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## **Editorial Preface**

Journal of Research in Language and Translation (JRLT) is pleased to announce the publication of its first issue which includes articles on different topics, ranging from the motivational impact of storytelling to the translation of culturally sensitive content. These articles, and the topics they address, reflect the journal's core mission; that is, to provide researchers and scholars with a medium to disseminate knowledge, share scholarly expertise and to inform practices in the fields of language and linguistics, language learning and teaching, and translation.

The publication of this issue would not have been possible without the selfless help of the editorial team who first screened papers for quality and thematic fit and assigned these papers to potential reviewers. JRLT appreciates and genuinely values the experience and expertise of reviewers who took on the responsibility to assess the quality of manuscripts and to provide guidance on how to make each paper better.

In the end, we hope that the publication of the first issue will motivate reluctant researchers and novice academics to submit their work, have it evaluated by well-informed reviewers and, ultimately, bring it to wider readership.

Editor

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## **Storytelling motivation: Creating role models with inspirational stories**

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### **Abstract**

Motivating students is an important concern for language teachers. One of the most direct ways to motivate students is for the teacher to talk them into it. This study investigates the effectiveness of narrating inspirational stories about successful role models on motivating a sample of Saudi university learners of English ( $N = 270$ ). Teachers of the experimental group told their students motivational stories about famous people associated with the English culture as a warm-up activity for a period of about four weeks. Results of  $t$ -tests showed that the experimental group reported a significant reduction in anxiety ( $d = 0.41$ ). However, there were no significant differences between the two groups in integrativeness, motivation, or attitudes toward the learning situation. The role of creating role models for language learners is discussed in light of the present results.

*Keywords:* storytelling, role models, anxiety, motivational stories

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Recent years have witnessed an increasing interest in the pedagogical implications of motivation principles to language classrooms (Al-Hoorie, 2017; Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015; Lamb, 2017). A parallel line of inquiry also interested in classroom application is found in evidence-based second language pedagogy (e.g., Sato & Loewen, 2019). However, as Sato and Csizér (in press) explain, these two lines of inquiry have tended to take separate paths with little cross-pollination. Motivation and language learning psychology more generally have tended to favor observational questionnaire-heavy designs (Al-Hoorie, 2018; Al-Hoorie et al., 2021). On the other hand, the tradition of evidence-based pedagogy has utilized intervention designs but with little attention to the psychological dimension of the learning process (e.g., DeKeyser & Prieto Botana, 2019).

There are at least three approaches for possible intersections uniting these two lines of inquiry (Sato & Csizér, in press). One approach is for learner psychology research to draw more from actual behavior rather than self-report questionnaires (Al-Hoorie, 2018; see also Baumeister et al., 2007). This allows researchers to observe actual behavior rather than having to infer it from learners' report. A second approach is to examine the characteristics of the learning environment, teacher practices, and their relation to learner motivation (Dewaele, 2020; Dörnyei, 2019). This type of investigation sheds light on what psychological factors can potentially help promote better learning. Finally, researchers could conduct interventions targeting motivation and other psychological variables (Hiver & Al-Hoorie, 2020a; Lamb, 2017) in order to ascertain the effectiveness of these practices.

This paper reports a study that draws from the second and third approaches above. It reports a study on the relationship between pedagogical practice and learner motivation using an interventional research design. Teachers narrated motivational stories based on real individuals—serving as role models—associated with the target culture. This intervention took place at the beginning of the class as a warm-up activity for about four weeks. Little research has been conducted on the motivational aspect of warm-up activities at the beginning of the class, and therefore this study aims to fill in this gap and provide some evidence-based pedagogical recommendations.

### **Motivation and Role Models**

One well-known strategy to promote human motivation, and language learning motivation more specifically, is creating role models. One process through which role models have an effect on motivation is vicarious learning (Bandura, 1977, 1997). Vicarious experience, or learning by observation more generally, is an essential process in learning whereby one learns a skill by watching models before engaging in the task firsthand. Similarly, role models can enhance the learner's motivation through providing information about one's capability of successfully performing the task in question prior to engaging in it. Indeed, "Role models in general have been found to be very influential on student motivation" (Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998, p. 215).

