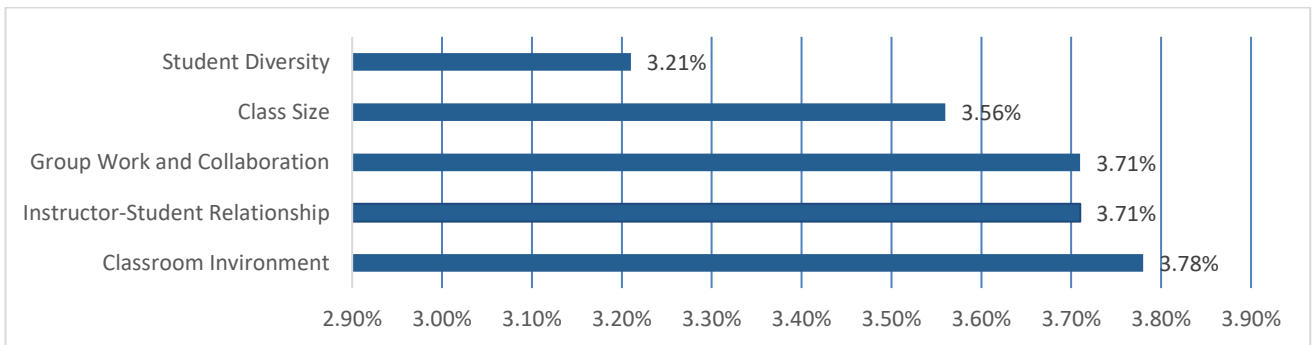
Figure 3.5: Factors Including Classroom Dynamics

According to the results of question 5 (Figure 3.5), the classroom environment has the greatest impact on classroom dynamics (3.78%). Other types fluctuate from 3.71% to 3.21%, showing close to each other's level of importance. Student diversity is the least influential but still statistically important factor in classroom dynamics.
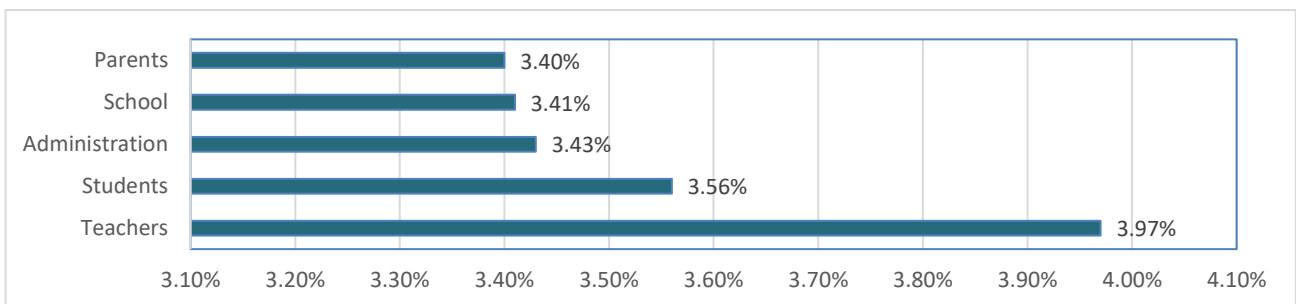
Figure 3.6: The stakeholders that have the greatest impact on classroom dynamics.

According to Figure 3.6, teachers are the most important/influential stakeholders 3.97%. The other stakeholders fluctuated from 3.56% to 3.40%. The parents seem to be the least influential, however still have a strong impact, on the classroom dynamics.

Figure 3.7: Students Misbehavior in The Classroom

The answers to Question 7 show that punctuality is the most frequent type of misbehavior that teachers face in the classroom at 8.75%, followed by 'talking out of turn' at 4.82%, then 'not paying attention or being off task' at 4.57%. The other types of misbehavior in the classroom fluctuate from 3.72% to 2.57%. 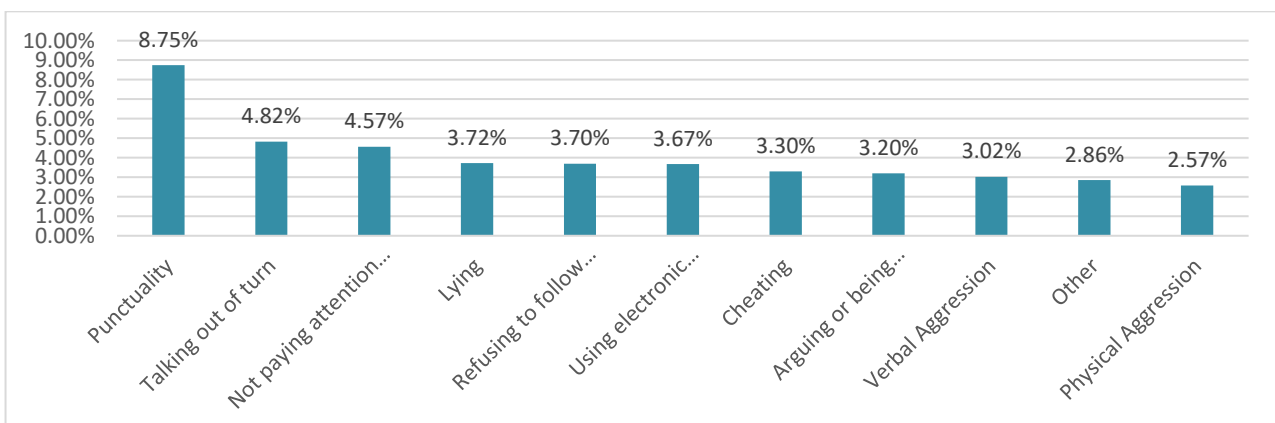In addition, six teachers responded that they also face other misbehavior types such as not doing homework, some parents not following school instructions, careless students, and students' disrespect [to peers, teachers, etc.].
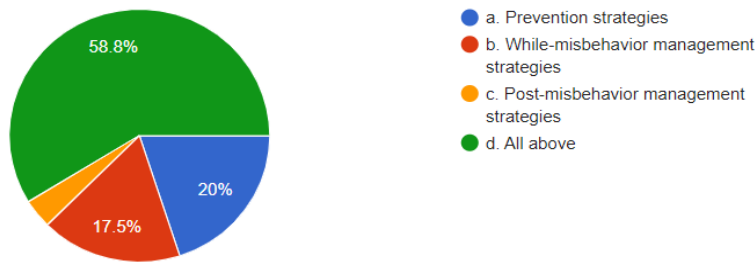
Figure 3.8: Misbehavior Management Strategies

From the above figure, it is no surprise that most of the participants chose the option 'all above', showing that the application of all strategies together: prevention strategies, while-misbehavior management strategies, and post-misbehavior management strategies, have a significant impact on misbehavior management by 58.8%. Other respondents 20% believe that prevention strategies are more effective than any other strategies. Less respondents use while-misbehavior management strategies more frequently than prevention or post-misbehavior strategies. While only 3.7% of respondents prefer post-misbehavior management strategies.

Figure 3.9: Prevention Strategies

N	Item	Number of participants	Percentages
1.	Being welcoming	34	42.5
2.	Giving Clear Instructions	54	67.5
3.	Suitable sitting Arrangement	33	41.3
4.	Classroom Rules	51	63.7
5.	Classroom Schedule	19	23.8

6.	Proper Summary and/or	35	43.8
7.	Balanced Students' Partic	45	56.3
8.	Individual Support Person	32	40
9.	Remembering Positive Thing	38	47.5
10.	Be Culturally Sensitive	33	41.3
11.	Awareness of Bias	25	31.3
12.	Maintaining Positive	39	48.8
13.	Using Verbal Praise	36	45
14.	Implementing a Reward	31	38.8
15.	Creating a Classroom	38	47.5
16.	Providing Opportunities	43	53.8
17.	Others	5	6.3
	Total	591	739.2

Question number 9 was related to misbehavior prevention strategies. The most frequently used strategy is giving clear instruction (67.5%), classroom rules (63.7%), and balanced student participation (56.3%). Furthermore, Balancing students' participation and providing opportunities for student leadership and responsibility are frequently used. The least influential seems to be the classroom schedule (23.8%).
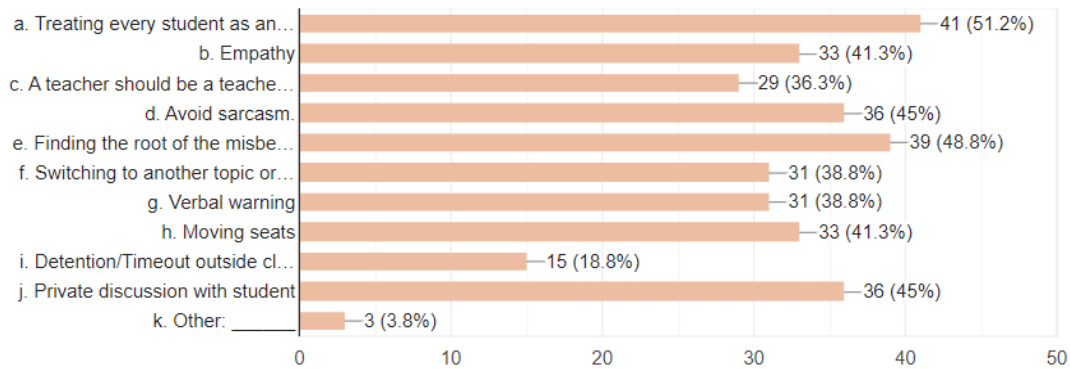
Figure 3.10: While-misbehavior Strategies

Among the while-misbehavior strategies most frequent one is treating every students as an indivisual (51.2%). 48.8%, of the respondents stated that finding the root of the misbehavior to react properly is important. Avoiding sarcasm (45%), empathy (41%), and moving seats (41%) are other common strategies used by the teachers. Other while-misbehavior strategies flactuate between 38.8% to 18.8%. Two of the teachers sugessted to 'give students responsibilities as a while-misbehavior management strategy.
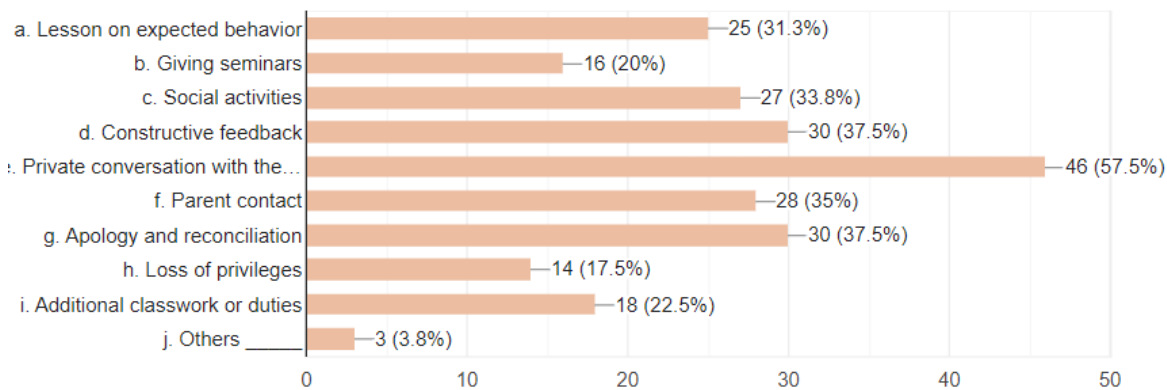
Figure 3.11 Post-misbehavior strategies

In Figure 3.11, the use of post-misbehavior strategies is demonstrated. The most common technique is a private conversation with the students (57.5%). Providing constructive feedback, apology and reconciliation are both 37.5%. making them the second most common post-behavior strategies. And the least popular seems to be the loss of privileges (17.5%) as the respondents did not clarify what they meant by other.
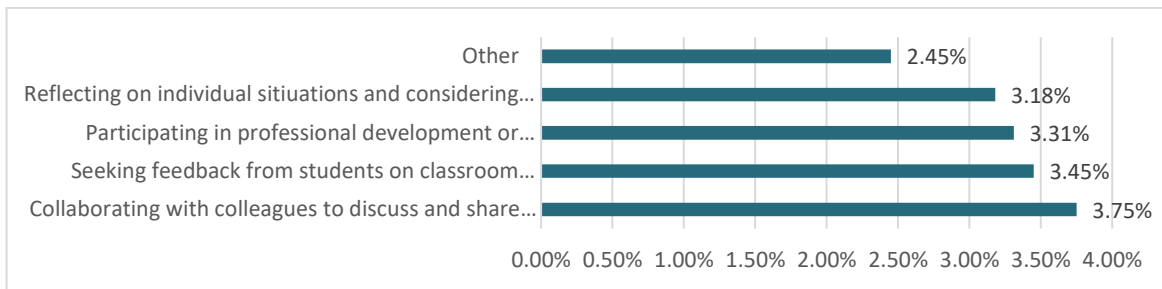
Figure 3.12: Rating Types of Classroom Management Strategies

The next question aimed to find out how teachers reflect and evaluate their own classroom management strategies. According to question number 12, collaborating with colleagues to discuss and share strategies is the most important way of reflecting on their classroom management strategies (3.75%), the next important is seeking feedback from students on classroom dynamics (3.45%), then participating in professional development or workshops on classroom management strategies (3.31%). The least frequent strategy is reflecting on individual situations and considering alternative approaches (3.18%). Furthermore, 3 teachers suggested being friendly with students, directing students to the principal, and tracking the students' progress by comparing their grades with previous marks.
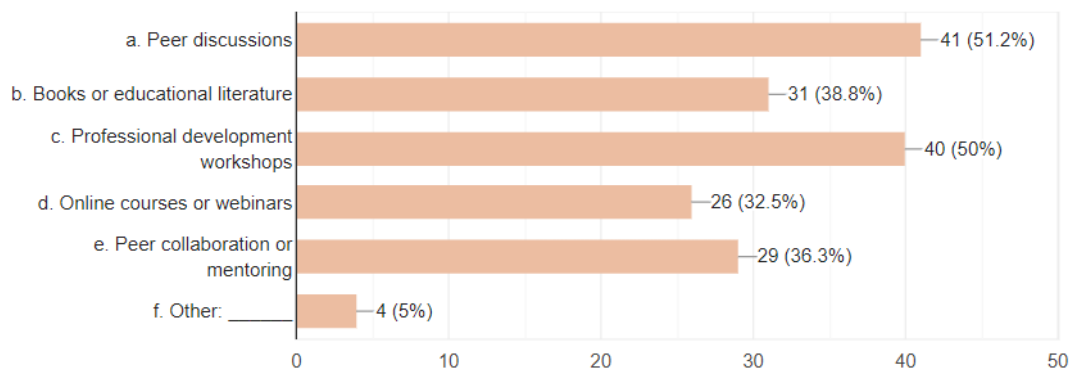
Figure 3.13: Resources to Improve Classroom Management Strategies

Figure 3.13 demonstrates the resources that may help to improve classroom management strategies, and the results show that teachers benefit from peer discussions (51.2%), professional development workshops (50%), books or educational literature (38.8%), and peer collaboration or mentoring (36.3%). The least preferred resources are online courses or webinars (32.5%).
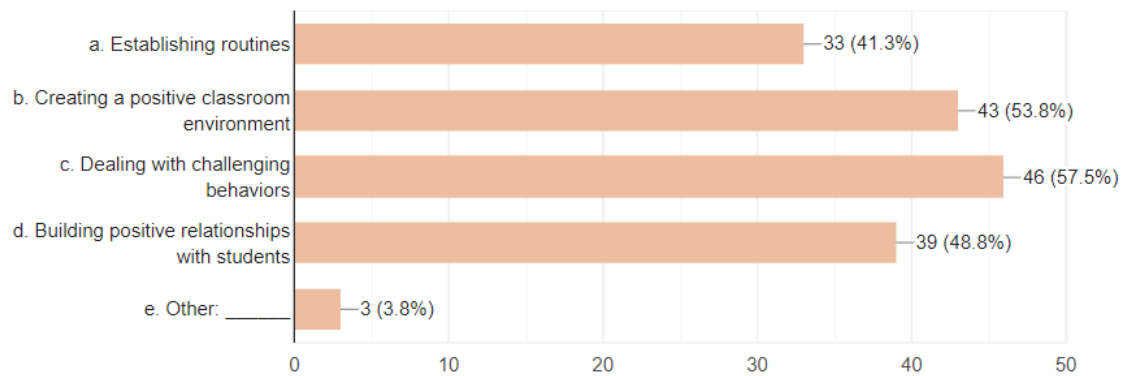
Figure 3.14: Areas' for Improving Classroom Management

According to figure (3.14), the respondents believe that the area that needs improvement in classroom management is dealing with challenging behavior (57.5%), next important aspect is how to create a positive classroom environment (53.8%), building a positive relationship with students (48.8%), and establishing routine (41.3%). Furthermore, in the comments for the option 'other', one of the teachers suggested putting a reward at the end of the week as the area for improvement.

And I in addition, the research opened a room for the comments asking the participants to write any additional comments that they would like to share regarding classroom management. One of the responses recommended providing smart boards with internet so students can sometimes practice and play educational games with teachers. This is a great idea for every school to have it because students need to improve not only the core subjects but also be prepared for real world innovations.

4. Discussion

The topic of effective classroom management techniques for positive classroom dynamics has always been one of the most crucial fields to be studied, analyzed, and discussed by all educators. The rapid changes in the world, such as technological innovations and students' psychology, directly affect the classroom environment. This is why this study is crucial to move hand in hand with the updates and requirements of today.

The finding of this study showed that classroom environment (76%) and teachers (79.4%) have a significant impact on classroom dynamics. In the study conducted by Smith and Johnson (2022), the first, most influential, factor affecting classroom dynamics is student diversity. According to the research of Ghafapour and Moinzadeh (2020), teachers are the stakeholder that has the most significant impact, which completely aligns with the findings of the current research. This can be explained by the historical importance of the teacher in the classroom and still dominating teacher-centered education.

The Second finding of this study showed that punctuality (87.5%) has frequent misbehavior in the classroom. Similarly, according to Alam (2013), punctuality is a common type of misbehavior in the classroom. Furthermore, arriving late to class, leaving early, and completing assignments after the deadline cause distortions in the classroom, which is why punctuality are common problem in Kurdistan and outside the country.

The third important finding of this study shows that teachers apply all prevention, while, and post-misbehavior management strategies in school. According to the survey results, similarly to the study conducted by Bos & Vaughn (2004), giving clear instructions is the most common preventative technique (67.5%). In contrast, according to Scrivener (2012), to be welcoming is the most important one. Furthermore, according to the survey, treating each student as an individual is the most common while-misbehavior technique (51.2%). While according to Bos and Vaughn (2004), providing classroom rules, and participation according to Oleson (2023), are the most common classroom management strategies.

As a post-misbehavior management strategy, the results of the survey show that private conversation with the student is the most common approach (57.5%) in Kurdistan. While according to Scrivener (2012), avoiding sarcasm comes first. Furthermore, according to Oleson (2023), feedback is the most popular/effective strategy.

In addition, according to Scrivener (2012), Duki (2009), and Kiefer (2006), and the findings of the current research, peer discussions and professional development workshops are the sources for the teacher development and improvement of misbehavior management and classroom management in general.

In conclusion, daily teachers face different cases that need an immediate reaction. This is why it is necessary to be aware of the possible cases and the misbehavior management scenarios, a strategic plan, in other words, a classroom management teacher's toolbox, which is available at any time and properly implemented to ensure a positive learning environment and healthy classroom dynamics.

5. Limitations of The Research

It is necessary to state the limitations of this study to avoid misinterpretations.

I.   First, the data was collected in Erbil city, Kurdistan, only: this is why the result can be generalized only for the educational institutions in Erbil.

II. Second the researcher collected data over two weeks, more time can give a chance to collect more responses from more different schools and teachers. Consequently, the results may slightly change.

III. Third, only one tool was used for data collection – a questionnaire. Integration of interviews and/or observations could help to add depth to the research results.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study focused on optimizing Classroom Dynamics by means of stakeholders' influence, student behavior/misbehavior management, types of misbehavior, and the strategies to manage classroom dynamics effectively. Classroom Dynamics refers to the interaction between teachers and students within the classroom setting. Preparing students for the physical, instructional, and psychological environment is directly linked to their success and overall development in the classroom.

Current research reveals several common types of student misbehavior in Erbil, Kurdistan, Notably, punctuation emerged as the most common type of misbehavior according to the teachers' responses collected in Erbil. This was followed by talking out of turn, lack of attention or being off task, lying, refusal to follow instructions, unpermitted use of phones and other electronic devices, cheating, arguments or disrespect, verbal altercations, and physical aggression.

Concluding literature review and the data collection, the following recommendations have been developed:

- **Optimize Classroom Environment**: clear instructions, classroom rules, sufficient seating arrangements, engaging content of the lesson, teacher-student rapport, etc. significantly influence interactions in the classroom.

- **Choosing the right Classroom Management Approach**: it is obvious that every teacher has a unique style and approach to classroom management, which is very natural. However, it is necessary to acknowledge this and adopt to these differences accordingly. The teachers must explore the existing strategies, methods and approaches to successfully manage their class. For example, recognizing the root of the problem first can help teachers to choose the right approach and act; accordingly, posting pictures and/or videos on the school website to show the parents/caregivers their children's performance, achievements, etc.

- **Preventing Misbehavior**: it is always easier to prevent misbehavior rather than deal with it. This is why it is highly recommended to take necessary actions, prepare, and use preventive strategies to reduce the possibility of students' misbehavior in class.

- **Professional Development Training and Workshops**: teachers and other stakeholders should periodically attend training and workshops to enhance their competencies, performance, and personal skills. By doing so, educators refine their instructional techniques, and classroom management strategies, and increase the effectiveness in facilitating student learning in general. Moreover, teachers are recommended to conduct discussions of the students' behavior, helping each other to cope with the classroom environment.

By implementing these recommendations teachers and other educators can progress in creating classroom dynamics and engaging classroom environments that lead to positive interactions,

enhance student learning outcomes, and effectively manage the cases of misbehavior inside and outside the classroom.

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Appendix: Survey

Misbehavior Management

This questionnaire is part of the research on misbehavior management techniques. The results will be published in a research anonymously, and none of the participants will be somehow threatened by them. Confidentiality and anonymity are guaranteed. Please fill in this questionnaire, it will take you only a few (about 5) minutes. Your contribution is valuable and much appreciated. Thank you in advance for your time and understanding!

* Indicates required question

1.   1. Gender *

Mark only one oval.

◯ Male

◯ Female

◯ Prefer not to say

2.   2. What type of educational institution do you work for? *

Mark only one oval.

◯ a. Kindergarten

◯ b. Primary school

◯ c. Secondary school

◯ d. High school

◯ e. Institute

◯ f. University

◯ g. Other_____

3.   3. How long have you been working as a teacher? *

Mark only one oval.

◯ a. 0-2 years

◯ b. 2-5 years

◯ c. 5-7 years

◯ d. More than 7 years

4.   4. How would you rate your relationship with your students? *

Mark only one oval.

◯ a. Excellent

◯ b. Good

◯ c. Okay

◯ d. Needs improvement.

◯ e. Poor

5.   5. What factors do you think have the **greatest impact on classroom dynamics**? Please rate   *
     the factors from 5 (the most important/influential) to 1 (the least important)

Mark only one oval per row.

	1	2	3	4	5
Student diversity	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Instructor-Student Relationship	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Group Work and Collaboration	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Classroom Environment	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Class size	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

6.   6. What **stakeholders** do you think have the greatest impact on classroom dynamics? Please   *
     rate the factors from 5 (the most important/influential) to 1 (the least important)

Mark only one oval per row.

	1	2	3	4	5
a. School	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
b. Teachers	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
c. Students	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
d. Parents	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
e. Administration	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

7. 7. **How often** do you experience these **types** of **misbehavior** in your classroom? Rate from 10 (always) to 1(never). *

Check all that apply.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
a. Talking out of turn	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Arguing or being disrespectful	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Verbal aggression	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Physical aggression	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Not paying attention or being off task	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Using electronic devices without permission	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Refusing to follow instructions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. Lying	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
i. Punctuality	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
j. Cheating	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
k. Other _____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

8. Other (if any) for question 7

_____

9. 8. What misbehavior management **strategies** do you prefer to use in your classroom? *

Mark only one oval.

○ a. Prevention strategies

○ b. While-misbehavior management strategies

○ c. Post-misbehavior management strategies

○ d. All above

10. 9. What misbehavior **prevention** strategies do you use? *

Check all that apply.

☐ a. Being welcoming.

☐ b. Giving clear instructions

☐ c. Suitable Sitting Arrangement

☐ d. Classroom rules

☐ e. Classroom schedule

☐ f. Proper summary and/or revision of the important points during/after the lesson

☐ g. Balanced students' participation

☐ h. Individual support personal growth

☐ i. Remembering positive things about every student

☐ j. Be culturally sensitive.

☐ k. Awareness of Bias

☐ l. Maintaining a positive learning environment

☐ m. Using verbal praise and positive reinforcement

☐ n. Implementing a reward system

☐ o. Creating a classroom community where positive behavior is valued

☐ p. Providing opportunities for student leadership and responsibility

☐ q. Other: _____

11. Other (if any) please indicate

_____

12. 10. What **while-misbehavior** strategies do you use? *

Check all that apply.

- [ ] a. Treating every student as an individual
- [ ] b. Empathy
- [ ] c. A teacher should be a teacher rather than acting like a teacher
- [ ] d. Avoid sarcasm.
- [ ] e. Finding the root of the misbehavior to react properly
- [ ] f. Switching to another topic or changing the flow of the activity/lesson
- [ ] g. Verbal warning
- [ ] h. Moving seats
- [ ] i. Detention/Timeout outside class
- [ ] j. Private discussion with student
- [ ] k. Other: _____

13. Other (if any) please indicate

_____

14. 11. What **post-misbehavior** strategies do you use? *

Check all that apply.

- [ ] a. Lesson on expected behavior
- [ ] b. Giving seminars
- [ ] c. Social activities
- [ ] d. Constructive feedback
- [ ] e. Private conversation with the student
- [ ] f. Parent contact
- [ ] g. Apology and reconciliation
- [ ] h. Loss of privileges
- [ ] i. Additional classwork or duties
- [ ] j. Others _____

15. 12. How do you **reflect and evaluate** your own classroom management strategies? Please *
rate from 5 (always) to 1 (never) (checkboxes)

Check all that apply.

	1	2	3	4	5
a. Seeking feedback from students on classroom dynamics and behavior management	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Participating in professional development or workshops on classroom management strategies	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Reflecting on individual situations and considering alternative approaches	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Collaborating with colleagues to discuss and share strategies	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Other: ____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

16. Other (if any) please indicate

_____

17. Other (if any) please indicate

_____

18. 13. What resources would you find helpful to improve your classroom management strategies? ∗

Check all that apply.

☐ a. Peer discussions
☐ b. Books or educational literature
☐ c. Professional development workshops
☐ d. Online courses or webinars
☐ e. Peer collaboration or mentoring
☐ f. Other: _____

19. Other (if any) please indicate

_____

20. 14. Which areas of Classroom Management would you like to improve? (Select all that apply) ∗

Check all that apply.

☐ a. Establishing routines
☐ b. Creating a positive classroom environment
☐ c. Dealing with challenging behaviors
☐ d. Building positive relationships with students
☐ e. Other: _____

21. Other (if any) please indicate

_____

22.   15. Additional comments or suggestions:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Exploring Alternative Assessment Approaches in EFL: A Selective Literature Review

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Abstract

Recently, many researchers in EFL classes have integrated alternative assessment. This study aims to review international perspectives on empirical studies on alternative assessment and its effectiveness in language learning in EFL contexts. The study used thematic analysis to analyze the studies on alternative assessment in EFL settings. There were many studies, but only five of them were chosen according to the criteria adopted in this study. The criteria were limited to exploring the methods, the limitations of the studies, alternative assessment strategies in the articles, and the findings of the chosen papers. The sources were selected from Google Scholar and Research Gate. This review found that in most articles, implementing alternative assessment methods was successful. It also found the qualitative method to be the main method among the revised articles. The study further included alternative assessment methods in EFL classes and the limitations of the study.

*Keywords***:** Alternative assessment, systematic review, EFL Classes**.**

1. Introduction

1.1 Background Information

In English Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, traditional assessments such as standardized tests, quizzes, and written exams are used a lot to evaluate students' language proficiency. This approach only provides measurable and structured methods for testing and faces many limitations and challenges. While in the last decade, a new form of assessment field has been taken, the standardized test, as this examination, delivers a momentary assessment of the recall information. However, standardized tests fail to cover all aspects of learning, and many students are misunderstood and unchallenged. Alternative assessment is a new paradigm, a change in emphasis on concentration, application, and engagement rather than memorization and standardized methods. As Al-Mahrooqi and Denman (2018) defined it, alternative assessment has covered all the traditional methods of assessment.

Similarly, Worthen (1993) stated that alternative assessment is a broad term that includes various types of assessment, such as direct assessment, performance assessment, and authentic assessment. Alternative assessment, which uses many assessment methods, engages the learners to

apply critical thinking skills in the real world or different contexts (Al Rugeishi, 2015). Dung and Ha (2019) indicated that in alternative assessment, individual performance is assessed based on specific learning objectives and performance rather than compared to other performances at international or national levels. The alternative assessment has been utilized in the classroom. Teachers need to independently evaluate, design, and employ the questions and methods related to the objectives of the class (Jabbarifar, 2009). Thus, teachers receive feedback on the effectiveness of the alternative assessment methods and their evaluation in progress. In EFL/ESL instruction in the classrooms, alternative assessment obtained a greater degree of acceptance and significance attribution in the field. Since language learning is related to language testing, the testing and practice of the other disciplines are inevitably quite different. Both English language learning and its assessment are so complex that, to solve these complexities, EFL teachers employed diverse assessment methods (Al-Mahroogi & Denman, 2018). In the classroom setting, the main objective of the assessment is to provide an opportunity for the learners to demonstrate on their acquired knowledge rather than find the gaps that they haven't learned.

Many studies have been investigated on alternative assessment methods, but the experts could not reach a unified and reliable definition for alternative assessment. According to Gipps and Stobart (2003.) alternative assessment is a complete concept that includes multiple-choice testing, information technology testing, and a method that integrates assessment into learning and teaching progress. There are other terms for alternative assessment, like direct assessment, authentic assessment, and performance assessment. Alternative Assessment is characterized by some features. It focuses on problem-solving, critical thinking skills, and integrating simulations and real-world contexts, emphasizes both the process and product of the learning process and performs that teachers take on new roles in both assessment and instruction. Furthermore, it highlights the importance of providing feedback on the students' strengths and areas to improve. (Herman, Aschbacher, and Winters, 1992; Huerta-Macias, 1995).

Teachers used many types of alternative assessments in the EFL/ESL classrooms, reflection by students and teachers, portfolios, online assessments, projects, peer assessments, self-assessment, video recording, and workshops and conferences. All these types of assessments are integrated to assess four language skills, reading, writing, listening, and speaking. In conclusion, alternative assessment can easily be integrated into EFL contexts.

1.2 The Rationale of the Study

This current and necessary systematic study focuses on the different alternative assessment methods for language acquisition. This review presents a concise overview of studies from 2017-2023 on alternative assessment, highlighting gaps in knowledge, identifying key trends, and suggesting areas

for further investigation. Secondly, it analyzes the effects of these strategies in various educational settings, providing valuable information for educators, policymakers, curriculum designers, and researchers. Furthermore, it serves as a valuable resource for adopting alternative evaluation methodologies to facilitate their broader application. This review provides a summary of the reviewed papers on the strengths and weaknesses of research concerning different assessment methodologies. It aids in informed decision-making in the field of education.

1.3 The Aim

This review article aims to explore the use and effectiveness of alternative assessment as an innovative method in EFL classes from the five reviewed articles, especially focusing on their effectiveness in improving students' performance and outcomes. By investigating different types of alternative assessments such as self-performance, self-assessment, portfolios, and practice teaching. It seeks to deliver insights into how these methods affect students' motivation and academic performance through teachers' perceptions. Furthermore, to evaluate its efficacy and ascertain its impact based on the experiences of both teachers and students, empirical studies were selected. It makes the comparison and contrast among the articles concerning the methods. The objective of the study was to analyze the kinds of alternative assessments used in the EFL context. It also evaluates the effectiveness of alternative assessment methods on students' motivation and academic performance in learning the English language. To gain the study purpose these two research questions were scanned:

1. Which type of alternative assessment methods are used commonly in EFL settings?
2. How do alternative assessment methods affect students' learning English language and academic performance in EFL contexts?

1.4 The Structure of the Study

The five major sections of this recent review article are as follows: introduction, body, methodology, discussion, and conclusion. The introduction provides an overview of the study's context, objectives, significance, and structure. Furthermore, a comprehensive overview of all five research studies is provided in the main body. The discussion section delivers comparisons and contrasts in terms of the aims, challenges, methodologies, and results of the five articles related to alternative assessment approaches. *The conclusion section summarizes the key findings and offers recommendations based on the strengths and weaknesses identified in the reviewed studies.*

2. Methodology

In this review, the article focuses on the alternative assessment methods in English Foreign Language classes. The study's purpose was to provide authentic knowledge of alternative assessment methods in EFL classrooms. To gain the studies, different techniques were used in searching like Google

Scholar, Scopus, and Research Gate Taylor &Francis online open-access databases to name a few to ensure the reliability of the study. In this study, a thematic analysis was implemented. This method is used to analyze the types of alternative assessment types used in the EFL context to provide a comprehensive exploration of each type of assessment's effects on students' outcomes and learning the English language process. Different keywords were used including alternative assessment, portfolios, and authentic assessment in most of the studies did not meet the inclusion of the constraints. Concerning the selection criteria, those articles were addressed that stated the objectives of the study. The selection of the articles crossed some criteria. First, the articles need to be up-to-date, and they have been customized from 2017 to 2023 in terms of publication. Second, the articles investigated various perceptive of alternative assessment methods. Third, the procedure focused on the empirical studies to investigate their data collection and methods. Lastly, the articles need to be carried out in different nationalities and settings. Empirical studies clearly state the methods of the study, the participants, and the results in the requirements. On the other hand, many of the articles were excluded due to their publication in other languages rather than English, conference papers, and working papers. Finally, the five of these articles were eligible for the review article.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Summary of the Articles

3.1.1 Sefli@assessment:

Technology investment and the facility of the internet made the researchers utilize mobile phones as a tool for the assessment form in the class or outside of the class. Tulgar (2017) aimed to propose a new modern method for self-assessment at the university level. The researcher presents a new concept, selfie@assessment, and a new approach to self-assessment through mobile phones, to enable students to assess individual or group self-assessment and do their tasks via self-video recording It also aims to allow learners to assess their learning process and give feedback to other presentations freely. The study utilized a qualitative method. A written report and self-videos were used to collect the data from 71 participants who enrolled in the Teaching English to Young Learners class for a whole semester. A mini-presentation was required from the students on a covered topic in the course. The teacher, presenter-students, and other students in the class evaluated the recorded presentation. The students watched their videos and evaluated their own performances. The students submitted their self-assessments in the form of a self-video recording to their teachers. to evaluate their performance orally. A written report was submitted by the presenter-students in which they listed the pros and cons of self-assessment via video format.

The qualitative method was used to analyze the written reports of students and self-videos that were submitted. The analysis highlighted the advantages and disadvantageous of self-assessment and

self-videos such as students having anxiety with recording videos, difficulties with technology's tools to send and record videos, and as the data was elicited from students, they preferred different places to record. The results of the study declared that selfi@ assessment is an appropriate technique for the group and self-assessment in the class. The primary result highlighted that self-assessment helped to the students' motivation, and made them comment on their educational practice and learning performance freely without students' and teachers' pressure. On the other hand, it is found that self-assessment can contribute to enhancing students' speaking skills in the target. In conclusion, sefli@assessment is one of the assessment methods that can be used as an alternative assessment and it is applicable and practical to assess self and group in the class performance. For further studies, self@assessment can be used with other methods and other English language learning skills.3.1.2 Portfolio Assessment: Suwaed (2018) conducted a study on using portfolio assessment in the writing classroom to get EFL student's perspectives in their second year in Libya. The study aimed to find out the Libyan EFL undergraduate students' perceptions toward portfolio assessment as an alternative assessment method in the writing class. It also investigated the challenges of implementing portfolios, the benefits, and their perceptions of the types of exams. The setting of the study was the English department at the Faculty of Art at Sabratha University. Thirty-eight Libyan second-year students who were enrolled in writing classes were the sample of the study. The study used a mixed method, both qualitative and quantitative. The researcher conducted a semi-structured interview and an open-ended questionnaire to explore the students' perceptions toward portfolio assessment and their outcomes in the exam types. The questionnaire was designed with two parts: demographic information and an open-ended section reading the aim of the portfolio, the benefits, and the challenges of keeping the portfolio. The sample portfolio was utilized to support the questionnaire and interview data. The quantitative analysis was analyzed to categorize students' responses to the open-ended questions as the difficulties and benefits of using portfolios as an alternative assessment method in writing classes. The frequency of the responses was calculated. For qualitative data, three main themes were categorized from the students' interviews with the content analysis: students' performances from the exams, the benefits of a portfolio, and its advantages.

The result found that most of the students believed portfolios were a good assessment method for enhancing their writing and grammar skills, particularly. The students highlighted that portfolios helped them to improve their sentence structure and write them down accurately. The students also stated that they developed their writing performance compared to the traditional pen-and-paper tests. On the other hand, students expressed some discomfort with the portfolio assessment, as they were more familiar with the traditional assessment strategies. Although implementing a portfolio has been beneficial for improving writing skills, the results highlighted the difficulties with implementing

portfolio assessment, like its time-consuming nature and the lack of vocabulary and skills needed for the writing tasks. The study recommends providing e-training for the teachers and students To be familiar with integrating portfolios as alternative assessments in their classes.

3.1.2 Practice Assessment

Practice of alternative assessment strategies and teachers reflection research was carried out within the context of English language instruction in Iran. Specifically, the research was conducted in a university, institute, and school in Iran. Naraghizadehiz, Azizmalayeri, and KhalKhalaji (2022) investigated the study on the EFL teachers' perceptions and practices of alternative assessment techniques and teachers reflections on this type of assessment. It also aimed to seek the connection between teachers' reflective practices. The study aimed to explore how practices of alternative assessment are related to the teaching practice reflection via teachers' perception and its impact on the teaching practices. A mixed method was implemented for collecting data and analyzing it. A convenient sampling method was used to select the participants of the study. Eighty-one (81) EFL teachers were the participants in the quantitative data. For qualitative data, 30 teachers were involved. The quantitative data was selected via a questionnaire with three parts: an introduction with demographic information, teachers' perspectives on the strategies of alternative assessment, and students' points of view on Alternative Assessment(AA). In addition, a semi-structured interview was used to collect the data on the teachers' perceptions and practices. The questionnaire was checked for reliability and validity. The Pearson correlation coefficient was utilized to see the relationship between teachers' experiences of applying the alternative assessment and their reflections in the qualitative data. The qualitative data was analyzed by thematic analysis and descriptive statistics in frequency and percentage format. The analysis delivers a more in-depth understanding of EFL perspectives and the practical session of alternative assessment.

The study of Naraghizadehiz, Azizmalayeri, and KhalKhalaji (2022) revealed that there is a great connection between teachers' experience of implementing alternative assessment and their reflections. For example, years of teaching experience helped them understand that assessment has been reshaped over the years. Teachers also highlighted the time and training for alternative assessment (AA) strategies. The finding also presented that the EFL teachers had a positive view because (AA) is more flexible than the traditional assessment in that teachers understand the students' competencies better. A qualified teaching atmosphere is another reason that teachers were positive about the AA strategies. These alternative assessment strategies helped to make students more engaged, and they analyzed their needs and peer assessment. The conclusion emphasized the significance of the relationship between EFL teachers and their reflections on the AA strategies. Providing professional development training for teachers, integrating AA into the curriculum,

and supporting the resources like teaching materials and facilities are the recommendations for further implications. 3.1.4 Performance Assessment

Ismael (2023) conducted a study that aimed to investigate the challenges of applying performance assessments in three university English departments in the Kurdistan Region universities and to address the solutions to the difficulties of implementing performance assessment in terms of practice and technicality in English departments. The study also aimed to explore the perceptions of 16 EFL teachers and reveal solutions to the challenges related to conducting performance assessments in Kurdistan university contexts. The interpretivism method adopted in the study aims to gain social and cultural meanings from the participant's behavior, thoughts, beliefs, and norms, through the interpretation of the collected data. The interpretivism method is used due to attempt human and social reality differently. experience in the English language and their awareness of performance assessment were two key items in selecting the participants. The interviews were transcribed, and analyzed by utilizing NVIVO software. In addition, a focus group interview was carried out with the aforementioned participants as part of the research process to reach a conclusion and determine the proposed solutions for the challenges associated with implementing performance assessments in the Kurdistan Region. The research employed thematic content analysis to examine the data and discover recurring themes that were associated with the challenges and suggested resolutions.

The study found six main results related to the challenges of implementing performance assessment in the English contexts of Kurdistan universities and addressed some solutions to the difficulties. The first difficulty was the lack of resources, technical, and infrastructure. Another finding is that students were not interested in the type of assessment and lack of motivation were the difficulties faced during implementing performance assessment. Curriculum difficulties as implementing performance assessments were not a part of curriculum design was another finding in this reviewed study. There was lack of training for teachers and student t. They suggested a solution by providing training regarding implementing performance assessments. Traditional assessment methods were a challenge in applying the performance assessments, as the departments designed their curriculum and courses on it Finally, teachers' beliefs found a lack of confidence in their skills regarding implementing performance assessment in the English departments of the region. The implementation of performance assessments in the English departments of universities in the Kurdistan Region presents benefits as well as challenges.

3.1.3 E-assessment

Jalilzadeh et al.(2023) conducted a study on the challenges and clarification of the E-assessment in one of the preparatory language schools in Turkey, a part of Asia, The study aimed to investigate the main difficulties that English foreign language teachers face in their classes during COVID-19 and

their perceptions. The study also sheds light on the e-assessment details in terms of teachers' challenges during the implementation of e-assessment. It enhances the efficacy of the e-assessment practically in Turkish contexts and generalizes to global contexts. The phenomenology research method was utilized. The study looked into the teachers who had prior experience teaching in a Turkish preparatory school. The sample size of the study was 56 PhD and MA holders. Open-ended questionnaires, analyzed using MAXQDA 2022, and purposive e-sampling were used to collect the data to gain an in-depth understanding of the challenges and perceptions. The data was analyzed through quantitative content analysis. The analysis was categorized based on the two types of coding, such as descriptive coding and in vivo coding. These systems were utilized mainly in the coding phase to develop more general and important themes in the data. The study revealed that EFL teachers in Turkish language schools faced numerous challenges during the implementation and design of the e-assessments. Individual differences in learning and skills, department and unit policy power to implement e-assessment in learning at that lockdown time, mediating, teacher and student assessments, feedback, students, and teacher technological knowledge are these challenges faced by the teachers. It also highlighted the necessity of training teachers and students, integrating technology, redesigning assessment tools, adapting curriculum, increasing student engagement, and organizing improvements to address these gaps.

4. Discussion & Recommendations

The review articles were analyzed about alternative assessments in EFL classes as innovative methods of assessment. The study aimed to provide a comprehensive overview of the review studies and their effectiveness on language learning skills.

In these five articles, the methods implemented were qualitative and mixed. Of these, three were qualitative methods with different designs among the reviewed studies, including individual and online interviews, focus group interviews, written reports, and self-video recordings. Two of these implemented the mixed method, including an open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The analysis of these five articles shows that quantitative analysis has not been used alone as a single method.

It will be great to provide a comprehensive result. As quantitative deals with numbers, it will show how alternative assessment affects the student's performance and learning skills effectively as it presents numerically.

As this review focuses on the perspective from different settings on alternative assessment methods, the setting of the studies is localized to different countries and regions. Jalilzadeh et al. (2023) conducted the study in Turkey at one of the language preparatory schools to investigate the challenges and clarification of E-assessment. The second setting was the Kurdistan Region, where

Ismael (2023) investigated the EFL teachers' perceptions of alternative assessment at the English departments of Kurdistan universities. The last study that was conducted in Iran regarding teachers' perceptions by Naraghizadehiz, Azizmalayeri, and KhalKhalaji (2022) the study highlighted English Language Instruction in three different settings, like schools, institutes, and universities was investigated to explore the teachers' perceptions and practices of alternative assessment strategies. These different settings provide a comprehensive view of the effectiveness of alternative assessment methods and the challenges of implementation. The variety of settings gives vital insights into the alternative assessment with different participants, time, and the way of integration.

The last two studies focused on the students' perceptions of alternative assessment, its effectiveness in language learning, and the content of the course. Suwaed (2018) aimed to examine the Libyan EFL undergraduate students' perceptions of using portfolios as an alternative assessment in the English Department/Faculty of Art at Sabratha University. Finally, Tulgar (2017) investigated undergraduate perceptions in the English department, specifically those students who enrolled in the Teaching English to Young Learners course for one semester in Erzurum,Turkey. It aimed to explore a new concept of assessment, like selfie@ assessment. Overall, the studies could investigate on the students' perspectives more rather than teacher's perceptions.

In international literature, assessment in EFL/ESL has been debated widely, particularly alternative assessment. Regarding the strategies of alternative assessment and their effects on the language skills assessment, these strategies of alternative assessment were used in this review article: portfolios, e-assessment, self-assessment through mobile phones, interpretivism methods to gain social and cultural meaning through interviews, a semi-structured interview, an open-ended questionnaire, and a written report. For example, Tulgar (2017) explored a new concept of alternative assessment through phone on speaking skills. It was found that the alternative assessment helped students to be motivated and comment on their educational practice. It also helped students to improve their speaking skills and use self-reflection techniques by teachers and students to assess individuals and groups. Similar to the student's performance, Suwaed (2018) used portfolios as an alternative assessment method in writing classes to compare the traditional assessment. It was reported that most of the students were positive about assessing their writing skills via portfolio. They developed their sentences, patterns of sentences, and structure of essay writing. It highlighted that their portfolio highly improved their writing skills and helped them to be independent writers in their tasks.

The other three studies investigated teacher perceptions of alternative assessments. Naraghizadehiz, Azizmalayeri, and KhalKhalaji (2022) investigated the teachers' perceptions and practices of alternative assessment techniques in the EFL context. The teachers reported that there a countless links between teachers' experience of implementing alternative assessment and their

reflections. It also reported that years of teaching experience helped them understand that assessment has been reshaped over the years. Teachers also emphasized the time and training needed for the AA strategies. These alternative assessment strategies are helping to make students more engaged and better suited for analysis and peer assessment in the class. The study could use more than the teacher experience method to see how these experiences and training the teachers on the alternative assessment method affect student's outcomes in the language learning process.

On the other hand, Ismael (2023) probed the challenges of applying performance assessments in the English departments of Kurdistan universities and addressed the solutions to the difficulties too. Teaching experience and teachers' awareness were two key terms to use in this study via the interpretivism method, which focuses on the subjective meaning of human experience and social phenomenon It was reported that teachers faced many difficulties: technical difficulties, lack of resources, student disinterest, and lack of motivation were the difficulties faced during implementing performance assessment. Surely, these difficulties affect the student's performance in English language learning. The researcher could highlight only the main challenges regarding technology. The study also reported teachers and students lacked professional training regarding the performance assessment that they faced. Like this, Jalilzadeh et al. (2023) investigate the key problems that English foreign language teachers face in their classes during COVID-19 through the e-assessment method. The study reported that EFL teachers faced many challenges, such as individual differences, teacher and student assessment, feedback, and student and teacher knowledge. It revealed that these difficulties affect student performance in the learning process. It addressed the fact that teachers and students need training, increasing students' engagement in the class, and organizing improvements to find solutions to these gaps. Regarding the limitations of these five articles, the articles by Jalilzadeh et al. (2023), Naraghizadehiz, Azizmalayeri, and KhalKhalaji (2022), and Ismael (2023) all found some results and tried to fill a gap in the field of implementing alternative assessment in English language learning .. First, the sample size of all these abovementioned articles were not sufficient for collecting the data and getting in-depth results. This sample may not reflect the whole EFL teacher population in Turkey, Iran, and Kurdistan. As the studies were conducted in different countries, they were limited to a small sample size purpose of the studies, duration of the study, and implication of the study's purpose in the settings. It affects the generalizability of the study's findings and cannot contribute to other courses and cultural backgrounds in these different contexts. These studies (Jalilzadeh et al., 2023; Ismael, 2023; Naraghizadehiz, Azizmalayeri, & KhalKhalaji, 2022) relied on the experience of teachers, and participants' self-reported experiences may be vulnerable to bias. The studies did not include other stakeholders, such as students, that may provide great information about

the challenges of online assessment. In addition, the studies did not focus on the effectiveness of alternative assessments on students' performance.

On the other hand, Suwaed (2018) revealed many insights into the effectiveness of alternative assessment on Libyan students' learning skills through portfolio assessment. The study had some limitations regarding sample size and the specific context, which could be addressed in future studies by integrating it into other courses to gain different results.

Although Tulgar (2017) found vital results in the study such as selfi@asseemnet is a suitable technique to for group and self-assessment in the class, it helped students motivation and helped students to enhance their speaking skills. There are some limitations: the implication and finding were limited to one limited course in the EFL context. The study integrated only one video and a written report, while it could use other tools to have different data and results. It affects the generalizability of other contexts and subjects.

Overall, these five studies found great results, but these limitations may affect their contribution and generalizability to other contexts and subjects.

5. Conclusion

The paper tries to report a thematic review of the different perspectives of the alternative assessment method in EFL classes published in 2017–2023, its effectiveness on the student's performance, and the challenges of the integration of alternative assessment. Based on the articles, there is a high positive perception and effect of integrating alternative assessment in the EFL context. It provides more opportunities for teachers and students. There were some challenges in employing alternative assessments in some settings.

The reviewed methods of alternative assessment from the chosen articles were considered useful based on the student's achievement in language learning skills. The reviewed studies' result presents a significant result. The students developed all their basic language skills. In addition, in terms of methodology, the qualitative method was the main method used mostly in the reviewed articles.

It is very important. Some limitations impact the findings of this review paper. This study is not an empirical study, as the relevant studies have been missed due to the selection criteria. This presents the comprehensive studies reviewed on the alternative assessment in EFL settings. The reviewer expected the selection of publications to reflect recent studies that have been investigated on the alternative assessment in EFL classes. Future researchers may include various numbers of studies and different alternative assessment methods in EFL settings. The purpose of this review was to provide a summary of the reviewed papers in terms of year of publication, types of methods,

different perspectives in different settings. Ii also highlighted how this method has integrated into English language learning process. It is a kind of source for educators, researchers, and teachers in the field.

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Challenges Kurdish EFL Learners Encounter When Learning the English Language Program: A Survey Study

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Abstract

English is a global language widely used for communication across the world, impacting various fields such as technology, science, business, and education. Kurdistan, a region located in the Middle East with its own independent government and educational system, has seen a growing interest in learning English. Kurdish EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners seek to advance in English for various reasons, including self-improvement, hobbies, and career opportunities. This study, conducted through a questionnaire survey with 110 students from different departments at Tishk International University, identifies the major challenges EFL learners face while learning the language. The study concludes that the primary issues include lack of confidence, speaking anxiety, and insufficient learning resources. By investigating these obstacles, the study recommends new strategies to support Kurdish learners in their journey to language proficiency.

Keywords: Kurdish, English as a Foreign Language, lack of confidence, language anxiety

1. Introduction:

English which is highly promoted by Kurdistan's educational system from elementary school through university. After graduating, it is crucial to know the English language for better career opportunities. This survey explores the challenges faced by Kurdish EFL learners, examining factors such as the reasons for their lack of confidence, the impact of teacher feedback, and their speaking anxiety, among other issues. The research aims to investigate the major challenges that Kurdish EFL learners face in the process of learning the language.

This research aims to analyze the challenges that Kurdish EFL learners encounter while learning the English language. To meet the aim, the study attempts to answer the following questions:

- What challenges do Kurdish EFL students face in achieving English language proficiency?

- What are the major reasons for a lack of confidence in language learning among Kurdish EFL learners?
- How do students' differences, such as culture and language proficiency level, affect the classroom environment?

Understanding these challenges is crucial to pinpoint the reasons why Kurdish students experience slow progress and thus develop strategies to address these issues. Implementing these strategies can create a better learning environment for Kurdish students. The results of the study can make a significant difference in educational outcomes if applied effectively. We aim to demonstrate that, despite Kurdistan's geographical location and the language gap between the first and second languages, there are always issues that can be addressed to improve learning outcomes.

2. Literature Review:

Learning English is important due to the opportunities which this language brings. However, there are challenges faced by EFL students in the world, and Kurdish EFL students are no exception. Motivation, speaking anxiety, and language anxiety are the main ones to name a few.

Motivation plays a crucial role in language advancement. We have types of motivation such as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. A study conducted by Moskovsky & Alrabi (2009) shows that enjoyment and challenges are the two highest ranges for intrinsic motivation of their learners. Many of their respondents enjoy learning the English language because they are interested in their culture and language. According to the research in Iran by Vatankhah & Tanbakooei (2014), the role of social support such as support from parents and teachers can affect learners a lot. They can motivate them extrinsically by giving them positive feedback on their language progress. They also believe that motivation plays a fundamental role in learning a foreign language.

Amoah and Yeboah (2021), in their research in China, showed that Chinese learners have a fair level of motivation, which means they push themselves to learn the English Language. Their study also mentioned that psychological factors like lack of motivation, fear of making mistakes, or fear of negative evaluation are more effective than linguistic factors for learning the English language. On the other hand, we have different perspectives too, Wallace (2020) mentions that most of the students have positive motivation toward learning the English language. In our research too, most of the Kurdish EFL learners are highly motivated to learn

another language. The research above showed that the level of motivation can be different among learners.

Language anxiety can affect learners everywhere. According to the research in Turkey Seyit Ahmet Capan & Harun Simsek (2012) They mention that FLA (Foreign Language Anxiety) has a lot of impact on learner's achievements. This anxiety can be the main reason for slow learning progress. The findings of Cutrone's (2009) research show that language anxiety can affect a lot on learners' abilities. Javid (2014) discovered that most students have fear during the exams and they recommend the teacher to give them support and positive feedback. In addition to that, Gerencheal and Mishra (2019) investigated the anxiety level among students. They found out that anxiety levels were medium to a high level, and also found out the anxiety level among female students is higher than male students. Anxiety can cause slow progress in students.

Another challenge that many learners face is speaking anxiety. According to the research Amoah and Yeboah (2021), one of the problems of Chinese EFL learners is the anxiety of speaking English. When they meet someone who speaks English, they immediately say that their English is bad or they're not good at speaking English. This shows that speaking takes a crucial place in language learning. The researchers, Ozturk and Gubuz (2014), mentioned that speaking is one of four language skills and students want to improve more. However, many reasons cause speaking anxiety. The findings from the research done by Toubot et al. (2017) highlight the impact of speaking anxiety. It indicates that fear of negative evaluation can affect learners creating speaking anxiety. Speaking is essential for some schools. According to Erdiana et al. (2020), junior high school students in Indonesia must master speaking skills and get 70-80 for passing.

3. Method:

3.1 Research Design:
This study employs a quantitative method that is designed to investigate the challenges Kurdish EFL learners encounter in achieving English language proficiency.

3.2 Participants:
The participants of this research included 110 learners from various departments at Tishk International University and Salahaddin University-Erbil. 91 of which were females and 19 were males.

3.3 Data Collection:

Data was collected through an online questionnaire survey. Google Forms link to the survey was distributed to the learners, allowing them to participate at their convenience.

3.4 Instrument:

The survey comprised 11 multiple-choice questions, including demographic questions such as age, gender, and department. Additionally, a "select all that apply" question was included. One Likert scale question was used to assess students' confidence in speaking English.

4. Results

A survey was designed and conducted among 110 learners. This survey holds questions from general to more specific questions. We wanted to identify the issues that Kurdish EFL learners face and the reasons behind each. Moreover, we found different points of view and perspectives about slow progress in their language proficiency.
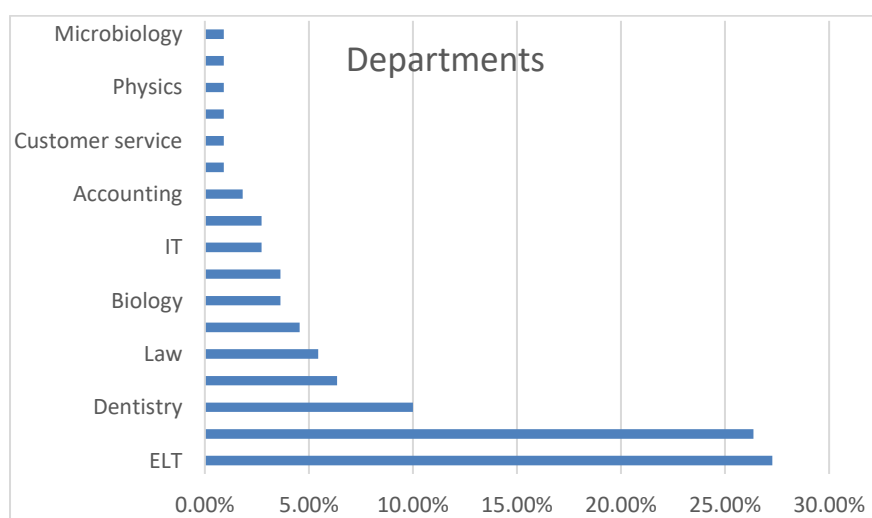
Figure 9. Departments where learners participated

Figure 1 shows that 30 learners are from the English Language Teaching (ELT) department which takes 27.27%. 29 students, who did not disclose their departments, participated in this survey to show that they are willing to learn the language. Students from various departments participated in the survey. The aim was to find the challenges ELT learners face. However, there were also learners from other departments who were ready to share the same experience.

Figure 10. Student's motivation

Figure 2 shows the reasons that motivate learners the most in learning a new language. Around 59 learners chose career opportunities. Moreover, around 34 people chose cultural interest, which shows that one of the reasons that make learners motivated is the cultural background. Hobbies are another reason for motivation for some people. However, it was the least factor to motivate the students to learn the language. Carrier opportunity was the most effective factor that motivated the learners to know another language. This pinpointed that many learners were motivated to learn the language to find a job after graduation. Others were motivated to learn English as a cultural interest and to use it when traveling.
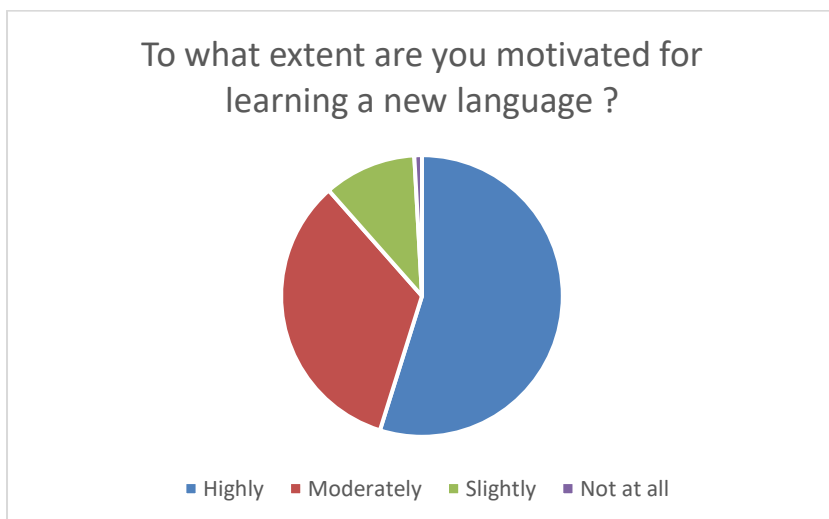
Figure 11. Motivation level

Figure 3. shows the extent of motivation of learners to learn a new language. 59 learners are highly motivated to learn a new language. On the other hand, 38 learners are moderately motivated for language learning. We have some learner who are slightly motivated to go out of their comfort zone and try something new. Apart from these, we have a learner who is not

motivated to learn a new language. Overall, the data shows that most of the Kurdish EFL learners are highly motivated to learn a new language, which makes them try harder and progress in their learning language journey.