In a large-scale international study, Muir et al. (in press) offer interesting insights into the role models of language learners. The researchers administered a survey to a sample of over 8,000 participants from 155 L1 backgrounds. Their results showed that about 68% of the respondents reported having an English language role model. The participants also reported four main dimensions that determined their role models: command of the language, paralinguistic features (e.g., personality, facial expressions), personal attributes (e.g., age, job), and language accent or variety. Furthermore, the majority of the participants reported having an English native speaking role model (about 64%) who is older than them (78%) and who is famous (i.e., not personally known to them; 55%). Most of these famous role models were

TV/film personalities, politicians, authors/poets, singers/musicians, and YouTubers/vloggers. Compared to females, male respondents were more likely to report role models with these characteristics (i.e., male, famous, and native speakers of English).

Based on these results, Muir et al. (in press) argue that their findings “lend strong support to the claim that role modelling is thoroughly deserving of more systematic and detailed investigation.” Role models may be peers, near-peers, and teachers; famous (i.e., not personally known) individuals; fictitious (e.g., animated) characters; or even imagined. If these role models are not acknowledged in language teaching, according to Pavlenko and Norton (2007), motivation may suffer. Acknowledging these role models may encourage greater investment and identity enactment by language learners. There is unanimous agreement among L2 scholars about the vital role of self and identity processes in successful language learning, regardless of their ontological, epistemological, and methodological positions (see Al-Hoorie & Hiver, 2020; Noels & Giles, 2009).

To attempt to motivate learners with role models who are native speakers of the target language, as observed in Muir et al. (in press), might suggest that this strategy can additionally enhance integrativeness. Integrativeness refers to the learner’s “willingness or affective ability to take on characteristics of another cultural group” (Gardner, 2010, p. 9). However, intervention research in this regard has not been very successful. As reviewed by Gardner and Tremblay (1994), research that attempted to improve attitudes toward the L2 community through exposing students to aspects of the target culture has led to conflicting evidence. In a similar vein, Gardner et al. (2004) found that, in nine classes, there was significant variation in learners’ attitudes toward the learning situation, which can be attributed to the specific characteristics of each class (including the teacher). At the same time, integrativeness did not vary as much among these nine classes. This pattern suggests that integrativeness is more stable, and may perhaps be influenced by the home environment especially at a younger age (Gardner, 1985, 2007).

In sum, these findings suggest that creating role models may have the potential to improve language learners’ motivation (Dörnyei, 2001; Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998; Muir et al., in press). At the same time, especially as learners grow older, role models might not have as much of an appreciable impact on their integrativeness or attitudes toward the target community—at least if not done in a systematic, long-term fashion.

### **Motivation and Storytelling**

Storytelling has been a fascination for humankind throughout history. Humans seem to have a natural attraction to stories. People of all ages are attracted to storytelling because it requires no more than the ability to listen and imagine. Predating writing, storytelling has been used for as various reasons as entertainment, education, and conveying and preserving cultural heritage, values and mores. Nowadays, the ancient art of storytelling has its own World Storytelling Day as well as a Society for Storytelling. This art has also recently morphed into the business of motivational speaking, earning professional motivational speakers significant profits.

Language learning researchers have capitalized on the potential of stories (Ghanizadeh et al., 2020; Lucarevschi, 2016). Some research has compared the incorporation of storytelling in language teaching with traditional textbook teaching. The rationale of this research stems from the idea that storytelling is more enjoyable and engaging, which can make the material more memorable to learners and consequently lead to better language uptake (e.g., Al-Mansour & Al-Shorman, 2011; Isbell et al., 2004). Another line of research uses stories to promote social interaction and collaboration among students and with the teacher. The resulting interaction involves longer meaningful conversations and more student-initiated turn-taking, again

facilitating language development (e.g., Ko et al., 2003; Li & Seedhouse, 2010). These approaches treat storytelling largely as a teaching tool.

When it comes to using stories as a motivational tool, one approach draws from narrative stories as a means of professional development. Drawing from McAdams and Pals's (2006) framework, Dörnyei (2017) calls attention to the role of *narrative identity*, referring to reconstruction of one's own evolving life story. Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) maintain that there is a dynamic interplay between the characteristics of particular situations, dispositional traits (i.e., relatively stable, decontextualized dimensions of individual differences, such as introversion), characteristic adaptations (more contextualized attributes, such as communication apprehension), and life narratives. Life narratives are thought to be at the center of this network due to its vital and malleable nature (see also Hiver et al., 2019; Hiver et al., 2020). In Dörnyei's (2017) words, "the way people shape their life narrative will shape their whole mindset" (p. 90).