Figure 12. Anxiety level

Figure 4 shows the level of anxiety learners have in speaking a foreign language. 15 learners indicated that they *always* feel anxious when it comes to speaking another language. Moreover, around 34 students *often* feel anxious about speaking. Almost half of the learners, 53, *sometimes* feel anxious which shows that the participants have less speaking anxiety. On the other hand, 8 learners *rarely* have anxiety when it comes to speaking another language.
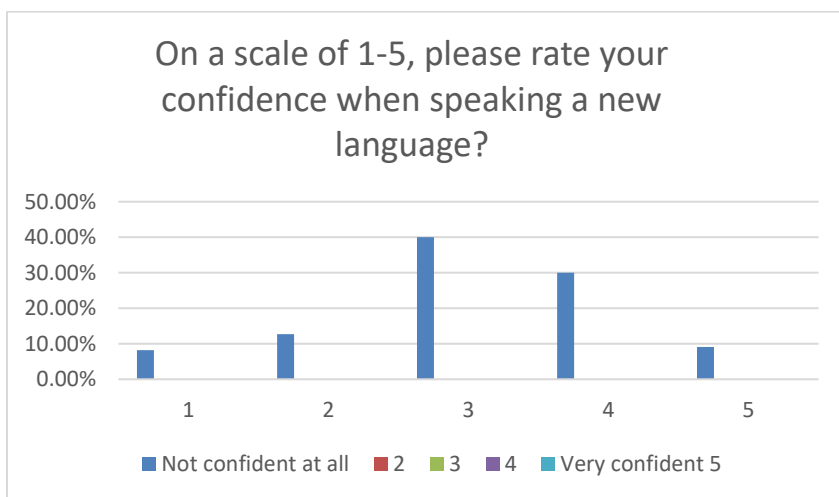
Figure 13. Confidence level in speaking

Figure 5 shows the confidence level among the participants on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being *not confident at all* to 5 being *very confident*. The aim was to know how the learners see themselves in terms of confidence in speaking. 8 learners, which is 8.2%., were *not very confident at all* when speaking a foreign language. Around 14 learners, which took 12.7%,

were *not confident*. Most learners, 44 learners which took 40%, selected *neutral*. On this rating scale, 33 learners who took 30% selected *confident* in speaking another language, which means among the participants we have learners who are confident in speaking and have less anxiety. In addition, we have 10 learners who selected *very confident*, meaning their level of confidence is higher and they believe on themselves with having less anxiety in speaking a foreign language.
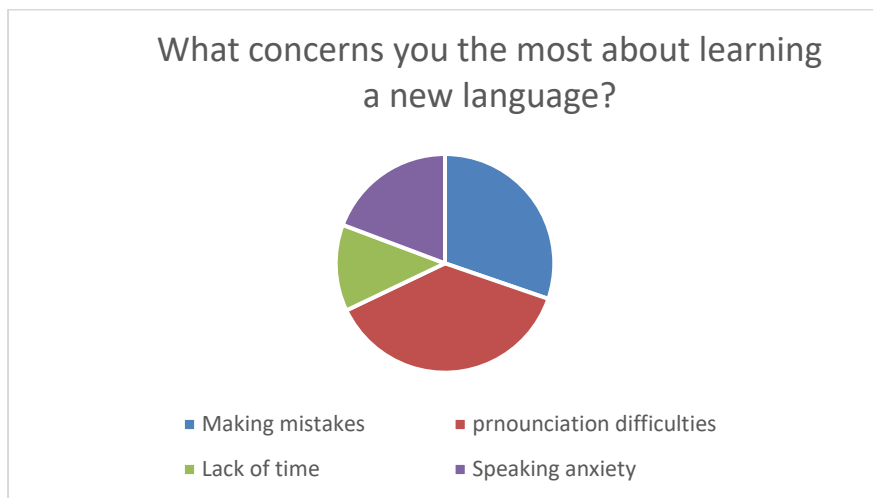
Figure 14. learners' concerns

Figure 6 shows the reasons that learners have concerns while learning a foreign language. One of the most selected answers is pronunciation difficulties, with around 41 learners saying that the main problem for them is having a hard time because of word pronunciation. At the same time, 33 learners, have a fear of *making mistakes*. However, we have 14 learners who think that *not having enough time* is a concern for them. 21 learners found *speaking anxiety* to be concerning for learning a new language.
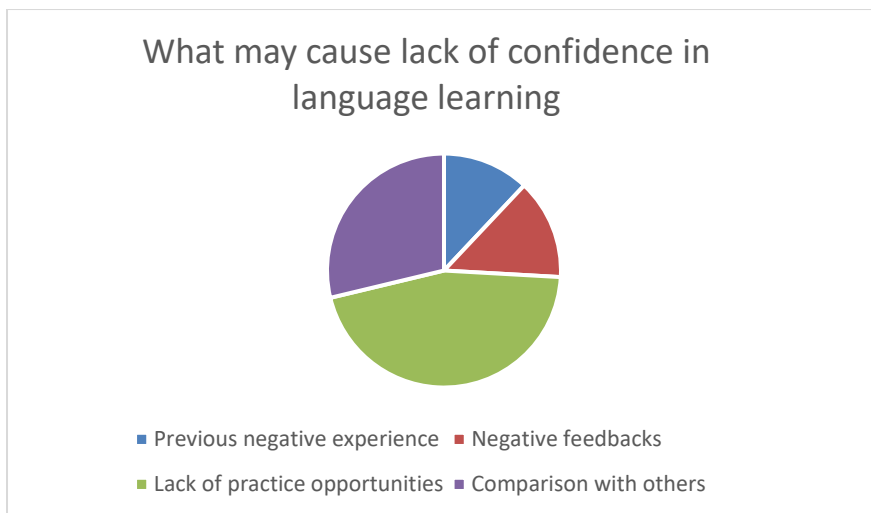
Figure 15. Reasons for lacking confidence among Kurdish EFL learners

Figure 6 shows the main reasons for a lack of confidence for learners in language learning. 13 learners mentioned that previous negative experiences caused not having enough confidence in language learning. 15 learners indicated that negative feedback can cause a lack of confidence for them. On the other hand, most of the learners mentioned that because of lack of practice opportunities, they were not confident in learning another language. Comparing with others could affect a lot as well. About 31 learners who participated in this survey said that comparing themselves with others caused them not to have enough confidence. Moreover, some learners pointed out that fear could make them lose confidence in language learning.
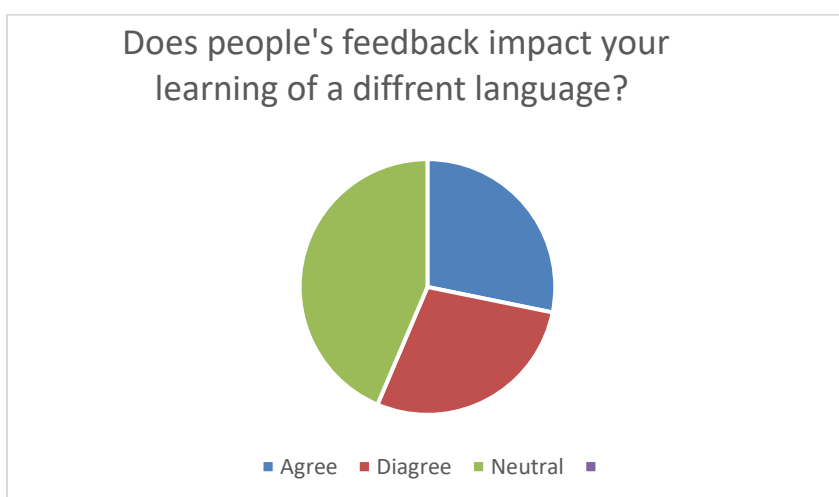
Figure 16. Learner's perception of external feedback

Around 48 learners stayed on the fence, believing that people's feedback could or could not influence their language learning. On the other hand, 31 learners disagreed that people's feedback would impact language learning. Another 31 had the opposite opinion, thinking that people could impact their language learning.
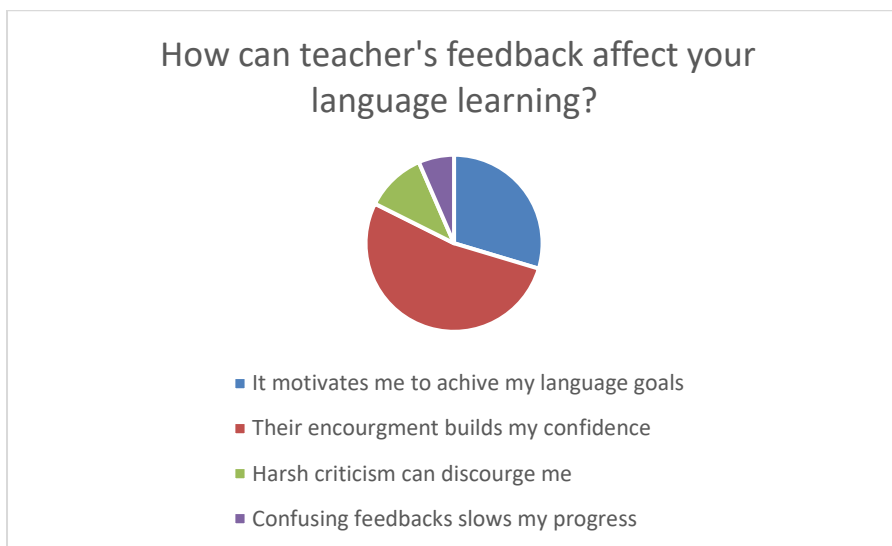
Figure 17. Learner's perception of teachers' feedback

Figure 9 shows how teacher's feedback impact learner's language learning. Teachers' influence on learning a language could be prominent. Among the 110 learners, 32 learners believe that the teacher's feedback can motivate them to achieve their language goals. Moreover, 57 learners think that the encouragement of the teacher can build their confidence. On the other hand, around 12 learners say that harsh criticism can discourage them, and finally, 7 learners mention that confusing feedbacks slow their progress. Overall, teachers' feedback can affect a lot on learner's progress.
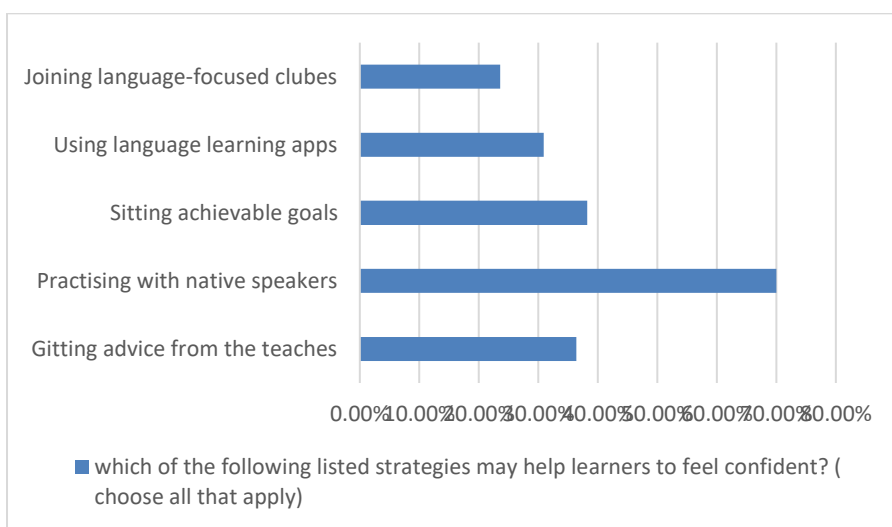
Figure 18. Strategies help learners feel more confident

Figure 10 is about learner's opinions about some strategies that may help them to gain more confidence while learning a language. For this purpose, we provided some strategies to help learners to feel more confident. Around 40 learners believe that getting advice from the teachers can help a lot to feel more confident in learning another language. On the other hand, 77 learners believe that practicing with a native speaker can make them progress faster and feel more confident through it. Moreover, 42 learners believe that if they set achievable goals, they can feel more confident in another language. While 34 learners mentioned that by practicing from language apps, they can gain more confidence. However, 26 learners believed that joining language-focused clubs makes them feel more confident.

5. Discussion:

The results of this study give us a better understanding of the challenges that Kurdish EFL learners face and what influences their language learning journey. We've identified key issues like pronunciation difficulties, speaking anxiety, and the fear of making mistakes that learners encounter when trying to learn a new language. While our research shares some similarities with past studies, particularly those focused on EFL learners, it stands out because it specifically looks at the challenges faced by Kurdish EFL learners.

The data shows that career opportunities are the biggest motivation for Kurdish learners to study English. However, many of them also struggle with speaking anxiety. Nearly half of the participants said they sometimes feel anxious when speaking a foreign language. Pronunciation difficulties and the fear of making mistakes also create significant obstacles for many learners. We found that a lack of confidence often comes from previous negative experiences, negative feedback, and not having enough practice opportunities.

When it comes to external feedback, learners had mixed opinions. Some felt it didn't have much impact on their learning, while others believed it could greatly affect their progress. However, most learners agreed that teacher feedback plays an important role in building their confidence.

The learners also identified some strategies that could help improve their language skills. Practicing with native speakers was the most popular choice because it provides real-world interaction, which they found valuable.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, this study highlights the various challenges Kurdish EFL learners face in their journey to achieve English language proficiency. Learning another language is important, especially for the career opportunities it offers. With 110 learners participating in this study, we identified three main challenges that students encounter when learning a foreign language:

- Language and speaking anxiety
- Difficulties with pronunciation
- Lack of vocabulary

To better support Kurdish EFL learners, it's recommended that teachers focus on creating a learning environment that reduces anxiety and encourages practice. Offering optional courses or language-focused clubs can also give learners more opportunities to build their skills and confidence. By putting these strategies into action, educators can help Kurdish learners overcome their challenges and achieve greater success in their language learning journey.

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The Metalinguistic Awareness of Kurdish EFL Undergraduates on Pragmatic Markers

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ABSTRACT

Pragmatics markers are linguistic units of multiple functions as they are used to meet different needs in both writing and speaking. Thus, this linguistic set is an inevitable part of learning for foreign language learners. Thus, from a metalinguistic perspective, they are supposed to be aware of identifying and using such markers relying on the knowledge they already provided in the class. Identifying this assumption, this paper investigates the metalinguistic awareness of Kurdish EFL students in manipulating the pragmatic markers in the English language. Recognizing the gaps related to this lexical area can guide EFL instructors to train their students to be better communicators in the English language. To meet these aims, a test has been designed in which the students were required to identify the appropriate pragmatic marker to use in a suitable context. The results indicate that EFL learners require more focused exposure to pragmatic markers to enhance their proficiency in both academic and everyday English communication. To achieve this, teachers need to highlight the materials with pragmatic content in the modules they teach to enable learners to consciously internalize them. To a reasonable extent, the EFL undergraduates could identify the pragmatic markers for being not part of the sentence structure, but their functions were not equally accessible to them.

Keywords: Metalinguistic, Pragmatics, Markers, Discourse, Communication, Knowledge.

1. DEFINITION & TERMINOLOGY

This study can be theoretically located in the frame of metalinguistic knowledge that encompasses the pragmatic subdomain of discourse structure. The metalinguistic awareness of EFL learners involves the learner's knowledge of the underlying system of the foreign language s/he learns. This awareness enables them to communicate in that language properly; an ability that requires reflection on the explicit and implicit knowledge of the language. This matter can be inferred from Malakoff (1999 as cited in Kola, 2018) defines *metalinguistic awareness* as "the awareness of the features of the language that gives the speakers of the language ability of not only comprehending or producing utterances but also checking the linguistic form and the

structure underlying the meaning of the utterances". Thus, this awareness mainly involves two basic types of activities: analysis of the linguistic strategies and adjustments of these strategies according to physical and linguistic contexts that one encounters in daily life. The latter type often encompasses the cognitive processes of monitoring and controlling which occur in the language learner's mind.

Pragmatic markers are, to a great extent, defined similarly by the linguists and those who investigated them. Keller (1979, p.220), for instance, defines them as "a set of signals in the conversationalist's speech, used to introduce level shifts within the conversation, or to prepare listeners for the next turn in the logical argument". Almost similarly, pragmatic markers are perceived by Blakemore (1987, p.125) as a group of "expressions used to indicate how the relevance of one discourse segment is dependent on another" and that "they signal semantic relationship between utterances" (Blackmore, p.2002). Not very differently but more swiftly, Schiffrin (1987, p. 31) defines such markers as "sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk". Though (Livenson 1983, cited in Fraser,1988, p.19) is credited to be the pioneering work that called for studying *discourse markers*, the first deep exploration of them is attributed to Schiffrin (1987), according to Fraser (1999, p.933). Fraser (ibid) comments on Schiffrin's perception of discourse markers stating that she finds them to serve as "discourse glue", which suggests that the major function of discourse makers is making the discourse parts coherent. Additionally, she asserts that some of these markers, without identifying them fully, are pragmatically used. Schiffrin (2015, p.192) clearly postulates their use is "multifunctional".

Taking the previous definitions into account, Heine *et al* (2021, p.7) coined a definition that sounded quite comprehensive involving all the characteristics of the pragmatic markers found in those definitions as stated below:

Discourse markers are (a) invariable expressions that are (b) semantically and syntactically independent from their environment, (c) set off prosodically from the rest of the utterance in some way, and (d) their function is metatextual, being anchored in the situation of discourse and serving the organization of texts, the attitudes of the speaker, and/or speaker–hearer interaction.

In light of the presented definitions, the procedural definition for pragmatic markers that this study adopts can be worded in this fashion: *pragmatic markers are words or phrases that are not essential syntactic elements in the structure of the discourse they appear in. They are used by the addressers to enable the addressees to smoothly navigate through the interaction and get the intended message accurately as they can guide the addressees to identify how the parts of the discourse are related and how the argument is directed.*

Technically, pragmatic markers are also known as *fillers, pragmatic operators/particles, discourse markers, discourse operators, discourse connectives, discourse signaling devices, discourse particles, phatic connectives, hedges, conversational greasers* (Fraser 1990 and 1999) and (Beeching 2016). Syntactically, according to Fraser (ibid, p.940), a pragmatic marker is "a subordinate conjunction" as it "cannot introduce a sentence which stands alone but requires that the previous independent clause be present". To Fraser (1996, p.322-323), the term *pragmatic marker* is used to refer to the nonpropositional meaning of the sentence, i.e. the potential message the interlocutor intends to convey. These markers signal the intended message and reveal the force of the utterance. Consider these examples:

      a. Luckily, Jack arrived on time and gave me a hand.

      b. In fact, I won't be able to join you.

In (**a**), in addition to the truth value that the propositional content of the utterance, an expressive function is indicated by "luckily", which reveals the speaker's pleasure for what Jack did. And, in (**b**), what the speaker adds to the propositional charge of the utterance is a representative force as s/he implicitly apologizes for not joining the addressee in a future activity. In both of the utterances, the pragmatic function is obviously expressed.

The diversity of perspectives from which pragmatic markers are addressed is apparently attributed to the different disciplines that are concerned with them. Pragmatic markers do interest syntax (Fraser, 1999 and Diewald 2006), semantics (Hansen, 2006) pragmatics (Fraser 1996), discourse markers (Schiffrin, 2001) as well as sociolinguistics (Muller, 2005 and Heine *et al*, 2021); each discipline approaches them according to the nature of its domain. The multicolored-views-based studies clearly signal the important role of pragmatic markers in both spoken and written communication. This vital role can be detected in Heine *et al'*s (ibid, p.2) postulation that pragmatic markers "tend to be transferred easily from one language to another – more than most other kinds of linguistic expressions". This statement does stimulate translation theorists to research pragmatic markers from their domain's perspective. It also suggests the universality of pragmatic markers.

It is worthy to mention that some scholars, like Aijmer and Simon-Vandenbergen (2006), identify pragmatic markers to be different from discourse markers arguing that the former type indicates the speaker's attitude about what s/he utters whereas the latter type is simply used to indicate coherence. In disagreement with this distinction, some other researchers, like Fraser (1996), generalize using the term of pragmatic markers arguing that discourse markers are a subclass of pragmatic markers. A third different view represented by some researchers, like Brinton (1996), prefer the term pragmatic marker without identifying the term of discourse

markers. In her review of Schiffrin's seminal book (1987), Traugott (1995, p.5) identifies the markers as "items which are all pragmatic" for they do "meta-textual work" which is realized in indexing the attitude of the use of such markers. This judgment sounds quite decisive and straightforward as if it target is the propositional content and the truth value of the utterance, they can be produced and accessed without including the markers. Thus, the pragmatic markers add to the utterance extra meaning, which is mostly non- propositional meaning. This view is confirmed by Biber et al. (2007, p.140) who believe that such markers "do not affect the propositional meaning of the clause, instead of having a purely pragmatic function".

Stemming from Hymes' (1971) emphasis on the role of what he called *communicative competence* to be equal in its importance to Chomsky's (linguistic) *competence,* this study attempts to shed light on the Kurdish EFL learners' knowledge of using discourse markers. In the current study, the term of pragmatic markers is preferred due to the fact that such linguistic devices do not only signal the concept of connection and, but they also indicate a procedural concept in the course of the discourse; they are unquestionably used for pragmatic reasons. As for the linguistic expressions used for cohesive purposes, transitions –as Meyer (2000, p.88) calls— can be an appropriate label for such a set whose sole function is achieving coherence throughout a text.

2. TYPES AND FUNCTIONS

In a brief, though there is no comprehensive taxonomy of discourse markers yet, Brinton (1996) highlights two main functions of pragmatic markers in terms of their textual uses:

(a) to mark various kinds of boundaries (to initiate or end a discourse or to affect a shift in topic), and

(b) to assist in turn-taking in oral discourse or "chunking" (marking of episode or paragraph) in written discourse.

and in terms of their interpersonal uses as:

(a) subjectively, to express speaker attitude, and

(b) interactively, to achieve intimacy between speaker and addressee (for example, by appealing to the addressee or expressing shared common knowledge).

(p.6)

The first type of function covers the written formal and academic uses of pragmatic purposes and the second involves the spoken uses as the examples to follow display. Fraser (2009, p.295-297) indicates a more detailed taxonomy of four main types with multiple subsections as shown in Table 1.

It is worth mentioning that pragmatic markers are similar in their functions in the discourse to signposts on the road. In other words, they indicate the speaker/writer's intended meaning rather than being part of the core of his/her message. Schiffrin (1987, p.55) approves this feature of pragmatic markers clearly saying that "the structure and meaning of arguments can be preserved even without markers"; simply because the markers are out of the scope of the core proposition capsulated in the linguistic units. Importantly, Schiffrin (2006, p.318) makes a simple yet valuable point about the functions of markers stating that they are "similar to their pragmatic meanings".

Urgelles-Coll (2010, p.28) highlights the role of pragmatic markers in stringing the linguistic units in a text and make them coherent stating that "discourse markers are a cohesion device in a text that would be a simple

group of sentences without them" and that "speakers use markers to

integrate forms, meanings, and actions to make sense of what is being said."

As for the frequent positions of pragmatics makers, Beeching (2016) identifies two normal positions stating that such markers "occur at the junction between speakers in turn-taking, frequently in utterance-initial or utterance-final positions. Fraser (1999) is more detailed in this point as he identifies four different fashions of behavior that mark the different sets of the English discourse markers- as he prefers to label them. He recognizes these issues related to the position of the markers in daily utterances:

1. A discourse marker may occur at the beginning of the second sentence.
- He woke up so early. However, he missed his bus to school.
2. In addition to beginning the sentence, a discourse marker may end it or occur within sentences.
- Jack is a distinctive businessman. He is, in spite of this, often sad.
- We knew it was too dangerous. We gave a try, nevertheless.
3. It needs to consider these cases:
   a. A discourse marker relates two independent sentences as seen in 1 above.
   b. A discourse marker joins two independent clauses.
- Tom is an engineer whereas his wife is a professional pianist.
   c. A particular set of discourse markers can introduce the dependent clause that it joins with the independent one. This set can also initiate the second related sentence.
- Because of her hard work, Janet was rewarded by the manager.
- Janet was rewarded by the manager because of her hard work.

- Janet worked hard. Because of that, she was rewarded by the manager.

    d.   This class of discourse markers can only initiate the dependent clause.

- I won't do it unless you explain it.

- Unless you explain it, I won't do it.

4. The discourse marker to be used should indicate the semantic relationship/s between the related utterances so as to keep them coherent in their sequence.

Importantly, pragmatic markers indicate their users' interpretation of what they would utter next to the marker. This point has been stressed on by Fraser (1999, p.891) saying that the discourse markers "signal a relationship between the interpretation of the segment they introduce" as Table-1 displays.

Table-1: Types & functions of pragmatic markers

Type	Function	Example in utterance
1. Basic Pragmatic Markers	To explicitly indicate the illocutionary force	-*Please*, sit down!
2. Commentary Pragmatic Markers: It has 5 subtypes:		
a. Assessment Markers		-I was late for the exam. *Luckily*, it was postponed for the following week.
b. Manner-of-Speaking Markers		-*Frankly speaking*, I can't help you, Jack.
c. Evidential Markers	To signal a comment on the basic message	- A: Will he go? B: *Certainly*, he will go.
d. Hearsay Markers		A: Is the game still on? B: Reportedly, the game was postponed because of rain.
e. (Non)Deference Markers		-Sir, you must listen to me. - You jerk, where do you think you're going?

DISCOURSE MARKERS. There are 3 classes:	To signal a relation between the discourse segment which hosts them and the discourse segment, perhaps produced by another speaker.	
a. Contrastive Discourse Markers		-Mark, a good guy. *On the contrary*, he's a jerk
b. Elaborative Discourse Markers		-I don't think it will fly. *Anyway*, let's give it a chance.
c. Inferential Discourse Markers		- Sue isn't here. *As a result,* we won't be able to see the video
4. Discourse Structure Markers. There are three subclasses:	Signal an aspect of the organization of the ongoing discourse	
a. Discourse Management Markers		- *In summary*, the economy has not flourished under the Bush administration.
b. Topic Orientation Markers		-That's all there is to say on this for now. *Returning to my previous topic*, I would like to point out that…
c. Attention Markers		-We must leave right away. *Look*, can't you pay attention to what I'm saying

See (Fraser 2009, p.295-297)

3. METHODOLOGY

To collect data to diagnose the student's awareness of English pragmatic markers in terms of their uses and functions, two tests have been used. The markers used in the test have been selected according to the participants' academic level and their expected frequent exposure to such markers. To assess the learners' recognition awareness, a discrete-point test has been utilized, which is a multiple-choice question of 15 items with three options to select the answer

Another, to probe the learners' awareness of the pragmatic function of the markers, the test has been made up of another question that included ten pragmatic markers in sentences. The test-takers task was to identify each marker and indicate its pragmatic function. For the validity of the test's ability to meet the aims of the study, a jury of three experts has been consulted to review the content of the test. Later, the test was piloted with a group of ten senior undergraduates to assess its reliability. Some slight adjustments were made and the last version of the test was then approved by the jury.

The test was taken by 30 seniors at English Department, Charmo University. The participants were all regular morning female and male students in the academic year 2022-2023. They took the test in person on campus in a lecturing hall at the Department of English Language. Thus, due to the fact of being of the same grade, age, and academic institution, the participants were selected according to convenience sampling. Additionally, all the participants' first language was Kurdish—living in the governorate of Sulaymaniyah, Kurdistan-Iraq.

4. Data analysis and discussion of the results

The results have shown that the performance of the participants was almost good in general as the average of the correct answers to all the items of the multiple-choice question was about 65.84%, whereas 34.16 failed to identify the majority of the appropriate choice. This indicates a promising index about the students' awareness of meanings and functions of pragmatic markers, which implies that the test-takers have acquired considerable knowledge in their classes about such markers. In light of the researcher's knowledge of the curriculum of the department where the students study, the acquisition of this knowledge has occurred unconsciously via the students' exposure to different linguistic and literary texts at their different academic levels at the department.

Before exploring the details related to the test-taker participants, it could be appropriate to demonstrate the model answer in the table below:

Table.2 Question's items and their correct answers

Question	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15

Answer	A	C	A	C	B	C	A	A	C	B	A	C	B	A	C

As for the details of participants' replies to the questions in figures, they are briefed in Table.2.

Table.3 Test-takers' performance in Test-1

Question	Choice A	Choice B	Choice C
1.	95%	0.0 %	5.0%
2.	20%	17.5 %	62.5%
3.	82.5%	0.0%	17.5%
4.	15%	7.5%	77.5%
5.	20%	42.5%	37.5%
6.	2.5%	12.5%	85%
7.	40%	57.5%	2.5%
8.	92.5%	2.5%	5.0%
9.	5.0%	15%	80%
10.	72.5%	20%	7.5%
11.	25%	17.5%	57.5%
12.	15%	12.5%	72.5%
13.	7.5%	77.5%	15%
14.	35%	50%	15%
15.	17.5%	32.5%	40%

Presenting how the test-takers have replied to questions' items individually may provide a better insight into their awareness of the use of English pragmatic markers. Relatedly, the first item in the question was answered correctly by almost all the students as 95% of them selected the right option. The question stated as follows:

- **I get up late at weekends, _____ during cold weather.**
  a. including   b. particularly   c. similarly

Probably, the familiarity of the content of the item to the students had its positive role in this success as most of the students wake up late on weekends and holidays.

The performance of the test-takers declined in the second item, which was correctly answered, choosing option C, by 62.5% of the subjects. The item had been realized by the following incomplete sentence:

She rarely drinks, _____, not during the week.

    a. particularly   b. in other words   c. or at any rate

The wrong answers were almost equally divided between the other two potions—A and B. Lack of exposure to the correct choice, compared to the other two, could be the reason for the incorrect choices made by about 38% of the participants.

The third item in the question has been correctly answered by the majority of the test-takers. The context could have been quite helpful to identify the appropriate marker to complete the sentence as the two cities' names could have drawn their attention to the marker, *namely.*

  - The study also mentions two other cities, _____ Singapore and Shanghai.

    a. namely   b. in other words   c. to be accurate

Good performance has also colored the fourth by being answered properly by 77.5% of the test-takers. Surprisingly, though the test-takers were not as exposed to this marker, *not to say,* as to the other two alternatives. It could be justified that their awareness of the inappropriateness of the two markers has provided a clue to identify the correct option to fill in the sentence gap. Thus, the test-takers seem to be conscious of the context here, which is a positive indicator of their performance.

 - Her manner was rather offhand, _____ rude.

    a. at least   b. particularly   c. not to say

The test-takers were not satisfied in their answers to the fifth item as only 42.5% of them selected the right option. Being enclosed by two commas because of its position, the correct choice, *strictly speaking*, could not be identified by the test-takers depending on their vocabulary knowledge or on the general linguistic context of the missing marker. This may be understood better when knowing that Kurdish EFL learners' knowledge of using English punctuation is not good enough and this issue is one of the challenges that they face in their writings as evident in several studies like Aljaf, Ahmed & Salim (2021), Omar & Barzani (2022) and Taqwfeeq (2019).

   - The tomato is not,_____, a vegetable even though it is commonly thought of as one.

    a. by contrast   b. strictly speaking   c. likewise

Apparently, the sixth item has not been challenging for 85% of the test-takers who successfully responded to it. The reason is not difficult to identify as this pragmatic maker, *for example,* is one of most frequent markers EFL learners come across in the texts they may read.

- Many cities, Hong Kong _____, have extensive mass transit systems.

   a. say   **b. including**   **c. for example**

Only 40% of the test-takers made the right choice and 57.5% selected B option. Thinking the adjectival phrase next to the pragmatic marker paraphrases the adjective *outrageous,* the participants must have thought the option of *in other words* would fit best.

- Prices at the mall were outrageous, _____, considerably higher than at other shopping centers.

   a. or at least   **b. in other words**   **c. not to say**

The fluctuation of the participants' performance is crystal clear when it comes to item-8 as 92.5% of them have responded correctly. Making a connection between the names *USA and UK* and the pragmatic marker *namely* must have triggered their appropriate choice. This proves the students' use of the linguistic context to get what a pragmatic may mean or function in a sentence or an utterance.

- A number of countries, _____ the USA and the UK, have banned smoking in restaurants.

   a. including   **b. namely**   **c. viz.**

The ninth item was responded appropriately by 80% of the test-takers, which is a very good indicator. Some of the participants, 15% of them, chose the B-option, which is wrong, probably thinking that the marker *so* would collocate with *many,* which is following the space.

- Everyone knows that cigarettes cause disease. Why,_____, do many people continue to smoke?

   a. for example   **b. so**   **c. then**

What is interesting to notice is that the sentence is simple lexically and syntactically, yet it was not easy for 20% of the test-takers to identify the correct pragmatic maker. This suggests that the EFL learners need to be cautiously exposed to the sets of pragmatic markers so that they can use them properly and control them metacognitively.

Another time, the curve of the participants declines when describing their responses to item-10 as only 20% of the answers were correct. 72% of the test-takers thought that option-A fit best.

- He needs to go on a diet, _____, cut down on sweets.

   a. that is to say   **b. or at any rate**   **c. likewise**

Similarly, the participants' performance was poor at answering the eleventh item of the question; 25% of them could identify the right pragmatic marker, 57.5% chose the second option and 17.5 selected the third.

- Her report highlighted what we all know, _____ that there have been problems with distribution.

    a. viz   **b. for example**   **c. in particular**

Lack of knowledge can be the most probable reason for the student's failure to answer the two items, 10 and 11knowing that the pragmatic markers *at any rate* and *viz* are the least common markers to the participants compared to the other ones. Being unaware of these makers' meaning and function has made the test-takers evade them.

The curve of the participants' performance rises considerably in their answer to item 12 which depicts the following context:

- English is often said to be the most commonly spoken language although _____, this is not true as Chinese and Spanish have more native speakers.

    a. at least   **b. in other words**   **c. strictly speaking**

72% of the participant have identified the most appropriate choice, which suggests a positive indication that the students were able to access the content of the pragmatic marker they opted and it how it would properly bridge the gap between the two clauses in the sentence. The rest of the participants have almost equally been divided in selecting the wrong options realized by the alternatives of **a** and **b**.

A similar positive case is seen in item -13. The participants' performance keeps climbing up the scale higher as the positive ascending curve hits 77.5 % by selecting the marker of **b**, whereas 7.5% chose **a** and 15% chose **c**. The item stated the following:

- I'd like to thank our local office staff, _____David Evans, Jackie Robbins and Mike Smith.

    a. that is to say   **b. namely**   **c. for instance**

Negative performance is seen with the participants in doing item-14 and item-15 as only 50% have successfully selected the best choice in the former and 40% could do item-15.

Item-14 sketched out the following context:

- This chapter focuses on three elements that are essential for a successful product, _____ good design, quality materials and effective marketing.

    a. namely   **b. for example**   **c. in addition**

Being in a list-fashion, the terms mentioned after the space have made the participants think that they are examples for the three elements not their names. Thus, 50% of the students believed that *for example* was the best choice and only 35% of them made the correct selection. The selection of the remaining 15% seemed to be based on poor reasoning and weak comprehension. On the other hand, apparently, the participants could not identify the relationship between the two sentences, probably due to lack of knowledge that *Cantonese* is a language and that they could identify the comparison involved between the two languages. This clearly indicates that language proficiency is a fundamental factor in using or identifying pragmatic markers in a language. Item-15 has involved the following context:

- The Thai language has five tones. Cantonese, _____ , uses tone to convey meaning.

   a.   by contrast   b.   for example   c.   similarly

40% of the participants filled in the gap correctly. However, 35% of the participants thought that Cantonese is an example of Thai language.

To sum up, to make their choices, the participants have been attracted to the pragmatic markers that seemed to be more frequently used in their academic environment. Moreover, the participants' linguistic proficiency, especially the lexical aspect, could enable them to certain extent to identify the pragmatic markers in the sentences and to access the function of many of them.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In the light of the results this study has arrived at, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. It could be generally judged that the students' awareness of the usage of pragmatic markers is fairly acceptable, especially if we statistically learn that the correct answers of the test was 65.84% in gross. However, the Kurdish EFL undergraduate face difficulty in identifying the functions of such markers, especially the ones that they are less exposed to. This deficiency may negatively affect their ability to use or comprehend such markers.

2. Lack of exposure to pragmatic markers can have a considerable negative impact on the EFL learners' ability to accurately access the using and identify the concept/s of the marker.

3. Cognitively speaking, a lack of knowledge about the English-speaking world and how life there is experienced may influence the performance of the EFL learners' use of English language, especially the culture-flavored parts.

4. Pragmatic markers are inseparable sets from the language, which makes an extra challenge for EFL learners to speak fluently and write appropriately. This point requires the EFL teacher to address such sets in their instruction and highlight the importance of their inclusion in whatever they assign the students more to establish these markers in their use of English.

5. The EFL learners need to understand that using pragmatic markers is crucial to sound authentic and clear in their use of English; pragmatic markers are not simply used to decorate what is written or uttered.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

To enhance the awareness of the EFL Kurdish undergraduates of English pragmatic markers, teachers are required to highlight such markers whenever used in the class whether in spoken or written discourses. Not only the semantic aspects of the marker should be focused on but also their pragmatic functions in the contexts they appear in. This requirement can be authentically activated in the classes of conversation and academic writing. Additionally, in classes that involve literary modules, especially novels and short stories, the teachers can draw the learners' attention to the use of the pragmatic markers throughout the narrative texts they teach. The learners' frequent authentic exposure to the various sets of such linguistic signposts throughout their academic journey will undoubtedly internalize their semantic and pragmatic characteristics and use them precisely.

Further research can be conducted on pragmatic markers in terms of their occurrence in the series of English textbooks used in the English classes at primary and high schools in Kurdistan region and how the teachers address them.

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Language Dynamics in Zora Neale Hurston's *Spunk*: Exploring Code-Switching

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ABSTRACT

The interaction of language and cultural identity is central to the themes portrayed in the Harlem Renaissance literature. Zora Neale Hurston's short story Spunk illustrates the cultural element and interaction among Blacks during the Harlem Renaissance. This paper aims to focus on the language dynamics, specifically code-switching, in the short story *Spunk*. As part of her depiction of her characters' multilingual identities, Hurston emphasizes code-switching between Standard English and African American Vernacular English within the context of what may be characterized as quotidian discursivity. She also makes connections between the code of speech and issues of class, power, and subject positioning. The study is mainly qualitative and text-based; it utilizes code-switching to understand the motivations, interpersonal dynamics, and inner struggles of the characters. Hurston was already using language to portray the characters' socioeconomic positions and identity problems as they negotiated a racist society, according to the research, she effectively portrays a more sophisticated and perceptive understanding of language as a tool for plot advancement and symbolic cultural history definition in the play. From a perspective on the power dynamics in language and culture, this paper concludes that Hurston had a significant impact on the growth of African American literature and that her distinctive depictions of the Black experience remain influential.

Keywords: African American English, Code Switching, Cultural Identity, Language Dynamics, *Spunk*, Zora Neale Hurston

INTRODUCTION

Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960) is one of the most recognized African American writers, anthropologists, and folklorists, associated with the period of the Harlem Renaissance. The subjects of many of her works are racially charged and explain the aspects of the African American culture and folk beliefs, as well as the lives of Black people in the early 20th century (Hurston, 1925). Among the most noteworthy is *Spunk*, a short story, which was published for the first time in 1925 in *Fire!* a literary magazine of the Harlem Renaissance.

It is impossible to discuss the true pearls of Hurston's *Spunk*, leaving aside the language factors that predominate in the story. Language variation is defined as the use, as well as interpretation, and control of language, in each society or culture (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes, 2006). Language dynamics refers to the ever-changing nature of language and within the context of Hurston's work language, dynamics is relevant in the relationship between characters, their reasons to do something, and who they are analyzing the literary work of Hurston's subtext use of language and more specifically, the act of code-switching is of paramount importance to the text's dynamics. One of the aspects associated with language dynamics is known as code-switching, in which individuals use more than one language/variety in one conversation or interaction. Bilingualism is the frequent interchange of one language for another based on social, cultural, or situational occurrences that are common in a multilingual society. However, about African American literature, code-switching is one way through which the linguistic backgrounds of Black Americans are depicted in a literal manner through switching between different linguistic forms to negotiate their identity and interaction in various social practices (Mufwene, 2001).

Code-switching, which can be defined as the use of two or more languages or varieties within a conversation, is a widely observed practice in the world's multilingual population. Considering the discussion of African American literature, code-switching draws people's attention to the complex and rich language background of black people. In *Spunk*, code-switching and language conversion help to understand the characters' status, intentions, and personalities. Consequently, this research intends to investigate language dynamics, particularly code-switching in Hurston's *Spunk*, towards the enhancement of comprehension of African American culture, identity, as well as storytelling during the Harlem Renaissance.

An example of how the portrayal of language dynamics and code-switching enriches characters and their relations in *Spunk* by Hurston is the following: The characters' speech serves the author, imitating the contemporary social higher and lower classes' language, revealing cultural identity as well as emotional condition. As the intricate nature of the characters' love lives, the language used by the characters provides insight into the characters' personalities and the internal conflicts going on (Rickford, 1999).

This paper aims to explore the role of language dynamics, specifically code-switching, in Zora Neale Hurston's short story *Spunk* and how it reflects the cultural identity and social dynamics of African American characters in the Harlem Renaissance era. By studying the language dynamics in *Spunk*, this paper contributes to a deeper understanding of Hurston's

portrayal of African American culture and identity, as well as the impact of language on character development and storytelling in literature.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This part examines various studies on code-switching in language dynamics, focusing on Zora Neale Hurston's *Spunk*. It explores the linguistic aspects, character analysis, and historical development of code-switching within the context of African American literature, highlighting its significance in the exploration of cultural identity and social dynamics in literary works.

In their sociolinguistic analysis of conversational code-switching in a multilingual society, Xinyi, Zhong, Ang, & Sharmini (2023) designed the study. This paper narrowed down its focus to investigate the available scholarly articles produced on code-switching in the sociolinguistic context between 2010 and 2022 using PRISMA 2020 guidelines. There are recent trends observed based on the current literature and might continue up to 2019 in terms of code-switching research articles, which primarily emphasize the factors that affect code-switching but are restricted to the micro factors only.

In a study, Valentin Dragoș Biro (2019) discusses linguistic aspects in Zora Neale Hurston's *Spunk*, where the aspect of code-switching as a subject in linguistic development and advancement is also talked about. The study explores how language is defined, with reference to the two processes: static systems and how the actuality of communication needs move the language. This article seeks to only define linguistics as the history of these evolutions, drawing attention to several views concerning languages and how language and society fit into the liberty of the speakers.

Another research has been carried out on this incredible story. In Ratna's (2019) discussion, she examines the concept of courage with the three main characters of the short story *Spunk* by Hurston. The types of courage portrayed by the characters in the study are apparent courage in a shivering man, courage gained after banishing fear, and courage in decision-making by the feminine character. The presented literary analysis of the contextual meaning of Magnolia's *Spunk* shows how this term is reflected through these varieties of courage.

Abdullah, Mefareh and Almelhi (2020) conducted a meta-analysis paper under study that focuses on the topic of code-switching within Zora Neale Hurston's *Spunk* employing sociolinguistic and language pedagogy approaches to aim for synthesizing and critically evaluating the prior research in the current field. The approach of research integration is used to integrate findings of various primary research studies which include both qualitative and quantitative cross-sectional, longitudinal, cross-contextual, and cross-country studies, case studies, and systematic reviews to create an overall perception of code-switching in the context

of language teaching and learning. To this end, the paper also explores the historical development of code-switching in linguistic theories, uses, teachers' perceptions, and classroom practices together with some repercussions for the philosophy of EFL instruction.

Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (2006) focus on the aspects of American English and the differences or rather the dialects between them, talking about which is the culture and variety like Hurston's *Spunk*, African American Vernacular English (AAVE). Analyzing the nature of language variation and change, Mufwene (2001) utilizes the theories of ecological and evolutionary principles in the linguistic professionalism of the twist ending of *Spunk* by Hurston while Bloom (2009) has given proper usage and appreciation of Hurston's use of vernacular and her concern for dialectal language, in her literature. In Hook's (1993) *Spunk*, the author discusses folklore of the Harlem Renaissance, and language-code switching as dynamic elements that enrich the plot and the real African American life experience. In Davis (2018) the author aims to find out how African American youth use code-switching as a tool to assert their identity hence establishing the role of language dynamics with regards to identity in different linguistically diverse societies.

These studies collectively provide a foundation for understanding language dynamics and code-switching in African American literature, but the present research on *Spunk* will specifically focus on how these elements contribute to the exploration of cultural identity and social dynamics in Hurston's work, filling a gap in the existing literature by offering a detailed analysis of code-switching within the narrative.

3. METHODOLOGY

This article employs a qualitative study of language dynamics in Zora Neale Hurston's *Spunk*, in which the researchers use textual analysis of the dialogue and plot to look for examples of code-switching. This approach involves closely examining the language choices and patterns in the text to identify when and how characters switch between different languages, dialects, or registers. The reasons for the switches, the effect on the overall narrative and characterization of the speakers, and any cultural or social implications of the language choices.

4. THE RELEVANCE OF LANGUAGE DYNAMICS AND ITS IMPACT ON CULTURAL IDENTITY IN LITERATURE

Language is a means to convey information and communicate but it is also a means to divulge and expose even the essence of one's culture and social context. In the context of the themes of the narrative, there is a shift between (African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and Standard English as the individuals of the story illustrate the dynamic ways in which African Americans switch between languages. Other concepts that can be used in the explanation of

code-switching include the sociolinguistic phenomenon of style shifting, as is evident in the characters' shifting between the standard and variants of English as they try to respond to the multiple facets of their social reality (Rickford & Rickford, 2000).

Language is an important medium that helps in the presentation of the complex nature of personal and social selves, which determine the cultural encounter. In *Spunk*, Hurston plots a very complicated story that seems to address the way language and ethnicity advance among the African American characters. The fluidity of AAVE and Standard English as evidenced by the characters' use of both dialects is an appropriate reminder that the construction of the social world as well as mutual relations depends on language only as a strategy. From the sociolinguistic point of view, the use of code-switching in the *Spunk* can be discussed and applied to the problem of language representing cultural immersion and identification, as well as other processes occurring in the frameworks of the cultural minority.

5. LANGUAGE DYNAMICS IN SPUNK

The unique African American English that Hurston describes in *Spunk* is a hallmark of Black culture and language. It is possible to conclude that through the prompt analysis of code-switching, scholars can mark out how the African American people define the existence of their communities and struggle for their cultural identity. This finding aligns with the work of Xinyi, Zhong, Ang, & Sharmini (2023), who stress the use of codeswitching as a way of cultural identity in the frameworks of a multicultural society. From theoretical approaches like style-shifting, the ecological theory of language development, and the folk culture of Black Americans, the idea of how colors work in Hurston's pieces of writing can be regarded as highly significant (Hurston, 1995).

Her collection of short stories is filled with vibrant characters and explores the theme of African American identity remarkably. This is demonstrated through an examination of the short story *Spunk*. Concerning the variety known as AAVE, code-switching can therefore capture the multi-faceted language and identity overlay that many Black Americans go through. With reference to the aspects analyzed, this paper has shown that Hurston's focus on folklore and Vodou in *Spunk* can also be connected to her consideration of the usage of language. The characters' code-switching can be discussed as the impact of their cultural setting in which extralinguistic creativity and linguistic shift are viewed as the credo of the interaction with the roots (Gates, 1989). This is also seen in Bloom (2009), where as much as he admires Hurston's use of vernacular as a way of recording African American experiences, he sees this as something that was done well.

In the given short story *Spunk*, Hurston uses terminology as effective tools in portraying the aspects of race, individuality, and tradition. As earlier illustrated, Hurston employs AAVE and code-switching to depict authentically Black people's flexibility in language difference within society. In a similar vein, Valentin Dragoș Biro (2019) states that Hurston's work shows the processes of language and its change depending on social factors. In understanding the social functions engendered by characters' code-switching, readers also get to appreciate how language forms the means through which culture is performed and the human need and desire to remain connected to one's tradition and heritage (Davis, 1993).

Spunk is about the male protagonist, Spunk Banks, a brave man who arrogantly takes Joe Kanty's wife, Lena Kanty, as his own. Lena likes Spunk over her husband, who is weak and shy. After being provoked by the other men in the pub, Joe, armed with a razor, goes alone to find Spunk, who has a large gun. Easily Spunk kills Joe, claiming he was sneaking behind him and threatening his life. After Joe's death, Spunk feels haunted by a black bobcat, which makes him anxious. Spunk dies after falling over a circle saw in the sawmill, claiming that the late Joe shoved him from behind.

The characters' multifaceted identities generate tension and represent power distribution. The story's communicative styles are based on oral storytelling, resembling songs, sermons, and folktales. Surprisingly, language is also used manipulatively to swerve the events wherein the story is situated. From the interaction between Joe and Spunk, one can understand how language determines power dynamics. The dialect is therefore one of the most evidently observable aspects of the language dynamics used in the text. To convey the white non-southern characters, Hurston does not use dialect, but to portray the African American characters and their way of speaking in the rural South, she employs the features of a dialect. The main reason for that is not only in the fact that the use of dialect immediately brings depth and realism into the conversation, but it also allows the reader to get a sense of the cultural and regional specificities of the story setting. This technique corresponds with Wolfram and Schilling-Estes' study of the dialect to depict cultural differences in American English.

For instance, readers easily recognize the use of the Southern African American dialect in basic words such as "dat" instead of "that," "papa" instead of "daddy/father," "wid" instead of "with," and "ain't" instead of "isn't." *Spunk* is filled with the vernacular and colloquialisms that were prevalent in the rural Southern United States during the early 20th century. Popular expressions and slang utilized by the characters bring the tone of the setting and the spoken language very much in line with such cultural taboos as those predominant for the described era and location. Not only do these language components contribute to the creation of a

specified environment, but these are also huge regarding the characters' personalities, status, and backgrounds. This is similar to the opinions of Hook (1993), talking about the factors of folklore and language interactivity within Hurston's works. In this sense, the readers can get some insight into the educational backgrounds of the individuals, their origin, and their relationship with one another through their choice of words and the pattern of their dialogue.

Besides, the use of colloquial language creates the tone of the story as funny, tense or accompanied by the special rhythm typical for Southern fiction. In totality, such linguistic features go a long way in the enrichment and realism of Hurston's story and hence improve the reader's appreciation and understanding of the characters and the society they live in.

In *Spunk* dialect is used by Hurston intentionally and purposely to enhance the story as it reflects actual Black reality in America. Not only do the phrases "Looka theah, folkses!" and "Theah they go, big as life an' brassy as tacks" (Hurston, 1995, p. 943) represent acts of code-switching but also, fundamentally, assert the existence of African American pop culture which, despite counterargued pressures from the wider world towards the standardization of the English language, continues to thrive. Such switching, therefore, portrays the flexibility of the characters to move between different linguistic/cultural arenas, as well as their identity. This is evident in the following section indicates a change in the mode of speaking as it turns to a normal rural African American Vernacular English (AAVE) typical. The use of AAVE in *Spunk* was to portray the unpolished and loose language that was (and still is) used by black people, especially those in the rural areas of southern United States of America.

In another instance, Hurston uses AAVE as a way of embodying her characters and depicting the culturally rich and complex social relations in that society. For example, "Say, Joe, how's everything up yo' way? How's yo' wife?" and "She jus' passed heah a few minutes ago goin' thata way," (Hurston, 1995, p. 943) shows the characters' identity issue more clearly. Not only does it make the words spoken sound more realistic, but it also helps to make sure that the antagonism and the struggle between the characters are easily seen. Thus, Hurston captures the richness of African American experience in the early years of the 20ᵗʰ century by portraying language as a way of facilitating relationships while at the same time being instrumental in people's interactions with each other.

It is worth noting that Walter Thomas employs the features of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) to encode his character's rural Southern background when he says, "Now pee-eople!" (Hurston, 1995, p. 943). This phrase is a stretched-out callout which is used to gain the attention of people within his surroundings. The highly stretched pronouncing of 'people' to 'pee-eople' is purely an ornamental use of language which underlines the speaker's

determination to include all people in the conversation or in the given situation. The stretching of the word and the use of an exclamation mark are typical for AAVE; terms are elongated in order to stress, to create rhythmic patterns, as well as to involve the audience in the communicative process. This phrase is comparable to a call-and-response tradition used by the African Americans. It's not only a statement Walter is making in this line, but he is begging for the attention of the community and expecting them to pay heed. In the rural South everyone was involved in the conversations because that was the way of life.

In the story, the character portrayal as well as the general composing style is tantamount to the African American oral narration. Its choice also has a certain rhythmic feature, like the beat of spoken poetry and folklore songs. For instance, when Walter and Elijah talk about the death of Spunk, they talk melodiously, "Whut bob-cat, 'Lige? Ah ain't heered 'bout none." Elijah (Lige) replies, "Ain't cher? Well, night befo' las' was the fust night Spunk an' Lena moved together an' jus' as they was goin' to bed" (Hurston, 1995, pp. 952-3).

This rhythmic element is not just a matter of style; it directly relates to the African American community's ethnic roots, stressing the fact that most stories were orally transmitted, having passion, beats, and vivid descriptions. The flow or enunciation of this pattern is one of Hurston's strengths and gives an engaging read to the piece. For instance, Elijah states, "Looka theah, folkses… theah they go, big as life an brassy as tacks" (Hurston, 1995, p. 943). This is a nicely chosen phrase which can be easily read out loud, one gets the impression that such a phrase was meant to be read aloud rather than inactively, silently. The melody of her writing takes the readers in maintaining the grip on her creation and deafening them to the outside world in the process. This rhythmic flow enhances the narration by injecting it with energy, emotion, and authenticity. Hurston's rhythmic writing in *Spunk* demonstrates the tenacity and innovation of African American culture. Despite the persecution and hardships endured by the people in the narrative, their voices are infused with vigor and vitality by Hurston's rhythmic prose. The rhythmic story line of Hurston does not merely amuse but educates viewers about the subtlety and heritage of the Afro-American population urging the readers to pay heed and feel the impact of the tale.

When Hurston intends to describe the character of Spunk through African American dialect, she does it creatively when Walter Thomas states, "But that's one thing Ah likes about Spunk Banks—he ain't skeered of nothin' on God's green footstool—nothin!" (Hurston, 1995, p. 943). The abbreviation "Ah" instead of "I" is a phonetic which is a shortened way of representing a Southern drawl which is typical of AAVE. This pronunciation is characteristic for rural Southern speech wherein the vowels tend to be pronounced more voluminously and the

consonants are at least partially voiced or changed. Additionally, the phrase 'ain't skeered of nothin' also falls under AAVE, as "ain't" is a negation and "skeered" is a non-standard English for scared. The structures 'ain't ' and 'nothin'' are double negatives in AAVE while in standard English they would nullify the negation. The double negatives hence serve to intensify the statement. In this phrase, one is reminded of the popular characteristic of bravery which is attributed to the caricature character Spunk Banks.

Furthermore, the phrase "on God's green footstool" is an idiomatic prototype for "on Earth," "in this world" coined by the speaker, who apparently has a religious background, and which is a part of the culture since it is incorporated into the language's vocabulary. The exaggeration of saying "nothin" at the end of that sentence is meant to stress the bravery of Spunk coupled with the respect the community has for him. African American Southern English, or the informal grammar and pronunciation used throughout this sentence, supports Walter's Southern rural background.

Thus, Hurston employs language not only for the provision of information and simple exchange of messages but also as an effective way of conveying the hidden meanings and handling the important problems. For this reason, metaphor and imagery among other features of literary narrative, are practically evident as evidencing multiple layers of meaning beyond the 'textual.' Privilege is another component of Hurston's works expressed through symbols where power underscores the major areas covered in her pieces. They can comment on aspects of intimate relationships, groups and societies with vivid references to imagery and the use of the word picture. For instance, the concepts of light and darkness can be a symbolic representation of moral strife, or the changes in the hierarchal relations of the characters. Likewise, the storms, forests, and fauna in Hurston's works symbolize the components of power and passions that underlie the actions of people. Therefore, the reassertion of symbolism in *Spunk* enriches the story and contributes to its significance, causing the readers to consider its meaning and essence on a deeper plane.

In *Spunk*, the characters switch between Black English and Standard English and use the terms base and fine depending on the situation. Hurston was dedicated to portraying colored folk in the South and the color of their speech and the thereof humorous lore. The interlocutor did not impose stringent restrictions on the characters in terms of using the colloquial language when they were passionately enraged or when they were out of their minds. For example, when Spunk confronts Joe about Joe's wife, he uses standard English, which is known as the language of the white and he wants to show Joe that he is in power and control. Spunk asks

Joe, "Call her and see if she'll come. A woman knows her boss an' she answers when he calls" (Hurston, 1995, p. 951).

Finally, Spunk is the one who uses the most detailed and oral form of code-switching in the text. Here the character has the highest amount of power in the story and thus the manner of his speaking and its expression fits the character's dominance. Before Joe's death, the speaking style of the individual is plain and mimics southern black English. It symbolizes his ancestry, his bond with the community, and his comprehension of the world as it is experienced by those in his vicinity. Nevertheless, after Spunk murders Joe, his entire reality undergoes a profound transformation. He purchases a fresh suit, enters matrimony with Lena, and starts communicating in an elevated form of standard English. His language progresses in tandem with his recently acquired status. The adoption of the sophisticated dialect not only symbolizes his social advancement but also acknowledges his participation in power dynamics. Spunk has risen in social status, and as a result, he has had to modify his manner of speaking to effectively converse with individuals who are now of lower social standing.

Spunk's linguistic development can be seen as a symbolic transformation, signifying the abandonment of his previous identity. He abandons the previous world, which could only be comprehended through dialect, and embraces a new one of influence and prosperity conveyed through standard English. For example, after killing Joe, he carelessly states, "Ah didn't wanna shoot him but he made me do it. He's a dirty coward, jumpin' on a man from behind" (Hurston, 1995, p. 952). This symbolizes his metamorphosis and the concessions he takes to assimilate into this other realm. Spunk subverts the conventional narrative of going from poverty to wealth, since language serves as more than just a tool for communication, but also as a mirror of his evolving sense of self.

Ultimately, Hurston's adept utilization of code-switching in *Spunk* reveals the intricacies of African American encounters, hierarchies of authority, and the process of cultural integration. The characters' shifts in speech, characterized by specific linguistic choices, serve to emphasize their individual travels, challenges, and the societal obstacles they encounter. The characters in the story utilize language as a potent instrument to shape their personal narratives and the overarching themes. Joe's commitment to proper English, Walter's need for control, and Spunk's process of change and adjustment all demonstrate the influential role of language.

Language reflects cultural identity. Examining various linguistic variations in literary texts enables readers to comprehend the speaker's sense of self. To accomplish this, it is necessary to analyze the distinct linguistic characteristics of a particular language variant. Creole, an unconventional dialect commonly used by Black people, is notable in the realm of literature.

Paralanguage and kinesics are also influential in representing black speakers. Black English is frequently mischaracterized as a style of speech that lacks status and is influenced by social and historical factors.

Hurston's utilization of Negro dialect is notably intriguing and intellectually stimulating since she actively defies the prevailing assumption associated with the linguistic patterns of Black individuals. Unlike earlier 20th century literature, which typically portrayed Black characters using non-standard English to convey their language abilities, Hurston adopts a distinct method. She chooses to use Standard English as the linguistic variation for her two Black major characters. This decision not only deviates from the conventional depiction of African American speech, but also illuminates the linguistic aptitude and intellect of these individuals.

Hurston offers her efforts to documenting the genuine speech of rural Southern African Americans. The depiction of Negro dialect in earlier eras has been characterized as "stereotyped and limited" when compared to the more complex and multidimensional discussions offered in later periods. The speech of both the narrator and the characters was frequently portrayed in a style that resembled a contrived, unattractive, and distorted form. Nevertheless, in her literary piece *Spunk*, Hurston deviates from this customary practice and introduces a novel viewpoint on the way African Americans spoke, drawing from her personal encounters and careful observations. Through adeptly constructing the language of her characters with a hint of authenticity, she presents a dynamic and varied assortment of linguistic idioms prevalent in African American society. Hurston's depiction of the distinctive identities and linguistic patterns of her Black characters ultimately enhances the depth and authenticity of their portrayal.

Spunk shows how language and speech shaped the African American sense of self and community in the early 20th century. Hurston, a talented writer, uses a variety of speech styles to expose and explain language's vast significance. She masterfully creates a literary landscape where African American characters' dialect seamlessly coexists with their white counterparts' smooth, articulate English, starkly highlighting the racial divides while celebrating the black community's unyielding pride and indomitable spirit.

Words are the most potent form of communication, able to unify people. They can be written and spoken, touching one's soul. Language is a powerful tool in Zora Neale Hurston's captivating story *Spunk*. Hurston brilliantly uses dialect to define her complex characters. Joe, a weak and cowardly character in Hurston's narrative tapestry, is eclipsed by Spunk, a powerful

and dominant figure. From the beginning of the story, Spunk and Joe have a talk that shows their opposite personalities.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of code-switching in *Spunk* highlights the intricate relationship between the African American community's social structure and language and identity in the early 1900s. In addition to the impact Hurston's lively portrayal of language has on character development, it helps to question stereotyped depictions of Black discourse. The study therefore strengthens Hurston's place in African American literature by showing how her characterization, and more specifically her choice of language highlights cultural values and social issues, which elements contribute to the formation of her literary canon. Moreover, this concern encourages the readers to think about the subtleties of interactions and the function of words to liberate or oppress. Through these changes in languages, we come to understand more about the characters' objectives and the social reality they are faced with, thus enhancing one's appreciation of history. Finally, Hurston's work promotes the enjoyment of Black vernacular as a part of American literature's asset.

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Conceptual Blending and Meaning Construction in Kurdish Jokes: A Cognitive-Analytical Study

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Abstract

This study analyzes selected Kurdish jokes using the cognitive linguistic theoretical framework of conceptual blending, which relies on mental spaces as cognitive packets of information used to interpret the world around us and within us. The dynamic nature of language as an interactive and situational phenomenon is addressed by conceptual integration, often referred to as conceptual blending theory. The productivity of newly emerging linguistic structures is explained by this principle. It is claimed that jokes have not been correctly distinguished from other linguistic structures in the sense that Blending Theory has not profiled their humorous character, despite jokes being a paradigmatic discursive form that can be recognized intuitively. The analysis is used to find out whether Kurdish learners could comprehend the jokes in their native language and if the concept of conceptual integration, which is the process of identifying the input spaces that make up a joke's blended space, would be applied to their analysis of jokes. Fourth-year students from the University of Garmian, Department of English Language and Literature, were chosen to examine cognitive processes involved in the comprehension of jokes. They were given four Kurdish jokes, specifically jokes from the Central Kurdish dialect, and attempted to articulate the thoughts that run through their minds when reading them and which discordant elements are responsible for their funny effect. Taking into account the participants' answers, the input spaces (by naming their constituents) and the blended space were defined. Additionally, the participants' answers were evaluated depending on their background knowledge, which is necessary to comprehend the joke. The study's findings support the assertions made by Fauconnier and Turner that conceptual integration is a general cognitive process by which people, including Kurds, produce meaning.

Keywords: Conceptual Blending, productivity, mental space, jokes, Kurdish language.

1. Introduction

The *blending theory*, also known as *conceptual integration theory*, has drawn attention from scholars in a variety of linguistics fields, as Fauconnier & Turner (2002: 18) put it, blending is an intangible, subconscious process that permeates every facet of human existence. Therefore,

it is not surprising that this theory has found its application in the study of different types of humor. In line with this Coulson (2002) claims that although not all blends are humorous, blending appears to be an essential component of humor.

This study focuses on jokes as a form or an essential type of humor, among other areas. It can be argued that there is some uncertainty regarding the applicability of this theory and its effectiveness in accounting for the construction of meaning in the phenomenon being studied. To put it briefly, the problem addressed in this study can be represented by the kind of controversy that may arise regarding the answers to the following questions.

1. Can conceptual blending theory address the meaning-making of jokes?
2. Can Kurdish learners be able to capture the point of jokes?
3. Can they diagnose the conceptual blends that constitute or form the meaning of the jokes?
4. Can they unpack the joke by unveiling its components?

In order to verify the hypothesis that conceptual blending theory is endowed with sufficient mechanisms to allow users to analyze and comprehend jokes and that blending in jokes depends on its constituent parts, *four* Kurdish jokes are randomly chosen and analyzed following Fauconnier & Turner's (2002) model. The study aims to provide answers to the questions raised above.

2. Cognitive Semantics: An Overview

In line with Croft and Cruse (2004), the term Cognitive Linguistics emerged in the 1970s as an approach to studying language and has been more prevalent since the 1980s. It comes in response to growing dissatisfaction with formal approaches to language. In the study of language and the mind and how they interact, as Evans (2007) indicates, cognitive linguistics places significant attention on the role of meaning, conceptual processes, and embodied experience. Cognitive linguistics is an endeavor or approach to the study of language and the mind, rather than a single well-articulated theoretical framework (Evans & Green, 2006). However; some followers of this school of linguistics divide cognitive linguistics into two main branches: *cognitive semantics* and *cognitive grammar* (see, e.g., Evans & Green, 2006). Cognitive semantics studies two important aspects of meaning: conceptual structure and conceptualization. While the latter addresses how meaning is created, the former concentrates on how knowledge is represented in the human conceptual system (Evans, 2007). The second facet of meaning is the focus of the current paper. The fundamental tenet of cognitive semantics is that meaning is conceptual in nature. As a result, research in cognitive semantics focuses on modeling the conceptual structures and processes that underlie linguistic meaning. This is

where cognitive semantics differs from *truth-conditional* semantic systems, which simply take into account the relationship between the world and the word, excluding the value of human perception and conceptualization (Murphy & Koskela, 2010).