Another approach drawing from the motivational effect of stories incorporates storytelling into the curriculum. Some of this research has provided evidence for the motivational effect of storytelling. In a year-long study, Yang and Wu (2012) found that when language learners were asked to collaboratively produce digital stories and share them with their peers, their motivation improved—as well as their critical thinking skills and their language achievement. In a similar vein, Castañeda (2013) reported that storytelling was an effective tool for language learners to communicate their emotions. Students formed personal investments and emotional connections to the stories because the task appeared authentic and meaningful to them. Parallel to this research is found in randomized controlled trials showing that storytelling might have the potential to reduce anxiety in patients (Sekhavatpour et al., 2019), an effect that might be especially salient when the control group receive no particular intervention (e.g., standard care or waitlist control; see Hartling et al., 2013).

However, from a practical perspective, it is not always possible to recast the lesson or the whole curriculum as a story, as some studies reviewed above have done. But it is relatively straightforward for the teacher to tell their students an inspirational story (e.g., before the lesson starts). According to Dörnyei (2001), teacher motivational strategies map onto one of four stages: creating the basic motivational conditions, generating initial motivation, maintaining and protecting motivation, and encouraging positive self-reflection. An inspirational story at the start of the lesson could be one way to generate initial motivation and prepare learners for the lesson to come. Motivational stories, especially those based on role models, may stimulate learners' attention and enhance their engagement. Aptly put by Murphey (1998), "heroines and heroes, intellectual and financial wizards, and people in high and low places in histories, stories and society inspire us throughout our lives with their deeds and ideas" (p. 201).

In short, the above review suggests that teacher use of inspirational stories could lead to more student enjoyment, motivation, and engagement (Hiver et al., 2021). This might be manifested in a more favorable evaluation of the teacher. This strategy might additionally reduce student anxiety since motivational stories based on role models could address uncertainties about the learner's self-efficacy and competence by providing positive analogies of accomplishment (Dörnyei, 1994, p. 281).

### **Theoretical Framework of the Present Study**

This study adopts Gardner's (1979, 1985, 2010) socio-educational model. Although it has been claimed that this model loses its value in the context of global English in that the target community becomes less and less defined, as explained below, this argument does not seem to

do justice to this model. The socio-educational model has demonstrated its worth on multiple fronts.

Conceptually, integrativeness has never referred to any actual integration to a well-defined target group. As Gardner explained,

from the point of view of the socio-educational model, integrativeness has never meant “to integrate” into the other community. And I know in all of our investigations I never met a student who was learning the second language in order to integrate into the other community. This particular interpretation was made by other researchers who were reading meaning into the concept. (Gardner, 2010, p. 223)

The semantic baggage that the term *integrativeness* was taken to have also led Gardner (2007) to suggest an alternative term: “Because of the excess meanings that have become associated with the ‘integrative’ concept, I now sometimes refer to it as Openness, or Openness to Cultural Identification” (p. 15). This notion, Gardner (2007) continued, is comparable to other constructs such as international posture (Yashima, 2002).

In the context of globalization, one could argue that, with these nuanced refinements, integrativeness could therefore be reframed as openness toward an *imagined community* (Anderson, 1983; Norton, 2000). Since most language learners in foreign language contexts typically have no direct interaction with native speakers, and since they have to rely on cultural artifacts, the media, and online communities, the target community for all practical purposes is imagined—created, recreated, and evolved within the learner’s mind. In Norton’s words,

in many language classrooms, the target language community may be, to some extent, a reconstruction of past communities and historically constituted relationships, but also a community of the imagination, a desired community that offers possibilities for an enhanced range of identity options in the future. (Norton, 2013, p. 3)

This is why different learners can form very different conceptions of the target community. From this perspective, therefore, the claim that globalization invalidates integrativeness (or openness to a target community) becomes problematic.

Empirically, the socio-educational model has been applied successfully to different contexts around the world, including Brazil, Croatia, Japan, Poland, Romania, and Spain (Gardner, 2007, 2010). Meta-analytic research has also shown that the model exhibits superior predictive validity compared with some other language motivation models (Al-Hoorie, 2018; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003; see also Claro, 2020). Indeed, findings by Muir et al. (in press) provide additional empirical support to the notion that a significant proportion of English language learners worldwide today still report role models that are native speakers of English or have native-like command of the language (see also Gearing & Roger, 2019, for a similar argument).

Psychometrically, the socio-educational model provides the most detailed measures in the language motivation field. These measures have undergone extensive psychometric validation (Gardner, 1985). They involve three main constructs, each further subdivided into subconstructs. *Motivation* consists of desire to learn the language, motivational intensity, and attitudes toward learning the language. *Integrativeness* represents attitudes toward the target community, interest in foreign languages, and integrative orientation. *Attitudes toward the learning situation* covers evaluation of the teacher and of the language course. Finally, Gardner (2010, p. 172) additionally argued that integratively motivated individuals are expected to express lower anxiety.