3. Blending Theory

Blending, as explained by Crystal (2008), is a theory in cognitive linguistics that was originated by Fauconnier and Turner in the field of cognitive semantics. It aims to make clear how elaborate analogies and intricate metaphors are put together and interpreted. In their well-known book, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* (2002), linguists and cognitive scientists Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner render the argument that humans are unique among animals in that they can perform cognitive functions due to the gradual emergence and development of the cognitive capacity to combine two disparate ideas. This cognitive process was dubbed "*blending*," according to them, it kept evolving until it reached the crucial stage of blending between two scopes (2002). This allowed for the creation of human singularities like language, art, science, and religion (ibid.).

According to proponents of the blending theory, conceptual integration, or blending, is a fundamental cognitive function that is essential to our ability to think. For example, the category of *pet fish* (Fodor & Lepore, 1996) is more than just a combination of the *pet* and *fish* categories. Rather, we create a new category *of pet fish* with a unique internal structure by judiciously integrating the elements of the source categories *pet* and *fish*. This is achieved by conceptual blending (Evans & Green, 2006).

3.1 Modules of Conceptual Blending Theory

Fauconnier & Turner (2006) employ illustrations of the network model's basic elements to highlight its key components. According to them, this model exemplifies the dynamic cognitive process that produces meaning, wherein online work is facilitated by conceptual projection. As a result, the elements that follow make up the CB network:

1. **The Input Spaces**: Partial structures are used to express these, incorporating elements and relations from several domains. Fauconnier and Turner (2002) look at the input spaces of a blend as mental spaces, which are small conceptual packets constructed as humans think and speak. Mental spaces are connected to schematic information through frames, which are also referred to as image schemas and in which the elements and relationships are arranged as a package that we already know. Selective projection begins from these input spaces; that is, we do not take or use every structure from the input spaces to the blend; rather, we use only the matched information that is required for local comprehension (Evans & Green, 2006).

2. **Cross-Space Mapping**: The mental spaces are linked by a partial cross-space mapping. There are other types of counterpart connections, such as the link of identity, the connection between frames and roles, and the metaphorical connection (Fauconnier and Turner, 2006).

3. **Generic Mental Space**: The components shared by the input mental spaces make up a generic mental space (Fauconnier, Turner, 2002). Its purpose is to assist in creating connections between the mental areas that are being input, allowing conceptual integration to proceed (Coulson, 2001).

4. **The Blend Space.** This makes up the network's fourth mental space, which has a fresh conceptual framework. A selection of pieces from the input spaces and their projection to the mix produces this new structure. After that, they are dynamically incorporated into the mixture to create a brand-new emergent structure. Therefore, the mix does not project other items from the input spaces. Similar to this, "structure is projected to a new space, the blend, from two input mental spaces. Blended spaces and generic spaces are connected. Blends have additional specialized structures in addition to the generic structure contained in the generic space. Additionally, they may have a structure that the inputs cannot produce (Fauconnier and Turner, 2002).

5. **Emergent Structure:** This is the extra structure in the blend that isn't captured in the input transcriptions directly. Three processes lead to the emergent structure. First, elements are composed of different inputs. The second is completeness, which entails inducing a schema. The unconscious and effortless recruitment of backdrop frames is a component of schema induction. These bring the composition to a completion. Lastly, elaboration is the online operation that creates the blend-specific structure. This procedure is also known as "running the blend." (Green & Evans, 2006).

As Fauconnier & Turner (2002) put it, establishing mental spaces, matching between spaces, projecting to a blend only, identifying shared structures, projecting backwards to inputs, bringing in the new structure for the blend or the inputs, and carrying out different operations within the blend itself are the fundamental steps involved in building an integration network.

4. Jokes: A Form of Humor

Ritchie (2004) describes a joke as a very brief text that may be employed in a variety of contexts and that is primarily recognized by a particular cultural group for its aim of making others laugh. This definition emphasizes the joke itself as the source of humor, suggesting that the key elements of humor are built into the joke, rather than depending on how the audience reacts. On the other hand, Schopenhauer (1883) offers a different view, stating that laughter in jokes

comes from suddenly noticing a mismatch between what we think about something and the actual thing itself, with laughter simply being a reaction to this mismatch. Jokes often start with a setup that can be understood in two different ways, but initially, only the more obvious meaning is noticed by the listener. The punchline at the end of the joke then reveals the other meaning in a surprising way, which can catch the audience off guard (Giora, 1988, 1991).

The comprehension of jokes is increasingly recognized as showing parallels to more conventional creative cognition. Thus, understanding the language of jokes is deeply interwoven with our cognitive and perceptual experiences. According to Turner & Fauconnier (1995), blending in Cognitive Semantics can be found in idioms, ordinary language, mathematical creativity, the development of sociocultural models, humor, advertising, and other linguistic and non-linguistic activities.

5. Adopted Model

The conceptual blending theory of Fauconnier & Turner (2002) is applied in this study to analyze the jokes under study. The rationale for adopting this model is that it has appropriate mechanisms that can account for the meaning construction in Kurdish Jokes. It also helps to show how the jokes blend these inputs to arrive at the meaning intended. The main element of the chosen model is shown in the figure below:
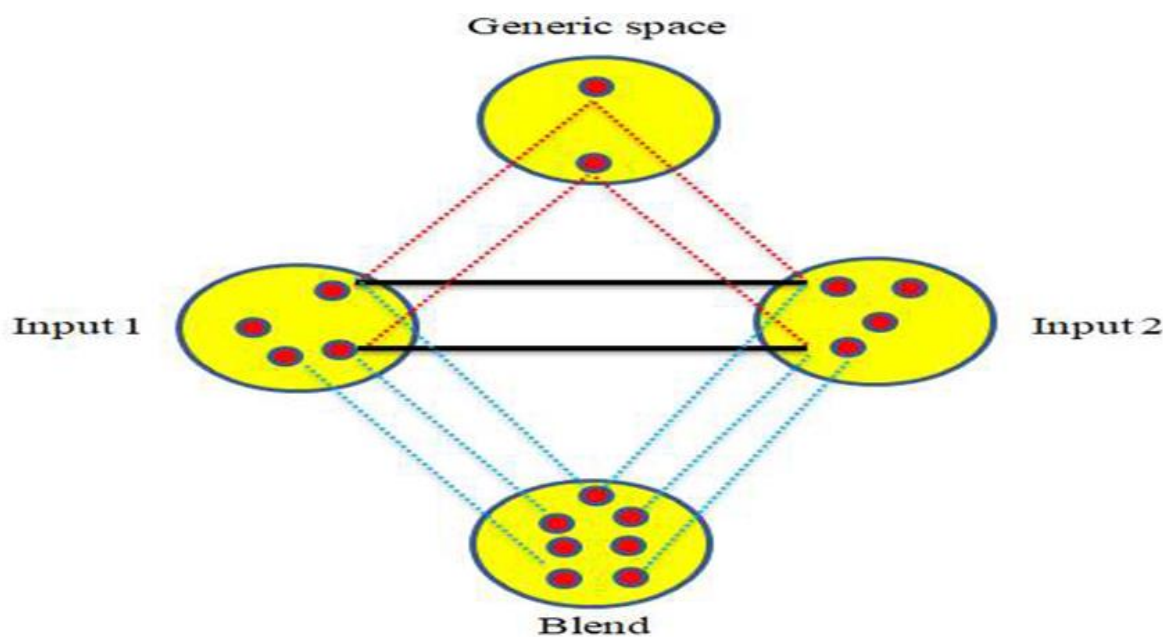
Figure (1) Elements of the Adopted Model

6. Methodology

6.1 Method of Analysis

The goal of the study is to identify signs that indicate the process of unraveling that students are thought to go through when they read and comprehend the jokes. Additionally, the participants are Fourth-year students from the University of Garmian, Department of English Language and Literature. Researchers used Google Documents as an online platform to facilitate the presentation of the Kurdish jokes to the participants. The document included four randomly chosen Kurdish jokes. The participants were instructed to read the selected jokes and determine each joke's meaning. To further clarify this instruction, the participants were asked to describe what was going through their minds as they read the joke and to attempt to examine the mechanisms and components that make a joke funny. After collecting the answers, researchers started to analyze the answers and compare the patterns of the chosen model. After analyzing the responses, researchers found multiple important results and findings.

6.2 The sample and The procedure

The study included 30 students (male and female) from the University of Garmian, College of Education's English Language and Literature Department as samples. This study was conducted in the 2023–2024 academic year. Before giving access to an online Google document, participants were asked the time suitable for them and that they were not obliged to participate since this work might seem out of their ordinary academic college duties. Then, participants were given access to the online Google document via email. The participants had unlimited time to complete their responses. As part of the answering procedure, first, the participants were asked to identify their gender and stage. Then, the guidelines for dissecting the jokes and the jokes themselves were presented.

7. Data Analysis

This study embarks on a journey to explore the intricacies of humor through the lens of data analysis, focusing on four randomly chosen jokes from the Kurdish language, specifically Central Kurdish, given that all participants are native speakers of Central Kurdish. Jokes from Central Kurdish have been selected since it reflect the diversity and richness of Kurdish humor, offering valuable insights into the linguistic and cultural dimensions of humor in this specific linguistic community. Through meticulous data analysis, we seek to uncover patterns, themes, and cognitive processes that underpin the construction and appreciation of humor in central Kurdish discourse.

7.1 Analysis of Joke No.1

يەكەم : ئەزانى! رۆژ نيە 100 كچ بەدوام نەكەون ؟

دووەم : ئادەى چۆن پێم بڵێ با منيش كچان دوام كەون ؟

يەكەم: جانتاكانيان لێ بدزە!

This joke is about two people having a conversation, the first person says " You know! There isn't a day that 100 girls don't follow me?" and the second says "How can you tell me to get girls to follow me too?" The first person answers " Steal their bags!".

The blended space in this joke is made up of two *input spaces* that are centered around the word "running after." The first input space involves a context that is typical of the *running* frame. On the other hand, the second input space projects the frame of *stealing*. The second speaker asks the first speaker to help him make girls follow him, and he tells him to steal their bags. As it is obvious that stealing someone's property will make them follow and run after you. When these two input spaces are combined, a blended space is created in which the first speaker asks the second to steal the girl's bags. Thus, it can be said that the joke's humorous effect is derived from the word "running after" polysemy, which enables the reader to connect two disparate input spaces and generate two distinct interpretations. Thus, in this joke, "running after" serves as the link. Moreover, the punchline "steal their bags" serves as the disconnect since it forces the reader to reconsider the first sentence.

Even while the participants' responses to the joke showed that they were able to grasp its meaning, not all of them were able to adequately demonstrate the process of decoding and the participants' recognition of the input spaces. In most cases, the participants who were successful in recognizing the input spaces also identified the connection between them. Some participants, however, just clarified that the joke relies on the word "running after's" dual meaning, indicating that they recognized the connectivity but were not able to indicate the input spaces. On the other hand, in some cases, the participants described the input spaces but did not focus on the link. Finally, a small number of participants highlighted the importance of the disjuncture for the effect of humor in the joke.

7.2 Analysis of Joke No.2

كچ : دايكە زۆر ئەترسم پياوەكەم ژنى ترى هێنابێ لە بەيانيەوە تەلەفونى بۆ ئەكەم وەڵام ناداتەوە

دايک : كچم قسەى خێر بكە ئيشەڵڵا هيچ نيە كێ ئەڵێ بەر تەقينەوە نەكەوتوە و نەمردوە

This joke is about a girl who talks with her mother about her feelings toward her husband, she says " Mom, I'm very afraid my husband has married another woman. I've been calling him since morning and he doesn't answer" and the Mom says " My daughter, speak positively. God willing, it's nothing. Who knows, maybe he has been in an explosion and died?

The blended space in this joke involves two input spaces from the frames of a dialogue between a mother and a daughter involving the context of *jealousy* from the side of the daughter towards her husband and the idea of being dead rather than being a cheater from the side of the mother.

By matching these two input spaces and projecting from them selectively, a blended space is created where a wife is envious of her husband and complains to her mother about her predicament. The line "maybe he is dead in an explosion, speak positively" gives the joke its comic effect since it allows the reader to make a connection between two different input spaces and come up with two different interpretations. So the aforementioned sentence is the joke's connecting link. Additionally, because it compels the reader to reevaluate the opening sentence, the punchline "maybe he is dead in an explosion, speak positively" acts as the disconnection.

Over 50% of the participants were able to identify the input spaces that make up the joke's blend. However, a number of participants identified the connector more than the input spaces. Because "to die than to cheat " can mean two different things, some participants only wrote that the joke is funny. This suggests that they understood the joke's point and were likely aware of the input spaces, but they only paid attention to the connector when explaining why the joke was funny. Additionally, a few participants emphasized the significance of the disjuncture, clarifying that the joke is humorous because the mother would rather prefer her son-in-law die than delude her daughter. Lastly, some of the participants just commented that "this joke is just boring and used very often", which does not indicate whether the joke is unfolded or not.

7.3 Analysis of Joke No.3

خێزانێک له ناو بەلەمێکدا ئەبین و به قاچاخ ئەپەڕنەوه له توركیاوه بۆ یۆنان. مندالێكیان له باوكەكه ئەپرسێ

"بابه قەزاوقەدەر و موسییەت جیاوازییان چییه"

باوكەكەش له وەڵامدا ئەلێ:

" قەزاوقەدەر ئەوەیه كه ئێستا هەر له خۆیەوه دایكت بكەوێته دەریاكەوه. موسییەتیش ئەوەیه كه مەله بزانێت و خۆی ڕزگار بكات "

This joke is about a family who are in a boat trying to smuggle from Turkey to Greece. A conversation happens between a son and his father when the son asks his father, "What's the difference between fate and disaster?" and the father answers "It's destined that your mother

will fall into the sea on her own. The disaster is that she will know how to swim and save herself"

This joke has two input spaces as the blended space and they are taken from the frames of a conversation between a father and son about fate and disaster. The first input space contains a setting that is characteristic of the son's doubts about fate and disaster. On the other hand, the second input space projects the frame of being bored with his wife and complaining from the side of the father. Merging these two input spaces results in a blended space in which a father wants to show his son what *fate, and disaster* mean by bringing examples to him from a real-life situation about his wife and him. The humorous effect in the joke is achieved by the playing of the words *fate, and disaster* from the side of the father, which allows the reader to produce two different interpretations and connect two different input spaces. Therefore, *fate, and disaster* function as the connector in this joke. Furthermore, since the punch-line 'the idea of falling the mother or the man's wife into the river and then being saved' prompts the reinterpretation of the first sentence, it functions as the disjuncture.

The majority of participants who identified the input spaces that combine to make the blended space where two people dispute fate and disaster mentioned that they initially thought the father would discuss his son's mother because this is a common occurrence. This realization made them laugh. Some of the participants wrote about the life of a married man to go into greater detail about how they dissected this joke. Fewer participants were able to spot the joke's disjuncture. Regarding the connector, a significant proportion of respondents stated that the joke is humorous because it plays on the double meaning of fate, and disaster. Lastly, hardly one participant expressed outright that they missed the joke's intended meaning.

7.4 Analysis of Joke No.4

ژنێک پیاوەکەی ئەنێرێ بۆ بازاڕ بۆ ئەوەی شقارتەی بۆ بکرێ. شقارتە ئەکرێ و ئەیهێنێتەوە بۆ ژنەکەی. ژنە هەرچەند ئەکا، هیچی داناگیرسێ! بە پیاوەکەی ئەڵێ: "ئەمڕۆ پیاوەکە خۆ دەنکەشقارتەکان هیچیان داناگیرسێن!" پیاوەکەش ئەڵێ: "جا وەڵڵا ژنەکە لە دوکانەکە هەمووم تاقی کردوە، دائەگیرسان!"

Joke No.4 is about a wife who sends her husband to buy her matches. The husband buys matches and brings them to his wife. No matter how much the woman does, nothing lights up! Then the wife says "Come on, man, the matches don't light anything!" and the husband replies, "Well, woman, I tried everything in the shop, they would burn!"

The basis of this joke is an uneven blending of the input spaces for "light" and "turning on the lights." The first input space contains a naive man who has been sent to buy a lighting item for his wife. The man examining all the lights to see if they are working or not is the second

input space. When these two input spaces are combined, a blended area is created, and a man uses every match he purchases from the store to see if it works or not. The expression "Well, woman, I tried everything in the shop, they would burn!" is the connector in this joke and it is key for producing the humorous effect. It is worth mentioning that the same expression would be the disjuncture in the joke because it triggers the reinterpretation of the punch-line in the light of his profession.

Nearly half of the participants misinterpreted the joke or failed to get its intended meaning. A few participants claimed not to understand the joke, however, one female participant out of all of them claimed to understand that "the joke centered around the term "lights. "Some of the participants made comments like "the joke is a bit predictable," which in no way indicated that they had thought the joke through. The two input areas that make up the joke's blend were mentioned by the participants who did, for the most part, begin the unfolding process with the connection, the word "light." A couple of them neglected to note the input gaps and instead simply commented on how funny the joke was due to the man's character's ambiguity and idiocy.

8. Findings

This study sought to determine whether participants, who are native speakers of Kurdish, could mentally unfold jokes in their native language. Finding and connecting the input spaces that make up the blended space that underlies the joke in question is referred to as "unfolding" the joke. Even though the participants were not acquainted with the conceptual integration theory or its relationship to jokes, it appeared from their written assessments of jokes that they inadvertently engaged their mental mechanism for unfolding the blend while interpreting jokes. This indicates that even though they are unaware of the theory of blending, they are unconsciously going through the same cognitive processes that are involved in the unfolding steps of jokes.

The study's findings showed that the participants, fourth-year students at Garmian University's Department of English Language and Literature, could recognize to some extent the input spaces that make up the blends in the entire jokes that were given to them in the questionnaire. Still, some jokes were harder for the participants to digest than others. Furthermore, the analysis revealed that certain participants' depictions of their thoughts during the joke reading process indicated the need for a second reading and reevaluation. According to earlier studies, this mental process occurs when we read or hear a joke in order to deduce its other meaning and comprehend it.

The majority of participants described the input spaces that make up the joke's blend and made the required connections between them in order to explain why the joke is funny, even though they were not familiar with the conceptual integration theory. Additionally, they frequently highlighted the disjuncture and/or connector in their responses; very seldom did respondents expressly indicate that they did not understand a particular joke. As a result, the findings demonstrate that Kurdish students who took part in the study are capable of understanding jokes written in Kurdish and, more significantly, that they do so by unconsciously breaking down the jokes' blends.

9. Conclusions

As a conclusion to this work, it has been said that jokes are a unique blend that requires an entirely novel conceptual structure to be interpreted. The dynamic nature of language in general and the Kurdish language in particular as an interactive and situational phenomenon is addressed by conceptual integration. The productivity of newly emerging linguistic structures is explained by this idea and conceptual integration serves as a theoretical model that throws light on creativity in language use. Jokes have not been correctly distinguished from other linguistic structures in that their humorous component has not been highlighted in Blending Theory, despite the fact that jokes are a classic discursive form that can be readily distinguished intuitively.

This study confirms that Kurdish students, particularly those in their fourth year of English studies, are capable of "unfolding" jokes by identifying and connecting the input spaces that create the blended meaning underlying the humor. The findings suggest that even without formal knowledge of conceptual integration theory, these students engage in similar cognitive processes to decode jokes. This aligns with the conceptual integration theory, which posits that jokes represent a unique blend requiring a novel conceptual structure for interpretation. Despite the theory's broader applications to creativity in language, its specific mechanisms for understanding humor have not been thoroughly explored in previous literature. The study's results support the utility of conceptual blending theory in analyzing humor, as it offers insights into how meaning is constructed within jokes. Furthermore, the participant's ability to deconstruct jokes effectively, particularly those requiring more basic knowledge, highlights the role of prior knowledge in understanding humor. The necessity for some participants to revisit jokes for better comprehension underscores the iterative nature of joke interpretation.

Overall, these findings reinforce Fauconnier and Turner's assertion that conceptual integration is a fundamental cognitive process for meaning-making. They also pave the way

for further research into how conceptual integration theory can be applied to humor and other discursive forms, contributing to a deeper understanding of both linguistic creativity and cognitive processes involved in humor.

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Student's Perspective on Flipped Classroom as an Innovative Approach in English Foreign Language Classes: A Selective Literature Review

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Abstract

The last decade was the time of the Internet rebellion, which had huge control over learning. Models in teaching languages continuously discover new training to join innovative technology with their teaching. Delivering lectures and doing activities are exchanged in the flipped classroom method. It means that learning occurs at home while giving clarifications and tasks in classes. The researchers in EFL classrooms investigated all skills, reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Students' perception is the vital point. This review article focuses on students' perceptions regarding the flipped method in EFL classes, published in the last four years. Five articles were chosen with focus criteria: flipped classroom, students' perceptions, and English as a Foreign Language. This review study used thematic analysis to analyze the review articles. The results of the study revealed that 2023 was the lucky year to have two published papers and grammar skills were mostly used in these five articles. Iran, as the setting of the studies, was localized more than other countries in these selectively reviewed papers. It also showed that students had positive views toward the flipped classroom and improved their academic performances. Moreover, English foreign classrooms were mostly implemented in flipped classrooms rather than separate skills like writing, reading, and grammar.

Keywords: Student perspectives, flipped classroom, EFL classrooms, innovative approaches

1. Introduction

1.1 Background Information

Internet development and its application have become a prominent aspect of lives in the 21ˢᵗ century. One of the sectors most affected by these developments was education. This innovation improved learning and teaching in terms of efficiency, effectiveness, and speed of instruction. The distinctive feature of technology presents a great chance and an inspiring environment for learners recently. English foreign language teachers brought many technological tools to the English context with this rapid advancement of technology. Many English teachers quickly adapted Flipped Classroom to their classes. As, Afririlyasanti, et al. (2017) argued flipped classroom supports 21st-century learning and its characteristics, such as

critical thinking skills and proficiency in EFL. Technology has been used to broaden the context in the flipped classroom. In addition, Al-Harbi and Alsumaimeri (2012) defined a flipped classroom as learning occurring outside of the classroom: rehearsing, doing activities, and students interacting in the classroom. Correspondingly, Basal (2012) defines a flipped classroom as "what is traditionally done in class is now done at home, and what is traditionally done as homework is now completed in class" (p. 13). Finally, there are many synonyms for flipped classrooms, like 'inverted classroom', 'inverted learning', and 'flipped classroom'. (Bergmann and Sams, 2012; Barker et al., 2013; Lage and Platt, 2000).In 2007, Colorado was the center of constructing the flipped classroom method by two science teachers to highlight the challenges such as student absences, particularly, at the end of the semester.to help these students, and they begin to shoot a video of the lesson and share it with students. That was the first step in the flipped classroom method. In addition, Bergman and Sams (2017) investigated that a flipped classroom as a pedagogical approach delivers a great chance for better learning, increased interactions, and learner powers. In addition, it allows learners to revise the materials in their own way, promoting active learning. There are a lot of studies that have investigated the flipped classroom and students' perceptions.

The importance of Flipped Classroom FC was added to the flipped classroom. Basal (2015) inspired us with the idea that a positive FC details the recording and shares it with the students: The time spent on the activities and answering students' questions is more important than the video. The FC is used for doing exercises, sharing ideas, and comprehending unclear topics for the class. The video recorded needs to provide a class atmosphere for critical thinking skills and adopting active learning. Previously, learning was happening via taking notes in class, the instructor center, and listening to the teachers traditionally, but the flipped classroom transformed all these elements differently. For instance, students can learn from their style, which means learning can happen anytime and anywhere. The role of the flipped classroom has changed in three different forms: teacher-student center, high interaction among students and teachers from low, and gaining knowledge from the widespread use of technology in the learning and teaching process (Karimi and Hamzavi, 2017).

1.2 The Rational of the Study

Technology has had a huge influence on all aspects of life. Learning and teaching were not far from having the same great impact as utilizing a flipped classroom in any skill. In this review article, highly focuses on the EFL classes and students' perceptions. The significance of this review article depends on its aim and objectives to inspire curriculum designers, teachers, researchers, and stakeholders to implement this method in the Kurdistan region. As most of the

courses are delivered via traditional methods, they need to be shifted to post-era methods of teaching and learning.

1.3 The Aim

This review paper aims to analyze five articles on the flipped classroom and students' perceptions. This review focuses on the last six years of publications on the students' perceptions toward the flipped classroom approach as a pedagogical tool in teaching to be learners who are more independent and find their path in the process of learning the English language. The objective of the study was to analyze the key factors affecting students' perception of the flipped classroom. It was also highlighted how students perceive the effectiveness of flipped classrooms on their academic performance in learning the English language. To gain the aim of the study, these two research questions were scanned:

1. What are the students' perceptions toward flipped classrooms?
2. How does a flipped classroom impact on student's academic achievement in EFL classes?

1.4 The structure of the study

This recent review article encompasses five main sections: introduction, main body, methodology, discussion, and conclusion. The introduction delves into the background information, the purpose, significance, and the study's structure.

In addition, the main body covers an overview of all five studies in detail. Furthermore, more Discussion delivers the comparison and contrast in terms of the aim, problems, methods, and findings of all five articles on the flipped classroom method in terms of students' perception. Finally, the conclusion section illustrates the most important points of the finding and conclusion of the articles. It gives some recommendations as well.

2. Methodology

In this recent review article on the flipped classroom in English as a Foreign Language, which was published in the last 6 years, five articles have been chosen to be reviewed. The study aimed to provide authentic knowledge of students' perceptions of flipped classrooms. It is clear information for researchers, educators, and curriculum designers in the field. In this study, a thematic analysis was implemented. The researcher explored these five articles related to the flipped classroom. They were obtained through SCOPUS, Research Gate, and Google Scholar for finding the current articles on the title. When the search was conducted using these key terms, flipped classroom, EFL, student perspectives, and flipped classroom in the different skills in EFL classrooms the selection of the articles crossed some criteria. First, the articles need to be up-to-date, and they have been customized from 2017 to 2023 in terms of

publication. Second, the articles investigated students' perceptions of the flipped classroom. Third, the procedure focused on the empirical studies to investigate their data collection and methods. Lastly, the articles need to be carried out in different nationalities and settings.

3. Literature Review

Nowadays, technology's revolution has played a great role in most teaching styles. Therefore, the needs of styles require making the class teacher-centered or learner-centered. In recent times, English as a foreign language or English as a second language classes have become more student-centered. Active learning and learner-centeredness have a good connection with the concept of a flipped classroom. The flipped classroom, which depends on the theory of constructivism, combines the inside and outside of classroom activities. Alsowat (2016) describes the flipped classroom in two ways. Firstly, listening to the audio, watching videos, and reading related materials are outside activities. On the other hand, making the classroom interactive through individual work, pair work, some activities, and discussing the unclear points to resolve them.

3.1 Summary of the Articles 3.1.1 Students' Perception of Flipped Classroom in Grammar Skills:

Hasan et al. (2022) investigated a study on the conceptions and perceptions of undergraduate learners in an EFL-instructed flipped classroom. The study aimed to find out the students' perceptions toward FLC in learning grammar at a private university in Bangladesh. The study's participants were 200 (88 female and 112 male) freshmen students. The study used an explanatory design and implemented mixed-methods methods to obtain the data. For collecting quantitative data, 20 items of a questionnaire with five Likert scales were designed. The first ten items were designed to learn about the conception and perspectives of implementing FLC in teaching grammar. Furthermore, the last 10 items of the questionnaire were about the attitude of the undergraduate students toward FLC techniques. Qualitative data was collected via a semi-structured interview to investigate the reflections of the FL instructions. The questions from the interviews were adapted. Interviews took 20 to 30 minutes to finish. The quantitative data was analyzed via SPSS program version 24 with descriptive statistics. On the other hand, the interview was transcribed. NVIVO-12 was used to code, subcode, and categorize the data to find the themes of conception and point of view on the FLC. In this study, the quantitative results showed that students were highly positive about the conception of the flipped classroom, and they were able to develop their grammatical skills within the flipped classroom. Collaboration, improving student rapport, implementing technology more, and active learning in a favorable environment were the findings of the semi-structured interviews. The

participants claimed that there were some technical issues with the integration. They faced the challenges of workload in-class activities and pre-class preparation. They recommended providing some training for the teachers' preparedness.

Furthermore, a private language institute sector was localized to conduct an experimental study in Isfahan, Iran. Noroozi, Rezvani, and Ameri-Golestan (2021) examined the Iranian EFL learners' perceptions toward implementing flipped learning in grammar classes. It also assessed the effectiveness of flipped learning via WhatsApp on the student-centered interface, comprehension, grammar conceptions and skills, motivation, and finding their own path in the learning language process. The participants were 60 male intermediate EFL learners randomly assigned into two different groups. The experimental group instructed the flipped classroom via WhatsApp and the non-flipped classroom with the traditional teaching method. The mixed method with an experimental design was implemented in this study. To enhance the data, the College and University Classroom Environment Inventory was applied quantitatively to obtain the data from both groups. A semi-structured interview was a tool for collecting qualitative data with the sample size of the study to gain insights from the perspectives of FL and how it affects their academic achievements. A chi-square test was used to analyze the post-class activities to further test the impact of FL on students' comprehension.

Overall, the findings revealed that flipped learning highly affected the students' motivations, self-learning, and engagement in learning grammar skills, mainly through WhatsApp, and allowed to enhance learner-centered comprehension of grammar concepts of the Iranian EFL male learners. The results of this present study can be evidence for further studies and have implications for curriculum designers.

3.1.2 Students' Perception of Flipped Classroom in Reading Skills:

Researchers and educators embrace all the main skills, like reading and listening, as input skills and writing and speaking as output skills, in EFL courses. Ebrahimnezhad (2023) implemented a flipped classroom in the reading course to see the students' perceptions and the effectiveness of FLC on their performance. The study implemented a mixed-method approach. The research took place at a private language institute in Neka, Mazdaran, Iran. 30 pre-intermediate students were randomly selected as participants with an available sampling type. They were randomly divided into two groups, such as the experimental group and the control group. The data were collected through three different tools: a comprehensive reading as a pre-and post-test, a questionnaire, and an Oxford placement test. A pre-test was employed at the very beginning of the experimental project to test the learners' language background, particularly in reading skills. In 12 sessions as experimental groups, a flipped classroom was implemented, whereas

the lessons in control groups were delivered using traditional methods. After this period, a posttest was assigned for both groups to see the impact of FLC on the learners' academic achievement. In addition, the experimental group has been administered a related questionnaire to determine their perception of FLC. The study's result declared that there is a difference between the mean score of the pre and post-test in the experimental group. It was also found that FLC had a great effect on the students reading performance at this time. The participants in the experimental group were satisfied with the FLC. Generally, this recent study recommended that FLC have a vital influence on the student's reading skills and their engagement with the class.

3.1.3 Students' Perception of Flipped Classroom in Writing Skills:

Previous researchers demonstrated many studies on the students' perceptions of the flipped classroom method. Alghasab (2020) conducted a study on the flipped writing classroom, which shed light on the pedagogy, benefits, and perceptions of EFL students. This present study explores the flipped classroom application with student-teachers of the English language at the College of Basic Education in Kuwait, and it aims to investigate learners' perceptions regarding writing skill development. The research was conducted in the first semester of the academic year 2019. The participants were 30 EFL learners who took an advanced writing course. The study utilized a mixed-methods approach, both quantitative and qualitative. The researcher used a five-point Likert scale questionnaire. It was updated from previous studies to align with the emphasis of the instructional program on the flipped classroom in the writing course. In addition, all students were invited to a semi-structured interview. The quantitative data was analyzed through SPSS, and the qualitative data was analyzed through thematic analysis. The results revealed that Kuwaiti students had a positive attitude toward the flipped writing classroom. While the questionnaires' results declared that Flipped Writing Classroom (FWC) provides an effective learning atmosphere, it is a successful method for developing writing assignments, and it motivates students to have better writing flexibility regarding time, participation, and engagement in the class. Additional findings from the interview indicate that there are many sociocultural and contextual factors negatively affect the students interface.

3.1.4 Students' Perception of Flipped Classroom in Enhancing Students' Academic Skills:

Similarly, Ye (2023) conducted research on Chinese English as an EFL education for junior secondary schools. It explored various stakeholder perspectives (parents, students, teacher educators, and teachers) on the flipped classroom. This study aimed to investigate how FLC, as an innovative approach, improves students' academic achievement and their engagement in the learning process. To obtain an in-depth understanding of different stakeholders, a

qualitative method was applied. The data was collected through an open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The recent data was analyzed via thematic analysis. It clearly states the differences and similarities of the results from these different groups. It allows for analyzing the data deductively and inductively. Overall, the study's results were classified into two different categories. First, the participants of the study had positive perceptions toward the FLC and viewed it constructively with its potential to develop students' critical thinking skills and understanding of the concepts of active learning, make students engaged in the class, enhance students' ability to speak fluently and improve their comprehension and vocabulary. The second section of the study's results showed some challenges faced by insiders: most of the students didn't have internet access, increasing teachers' workload in preparing materials for the class, adapting assessments traditionally to the flipped format, and the learners were required to have more self-discipline and manage their time to finish the tasks.

4. Discussion

These five current articles were analyzed in this review article about the student's perceptions of the flipped classroom as an innovative method. This review aims to explore and present the findings of this study on English Foreign Language EFL classes.

Conferring to the analysis of the five articles concerning the year of publication, two of them were published in 2023; the others were published in 2022, 2021, and 2020. It means the last four years; these studies on the flipped classroom regarding students' perceptions were done. Iran as the place of the study carried two papers, which is the highest rate among these five reviewed papers' settings. To gain comprehensive data and reach the goal of the studies, four of these articles implemented mixed methods, while the other utilized quantitative ones.

In addition, all five articles are implemented in EFL classes, but in different courses such as reading, grammar, writing, and learning English. The articles of Ebrahimmnezhad (2023), Hasan (2022), and Alghasab (2020) were conducted at the university level. They aimed to demonstrate the students' perceptions of the flipped classroom and its effectiveness on academic performance. Noroozi (2021) was placed in the language institute. Lastly, Ye (2023) conducted research in private and public schools.

In terms of the study's aim, all five papers aimed to investigate students' perceptions of a flipped classroom and to what extent FC effective their academic achievement in different courses.

Moreover,, regarding the limitations of these five articles, Noroozi, Rezvani, Ameri-Golestan (2021), and Ebrahimmnezhad (2023) can be together due to the fact that they conducted their studies with an experimental design and mixed methods were utilized, and their

findings somehow showed similarly. The studies have been conducted in the same country. Ebrahimmnezhad (2023) presents several insights and findings and tries to fill a kind of gap in the field, but it has several limitations, like the generalizability due to the fact that only a specific educational context was implemented with a small sample size that may limit the generalizability. The study solely focused on reading comprehension, not any other language skills. The questionnaire provided great insights into students' perceptions, but it was not tested for validity and reliability. The study also used a control group and an experimental group but did not provide enough details on the control group or which kind of traditional method was used. The study found that there is a significant difference in the student's scores in pre and post-test. It also found that flipped classrooms had a great impact on students' reading performance.

Similarly, Noroozi, Rezvani, and Ameri-Golestan (2021) conducted the study at the Language Institute in Iran. It declared many comprehensive findings regarding students' perceptions of the flipped classroom in terms of grammar skills that were experimental, like the Ebrahmimnezhad study. The study's findings revealed that flipped classrooms influenced students' academic performance, self-learning, involvement in learning grammar skills, and understanding grammar concepts through Whats App platform. The study has some limitations as well. It included a small sample size, which may limit the generalizability of the results to any other context. It also relies on self-reported data and objectives, which affects the validity of the findings. The study utilized WhatsApp as a single platform, which limits the broad applicability of learning from other digital platforms. Lastly, the duration of the study was short, which influenced the learning outcome as it has long-term effects.

Furthermore, Hasan (2022) investigated the viewpoints and conceptions of EFL learners in the flipped classroom. The study showed great findings. While it has some limitations,such as the sample size, particularly in a semi-structured interview, which included only five participants. This limits the generalizability of the results. Although there were not enough participants, it was not given enough demographics of the participants that may limit the applicability of the findings to a broader population of EFL learners, which would influence the validity of the study. In terms of the design, the study could not compare the learners' attitudes to evaluate the effect of flipped instruction techniques on the learners' competencies in grammar skills. The study's duration was constrained because of the academic university calendar and extracurriculars. A larger number of participants and a longer duration could deliver more reliable and accurate results, allowing more exploration of the effectiveness of a flipped classroom.

While Ye (2023) study had some boundaries, such as participants only in one city of China, that could be included in the other cities. The study didn't use any observational tools that may provide more comprehensive details in terms of the application of the FC. There was no quantitative method to measure the objectives of the effectiveness of the FC method. The study highlighted that the sample of the study were ostive toward of implementing flipped classrooms in their classes. It helped students to develop their critical thinking skills, develop students speaking skills, and engage to the class actively. On the contrary, the study found students faced some challenges in this method, such as internet access, adapting new types of assessment, and students workload. Finally, the study could provide follow-up studies to evaluate the long-term effects on the academic performance and engagement of the participants.

Finally, Alghasab's (2020) study has some limitations. First, the sample size included only 30 female EFL students and teachers in the College of Basic Education in Kuwait, no other genders. It affects the generalizability of the results to a broader context. The researcher has conducted the study in his own class rather than introduce bias for the students responses. It may affect the external validity of the study. The researcher could utilize the pre-posttest for the quantitative method to measure the students' improvement in their writing skills. It could draw on the direct influence of the flipped classroom instruction on the students writing skills. Additionally, the study couldn't divide the participants into a control group and an experimental group; the absence of a control group limited the ability to compare the outcome of the study to see its effectiveness. Finally, the study didn't mention the challenges of the implementation of the FC method, like technical issues, teacher and student preparedness for the method, or any training.

5. Conclusion

The journal articles attempt to show learners' perspectives towards the flipped classroom method, its effectiveness on academic performances, and the challenges of FC that they face. However, most of the analyzed articles have similar research questions, aims, and objectives, but some of them utilized the different aspects of a flipped classroom.

Ebrahimnezhad (2023) examined students' perceptions in the reading class on flipped classrooms and their effectiveness on their academic performance. The study result declared that students have a positive attitude towards flipped classrooms, based on the difference in the mean score of the pre-posttest in the experimental group. It also affected the reading comprehension skills. Generally, the participants in the experimental group were satisfied with

the FC method. It also helped them to be self-directed learners. The second article by Ye (2023) aimed to highlight how FLC, as an innovative approach, improves students' academic achievement and their engagement in the learning process. The obtained data illustrated that participants in the study had positive opinions toward the FLC and viewed it constructively with its potential to develop students' critical thinking skills and understanding of the concepts of active learning, make students engaged in the class, enhance students ability to speak fluently, and improve their comprehension and vocabulary. Additionally, the results showed some challenges faced by insiders: most of the students didn't have internet access, increasing teachers workload in preparing materials for the class, adapting assessments traditionally to the flipped format, and the learners were required to have more self-discipline and manage their time to finish the tasks.

On the other hand, Hasan et al. (2022) investigated the students perceptions of FLC in learning grammar at a private university in Bangladesh. The researcher found students were highly positive about the conception of the flipped classroom, and they were able to develop their grammatical skills within the flipped classroom. The findings from the qualitative data showed that students developed their collaboration skills, improving student rapport, implementing technology more, and active learning in a favorable environment. The participants claimed that there are some technical issues with the integration of flipped classrooms in their courses. They also faced the challenges of workload in-class activities and pre-class preparation.

Furthermore, Noroozi, Rezvani, and Ameri-Golestan (2021) aimed to observe the Iranian EFL learners' perceptions toward implementing flipped learning in grammar classes. The findings discovered that flipped learning highly affected the students' motivations, self-learning, and engagement in learning grammar skills, mainly through What'sApp. It allowed to enhance learner-centered and comprehension grammar concepts of the Iranian EFL male learners.

Finally, Alghasab (2020) explored the flipped classroom application with students-teachers of English language at the College of Basic Education in Kuwait, and it also aimed to investigate learners' perceptions regarding writing skill development. The results revealed that Kuwaiti students had a positive attitude toward the flipped writing classroom. The study also showed that FWC fosters an effective learning atmosphere, serves as an effective method for enhancing writing tasks, and motivates students by offering greater writing flexibility in terms of time, participation, and engagement in the class.

In the end, the number of publications has increased last four years on the integration of flipped classroom methods in EFL settings. The trend was limited to the topic of students' perceptions. The main findings of the five empirical studies were reviewed. Future researchers may include more studies to be reviewed on students' perceptions of flipped classrooms. They may include teachers' perception of the flipped classroom and its effectiveness in the EFL contexts. It is a kind of source for teachers and researchers in the field.

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The Role of Religion in Shaping Utopian Narratives

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Abstract

The current paper explores theological and sociopolitical outlooks on religion within both the conceptual framework of "Utopia" and the specific context of Thomas More's literary work "Utopia". The analysis defines "utopia as a philosophical concept that envisions a perfect society, establishing a foundation for understanding how religion functions within such an ideal state. The study further concentrates on Utopia, More's distinct work of English literature, evaluating the religious structure of its society, the roles played by various religious groups, and the conduct of religious ceremonies by the Utopians. Therefore, the study investigates how religion is portrayed in Utopia, drawing on interpretations from various religious scholars. Among the key highlights are the three functions of utopias like, change, criticism, and compensation. Additionally, the article studies how different religious utopias have been conceptualized both before and after More's work, including the Garden of Eden, the Millennium, Paradise Lost, and the contemporary vision of the New Jerusalem.

*Keywords***:** Utopia, Religion, Thomas More, Ideal state, Religious groups, Atheism

1. Religion in Utopia

1.1 Introduction

Utopia is a book written by Thomas More. According to Alicino (2017), More coined the term in 1516 in his book *Utopia*. More illustrates that utopia is a representation of the perfect community, where the merging of reality and imagination occurs to bring a paradigm shift. Moreover, the foundation of utopian thinkers and scholars is the creation of an imaginary ecosystem where there are no problems that have historically been known to plague humanity. The inexistence of the complications of the current world creates the perfect world. Yet, the actualization of the utopian ideology would mean that the basis for such arguments ceases to exist, since that is the basis for utopian thinking proponents. In utopias, all the elements of society are in a perfect state, including the political, economic, social, and legal spheres. Also addressed in the utopias is religion. This analysis will present a review of religion in utopia (Kessler, 2002).

2. Utopia: A Definition

Multiple authors have defined utopia. Utopia is an emphasis on an unnatural and distant paradoxical goal that is unattainable, where the result is a perfect state of existence (Nendza, 1984). Prosic (2020) presents the definition of utopia in two realms: abstract and concrete. For abstract utopia, it is the absorption of complete imagination, where pure fantasy and wishful thinking take center stage. On the other hand, concrete utopia involves a balance between reality and dream. This is borrowing from history, making such an outlook achievable by practice, as opposed to the wishful thinking of abstract utopia. An example of a complex utopia is provided by Van der Veer (2016), who states that urban planning, where the planners ignore the current social realities and develop visionary developments that are later actualized, makes such endeavors utopian.

Utopia is the existence of a perfect world without the current constraints of humanity. Utopia is a critical principle that allows for the judgment and inspiration of the current state to become better and improved. Kessler (2002) defines utopia as the imagination of an ideal society developed by individuals, creating desired worlds through possibility. Ruiz Callejón (2019) gives a contrasting view of utopia. The author defines utopia as the act of not accepting the current situation and creating conditions that allow for the desired state. This is compounded by the argument that utopia arises from the human confrontation of negativity.

2.1. Religion in More's Utopia

The foundation of utopian thinking is credited to More in his seminal work on the topic. More (2016) provides that on the island of Utopia, there are various religious alignments, with individuals coming together to practice allegiance to a common supernatural being. These are the majority in the imaginary state, identified as Christians. Others worship the sun, planets, and moon, among others. All these worshiping groups agree on the presence of a supreme head. Eventually, with time, the different religions join the Christian group (Geoghegan, 2007).

More (2016) further shows that the utopians only mourn for a dead soul when they believe such departed soul's life was suddenly and unwillingly taken from him or her. They believe that God will not take the soul of those whose death is imposed since they don't want to gladly die. However, for normal deaths, the utopians believe that there will be happiness for the departed souls. This, they believe, accrues from God being pleased with the souls to gladly go to him without any reluctance. Thus, no need for mourning for such souls (Nendza, 1984).

Despising fortune-telling and divination based on superstition; the utopians accept miracles that occur without nature's aid. The utopians consider such miracles divine intervention from God. Such acceptance allows for divine intervention seeking from God in

the form of miracles in prayers, where people are seen in the cities praying to God. The cities have two groups of religious followers. Both groups of individuals devote their lives to practicing religion, neglecting scientific and literary paths. Yet, this does not constrain them from practicing good deeds. They participate in labor, tending to crops, the sick, and any other economic and social activity that brings them fulfillment, without criticizing those who don't work as they do not boast of their capabilities. As such, they work harder than slaves, for both private and public good (More, 2016).

More (2016) further shows that one group of devotees chooses not to marry, eat meat, or engage in any pleasures of life. The other group marries, eats meat, and engages in other pleasures that do not constrain their ability to practice their religious alignment. Society considers the first group holier, while the second as sensible. These priests are each given a church to head. Each city in utopia cannot exceed 13 priests. The priests are provided with substitutes who fill for them. As such, only seven priests are allowed to join a war, selecting seven replacements from the extra priests. Upon returning, the replacement priests take up their previous roles, while the returning regular priests take their leadership roles in the churches. To replace the regular priests, legal proceedings takes place. This can only occur when the regular priests pass on. The priests are only elected by a popular secret vote, upon which they are appointed by a college of priests (More, 2016).

More (2016) shows that priests are responsible for the leadership of divine worship. They further censor immorality besides acting on other religious functions. People regarded as a disgrace in society are brought before the priests, where they receive counseling and spiritual advice. Furthermore, under the priests' control, the sinners are excluded from any religious service. In utopia, this is people's greatest fear, the fear of wrongdoers being tortured. An additional role played by the priest includes teaching children on the island. Utopians rarely offer priesthood to women. Such an honor is only given to widows who are old, though such an act does not take place. In case a priest is involved in a crime, the Utopians do not punish him, but leave him to God for spiritual punishment. Given how highly the Utopians hold the priests, they have no power to punish them (More, 2016).

For religious celebrations, as More (2016) shows, the utopians engage in two celebrations each month: the first and last day of the month. These months are measured in moon orbits. For religious worship, the utopians use churches. The buildings are large and dim on the inside, constructed to accommodate many people. Thus, given the diverse religions, they all believe in one divine being. The preaching in the churches does not violate the beliefs of any sect. Prayers are developed such that no single religious group will have superiority over others.

Moreover, the religious sects are allowed to hold private celebrations without infringing on the beliefs of the others (More, 2016).

More (2016) further provides that the utopians have a confession ritual where, one day before going to church, the wives kneel at the feet of their husbands and repent their sins. The children, on the other hand, confess their sins before their parents. This allows for a clear conscience for all family members. If any of the family members have bad blood with people outside the family, he or she is not allowed to attend the last feast until such anger and hatred subsides. Attendance in the churches is signified by the separation of women and men, with the former sitting on the right and the latter on the left. The religion in Utopia does not allow for the sacrifice of animals. The logic is that, since God is merciful, shedding blood from creatures he has created is not satisfying. For sacrifices, the utopian religious sects burn incense and candles. Priest dress in robes of varying colors. For the congregation, they are required to only dress in white. In prayers, the worshipers recognize God as the supreme being, creator of everything, and the ruler over humanity (More, 2016).

3. Analysis of Religion in Utopian Narratives

Kessler (2002) states that utopian religion lies on the belief in dreams and doubtful hopes provided to the society, making no limitations on the religion an individual can seek for spiritual satisfaction. Utopian religion allows for a distinction between religion and human fears, where such a distinction allows for the elimination of the spiritual threats currently suffered by humanity. According to Kessler (2002, religious beliefs that are based on the foundation of leading a happy and fulfilling life can be made possible by the social change brought about by utopia. This concept appeared in More's mixing of political ideas and Christian beliefs to create the perfect social state.

As a founding principle in religion, hope is also key in the utopian state. Braga (2016) argues that religious utopia is a projection of the future. The author argues that both the Hebrew and Cristian religions have had utopias in the past and still believe in some today. For the Hebrews, utopia began with the story of Paradise Lost and continued to the Promised Land during Mose's time. In Christianity, utopia started with the Garden of Eden and led to Millennialism, followed by the belief in Celestial Jerusalem. Millennialism depicted a future perfect state of Christians, but when this fails to happen, they shifted their belief to Celestial Jerusalem. Religious freedom is based on the idea of future redemption, which religious utopia scholars assume.

Scholars have debated what religion would be like in a utopian state. Alicino (2017) argues that utopia and religion are founded on the same premise: that both exist from their relevance

to individuals who do not receive sufficient satisfaction from the current reality. The wishful thinking that both have revolves around the inexistence of scientific proof to justify the ideologies presented. It is critical to present religion in a utopia guided by several functions of utopia. These functions revolve around religious self-regulation in the ideal world. The functions include change, compensation, and criticism (Fernando et al., 2018).

3.1. Change

For the realization of the ideal state of affairs, change has to occur. According to Fernando et al. (2018), utopian visions develop into objectives that individuals pursue in the hope of getting to the ideal state. Such inspiration can develop as a result of cognitive or behavioral inspiration. Following the cognitive view, the vision creates an environment where debate, rationality, thoughts, and experimentation take deep roots. For the behavioral outlook, individuals in society engage in a collective of personal actions that inspire social changes. Through this lens, this analysis argues that religion in utopia is inspired by the change in the current state of belief in the supernatural, thus taking the behavioral form.

According to Nendza (1984), religion in utopia is not guided by any official allegiance. People in utopia have the freedom to choose their religious alignment. This is without infringing on the rights of other individuals in the ideal state of society. This approach shows that the goal is to create social change in religious beliefs towards an ideal state of spiritual identity and belief. Yet, despite the freedom from religious obligation, Nendza (1984) asserts that there is no tolerance for disbelief. Hence, atheism is not tolerated in utopia. People in utopia are obligated to believe in a theological high point, a supernatural being, as a point of religious beliefs. Alicino (2017) notes that religion in utopia is ordered in a way to enhance the good of the commonwealth. Hence the restriction from disbelief is a theological high point.

The religious scholarship has over the years provided contrasting views of the desired state of being. White (2017) provides that social constructionism is central to religion in utopia. The argument is that religion arose from political and historical conditions shaped by modern reforms, which aim to bring about change. The proponents of this outlook debate that societies follow discourses provided through historical and political conditioning, shaping their view on religion. Thus, according to this argument, religion cannot be attributed to cultural background, but rather a constant change in the social formation of the society. In utopia, religion provides a desired state of acceptance, so long as people are not atheists.

3.2. Criticism

Fernando et al. (2018) argue that the imagination provided by a utopian outlook allows for a comparison between the current and the ideal. It arises from the evaluation of the hoped-for and the state in which the people find themselves. Thus, the lower the level of achieving the expected satisfaction from the imaginary state of religion, the higher the level of criticism in the current society. This analysis argues that criticism and negative emotions occurring thereof are based on the self-discrepancy theory. According to Ferrara (2007), the self-discrepancy theory can be evaluated from three domains of an individual's ego. The first domain is actual, which represents the current state of an individual as reflected by others or oneself. The second domain, the ideal self, is the imagery aspirations and hopes of self that one would wish for self or others. Finally, the ought self is what one or other people in the society expect to possess in the current state, even though that is not what they have. In other words, this is the responsibility that accrues to an individual in the society. Taking this outlook on religion in utopia, criticism in the utopian state occurs when they ought and ideal do not reflect the envisioned state of belief.

3.3.Compensation

Nendza (1984) debates that as much as utopian thinking inspires pursuing the ideal state, such an outlook on religion can impede social engagement. As such, this state may arise where individuals engage in a fantasy without evaluating their existing state, leading to escapism. Such escapism leads to the disintegration of the current reality in spiritual life. The compensation function of utopia thus shows that in utopian thinking, the desired state ends up not being achieved.

In other words, in their 1984 debate, Nendza examines the dual nature of utopian thinking, particularly its implications for social engagement and spiritual life. While utopian visions can inspire individuals to strive for an ideal state, they can also create a counterproductive form of escapism. This escapism manifests when individuals, absorbed in the allure of an idealized future, neglect to address and improve their current realities.

In the context of religion, utopian narratives often portray an ideal spiritual or societal state that adheres to religious ideals. While this can serve as a powerful motivational tool, encouraging believers to pursue moral and ethical perfection, it can also lead to a detachment from the practical aspects of addressing contemporary social and spiritual issues.

Nendza argues that this detachment occurs because the focus shifts to an unattainable ideal rather than actionable change. The envisioned utopia, though inspiring, may remain perpetually out of reach due to the lack of engagement with present realities. This can result in a disintegration of the current spiritual or social order, as individuals become more invested in

the fantasy of a perfect state than in making tangible improvements to their existing circumstances.

Thus, the compensation function of utopian thinking reveals a paradox: while it motivates individuals to pursue a higher ideal, it simultaneously risks undermining efforts to achieve meaningful progress in the here and now. In the realm of religious utopian narratives, this dynamic highlights the challenge of balancing visionary aspirations with practical engagement in addressing real-world issues.

4. **Conclusion**

The analysis portrayed the depiction of religion in More's Utopia. It investigated utopia in More's discourse that illustrated elements of a society that has its political, economic, and social state in perfection, an ideal state that humanity seeks. The study demonstrated that religion in Utopia has emerged as a perfect state of being, where each individual has freedom of worship, so long as he or she is not an atheist, in addition to illuminating how the priests in Utopia play a crucial role, presiding over all religious functions. This paper further provided the functions that are key for religious utopia to take place. These functions are compensation, criticism, and change. Finally, it concluded that as an evolving state, religious utopia keeps transforming, given that the achievement of such visionary plans automatically eliminates the utopia, creating the desire for a new reality.

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The Essential Role of Modern Women in *Top Girls* by Caryl Churchill

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Abstract:

This article investigates the comprehensive representations of modern women in Caryl Churchill's play *Top Girls*. The study starts by looking at how feminist ideals evolved, then examines feminist literary criticism and how it may challenge patriarchal narratives, especially via theatre and literature. The paper investigates significant characters from Churchill's *Top Girls*, including Marlene, Joyce, Win, and Louise, to emphasise their opposing views on the profession, parenting, and social class. It highlights Churchill's criticism of the neoliberal concept of meritocracy and the limits of capitalist feminism, which often sacrifices human ties and women's solidarity. Churchill's character dynamics and conversation call into question the concept of universal sisterhood, highlighting the differences produced by different social, economic, and political environments. Finally, the paper asserts that "*Top Girls"* promotes a more inclusive vision of modern women's various roles and problems, pushing for unity that limits class, culture, and individual ambition.

Keywords: Top Girls, Career, Caryl Churchill, modern women, motherhood, feminism.

1. Introduction

Throughout history, patriarchal systems that favoured male supremacy and control have denied women basic human rights. Feminist movements arose in reaction to such oppression, aiming to question and demolish these systems while fighting for women's rights and equality. However, feminism is not a static term; its definition and purpose have developed throughout time, affected by geographical, cultural, and social settings. As a result, the definition of feminism varies greatly between nations and historical periods, ranging from a call for peace and equality to a more extreme challenge to institutional oppression. At its foundation, feminism seeks to remove gender disparities and build a society based on equality and fairness, encouraging women to achieve freedom and self-actualization (Offen, 1988).

Carden (1974) claims that Feminist criticism in literary and cultural studies has transformed how women's roles are analyzed by emphasizing the need to confront sexism, gender biases, and patriarchal narratives. Caryl Churchill, a well-known playwright, has made substantial contributions to this discussion with her revolutionary piece *Top Girls.* The play is set against the background of late twentieth-century feminist movements, and it employs real and fictitious

female characters to examine the complexity and paradoxes inherent in feminism. Churchill's work questions simple notions of sisterhood investigates the influence of social and economic institutions on women, and criticizes the many feminist philosophies that have affected the lives of contemporary women.

This article contends that in *Top Girls*, Churchill critiques the "essential role" of modern women by exploring the conflicts between career ambition and traditional values, the limitations of capitalist feminism, and the complexities of solidarity among women from various social and cultural backgrounds. This study looks at key characters including Marlene, Joyce, Win, and Louise to see how Churchill undermines the idea of a shared feminist identity and pushes for a more subtle, inclusive understanding of women's diverse experiences and struggles in modern society.

2. Waves of Feminism

Feminist movements have transformed and witnessed changes throughout history, and those changes are an outcome of the developments of the movement, most movements witness changes and alternations in the manifestos, yet feminism is accused of changing its agenda, and identical perspective through each movement or as it is academically known as "waves." Those fluctuations reflect the social problems and obstacles in that period. In extension, from the past, there is no fixed definition for "feminism". It is clear lexically. However, it is used to be defined according to the media's perspective or people's understanding. Feminism has been a very controversial concept from the past till now (Johnson, 2017).

Mohajan (2022) states that the movement assembled in different waves, historically, it is divided into four waves, despite the alternations all the waves advocate women's rights in society. The first wave was the emergence of the first natural political wave belongs to the late 19ᵗʰ century to the mid-20th century; however, the initial attempts appeared earlier, for example, Mary Wollstonecraft, a British philosopher, wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), a groundbreaking book on feminism. The book advocates for the empowerment of women in education, politics, society, and marriage. The first wave demanded fundamental rights, such as voting and work. The goals of the first wave were considered essential and straightforward, which insisted on women's social acknowledgement (Wrye, 2009). The second wave was extended from the first wave with some essential changes regarding the claims and ideology of the movement. This movement emerged in the 1960s to 70s. This wave encompassed three distinct forms of feminism, which were organized hierarchically. Among these, bourgeois/liberal Feminism was considered the least politically powerful since it did not support radical/cultural Feminism's aim to dismantle patriarchy to

protect women's social, cultural, and sexual empowerment. Furthermore, it did not promote the radical overhaul of society's economic, political, and social systems as socialist/materialist feminism did. Furthermore, each feminist dynamic had an artistic equivalent; for instance, bourgeois/liberal Feminism maintained fidelity to traditional realistic forms while attempting to create new roles for women within the boundaries of traditional theatrical literature. Radical and cultural feminism emerged as a reaction to the newly identified concepts and possibilities of a 'women's language', which were strongly influenced by new French feminist theories (Mohajan, 2022). On the other hand, socialist and materialist feminism established its aesthetic based on the presentational forms, techniques, and performance registers inherited from Brechtian philosophy.

The third wave of feminism occurred between the 1990s and 2000s; it evolved from its predecessors, moving on to issues such as sexual harassment, gender-role stereotypes, and intersectionality term coined by Kimberly Williams Crenshaw, an American Civil Rights Activist, during the third wave when it found its platform. Intersectionality examines oppression as a collection of biases based on gender, race, and socioeconomic class. With the introduction of the internet, feminists were able to get greater attention, pitting their ideals against a patriarchal society (Mohajan, 2022).

The most recent fourth wave of feminism came with the advent of social media, which enabled even greater levels of communication with women across the world. Fourth-wave feminists promote women's empowerment via independence, equitable opportunity, speaking out against abusers, and inclusivity. While earlier waves rebelled against their patriarchal counterparts, fourth wavers sought the support of their society's men in order to make headway against those who prioritize male interests. Throughout history, several waves and movements have formed, and despite their diversity and distinction, the goal has remained the same: to defend women's rights and maintain their fundamental prerogatives (Wrye, 2009).

2.1 Feminist Criticism

Before the feminist movement, discourses predominantly revolved around male perspectives. Men had always defined women not based on their inherent qualities but rather in relation to themselves. As Simone de Beauvoir, the French philosopher and writer stated she was never considered an independent entity; "Now, woman has always been, if not man's slave, at least his vassal" (Beauvoir, 2011). Women had been considered inferior to men, and feminism as a movement was a reaction against it. Feminist criticism seeks equality and legal rights for women in all areas of politics, culture, and society. On the other hand, bell hooks defines feminism as a social movement that seeks to confront and exert authority over sexism, as well

as the oppressive and exploitative treatment rooted in gender (Hooks, 2000). Furthermore, Tyson (2014) states that Sex and gender are persistent variables contributing to the differential social standings of males and females. Sex generally pertains to the innate and physiological differences between males and females. Simultaneously, gender refers to the acquired social, psychological, and cultural attitudes and actions related to males and females.

Feminist criticism analyses how literature and other cultural works either support or challenge women's economic, social, political, and psychological subjugation. According to Bressler (2011), Feminist criticism encompasses diverse ideologies: Scholars and critics categorize it differently. Some scholars as Toril Moi divide it into four groups: Anglo-American feminism, poststructuralist feminism, materialist feminism, and postmodern feminism. Others, like Rosemarie Tong critics, categorise it into numerous subcategories, varying in number from nine to over thirty. These include cultural feminism, amazon feminism, ecofeminism, material feminism, postcolonial feminism, etc. (Christina, 2011, pp. 157-158).

Feminism started as a social, and political movement, later, the resistance of women expanded worldwide, so the concept of Feminism became wider. In addition, the concept of feminism took a place in literature as a tool for reflecting society. Consequently, authors have had the opportunity to prove their ideas and influence other women to protest and transcend those committed against females. Female authors' contribution to literature is highly valued. Through their brilliant works and valuable contributions, they influenced society.

The history of literature recorded so many feminist authors like Kate Chopin, Virginia Woolf, Sylvia Plath, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Margaret Atwood, etc. and their contributions to literature will stay forever as effective. In a society dominated by males, the conflict of genders will be founded. The conflict between genders exists in both primitive society and modern societies. It is founded on different aspects of life, including social and personal life. Literature always influences society and can change the terminal mainstream that particularly services males. Moreover, theatre is counted as one of the most influential genres of literature; through theatre and Drama, various ideas and perspectives have been discussed and performed by people. The theatre is effective since it is considered visual art. In the 1960s and 70s, feminist theatre emerged from the second wave of the feminist movement. It became widely understood and recognized in that era (Carden, 1974).

3. Caryl Churchill

Caryl Churchill was born in 1938. She grew up in London and Montreal, and studied in the English literature department at Oxford University, this place influenced her and developed her intense attraction to Drama. She demonstrated her talent by publishing and producing three

plays before graduating from Oxford University, one of which was *Downstairs,* which was performed at the National Student Drama Festival in 1958 and won the first prize. Soon after, she gained fame as a radio dramatist. In the early 1970s, she wrote several scripts for BBC radio dramas. Later in 1972, Churchill shifted to television and theatre, she contributed six plays to BBC by 1981. In terms of comparison, Churchill was not completely as satisfied with the television experience as the theatre work, according to (Aston E. , 2010), theatre work was a free space for Churchill where she was capable of writing without the pressure of society and politics.