This level of detail in the socio-educational model makes it an ideal and comprehensive model to examine the effectiveness of motivational interventions. The present article reports

the results of an intervention study examining the effectiveness of motivational storytelling on student motivation. It combines the second and the third approaches recommended by Sato and Csizér (in press), namely an intervention targeting learner psychological variables.

Based on the literature review above, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H1: The treatment has no effect on the learners' integrativeness.

H2: The treatment has a positive effect on their motivation.

H3: The treatment has a positive effect on their attitudes toward the learning situation (the teacher and the course).

H4: The treatment leads to a reduction in the learners' anxiety.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The participants ( $N = 270$ ) were freshman language learners, with an age range of 18–20, studying at an all-male college in Saudi Arabia. They were in their first semester of the foundation year, after successful completion of which they qualify to proceed to their technical or business majors. The experimental group consisted of five intact classes ( $n = 129$ ). The control group also came from five other classes ( $n = 141$ ).

The students were taking intensive English classes full-time (24 hours a week). They had separate classes for grammar, reading and vocabulary, listening, and writing. Each class was typically taught by a different teacher. The teachers taking part in this study were the grammar teachers. They were experienced teachers with a minimum of 10 years of experience teaching English.

### **Instruments**

Role models were selected based on the characteristics of role models that are commonly reported by learners (Muir et al., in press). The choice fell on 10 people: Albert Einstein, Bill Gates, Stephen Hawking, Colonel Sanders, Thomas Edison, Walt Disney, Henry Ford, Roman Abramovich, John Baird, and John Griffin. Albert Einstein and Roman Abramovich are not native speakers of English, though the former lived in the United States until his death and the latter is the owner of a famous English football club. These 10 people, henceforth inspirational characters, were selected because they were successful either intellectually or financially. This was done in the hope that it would appeal to a wider range of students. On average, a two-page summary was prepared for each inspirational character from various internet sources and given to the participating instructors. The summary was based on the major achievements of each character and was organized in a chronological order.

At the end of the intervention, the participants responded to nine six-point Likert questionnaire scales adapted from Gardner (1985, 2010). These scales represented integrativeness (Integrative Orientation, Interest in Foreign Languages, and Attitudes toward the Target Community), motivation (Motivational Intensity, Attitudes toward Language Learning, and Desire to Learn the Language), attitudes toward the learning situation (Evaluation of the Language Teacher and Evaluation of the Language Course), and Anxiety. The reliabilities of these scales are presented in the Results section below.

## Procedure

Five classes were randomly selected, along with five more control classes. The grammar teachers of the experimental group were asked to participate in the experiment, and they agreed. The researcher met with these teachers and explained the nature of the experiment. A workshop was held to discuss the use of storytelling to motivate language learners. The teachers brainstormed ideas and practiced storytelling while emphasizing the motivational aspects of the story.

The teachers were asked to spend two days on each of the 10 inspirational characters, narrating the story in English during the first 10–15 minutes of the class as a warm-up activity. The teachers completed the task in about four weeks. The intervention took place during the latter part of the semester. The participants completed the questionnaire during class time. The questionnaire was administered in Arabic to avoid language interference, and the researcher was present to answer any questions about it. Ethical approval was obtained from the researcher's institution prior to the study.

## Results

The reliabilities of the nine scales used in this study are found in Table 1. All scales showed adequate reliability, with the lowest being .62 for Desire to Learn the Language.

The results are presented in Table 2. The experimental and the control groups did not show any significant differences in most of the motivation measures at the end of the experiment. A clear exception was Anxiety. The experimental group showed significantly lower Anxiety with an effect size approaching medium ( $d = 0.41$ ). The significance level of this comparison was smaller than the Bonferroni-adjusted value for nine comparisons ( $\alpha = .006$ ).

The results additionally showed a borderline significant value for evaluation of the teacher. However, since it was larger than the Bonferroni-corrected significance level, caution must be exercised in its interpretation.

Table 1

### *Scales and their reliabilities*

Scale	No. of Items	$\alpha$
Integrativeness		
Integrative Orientation	5	.79
Interest in Foreign Languages	6	.77
Attitudes toward the Target Community	6	.83
Motivation		
Motivational Intensity	10	.81
Attitudes toward Language Learning	6	.77
Desire to Learn the Language	6	.62
Attitudes toward the learning situation		
Evaluation of the Language Teacher	6	.86
Evaluation of the Language Course	5	.80
Anxiety	5	.70

## Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the effectiveness of using inspirational stories based on real-life role models associated with the target language community. The intervention was applied during the first part of the lesson, the warm-up phase, which has received little attention from a motivational perspective. The following sections discuss the results in relation to the four hypotheses of this study.