Churchill's collaboration with the Royal Court Theatre spanned several years, starting around 1972. This experience exposed her to a structure of political challenges that are artistically committed theatre of" The Court". Churchill was recognized as the first woman to hold the position of resident dramatist at the Royal Court Theatre in 1975. This position allowed her to examine the limits and diversity of traditional and orthodox theatre repetitively (Gale, 2016). Churchill was enthusiastic about the theatrical investigation, her impulse led her to integrate the appearance of feminist insights into contemporary views. This movement drove audiences to criticize institutions and beliefs that had previously been taken for granted, both in theatre and in society; this helped to develop Churchill into a feminist socialist criticism of society. She received an Obie Award for best play in 1983 for her play Top Girls, which explores the theme of women suppressing their humanity in pursuit of power within a male-dominated society. She ties a character's personal growth with large-scale social change in plays such as Top Girls; this demonstrates her conviction in the ordinary person's power to effect substantial changes in themselves and their environment. Churchill's works have had a long-lasting impact on theatrical practices, customs, gender stereotypes, and socioeconomic goals during the last two decades and up to the present day (Christina, 2011).

3.1 Top Girls

Top Girls employs historical pageantry to critique easy assumptions about universal sisterhood by showcasing the complexities and contradictions among women from different periods and backgrounds. The play's famous opening act resembles earlier feminist pageants by bringing together historical and fictional women to explore diverse experiences of womanhood. In the initial action, the author shows a variety of great women from history. It is a provocative image of different women from different ages, embodied in a diverse range of costumes that reflect their professions, nationalities, social classes, and historical eras. These include Isabella Bird, a nineteenth-century traveler; Lady Nijo, a thirteenth-century Japanese courtesan and nun; the apocryphal ninth-century Pope Joan; Dulle Gret, from a sixteenth-century painting by

Brueghel; and the Patient Griselda from several mediaeval literary works. The scene showcases a captivating visual display of sisterhood that, as Amelia Howe Kritzer observes, offers a comprehensive amalgamation of these women's experiences, strengths, and resistance tactics from different historical periods, serving as a source of inspiration for contemporary women facing challenges (Aston E. , 2009).

Unlike suffrage-era spectacles that often idealized female solidarity, Churchill deconstructs this notion by highlighting the divisions and tensions among women. Churchill uses overlapping dialogue to reveal the dissonant relationships among women, emphasizing that shared gender does not easily transcend differences in culture, politics, and class. Another significant concern of the play is the image of the two sisters of the space, Marlene and Joyce. Marlene and Joyce, sisters with contrasting worldviews and lifestyles, embody the conflict between modern ambition and traditional values. Moreover, the exchanges in the acts likewise draw attention to differences among women, similarly the relationship between Marlene and Joyce. While the ideological conflict between Marlene and Joyce seems irreconcilable, Churchill challenges the audience to consider alternative paths for women's solidarity beyond the constraints presented in the play. On the other hand, the play does not entirely reject the possibility of unified sisterhood but subtracts it as an absent ideal whose realization (Cameron, 2009). Ultimately, Churchill's 'Top Girls' critiques the limitations of both historical and contemporary feminism, calling for a more inclusive representation of women's diverse experiences and struggles (Solga, 2008).

3.2 Role of Modern Women in *Top Girls*

According to (Aston E. , 2010), society specifies the pivotal role of women. Thus, there is a variety of perspectives on women's roles. Women's position in society is complex, nonetheless, it depends on the culture of a specific society. In some societies they might take two fundamental positions; either she owns a career and be an independent woman, or she is a housewife and dependent woman. The significant role of both could not be denied. Thus, Churchill exposes the depiction of both positions by two sisters. Marlene is the protagonist of the play, and she is the central character. She works in an employment agency. She has been promoted to director of the agency "*Top Girls*". Her ambitions and dreams about her career have led her to neglect her family, including her daughter Angie. As a result, she could not balance her family and career.

In contrast, Joyce is a housewife; she is not a worker and raises Marlene's daughter because of her mother's busyness. Joyce exposes the perspective of the working class. However, she is not a particularly sympathetic character and is very resentful of her sister. Marlene and Joyce

do not get along well because of their different vision of life. So, through the character of the play, we observe the different attitudes toward careers and their significance for modern women. The matter of work is a central concept in the play and is lightly observed in Act Two. Win is one of the female characters in the play and the top girls' agency as well; she is a hard worker and focuses on her career. The conflict between males and females and the discrimination of gender is observed in her speech:

> Win: Oh yes, all that and a science degree, funnily enough. I started out doing medical research, but there was no money. I thought I would go abroad. Did they sell Coca-Cola in Russia and Pepsi--cola in China? You might think you can be qualified more than you are. Men are awful bullshitters, and they like to make out jobs that are harder than they are. In any job I did, I started doing better than the rest of the crowd, and they did not like it. So, I would get unpopular and drink to cheer myself up. I lived with a man and supported him for four years, but he could not get work. After that, I went to California. I like the sunshine. (Churchill, 1982)

Win exposes the suffering of women as well as describes the obstacles that could face women in patriarchal societies. Patriarchal structures create barriers in their job that minimise their contribution. She also states that men often exaggerate the complexity and importance of their work to maintain power. Win states that in all her jobs she did " better than the rest of the crowd" and yet this led to her becoming "unpopular". This demonstrates that doing well or outperforming at jobs does not lead women to recognition or advancement, but resentment. Women's experience is undervalued and unrecognised as men devalue their efforts. Although Win worked better than men, no one admitted this fact. Win's experience represents the greater reality of many modern women, who, although being educated and talented, confront societal impediments that prevent them from attaining their full potential. This problem still exists in modern life, so many females are denied different positions only because of gender discrimination, although they are qualified enough. On the other hand, other commercial reasons prevent women from working. In some institutions, women cannot be hired because it is expected that they need work vacations more than men because of their responsibility for family and children, which affects the productivity of the institutions.

Moreover, the play offers a multifaceted criticism of modern women's fundamental function, as formed by both patriarchal and capitalist institutions. Win's narrative is a reflection on the contrasts that modern women face: the strive for independence, the yearning for acknowledgement, the weight of undervaluation, and the emotional labour of combining

societal standards with personal wants. Churchill's work, via Win, conveys the splintered reality of women seeking fulfilment in a society that often fails to recognize and reward their entire ability. Hence the neglecting of women in their careers is described by another character in the play:

> Louise: There you are. I have lived for that company and given my life; you could say that because I have not had much social life, I have worked in the evenings. I have not had office entanglements for the very reason you just mentioned, and if you are committed to your work, you move in only a few other circles. (Churchill, 1982)

Churchill exposes the suffering of women in an innovative method, where she reflects on all the pressures that a woman could face a woman those lives in a society dominated by patriarchy. It demonstrates the character's suffering. She decided to leave her job, after she presented all her experience and effort for the company's sake, but no one appreciated her; therefore, she preferred to concede her position. The term "given my life" implies a complete dedication to her career, even at the expense of her personal life and well-being. This echoes the feminist perspective that patriarchal employment arrangements require extra labour and dedication from women while not necessarily providing the same benefits or recognition as men. Furthermore, it also shows women's pride that could not be affected by financial temptations. The author declares that women are working to fulfil their dreams, achieve their aims, and be independent; the matter is more than employment or a position that provides them with excellent financial gain. Career depicts the self-realization and recognition of females.

> Marlene: I do not mean anything personal. I do not believe in class. Anyone can do anything if they have got what it takes.
>
> Joyce: And if they have not?
>
> Marlene: If they are stupid, lazy, or frightened, I will not help them get a job; why should I?
>
> Joyce: What about Angie?
>
> Marlene: What about Angie?
>
> Joyce: She is stupid, lazy, and frightened, so what about her?
>
> Marlene: You run her down too much. She will be all right (Churchill, 1982).

The last conversation between Marlene and Joyce shows the different aspects of their life. Marlene shows her originality about her job so that she is a working woman and independent and handles her responsibilities at work accurately. On the other hand, her sister Joyce is not a worker, but she raised her daughter instead. The conversation shows that Marlene is unaware

of her daughter and does not know her like Joyce. This conversation exposes a sense of irony, Marlene is passionate about her work, but her personal life is dissolved. Moreover, according to Marlene, she does not subscribe to the concept of class. This statement expresses a neoliberal feminist viewpoint that emphasises individual initiative and meritocracy, asserting that anybody with the necessary skills and abilities can achieve anything. achievement perspective posits that women may attain success by diligent effort and unwavering resolve, disregarding the institutional obstacles of social class and gender that can impede achievement. On the other hand, Marlene's conception of a world without social classes is simplistic and disregards the existing structural disparities. This accords with the criticism of certain branches of feminism that give priority to individual empowerment and professional achievement without acknowledging the fundamental socio-economic systems that sustain inequality. Joyce said, "And if they have not?" Expressly challenges Marlene's meritocratic perspective by highlighting the unequal distribution of opportunity and assistance among individuals. Joyce's inquiry subtly criticises Marlene's limited comprehension of intersectionality, which refers to the interdependence of race, class, gender, and other characteristics that exacerbate disadvantages for certain minority groups. This conflict between Marlene and Joyce exemplifies the conflict between liberal feminism, which prioritises individual rights and accomplishments, and socialist feminism, which underscores the importance of tackling structural inequities that impact marginalised groups. Joyce's perspective is in line with socialist feminist criticisms that advocate for communal action and structural transformation instead of just emphasising individual achievement.

Moreover, Marlene criticizes lazy and frightened people, while Joyce accuses Marlene's daughter of the same quality. Although Marlene tries to deny that her daughter belongs to this category of people, the play ends with the scene of her daughter waking up at night, and she screams, "frightened, frightened" (Churchill, 1982). Angie might be the ultimate victim of a competitive world. However, the diversity of women represented in the office implies that work is a major source of worry for women in general. The play does not argue that women should not go to work; plainly, they must and want to, but employment unavoidably has an impact on their whole lives, sometimes negatively, due to societal limitations that punish women and limit their ability (Naismith & Worrall, 1991). However, Joyce's concern for Angie, "What about Angie?" emphasises the need for community and solidarity among women, implying that the feminist movement should not exclude those who are less competent or confident. Joyce's critique of Marlene's attitude reveals the unpleasant fact that modern women who achieve success often do so by adhering to patriarchal ideas of rivalry and self-reliance rather than

cooperating and supporting one another. Furthermore, within the feminist debate on what constitutes the "essential role" of a contemporary woman, this conversation between Marlene and Joyce highlights the contradiction. Marlene characterises the modern, professional woman who places personal success as a top priority and embraces the mindset of self-determined success. Joyce, conversely, embodies a socially focused viewpoint, prioritising empathy and acknowledging structural barriers.

4. Conclusion

The theatre has a significant impact on society as well as literature. Both can make remarkable changes in people's perspectives; thus, Caryl Churchill is one of the influential authors who exposed the female problem in her works. Her works contributed to English literature; *Top Girls* is one of her well-known works of Churchill. In this play, she exposes the image of British women after 1970; in addition, she attempts to promote the idea of the ideal sisterhood in modern life as she starts the first act of the play by gathering a group of women from different historical epochs to showcase the evolvement of the women crises in the society. Gender discrimination is another crucial concern of the play, especially in career competitions. Through the characters, it is discovered that the female characters face many struggles in their work. Although they are qualified as much as males, they must earn equal opportunities. Top Girls is a striking indictment of the roles and expectations that contemporary women face in a society driven by both patriarchal and capitalist forces. Churchill questions conventional feminist ideas via the play's complicated character relationships and conversation, she emphasizes the tensions between professional goals, personal sacrifices, and the need for solidarity among women from various socioeconomic and cultural origins. The examination of major individuals such as Marlene, Joyce, Win, and Louise demonstrates how multiple feminist ideologies liberal, socialist, and radical intersect and often conflict, challenging the concept of a cohesive feminist identity.

Churchill depicted the different images of a working woman and a housewife woman through two sisters in the play. Both characters have shortages in their lives and consequently are unhappy. Moreover, the play exposes the situation of the children of an employed mother; it shows Angie, Marlene's daughter, as a victim of this competition. The play does not declare that women should not work; it says that women need and want to work, but it shows the social restrictions forced on women. The author exposes that work inevitably affects women's whole life. Employment and career put women in a critical situation and demanded a crucial decision; finally, the play reveals that women in contemporary British society should sacrifice their private and personal lives for their careers. The play concludes that, although modern women

seek freedom and respect, these goals are often constrained by cultural expectations and economic institutions that value individual achievement above community strength. Top Girls advocates for a more delicate knowledge of women's different experiences by showing the problems and inconsistencies they confront in their personal and professional lives, as well as for an inclusive, intersectional, and solidarity-focused feminism.

Churchill's study indicates that no one story or viewpoint defines the "essential role" of contemporary women. Instead, it must address the complexities of navigating both the public and private worlds, while also acknowledging the need for structural change to achieve genuine equality and justice for women. Through Top Girls, Churchill not only analyses the limits of historical and present feminism but also advocates for a more complete understanding of women's roles and difficulties in modern society, encouraging us to seek alternate pathways to unity and empowerment.

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The Role of Social Media Platforms in Enhancing Language Learning Practices: A Case Study

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Abstract

In this globalized world, language learning is not merely bound to traditional classroom learning. Social media platforms have brought about a substantial change in language learning since it is utilized by individuals worldwide. Since the benefits of social media for enhancing EFL are ignored by learners, the recent paper aims to look into how social media can be effective in learning and improving English as a foreign language (EFL) in terms of language skills, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammatical comprehension. The data were collected through mixed methods. The quantitative data was collected through a 28-item questionnaire and analyzed by SPSS 27. And semi-structured interview was used for collecting qualitative data. Fifty-one participants in Erbil filled out the online questionnaire and four participants were interviewed for the qualitative phase. The findings of the study illustrate that learners have favorable perspectives toward social media platforms in enhancing EFL in terms of language skills, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar knowledge. The results of the paper can help teachers, curriculum creators, and course designers to include social media in their teaching to improve students' EFL proficiency. Also, they can increase learners' understanding of how to use social media platforms effectively to enhance EFL.

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language, Social Media, English Language Learning

1. Introduction

In the era of the digital world, language learning has experienced a substantial shift from learning a language in traditional classrooms to learning a language on social media. Social media is one of the digital tools that most people across the world utilize regularly (Xodabande, 2017; Al Arif, 2019). Some people use it for entertainment and fun, some use it for meeting new people, while some people use social media platforms for learning and developing a foreign language by practicing the language through social media. Researchers have delved into the realm of this line of work and reported findings on the role of social media in language learning. The findings of Hamadeh et al.'s (2020) study revealed that social media participates in learners' daily language practices and enhances language learning. Like any other country,

learning English as a foreign language has received the utmost attention in the Kurdistan region of Iraq due to its multilingual feature. According to Ilyosovna, (2020) people all across the world choose to learn English as a foreign language because they recognize its significance. For a lengthy time, English has served as the language of the entire world. It is virtually hard to identify a nation where learning English has not become the standard (Mahu, 2012).

Since language learning is both theoretical and practical, utilizing social media for language learning can assist in facilitating and enhancing language learning. Therefore, in the present time, technology and social media are used by learners in teaching and learning to increase the stimulation and engagement of learning and teaching (Kitchkaran, 2016). However, the dilemma emerges when the values of social media as a tool for learning and improving a foreign language is neglected by learners and are only used for entertainment purposes. As stated by Al Arif (2019), in over a decade, a variety of social media platforms have emerged, and people, particularly learners, frequently utilize these platforms because they are enjoyable for them. Through social media learners as users can engage in various activities, while also being a great resource for learners to learn the English language. The recent research seeks to explore the effectiveness of utilizing social media as a tool in learning and developing English as a foreign language (EFL) in terms of language skills, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammatical knowledge. As this paper enlightens the benefits of social media platforms in learning and promoting English as a foreign language, it will guide learners to resort to social media for their language practices, and lead educators to implement social media as a tool for language teaching in their classrooms for increasing students' awareness toward the usefulness of social media in language learning. Consequently, to address the aims abovementioned, the recent paper seeks to answer the following research questions:

- What are students' perceptions toward the use of social media platforms in improving the English language?
- What is the role of social media in developing learners' English language in terms of language skills, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammatical knowledge?

2. Literature Review

Learning a second language is said to be more difficult than acquiring one's native tongue (Allan & Finch, 2017). In the meantime, learners all around the world wish to acquire English as a foreign language and use several ways to learn the language. One of the efficient and useful methods used by language learners to practice a foreign language is through social media. Hamadeh et al. (2020) reported that social media use is promoted since it is simple to use in

comparison to other technical advancements, and learners find it to be much more practical for language learning. Similarly, some researchers in their studies indicated that the best tool for encouraging English language learners of all proficiency levels to actively interact with one another in English and improve their language proficiency is social media (e.g., Aziz et al., 2019; Ismail & Shafie, 2019; Derakhshan & Hasanabbasi, 2015; Kitchakarn, 2016). In the same way, research by Sivagnanam and Yunus (2020) revealed that social media usage is an engaging tool that supports implicit learning for EFL students. Furthermore, Al Arif (2019) believed that students utilize social media to practice English language learning which has positively affected students' English language proficiency. Similarly, in a study conducted by Tartari (2015) regarding the use of social media for academic purposes, where students participated in an interview and were asked about their attitude toward using social media for academic purposes. It was found that learners' attitudes are highly favorable toward using social media for academic purposes. Moreover, the results of the interviews revealed that social media is included by students in their educational process. Some students stated that using social media is crucial for learning a foreign language.

There is a growing body of literature on the role of social media. Social media is essential for learning English language skills because it gives adult learners the chance to develop their speaking, listening, reading, writing, and other related skills (Yadav, 2021; Derakhshan & Hasanabbasi, 2015). Social media has a significant impact on English language acquisition as it gives users, especially English language learners the chance to develop and master all the skills of the English language (Khan et al., 2016; Al Arif, 2019). A study conducted by Olaleke et al. (2015) revealed that social media can be utilized to improve students' language skills. Similarly, according to Abbas et al. (2019), social media does influence language learning skills, and learning English as a second language on social media is more practical using social media platforms. All aspects of English language proficiency, including pronunciation, listening comprehension, speaking, writing, grammar, and syntax, can be improved via social media (Yadav, 2021). Vocabulary is the basis of any language in the world, and the absence of vocabulary dramatically prevents language development. Abbas et al. (2019) believed that social media significantly aided ESL students in expanding their vocabulary.

The study conducted by Gonulal (2019) on the use of Instagram as a tool for language learning, revealed that English language learners generally reported favorable opinions about using Instagram to practice their language skills. The study demonstrated that Instagram has the potential to assist language learners in enhancing all language skills in general, vocabulary knowledge, and speaking skills precisely. This mirrors the findings in Lailiyah and

Setiyaningsih (2020) that the participants had positive attitudes towards Instagram in practicing and enhancing English speaking and participants agreed that utilizing Instagram helped them better comprehend vocabulary and sentence structure. On the other side, English language learners expressed slightly unfavorable opinions of utilizing Instagram to correct grammatical mistakes or increase mastery of English grammar. Instagram might not be the best place to practice grammar and other aspects of English language proficiency. This is because slang and other incorrect English use are quite prevalent on Instagram. As a result, several learners expressed unfavorable opinions about using Instagram as a tool to increase their understanding of grammar or correct errors related to grammatical structures

Among English language learners, Facebook is the most widely used medium for online interaction, because there are groups devoted to teaching English, and the members of these groups receive frequent updates on grammar, vocabulary, and other new material. Facebook therefore offers options for social engagement, both synchronous and asynchronous communication (AbuSa'aleek, 2015). The findings of his study demonstrated that the Facebook platform promotes English language learning and skill improvement. This is in line with the outcomes of the research by Olaleke et al. (2015) on the use of social media platforms for developing students' academic performance and activities, illustrating that the Facebook platform is the most widely used social media platform among learners. This application is proven to improve academic achievement and learning performance by enhancing students' reading comprehension, increasing the use of grammar and vocabulary, and encouraging relationships between students and other professionals. Likewise, research conducted by Faryadi (2017) on the effectiveness of Facebook in English language learning revealed that, according to 900 learners who participated in his study, Facebook enhanced learners' critical thinking and understanding and promoted students' English language fluency.

YouTube is a site that provides opportunities to create and deliver videos that promote interaction with others (Habes et al., 2019). In an authentic L2 learning atmosphere, YouTube has been proven to improve language acquisition and has the potential to enhance language skills (Dizon, 2022; Alobaid, 2020). The students in Sun and Fang (2015) claimed that YouTube helped improve their English speaking and assisted them in identifying linguistic weaknesses, primarily in L2 pronunciation. This is aligned with what Aldukhayel (2021) discovered, which is that the students in his research thought that one of the major benefits of watching YouTube vlogs or videos was pronunciation development. Reading blog posts and watching vlogs both contributed to incidental vocabulary development in almost equal amounts. The research by Arndt and Woore (2018), revealed that learners who watched

YouTube videos could significantly improve their incidental vocabulary learning. Moreover, the study by Yaacob et al. (2021) was conducted to figure out the effects of YouTube and Video-Podcast on listening skills and found that YouTube may improve young learners' listening comprehension.

TikTok is a social media application that permits users to record and share a variety of short clips in vertical format, which can be seen by easily scrolling up or down the screen. The research by Pratiwi (2021) aimed to explore how learners can improve their pronunciation through the TikTok application and recognize the efficiency and usefulness of social media in learning English pronunciation and found that the TikTok app can be utilized as a tool for learning English pronunciation. Additionally, a study by Herlisya and Wiratno (2022) found that TikTok includes modern features and everyone relies on it, the best option for enhancing learners' speaking skills is to use TikTok as a learning tool for acquiring new vocabulary. The existing literature emphasizes the important role of various social media platforms in enhancing language learning practices. However, gaps remain in our understanding of the learners' perceptions of the role, promoting mindful experience to maximize the usage outcomes, which this study attempts to explore.

3. Methodology

The recent paper examines the effectiveness of social media in learning and improving English as a foreign language. Therefore, two questions arise: What are students' perceptions toward the use of social media platforms in improving the English language? And what is the role of social media in developing learners' English language in terms of language skills, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammatical knowledge? Furthermore, to answer the research questions and enhance the validity and reliability of the data collected, the researcher employed a mixed-method research design (Dornyei, 2007). As for quantitative data, the researcher designed an online questionnaire that consisted of twenty-eight items, among those twenty-eight items, six of them targeted background information. The questionnaire was distributed with snowball sampling. Therefore, fifty-one participants (forty-one female participants with ten male participants) participated in the questionnaire. The data were collected in two weeks and analyzed with IBM SPSS 27. Moreover, for the reliability of the questionnaire, the researcher performed Cronbach's Alpha reliability test to make sure the questionnaire is reliable. Thereby, after running the test, the questionnaire showed to be reliable as Cronbach's Alpha was 0.725 (see Table 1). This means that the questionnaire is reliable because Cronbach's Alpha is bigger than 0.7.

Reliability Statistics

	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
	.725	.638	22

Table 1 Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test

As for qualitative data collection, semi-structured interviews were conducted with four participants. The researcher aimed to use semi-structured interviews as participants are motivated to expound on the problem in an exploratory way during a semi-structured interview (Dornyei, 2007). The participants were asked nine questions as the researcher aimed to gain more knowledge about participants' perceptions toward the effectiveness of social media platforms in learning English as a foreign language. The transcriptions of the interviews were thematically analyzed following the required steps of thematic analysis, where the researcher carefully read the transcriptions multiple times and took notes and post-reading. Then, some codes were generated and categorized into themes.

4. Results

4.1 The Quantitative Results

In the quantitative method, the collected data via questionnaire was analyzed by SPSS version 27. To answer the first research question, the researcher explored participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of social media in learning and developing English as a foreign language by using descriptive statistics, where the items related to participants' perceptions were categorized into a scale. Then, the mean of all the related items as one scale was obtained from the descriptive statistics test (see Table 2).

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
perception	51	3	5	3.54	.475
Valid N (listwise)	51				

Table 2 The descriptive Statistics of learners' perception on the effectiveness for learning ESL.

As shown in Table 2, the mean value of the descriptive statistics test is 3.53, which shows that learners, to some extent, have positive perspectives about the usefulness of social media in the context of language learning. This means that learners to some extent think that social media is effective and helpful in learning English as a second language.

After the significant result of learners' perception toward the effectiveness of social media platforms in learning EFL, the researcher desired to know the most significant reasons that lead learners to think positively about the role of social media platforms in learning English as a foreign language. Therefore, the mean of each item related to learner's perception was separately obtained from the descriptive Statistics test (see Table 3).

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I actively use SM to learn ESL	51	1	5	3.33	1.071
I believe that SM creates strees-free environment for language learning	51	1	5	3.69	1.010
SM plays a positive role in learning ESL	51	2	5	3.92	.821
SM provides learners with acess to more authentic language	51	2	5	3.96	.774
SM helps in becoming more self-confident language user	51	1	5	3.82	.932
SM negatively impact my ESL learning	51	1	5	2.27	1.021
SM make ESL learning more accessable	51	2	5	3.80	.693
Valid N (listwise)	51				

Table 3 The descriptive Statistics of reasons that lead learner to think positively about the effectiveness of social media for learning ESL.

As illustrated in Table 3, the highest mean value belongs to the statement that indicates that social media platforms provide learners with access to more authentic language (mean = 3.96). This means that almost the majority of learners agree that social media platforms provide learners with more real-world language, a concept backed by a great deal of research proving to be effective to enhance language skills. The second highest mean value with a mean score of 3.92 belongs to the statement which defines that social media has a positive role in learning English as a foreign language. This demonstrates that learners think that social media has a positive role in their language learning. The third reason with the mean value of 3.82 that lead learners to have favorable perceptions toward social media belongs to the statement which points out that social media helps in becoming more self-confident language users. This shows that learners think that social media platforms assist them to be more self-confident and also use English language with higher confidence. The other highest mean value of 3.80 belongs to the statement which shows that learning English as a foreign language is more accessible due to social media platforms. This indicates that learners can have access to the English language wherever and whenever they desire without thinking about time and space.
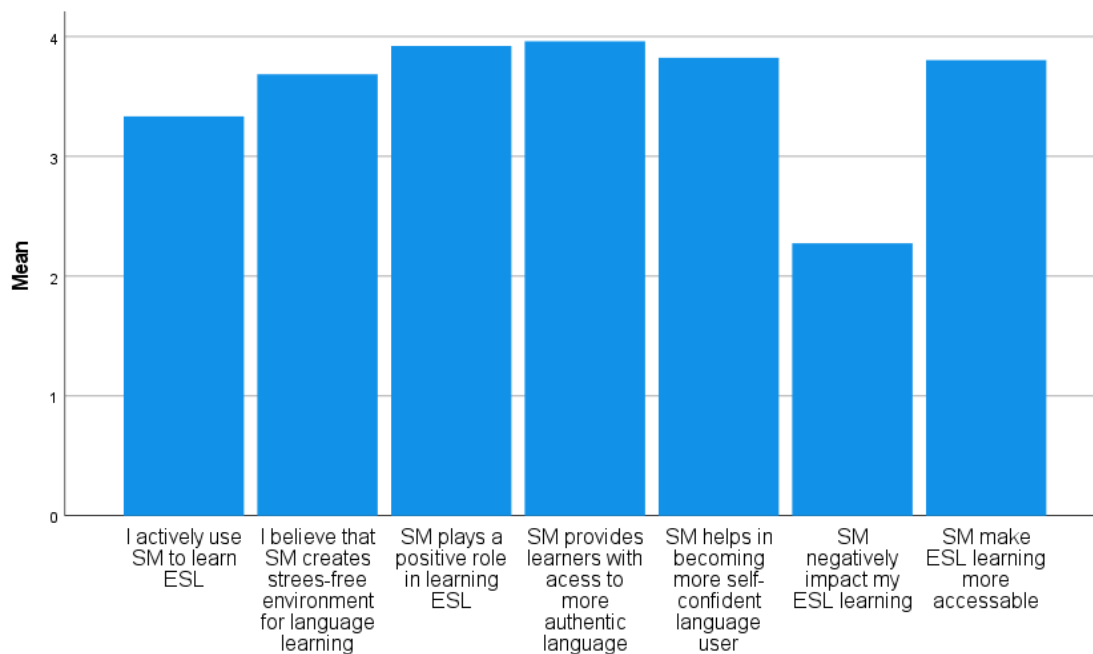

Figure 1 The figure below visualizes the results of the Descriptive Statistics.

The figure above illustrates the learners' perceptions of the use of social media platforms for language learning purposes indicating strong agreement that social media has a vital role in learning EFL. Social media platforms provide access to authentic language and make EFL

learning more accessible and stress-free. They also have an important role in boosting self-confidence. All in all, the participants expressed a positive perception of social media platforms in EFL learning.

As for answering the second research question, an Inferential Test was used. Therefore, a normality test was run to determine whether or not the questionnaire is normally distributed. If the questionnaire is normally distributed, a parametric test will be used. While if the questionnaire is not normally distributed a non-parametric test will be used.

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

			SM can assist in developing Listening skill	SM can assist in developing Reading skill	SM can assist in developing Speaking skill	SM can assist in developing Writing skill	SM assist in improving grammatical knowledge	SM helps in developing pronunciation	SM helps in vocabulary enrichment
N			51	51	51	51	51	51	51
Normal Parameters[a,b]	Mean		4.39	3.94	4.20	3.55	3.41	3.61	3.82
	Std. Deviation		.695	1.173	.722	1.286	1.080	1.097	.888
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute		.280	.324	.334	.304	.178	.267	.226
	Positive		.243	.183	.293	.200	.178	.164	.186
	Negative		-.280	-.324	-.334	-.304	-.178	-.267	-.226
Test Statistic			.280	.324	.334	.304	.178	.267	.226
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)[c]			<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
Monte Carlo Sig. (2-tailed)[d]	Sig.		.000	.000	.000	.000	<.001	.000	.000
	99% Confidence Interval	Lower Bound	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
		Upper Bound	.000	.000	.000	.000	.001	.000	.000

a. Test distribution is Normal.

b. Calculated from data.

c. Lilliefors Significance Correction.

d. Lilliefors' method based on 10000 Monte Carlo samples with starting seed 2000000.

Table 4 One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Normality Test

As shown in Table 4, One Sample K-S was used to check normality before running the inferential test. After checking normality, the result shows that the P value of sig (2-tallied) is smaller than 0.05. This means that the questionnaire is not normally distributed. Therefore, a K-related type of inferential test is used for analyzing the role of social media platforms in developing learners' English language in terms of language skills, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammatical knowledge (see Table 5).

Test Statistics[a]

N	51
Chi-Square	50.246
df	6
Asymp. Sig.	<.001

a. Friedman Test

Table 5 K-related Test (Friedman Test)

As illustrated in Table 5, a K-related Test (Friedman Test) was run to check the role of social media in improving learners' English language in terms of the four skills of language, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammatical knowledge. As shown in the Test Statistics, the significant p-value is 0.001 which means that social media platforms have a significant role in improving listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammatical knowledge. Therefore, the researcher ran 2 related sample tests to see which of these language skills were different and improved (see Table 6).