Table 2

### *Results of t-tests*

Scale	Group	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
<b>Integrativeness</b>						
Integrative Orientation	Experimental	5.03	0.78	0.98	.328	0.12
	Control	4.93	0.88			
Interest in Foreign Languages	Experimental	4.84	0.81	0.38	.707	0.04
	Control	4.81	0.85			
Attitudes toward the Target Community	Experimental	5.02	0.72	1.18	.237	0.14
	Control	4.90	0.95			
<b>Motivation</b>						
Motivational Intensity	Experimental	4.36	0.87	0.49	.626	0.06
	Control	4.31	0.75			
Attitudes toward Language Learning	Experimental	5.20	0.73	0.42	.673	0.05
	Control	5.16	0.73			
Desire to Learn the Language	Experimental	5.16	0.60	0.65	.517	0.07
	Control	5.20	0.58			
<b>Attitudes toward the learning situation</b>						
Evaluation of the Language Teacher	Experimental	4.34	0.95	1.97	.050	0.24
	Control	4.09	1.14			
Evaluation of the Language Course	Experimental	4.81	0.83	0.02	.988	0.00
	Control	4.81	0.96			
Anxiety	Experimental	2.53	0.84	3.36	.001	0.41
	Control	2.91	1.02			

*Note.* *df* = 268. Bonferroni-corrected significance level = .006

### **Integrativeness**

As expected, the intervention showed no significant effect on the learners' integrativeness toward the target community. Following the socio-educational model, this construct was operationalized using three scales: integrative orientation, interest in foreign languages, and attitudes toward the target community. One explanation for the lack of a significant effect is that learners' value system is relatively established by the time they reach higher education. It seems rather ambitious to expect that narrating some stories before class would transform such well-developed intergroup attitudes. Furthermore, learning about a few role models may not necessarily have a direct and substantial impact on attitudes toward the community as a whole. Overall, this finding echoes Dörnyei's (2001) doubtful remark: "given that this system has developed through long years of exposure to varied world experiences, isn't it an illusion for us, teachers, to expect to be able to make lasting changes in it?" (p. 51).

This finding is also in line with those obtained by Gardner et al. (2004). The researchers examined the motivational change in different classes taught by different teachers. Their results showed that integrativeness-related variables exhibited the least change during a full academic year. They did find a significant change in attitudes toward foreign languages, which is the most generic dimension of integrativeness, though they still speculated whether this was a Type I error (p. 29) and called for further research on it. The results of the present study do not provide evidence that motivational storytelling improves interest in foreign languages.

An alternative perspective to look at this issue is whether it is ethical for language teachers to attempt to modify their students' attitudes toward other groups. Ushioda (in press) described this practice as a form of "social control." Certain roles of teachers as motivators raise complex ethical questions about power inequality, politics, and social control discourse—especially when it comes to intergroup relations. From this perspective, therefore, the fact that the present intervention did not show a significant effect on students' integrativeness may be seen as a favorable outcome.

## **Motivation**

Contrary to the second hypothesis of this study, the intervention did not seem to have an impact on the learners' motivation. One explanation of this finding is the short duration of the study. The intervention took place over about four weeks only, a period that may not have been sufficient to effect substantial and durable changes in the motivation of the students. Furthermore, since motivation is a complex, multifaceted construct, it can be influenced by various factors and not only those within the classroom. Teacher use of a certain strategy is but one factor influencing motivation. This is due to the complexity of language learning motivation and its interaction with factors occurring outside the classroom and beyond the teacher's control (see Hiver & Al-Hoorie, 2016, 2020b). Further research should examine whether a more extended use of motivational stories can have a more tangible impact on student motivation (e.g., Hiver et al., 2019; Hiver et al., 2020).

Findings by Bernaus and Gardner (2008) may shed additional light on the present results. They report that, in the context of teacher use of motivational strategies, enjoyment of the learning environment (see also next section) does not always lead to higher motivation. Interestingly, class enjoyment—when it does not enhance motivation—may actually be associated with *negative* language achievement. In other words, students might enjoy certain innovative strategies wittily devised by the teacher—"story time" in the present case—but if that enjoyment is not associated with an increase in motivation, such strategies might backfire. This may be because students lose class time that could have been devoted to learning the language and to developing their skills in it. This possibility suggests that motivational strategies must be viewed as part of the overall picture of learning dynamics.

## **Attitudes Toward the Learning Situation**

The results show a potential effect of the intervention on evaluation of the teacher. This may make sense considering that the inspirational stories were narrated by the teacher. The students apparently enjoyed the lessons more due to these stories and then rated the teacher more favorably. Nevertheless, the teachers participating in this intervention, as is commonly the case in language classes, were not the only class teachers. Instead, each class was taught by two or three other teachers as well, teaching different skills. The questionnaire asked students to evaluate their teachers in general not the teacher participating in the study specifically. This

was done to avoid potentially suggesting to the learners that they should rate the teacher favorably due to the effort they had put in, which could lead to a biased evaluation.

One mechanism for this potential effect on teacher evaluation is that inspirational stories may help create a pleasant and relaxing class atmosphere (see Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998). Teacher behavior is one of the most influential motivation tools, and therefore students' attitude and motivation will likely be colored by it. For example, it might enhance the learners' sense of teacher emotional support (Patrick & Ryan, 2005; Patrick et al., 2007), which is directly and indirectly associated with satisfaction of basic psychological needs (i.e., autonomy, relatedness, and competence), enhanced willingness to communicate, and higher language achievement (Dewaele et al., 2019; Joe et al., 2017).

In contrast to evaluation of the language teacher, there was no significant difference between the two groups in their evaluation of the course. This might be due to the fact that evaluation of the course requires a more comprehensive perspective. Simply introducing an inspirational story before the lesson may be unlikely to transform the whole learning environment into a favorable one. A similar pattern of results was obtained by Gardner et al. (2004), who found that although attitudes toward the language teacher changed over time, attitudes toward the language course were more resistant to change. Improving the learning situation likely requires recognizing what concerns students perceive and addressing these concerns effectively.

## **Anxiety**

The intervention showed a clear effect on reducing anxiety. It had an effect size approaching medium ( $d = 0.41$ ), a magnitude considered sufficient for judging educational outcomes and for justifying interventions. According to Hattie (2009), a magnitude of 0.40 “sets a level where the effects of innovation enhance achievement in such a way that we can notice real-world differences, and this should be a benchmark of such real-world change” (p. 17). From this perspective, therefore, the results of the present study suggest that inspirational stories may have a meaningful effect on language learners' anxiety.

It seems that motivating learners with role models can increase their expectancy of success and their confidence in their abilities to overcome obstacles (see Dörnyei, 2001; Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998). Vicarious learning has long been known to help learners both acquire skills they need and develop confidence in their ability prior to engaging in the task (Bandura, 1977, 1997). The current results suggest that role models can help remove uncertainties about the learner's ability to learn the language. This finding is consistent with the argument by Muir et al. (in press) that role models “can exert considerable influence in shaping our values, attitudes, and beliefs.”

The results also point toward the role of using individuals associated with the target community as role models. In this intervention, role models were not limited to native speakers specifically (see also Muir et al., in press). There were two inspirational characters affiliated with the English community even though they were non-native speakers. Indeed, these role models were not originally selected based on their language ability per se, but based on their success stories in different life endeavors—intellectual and financial. These success stories were intended to inspire the students and enhance their confidence in their abilities to succeed in their learning goals.

The results of this study also underscore the value of capitalizing on learners' imagined communities (Norton, 2013). English, perhaps more so than other languages (Dörnyei & Al-Hoorie, 2017), opens up doors to membership in imagined international communities. Learners

imagine and reimagine their memberships in such communities, mediating their agency, investment, and resistance to learning English (Norton & Pavlenko, 2019). English affords learners the possibility of becoming “citizens of the world,” thus increasing their learning motivation. The role models used in the present study offered more than simply mastering language skills. They demonstrated real-life, modern day success in invention, science, business, and sports. As Norton (2013) put it, “If learners invest in a second language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital” (p. 50).

### **Pedagogical Implications**

Interventions targeting learner psychological variables may have an indirect effect on language learning (Sato & Csizér, in press). The intervention examined in the present study seems to have an effect on reducing anxiety. Implications of this finding are discussed in this section in relation to the flexibility of the motivational storytelling strategy, its impact on the lesson, and ways to enhance its effectiveness.