Test Statistics[a]

	SM can assist in developing Speaking skill - SM can assist in developing Listening skill	SM can assist in developing Reading skill - SM can assist in developing Listening skill	SM can assist in developing Writing skill - SM can assist in developing Listening skill	SM helps in developing vocabulary enrichment - SM can assist in developing Listening skill	SM helps in developing pronunciation - SM can assist in developing Listening skill	SM assist in improving grammatical knowledge - SM can assist in developing Listening skill	SM can assist in developing Reading skill - SM can assist in developing Speaking skill	SM can assist in developing Writing skill - SM can assist in developing Speaking skill	SM helps in developing vocabulary enrichment - SM can assist in developing Speaking skill	SM helps in developing pronunciation - SM can assist in developing Speaking skill	SM assist in improving grammatical knowledge - SM can assist in developing Speaking skill	SM can assist in developing Writing skill - SM can assist in developing Reading skill	SM helps in developing vocabulary enrichment - SM can assist in developing Reading skill	SM helps in developing pronunciation - SM can assist in developing Reading skill	SM assist in improving grammatical knowledge - SM can assist in developing Reading skill	SM helps in developing vocabulary enrichment - SM can assist in developing Writing skill	SM helps in developing pronunciation - SM assist in developing Writing skill	SM assist in improving grammatical knowledge - SM can assist in developing Writing skill	SM helps in developing pronunciation - SM helps in vocabulary enrichment	SM assist in improving grammatical knowledge - SM helps in vocabulary enrichment	SM assist in improving grammatical knowledge - SM helps in developing pronunciation
Z	-1.528[b]	-2.303[b]	-3.641[b]	-3.694[b]	-3.715[b]	-4.700[b]	-1.493[b]	-2.889[b]	-2.659[b]	-3.147[b]	-4.045[b]	-3.033[b]	-.541[b]	-1.280[b]	-2.482[b]	-1.219[c]	-.432[c]	-.755[b]	-1.170[b]	-2.667[b]	-1.407[b]
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.126	.021	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	.135	.004	.008	.002	<.001	.002	.588	.201	.013	.223	.666	.451	.242	.008	.159

a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test
b. Based on positive ranks.
c. Based on negative ranks.

Table 6 Test Statistics of 2 related Test (Wilcoxon)

As shown in the Table above, there are a significant improvement between writing and listening skills, vocabulary and listening skills, pronunciation and listening skills, grammar and listening, writing and speaking, vocabulary and speaking, pronunciation and speaking, grammar and speaking, writing and reading, grammar and reading, and grammar and vocabulary. Therefore, Wilcoxon Test was run to check which one of these skills has a higher rank of improvement (see Table 7).

Ranks

		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
SM can assist in developing Speaking skill - SM can assist in developing Listening skill	Negative Ranks	13[a]	9.15	119.00
	Positive Ranks	5[b]	10.40	52.00
	Ties	33[c]		
	Total	51		
SM can assist in developing Reading skill - SM can assist in developing Listening skill	Negative Ranks	16[d]	13.28	212.50
	Positive Ranks	7[e]	9.07	63.50
	Ties	28[f]		
	Total	51		
SM can assist in developing Writing skill - SM can assist in developing Listening skill	Negative Ranks	24[g]	15.98	383.50
	Positive Ranks	5[h]	10.30	51.50
	Ties	22[i]		
	Total	51		
SM helps in vocabulary enrichment - SM can assist in developing Listening skill	Negative Ranks	21[j]	13.07	274.50
	Positive Ranks	3[k]	8.50	25.50
	Ties	27[l]		
	Total	51		
SM helps in developing pronunciation - SM can assist in developing Listening skill	Negative Ranks	25[m]	15.44	386.00
	Positive Ranks	4[n]	12.25	49.00
	Ties	22[o]		
	Total	51		
SM assist in improving grammatical knowledge - SM can assist in developing Listening skill	Negative Ranks	33[p]	18.03	595.00
	Positive Ranks	2[q]	17.50	35.00
	Ties	16[r]		
	Total	51		
SM can assist in developing Reading skill - SM can assist in developing Speaking skill	Negative Ranks	14[s]	15.50	217.00
	Positive Ranks	11[t]	9.82	108.00
	Ties	26[u]		
	Total	51		
SM can assist in developing Writing skill - SM can assist in developing Speaking skill	Negative Ranks	23[v]	16.13	371.00
	Positive Ranks	7[w]	13.43	94.00
	Ties	21[x]		
	Total	51		
SM helps in vocabulary enrichment - SM can assist in developing Speaking skill	Negative Ranks	19[y]	12.45	236.50
	Positive Ranks	5[z]	12.70	63.50
	Ties	27[aa]		
	Total	51		
SM helps in developing pronunciation - SM can assist in developing Speaking skill	Negative Ranks	22[ab]	15.30	336.50
	Positive Ranks	6[ac]	11.58	69.50
	Ties	23[ad]		
	Total	51		
SM assist in improving grammatical knowledge - SM can assist in developing Speaking skill	Negative Ranks	29[ae]	18.19	527.50
	Positive Ranks	5[af]	13.50	67.50
	Ties	17[ag]		
	Total	51		
SM can assist in developing Writing skill - SM can assist in developing Reading skill	Negative Ranks	15[ah]	10.20	153.00
	Positive Ranks	3[ai]	6.00	18.00
	Ties	33[aj]		
	Total	51		
SM helps in vocabulary enrichment - SM can assist in developing Reading skill	Negative Ranks	21[ak]	13.10	275.00
	Positive Ranks	10[al]	22.10	221.00
	Ties	20[am]		
	Total	51		
SM helps in developing pronunciation - SM can assist in developing Reading skill	Negative Ranks	24[an]	15.46	371.00
	Positive Ranks	10[ao]	22.40	224.00
	Ties	17[ap]		
	Total	51		
SM assist in improving grammatical knowledge - SM can assist in developing Reading skill	Negative Ranks	28[aq]	17.39	487.00
	Positive Ranks	8[ar]	22.38	179.00
	Ties	15[as]		
	Total	51		
SM helps in vocabulary enrichment - SM can assist in developing Writing skill	Negative Ranks	14[at]	15.29	214.00
	Positive Ranks	19[au]	18.26	347.00
	Ties	18[av]		
	Total	51		
SM helps in developing pronunciation - SM can assist in developing Writing skill	Negative Ranks	18[aw]	17.97	323.50
	Positive Ranks	19[ax]	19.97	379.50
	Ties	14[ay]		
	Total	51		
SM assist in improving grammatical knowledge - SM can assist in developing Writing skill	Negative Ranks	23[az]	23.17	533.00
	Positive Ranks	20[ba]	20.65	413.00
	Ties	8[bb]		
	Total	51		
SM helps in developing pronunciation - SM helps in vocabulary enrichment	Negative Ranks	15[bc]	12.57	188.50
	Positive Ranks	9[bd]	12.39	111.50
	Ties	27[be]		
	Total	51		
SM assist in improving grammatical knowledge - SM helps in vocabulary enrichment	Negative Ranks	22[bf]	14.34	315.50
	Positive Ranks	6[bg]	15.08	90.50
	Ties	23[bh]		
	Total	51		
SM assist in improving grammatical knowledge - SM helps in developing pronunciation	Negative Ranks	16[bi]	13.34	213.50
	Positive Ranks	9[bj]	12.39	111.50
	Ties	26[bk]		
	Total	51		

a. SM can assist in developing Speaking skill < SM can assist in developing Listening skill

Table 7: Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

As shown in the Table above, reading skills received a mean rank of 13.28 which is higher than the mean rank of listening skills with a mean rank of 9.7. This indicates that social media platforms were more useful in improving learners' reading skills compared to listening skills. In terms of writing and listening skills, learners' writing skills received a higher mean rank of

15.98 than listening skills with a rank of 10.30. This points out that learners' writing skill is developed over their listening skills. When it comes to the difference between writing and reading, writing received a higher rank of 10.20 over reading with a mean rank of 6. This means that social media platforms assist the learner in improving their writing skill more than their reading skill.

Moreover, when it comes to the significant difference between vocabulary and listening, it can be seen that social media platforms are more useful for improving learners' vocabulary as they received a mean rank of 13.07 rather than listening skills with a mean rank of 8.50. Additionally, there is a significant difference between learners' listening skills and pronunciation, the mean rank shows that learners' pronunciation with a mean rank of 15.44 is improved over their listening skills with a mean rank of 12.25. This means that in terms of listening and pronunciation, social media platforms were more effective in improving pronunciation if compared to listening skills.

When it comes to the comparison between grammar knowledge and listening, the test indicates that social media platforms promoted learners' grammatical knowledge with a mean value of 18.3 over listening skills which obtained a mean rank of 17.05. In addition, social media promoted learners' writing skills over speaking skills. Writing skills obtained a mean rank of 16.13 whereas speaking received a mean rank of 13.43. In terms of vocabulary and speaking, the test shows that speaking received a higher rank of 12.70 compared to vocabulary with a rank of 12.45. This means that social media platforms were more useful for promoting speaking skills rather than vocabulary.

When it comes to the difference between pronunciation and speaking skills. It is indicated that social media improved learners' pronunciation with a rank of 15.30 more than their speaking skills which received a mean rank of 11.58. Furthermore, grammar knowledge received a higher mean rank of 18.19 than speaking skills with a mean rank of 13.50. This shows that social media platforms were effective in improving grammatical knowledge rather than speaking skills. In terms of the comparison between grammar and reading, reading skills obtained a higher rank of 22.38 over grammar with a mean rank of 17.39. This means that students' reading skills have improved over their grammar knowledge, but when grammar and vocabulary are compared, grammar received a higher rank of 14.34 over vocabulary with a mean rank of 12.39. This means that learners' grammar knowledge has improved more than their vocabulary.

4.2 The Qualitative Results

To elaborate more on the results of the quantitative analysis, the researcher used qualitative analysis to gain more knowledge about learners' perception of the effectiveness of social media in EFL learning in general and in terms of the four skills of language, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar knowledge. Therefore, several themes were generated from the transcribed interviews, which include:

- Appreciating social media platforms for learning English.
- Stimulating English language learning skills.
- Encouraging the development of vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar knowledge.

4.2.1 Appreciating Social Media Platforms for Learning English

In the recent world social media has a significant role in language learning and development. Therefore, learners value social media platforms in language learning and share positive beliefs. One theme found in the qualitative data presented learners' appreciation of social media for learning English. The theme describes the role of using social media platforms as a tool for learning and enhancing the English language by the learners.

The interviewees of the study were questioned about their thoughts on using social media platforms for learning EFL. In this manner, all the interviewees expressed their positive thoughts about the effectiveness of social media in learning EFL and found it as a useful and motivational tool for language learning and improvement. This response can be supported by the interviewees' speech; As stated by the first interviewee *"Social media gave me motivation to learn the English language and helped me to learn the language"*. The second and third interviewee supports the first interviewee and thinks that social media platforms are really useful for improving EFL as it contain authentic language and visual aids. Then, the fourth interviewee agreed that social media platforms are beneficial for learning and improving EFL, and expressed her positive thoughts toward social media platforms in improving EFL as she stated *"Social media is effective for learning and improving the English language, but not sure to what extent"*. Overall, all interviewees had the same positive thoughts about the effectiveness of social media in improving EFL and this finding is in line with the results of (Al Arif, 2019; Tartari, 2015).

4.2.2 Stimulating English Language Learning Skills

The significant role of social media in learning and promoting language learning is a subject undergoing intense study in the field of language acquisition. Stimulating English language

learning skills was another theme that was found in the study. The theme describes the positive role of social media platforms in stimulating listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills of language.

In terms of improving listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills of language, the analysis shows that social media platforms are useful to a great amount as contain authentic language. In addition, the interviewees claimed that learners should cautiously choose reliable content. This can be supported by the interviewee who stated that *"Social media is beneficial for improving all language skills as it contains authentic language and content"* and another interviewee claimed that *"In the digital era social media promotes all language skills in different ways, personally social media promoted my speaking and listening skills in the first place and writing and reading skills in the second place".* This finding is in line with the results of (Yadave, 2021; Olaleke et al., 2015). As stated by another participant "For me social media especially YouTube helped me to improve all the four skills, reading and speaking skills in the first place, and listening and writing in the second place". This finding mirrors the results of (Dizon, 2022; Alobaid, 2020). All in all, interviewees agree that social media helps in improving language skills and provides their personal experience to support their thoughts.

4.2.3 Encouraging the Development of Vocabulary, Pronunciation, and Grammar Knowledge

Along the four skills of the English language, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar knowledge can be gained through social media practices. Encouraging the development of vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar knowledge was another theme that was found in the study. The theme explains the positive role of social media platforms in developing vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar knowledge. This is evident as the participants stated that *"The main aspect of social media is that it promotes vocabulary learning".* This is aligned with the results of (Aldukhayel, 2021; Abas et al., 2019). Another interviewee stated *"We learn to pronounce different words from social media"* This mirrors the results of (Aldukhayel, 2021; Yaacob et al., 2021). Moreover, participants claimed that social media practices are beneficial for learning the correct grammatical structures. Overall, the interviewees illustrated that social media platforms could be really helpful for enhancing vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar knowledge.

5. Discussion

Appreciating Social Media Platforms for Learning English

The results of the study revealed that social media platforms have a significant role in language learning and enhancement. Learners appreciate social media platforms for language learning and utilize them to enhance the English language. Therefore, the results revealed learners' positive thoughts about the effectiveness of social media in learning EFL. This finding is further supported by the results of the descriptive statistics, which showed that learners, to some extent, have positive perspectives about the usefulness of social media in the context of language learning. The finding is consistent with the results of Al Arif's (2019) study, which explored the use of social media platforms in language learning and found that students have positive attitudes towards the use of social media platforms in English language learning. Likewise, Tartari's (2015) study, which investigated learners' attitudes toward the use of social media platforms in learning English revealed that social media platforms are effective in language learning and learners are positively thinking about the effectiveness of social media platforms in language learning. In brief, the potential of social media platforms to enhance English language learning is revealed by plenty of research in the field of language learning.

Stimulating English Language Learning Skills

The findings of the study revealed the positive role of social media platforms in stimulating listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills of language. Learners utilize social media platforms in language learning. Thus, the results showed that social media platforms are useful to a great extent in developing listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills of language. Additionally, this finding is further supported by the results of the descriptive statistics, which showed that social media platforms have a significant role in improving listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills of language. The finding is consistent with the results of Al Arif's (2019) study, which explored the use of social media platforms in language learning and found that social media plays a significant role in improving English language skills. Similarly, Yadave's (2021) study examined the role of social media platforms in language learning and found that learners can master English language skills through social media platforms. In short, the potential of social media platforms to enhance English language skills is shown by several studies in the field of language acquisition.

Encouraging the Development of Vocabulary, Pronunciation, and Grammar Knowledge

Along with the four skills of the English language, the results revealed the positive role of social media practices in developing vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar knowledge. Since learners use social media platforms in language learning. The results of the study demonstrated that social media platforms have a significant role in enhancing vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar knowledge. Moreover, this finding is further supported by the descriptive statistics results, which showed that social media practices help enhance vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar knowledge. The result is consistent with the findings of Abbas et al.'s (2019) study, which examined the effectiveness of social media platforms in developing vocabulary and discovered that social media platforms improve learners' vocabulary acquisition. Likewise, Yaacob et al.'s (2021) study, investigated the impact of social media platforms in enhancing listening comprehension and revealed that social media platforms are significantly helpful in improving pronunciation comprehension and learners' pronunciation is increased due to social media practices. In precise terms, various studies in the field of language acquisition demonstrated the potential of social media platforms to enhance vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar knowledge.

5.1 Limitation

Even though the study provided valuable information on the possible advantages of social media platforms for acquiring and enhancing language learning, it is essential to acknowledge the study's limitations. This involves that the study lacks teachers' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of social media in enhancing EFL. And interviewing teachers could help develop the study. Additionally, the study involved a small sample of participants, a larger sample of participants could help achieve more accurate and generalizable results.

6. Conclusion

In the recent globalized world, social media platforms have become a widely used tool for learners for various academic purposes. The purpose of this study was to explore learners' perceptions of the effectiveness of social media in learning ESL in terms of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills and vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar knowledge. Therefore, two research questions were addressed. The paper's literature review pointed to relevant studies on the role of social media in learning EFL and discussed the usefulness of various social media applications for enhancing EFL. The results demonstrated that social media platforms are useful for enhancing all four language skills, but in different amounts as reported by the participants as they hold positive perceptions of the role of social media platforms for language

learning purposes. More importantly, social media platforms also improve vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar knowledge to a great extent.

The results of the present study can raise learners' awareness of the potential benefits of using social media platforms in promoting language learning. Further, the findings can guide educators to incorporate social media into their teaching practices to maximize its benefits in language learning. Moreover, curriculum designers can integrate social media platforms into EFL curricula to facilitate language learning. In addition to highlighting the implications of the study, it is noteworthy to address that the study recommends further empirical studies to investigate the use of social media platforms in promoting English language teaching and learning. Further studies are required to explore the effectiveness of social media in enhancing English for specific purposes. Additionally, more studies are needed to investigate the role of social media in stimulating English for business purposes.

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Project Proposal on "Enhancing Quality Education (SDG4) through Quality Teacher Training: Developing In-service Teacher Training for English Education"

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ABSTRACT

This project directly addresses Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) – ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. This proposal is for a two-year-long in-service teacher-training program. The main purpose of this project is to advance the quality of English language instruction all around the country. Acknowledging the central role of teachers in achieving this goal, the program aims to equip them with the essential pedagogical and area-related knowledge, skills, and best practices to advance the effectiveness of English language learning among their students. This project is planned as an urgent requirement to address the specific needs of teachers. These needs will be identified through a comprehensive needs assessment conducted at the program's beginning through online platforms to increase the number of participants and to save time. The results will help to create training content and delivery methods that are directly connected to the challenges and opportunities encountered by teachers in various parts of the country. The nature of the program promotes continuous professional development (CPD) throughout the teachers' careers. While doing that, it also promotes a culture of lifelong learning, which aligns with the core principles of SDG4 and guarantees the long-term sustainability of the project's influences. Through equipping teachers with the essential pedagogical tools and nurturing a culture of continuous learning, this project aims to achieve considerable developments in the quality of English language education (ELE). This will directly interpret to improved learning results for students, contributing to a more inclusive and equitable education system and ultimately supporting the broader goals of SDG4.

Keywords: **English language education, in-service teacher-training program, continuous professional development, Quality education, SDG4.**

1. INTRODUCTION

All Member States adopted the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations in 2015 (THE 17 GOALS). Quality education, SDG4, being of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education while promoting lifelong learning opportunities (Goal4, n. d.). The main objective of this project proposal is to create a wide-ranging plan for improving the quality of education through in-service teacher-training programs for English language teachers across the country.

Quality education is essential for the overall advancement and success of individuals and societies. In this case, well-trained teachers play a pivotal role in delivering effective education, and thus, investing in their professional development is of utmost importance. This proposal aims to address the need for continuous training and support for educators to ensure they are equipped with the necessary English language teaching skills and knowledge to provide high-quality education in this globalized world. The project is entitled "Enhancing Quality Education (SDG4) through Quality Teacher Training: Developing In-service Teacher Training for English Education" because improving the quality of education without improving the quality of teacher education/training is not possible. As the English language is the lingua franca, teachers need to become highly competitive in this labor market to improve their income. It is a fact that a higher percentage of English language teachers are female, developing them professionally and improving their competitiveness in the labor market will clearly show its effectiveness on women's empowerment.

We propose an ambitious project aimed at promoting equal education to all interested parties without any discriminations (gender, race, nationality, age, religion, ethnic and cultural background, learning preference, physical abilities, and socio-economic status) by developing and delivering comprehensive resources and implementing training programs for teachers effectively support their students in mainstream schools. By equipping teachers with the necessary knowledge, skills, and tools, we can ensure that the quality of English language education will increase and students will receive the support they need to achieve their full potential.

2. PROJECT BACKGROUND

On December 22, 2017, Our Hero Arkadag Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov signed the Resolution approving the "Concept of improving the teaching of foreign languages" at the Meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers. Throughout the Concept, the issue of training and retraining of teachers, and the improvement of quality of educational and methodological base in the area of foreign language education is highlighted.

On the other hand, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, and SDG4 (Quality Education) among the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), is vitally important in realizing other Sustainable Development Goals for the future of our planet.

The Turkmen State has developed a powerful educational infrastructure and robust pre-service teacher education programs for preparing teachers to teach English language effectively in their classrooms. However, teachers living in provinces and suburb areas of the provinces need in-service teacher training programs to meet the above-mentioned standards.

"Gujurly bilim merkezi" Economic Society is currently and successfully implementing an award titled: "Gujurly: English language courses to underprivileged youth". With its highly academic, dedicated, collaborative, respectful and experienced team, "Gujurly bilim merkezi" will successfully realize the next project "Enhancing Quality Education (SDG4) through Quality Teacher Training: Developing In-service Teacher Training for English Education".

3. OBJECTIVES

Our proposed project, "Enhancing Quality Education (SDG4) through Quality Teacher Training: Developing In-service Teacher Training for English Education", addresses this critical need by providing 500-1000 teachers with comprehensive training in English language teaching methodologies and pedagogical skills. Experienced educators with international and national experience will lead this program. They will share best practices and innovative teaching strategies aligned with the latest trends of English language teaching in order to improve the quality of education. By participating in this program, teachers will gain the skills and knowledge to:

Improved pedagogical skills and instructional strategies among teachers.

Enhanced subject-specific knowledge and expertise.

Increased use of educational technology in teaching and learning processes.

Improved cooperation and knowledge sharing among English language teachers.

Advanced student commitment, accomplishment, and overall learning achievements.

As participants of a capacity-building project focused on quality education (SDG4), quality professional development and through participating in the seminars and workshops of this project, teachers will be able to:

▪ **Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education** and promote lifelong learning opportunities for English language teachers across the country, SDG4 (Goal4, n. d.)

- **Achieve gender equality and empower all female English language teachers** across the country, SDG5 (Goal5, n. d.)

- **Develop a set of inclusive education resources:** We will develop and implement in-service teacher-training programs to enhance pedagogical skills, subject knowledge, and instructional strategies. We will also create a range of resources, including lesson plans, assistive technologies, and assessment tools, knowledge pool, to empower teachers in accommodating every student in order to improve the quality of education. These resources will be tailored to various types of disabilities, ensuring inclusivity for all students.

- **Conduct specialized in-service teacher-training programs**: We will design and implement training programs to enhance teachers' understanding of inclusive education principles, provide strategies for adapting teaching methods, and enable them to effectively address the diverse needs of students. The training will focus on modern trends in ELT, practical approaches, classroom management techniques, promoting the use of educational technology in teaching and learning processes (even in low-resource contexts), fostering a culture of continuous professional development among English language teachers, and fostering positive attitudes towards inclusion.

- **Foster collaboration and support networks**: We will facilitate opportunities for teachers to collaborate and share best practices in English language education through workshops, online platforms (OPEN and other MOOCs), and peer mentoring. By creating a supportive network, teachers can learn from one another, seek guidance, and build a strong community committed to quality education. Through this project, we will Strengthen the collaboration between teachers, schools, parents, and educational institutions.

- **Monitor and evaluate the impact of the training programs on the quality of education**: Regular monitoring and evaluation will be conducted to assess the effectiveness of the project, identify areas for improvement, and make necessary adjustments. This will include feedback from teachers, students, and parents, as well as data analysis of academic outcomes, contests among the participants (online/offline), and overall student well-being. Monitor and evaluate

4. EMPOWERING EDUCATORS – IMPROVES QUALITY OF EDUCATION

This project tackles the challenge of equipping English language teachers with the latest pedagogical and methodological resources to integrate into their curriculum in order to improve the quality of education. Aligned with the principles of SDG4, this project will bridge the gap between training and implementation.

Traditional professional development often falls short of providing ongoing support for teachers integrating the latest trends in ELT. This project addresses this gap by creating an online professional network/ forums for discussions and exchange of experience besides its regular seminars and workshops all around the country. The research and team of dedicated specialists, trained through educational technologies, modern approaches in ELT, and pedagogy, will lead a series of workshops tailored to the needs of the audience.

5. PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The following activities will be undertaken to achieve the project objectives. They will be conducted all around the country, periodically throughout the year:

- **Needs Assessment:** Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment to identify the specific areas where teachers require training and support. This assessment will involve surveys, classroom observations, interviews, and focus group discussions with teachers, school administrators, education experts, and parents (students - optional). Collaborate with experts to improve the quality of education to develop high-quality, evidence-based resources that address the identified needs. Pilot-test the resources in select schools, gather feedback and make necessary revisions for refinement.

- **Curriculum Development:** Analyze the needs assessment results. Design and develop a comprehensive and well-structured curriculum for the teacher training programs, focusing on areas such as pedagogy, inclusive education principles, modern trends in subject-specific knowledge (ELT/ TEFL/ TESL/ FLT), assessment strategies, classroom management, and technology integration. Develop a detailed Action Plan in order to implement the curriculum all around the country. The curriculum will be designed to align with the latest educational trends and best practices keeping in mind SDG4 & SDG5.

- **Teacher Training Workshops & Programs:** Organize and deliver regular training sessions through workshops, and seminars for teachers, facilitated by experienced educators, subject matter experts, and technology specialists. These workshops will provide hands-on training, promote interactive learning, and encourage the sharing of best practices among teachers. Provide ongoing support and follow-up sessions to address individual challenges and reinforce learning. These workshops will be conducted similarly all around the country with our teacher-trainers, even in the suburban areas. Organizing hands-on extra-curricular activities, and language games (organizing Scrabble tournaments all around the country).

- **Online Learning Resources:** Develop an online platform or learning management system or knowledge pools (email groups / e-forums) to provide teachers with easy access to training materials, resources, and interactive modules. This platform will also serve as a space for teachers to collaborate, share ideas, and seek support from their peers while ensuring accessibility for all teachers.

- **Mentoring and Coaching:** Establish a mentorship and coaching program where more experienced teachers or education experts provide individualized support and guidance to less experienced educators. This program will enable teachers to reflect on their teaching practices, receive constructive and informative feedback, foster life-long learning and continually improve their skills.

- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Implement a robust monitoring and evaluation system to assess the effectiveness of the teacher training programs. Develop evaluation frameworks and data collection methods to measure the impact of the project on student learning outcomes and teacher capacity. Collect and analyze data on academic performance, attendance, behavior, and student satisfaction. Conduct regular assessments, surveys, interviews, and focus groups with teachers, students, and parents to gather qualitative feedback. Classroom observations will be conducted to measure the impact of the training on teacher performance, student outcomes, and overall quality of education. Extra evaluation will be conducted through teacher contests quarterly, which will focus on teachers' CPD. Each contest will focus on a specific book on ELT (for the first registered one hundred participants hard copies of the books will be provided free). Contest winners will be awarded with free and discounted training vouchers from international certificate programs as TESOL / CELTA

- **Collaboration, support networks, and international experience:** Attend international and national conferences and other educational-scientific events to bring novelty into the field and cascading new knowledge. Organize regular workshops and conferences where teachers can share experiences, success stories, and challenges faced in their English language teaching and learning journey (this chain of events would be titled as *"My ELT Journey & Me"*). Establish an email group or online form/platform where teachers can connect, exchange ideas, and seek advice from experts. Implement a peer-mentoring program to facilitate knowledge sharing and support among teachers.

6. ADDRESSING THE NEED FOR CONTINUOUS LEARNING

"Gujurly bilim merkezi" Economic Society is dedicated to improving the quality of education in Turkmenistan. We believe that well-trained and motivated teachers are the cornerstone of a strong educational system. However, many teachers in our country face challenges in accessing effective in-service professional development opportunities. This lack of training can hinder their ability to implement innovative teaching methods and create engaging learning environments for their students. This project aims to bridge the gap between educational development and teacher preparedness by offering a sustainable professional development model. With up-to-date technics and technology in ELT, teachers will contribute to the quality of education.

7. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The positive impact of this project will extend beyond the participating teachers. By equipping them with effective teaching methods, we are expecting below outcomes:

- Enhance student learning outcomes and critical thinking skills.
- Foster a more engaging and interactive classroom environment.
- Promote collaboration and exchange of knowledge between U.S., Turkmen, and international educators and ELT experts.
- Improved pedagogical skills and instructional strategies among teachers.
- Enhanced subject-specific knowledge and expertise.
- Increased use of educational technology in teaching and learning processes.
- Strengthened collaboration and knowledge sharing among educators.
- Establishments of online forums for Turkmen ELT teachers (which later will be Turkmen English Language Teachers' Association/ TELTA)
- Improved student engagement, achievement, and overall learning outcomes.
- National and International Presentations and Publications about the project acknowledging the grant providers' and supporters' help.

8. PROJECT TIMELINE

The next proposed timeline is designed for a 24-month program beginning in September 2024 (based on the conditions). We should adjust the schedule based on the estimated training begins. In addition, we may probably want to add some specific dates and numbers for seminars and workshops where it is required. As the project will be implemented over a period of two years, the team will remain firm on the following key milestones:

- Needs assessment and analysis through an online survey: Months 1-2
- Curriculum and resource development based on needs analysis: Months 2-3
- Designing a detailed Action Plan for Training workshops: Months 4-5

- Design and delivery of teacher training programs: Months 4-22 / Ongoing

- Establishment of collaboration and support networks for teachers: Months 4-24

- Developing and improving an online platform: Months 4-24

- Mentoring and coaching program: Months 6-24

- Monitoring and evaluation of project outcomes: Ongoing throughout the project

- Preparing and submitting reports: Quarterly

- Preparing research based articles and presenting / publishing: Ongoing throughout the project

9. BUDGET

Recognizing English language teachers' current needs, this project offers a wide-ranging professional development program. The program will actively work in various parts of the country conducting needs analysis, developing curriculum accordingly, training teachers through seminars and workshops, and conducting the program evaluation. This project will focus on the improvement of the quality of education (SDG4) through providing quality professional development to enable teachers to integrate the latest trends in pedagogy and methodology of ELT into their curriculum to meet high standards.

The estimated budget planning and distribution for this project is as follows:

Portable over-head projector & other technological infrastructure

Developing Needs analysis and assessment

Developing Curriculum based on Needs analysis

Developing a detailed and well-structured Action Plan based on the Curriculum

Online platform development and maintenance

Delivering Workshops & Seminars (periodically)

Grant coordination & Project Management (monthly)

Organizing & delivering other training & extra-curricular activities (periodically)

Mentoring the training program -

Monitoring and evaluation activities -

Participating at the international conferences & events -

Inviting internationally renowned ELT specialists for seminars & workshops -

Publications in journals & as book chapters –

Publishing books on English language teaching methods (at least 100 copies)

Awards for the winners of the contests and competitions-

Stationary items

10. CONCLUSION

Enhancing quality education requires investing in the professional development of teachers. This project proposal outlines a comprehensive plan for implementing teacher-training programs to improve pedagogical skills, subject knowledge, and instructional strategies. By supporting teachers through continuous training and mentoring, we can create a positive impact on the quality of education and contribute to the overall development and success of individuals, societies, and the global world.

"Gujurly bilim merkezi" Economic Society has a proven record of accomplishment of implementing successful education initiatives. We possess the necessary expertise and infrastructure to manage this project effectively. We are confident that "Enhancing Quality Education (SDG4) through Quality Teacher Training: Developing In-service Teacher Training for English Education" will make a significant contribution to improving the quality of education in Turkmenistan.

By investing in the development of quality education and providing comprehensive training for teachers, we can create an educational system that values and supports the diverse needs of all students. This project aims to empower teachers (the majority of ELT teachers are female, women empowerment) to implement inclusive practices effectively and foster an inclusive learning environment where every student can succeed. We invite your support and collaboration to improve the quality of education not only in the urban areas but also especially in the suburban areas of the country without any discrimination. With your support, we can include everyone to our training program, so that qualified teachers may have better opportunities in the labor market. With your support, we can empower women, as the majority of English language teachers are female. With your support, we can train the teachers on inclusive education, so that no child left behind. Your support + our action = will improve the quality of education.

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THE END

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