One benefit of using a motivational strategy based on storytelling is its ease and flexibility. Storytelling is considered one of the most ancient strategies used by our ancestors. Teachers are most likely going to be very familiar with it and most may only need minimal training to use storytelling as a motivational strategy. Unlike some other strategies, motivational storytelling may not lose its novelty with time since the sustainability of its impact may be maintained with new stories. This can additionally be facilitated by creating a “story pool” that teachers can contribute to and draw from.

This strategy also seems to be a low-cost technique. It requires little more than using the warm-up phase of the class more effectively. Even if the impact of motivational storytelling on reducing anxiety is not durable, teachers can continue using this strategy to maintain this low level of anxiety. To do so, teachers do not have to be limited to real role models. They can also draw from fictional characters and ask their students to suggest role models they themselves find motivating. Teachers may also encourage students to take part in reading, creating and narrating stories to their fellow students for additional engagement with this activity (e.g., Yang & Wu, 2012).

The use of this strategy at the beginning of the class may have an effect on the atmosphere of that lesson subsequently. The resulting reduction in anxiety may encourage students’ willingness to communicate during that class (see Dewaele, 2019). Teachers should therefore be ready to take advantage of this possible increase in willingness to communicate by introducing relevant communicative activities. In addition to the nature of class activities, learners with different anxiety levels seem to react differently to feedback. When their anxiety is low, language learners may benefit more from feedback (DeKeyser, 1993; Rassaei, 2015). Furthermore, learners with low anxiety levels may be more receptive to feedback through recasts (Sheen, 2008). Teachers should therefore expect different classroom dynamics during the class and different learning outcomes as a result.

The effect of this intervention can be viewed as the first part of a two- (or multi-) stage intervention. Introducing role models first lowers the learners’ anxiety, which is then followed by a different treatment aimed at amplifying another aspect such as attention or creativity. Research into motivational strategies has typically been limited to investigating the effect of individual techniques. However, it seems informative to also examine the possibility of *staggered interventions* that cascade into different effects for different purposes.

Finally, it is important for the teacher to evaluate the effectiveness of this strategy in their particular contexts. It is likely that how effective this strategy is would depend on various factors, including the nature of the course and the age of the students, their current motivation, and their proficiency levels. Indeed, “no motivational strategy has absolute and general value because such strategies are to be implemented in dynamically changing and very diverse learning contexts” (Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998, p. 224). Teachers should continuously assess that the presumed motivational effect is actually taking place (see Bernaus & Gardner, 2008). Consequently, the motivationally conscious teacher should regularly make sure that students, even if they are clearly enjoying the “story time” part of the lesson, are actually benefiting from these stories, such as with increased learning motivation or decreased anxiety.

### **Conclusion**

This study examined the feasibility of using inspirational stories as a motivational strategy. The results revealed a statistically significant effect on reducing anxiety but not on the other variables in the study. As explained above, this might be due to the relatively short duration of this study, and therefore future research should investigate the impact of longer intervention durations and of more intense role modeling (i.e., not just the first 10 minutes of the class). Further research should also examine the durability of the anxiety reduction effect obtained in this study. It is possible that this effect may dissipate after interventions with a shorter timeframe than those with longer durations.

Utilizing this strategy seems a low-cost technique. It requires neither financial recourses nor a significant amount of class time. The only resource needed is a handy pool of inspirational stories. Although there is plenty of internet sources providing such stories, it might be more helpful to create a customized story pool that is relevant to the learners in one’s particular context.

One limitation of this study was that the way teachers performed storytelling during their classes was not tightly controlled. The researcher was not present to observe the activity, and the teachers had no specialized training beyond a workshop at the beginning of the study. In other words, the current study was concerned with the effects this strategy would have when performed by average teachers. Future research could systemically examine the effectiveness of specific role modeling techniques.

Finally, one methodological limitation of the present study was that motivation baseline was not measured due to the short duration of the study and the relatively long survey (approaching 60 items). The participants were taking intensive language classes, so the relatively short interval between the two questionnaire administrations could have led to tediousness and possibly participant attrition. Nevertheless, the likelihood that these randomly selected groups had a preexisting anxiety difference (and not in any other variable) that exceeded the Bonferroni-corrected significance level seems low. This strategy, therefore, seems a promising avenue for future research.

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### **Bio**

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## **Self-Regulation and linguistic competence in language learning: A Socio-Cultural Theoretic perspective**

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### **Abstract**

The present study investigates the relationship between learners' psychological regulation and linguistic competence during L2 development of lexical knowledge. Within the framework of Socio-Cultural Theory, two types of regulation were investigated in the current study: self-regulation and object-regulation. To this end, the study analyzed content and functional word frequencies in L2 speech productions by two groups of elementary and advanced learners of English as a foreign language with the purpose of finding out how and to what extent L2 learners display content and functional word forms in response to a designed performance task. Content word frequency analysis indicated that elementary learners rely more on content words rather than on functional words, reflecting object-regulation status. In contrast, advanced learners balanced between content and functional words in their L2 productions, reflecting a higher sense of psychological self-regulation status. The findings of the study show that regulation difficulty is correlated with the learner's competence as shown in the precedence of non-inflected language forms over inflected forms in the learner's language.<sup>1</sup>

*Keywords:* regulation, self-regulation, socio-cultural theory, mediation, competence, acquisition, content, functional

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Second Language Acquisition (SLA) as an interdisciplinary field has connections with many disciplines. Its basic inquiry is about how a language other than the native/first language(s) is learned in various contexts, often referred to as L2. It is well established that L2 learning is a complex process that has been studied under various theoretical frameworks from the perspective of many different fields such as linguistics, cognitive science, sociology, and psychology. In this context, Socio-Cultural Theory (SCT) has constructed a theoretical framework that perceives second language learning as both social and psychological, and it has been one of the less studied theoretical frameworks within the field of SLA. Because of its implications for the study of SLA, SCT may be specifically relevant to the general understanding of L2 development.

SCT marks the view that learning is primarily social. Within this framework, language learning is a social-interactional developmental process that first takes place in the social environment (Poehner and Lantolf, 2005; Lantolf and Thorn, 2006; Lantolf et. al., 2015). Thus, the focus in SCT is the social activity itself rather than the learner. In its core, SCT argues that human mental functioning in general is mediated and regulated through material and symbolic socio-cultural artifacts, of which language is considered as a symbolic one (Lantolf and Thorn, 2006). In SCT, whatever the learner learns appears first on the social level (interpsychological) before it appears on the personal/psychological level (intra-psychological) (Lantolf and Thorn, 2006). Sociocultural factors, such as regulation and mediation, can influence language development of the learner. The present study focuses on regulation (i.e. self-regulation) as the most relevant factor in language learning development from the perspective of SCT.

Recent research has shown that the interconnection of self-regulation with language learning is rather an active experience that interacts with the language learner's proficiency level (Dörnyei, 2005; Tseng et. al., 2006; Liu and Lee, 2015; Fakuda, 2017). Nonetheless, self-regulatory research is a recent area of inquiry, and there is lack of studies on how self-regulation is demonstrated in other domains of second language learning, such as the learner's linguistic competence and what the learner actually knows about language. Thus, the current study aims to fill this gap by exploring the relationship between self-regulation and the learner's linguistic competence in terms of content and functional words use during language learning.

The present study aims to find out if sociocultural factors, such as L2 regulation, have correlations with the learner's competence (i.e. linguistic knowledge). More precisely, the study examines how learners of English as a foreign language<sup>2</sup> use their linguistic knowledge (i.e. competence) in order to regulate an L2 activity. Two groups of high proficiency and low proficiency learners are tested with regard to how they can efficiently use their linguistic knowledge of content and functional categories to regulate an L2 performance task. The study also investigates whether or not proficiency levels can indicate regulation difficulty for learners and explains how regulation development may be related to competence development.

The contribution of the current study is twofold. First, the study attempts to make sense of a rather less studied topic in the literature of L2 acquisition. Second, the study tries to find correlations between two seemingly independent and non-simultaneous aspects of the learner's L2 development, i.e. psychological development and linguistic knowledge development. The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. In the following section, an overview of SCT is presented with relevant previous research within this framework in the literature of second

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<sup>2</sup> Foreign language learning context (as opposed to second language learning) refers to the study of a language other than the native language in the learner's native language environment.

language acquisition. The methods section, which follows, describes the method of research and task design implemented in the current study. The results are then presented followed by a discussion of the study's results. The paper concludes with concluding remarks on the findings of the current study.

## **Background and Previous Literature**

### ***Socio-Cultural Theory***

Socio-psychological influences in second language learning have been recognized in the literature from different approaches such as Krashen's *affective filter* and Dell Hymes's *communicative competence* (Krashen, 1986; Dell Hymes, 1985, 1991). The *affective filter* proposes that factors such as motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety can affect the quality of second language learning, resulting in various individual experiences in language learning whereas *communicative competence* refers to the social-communicative knowledge that a language learner needs besides linguistic knowledge in order to learn language successfully. On the other hand, in the intersection of linguistics, psychology, and sociology, the socio-cultural approach to language learning emphasizes that language learning is a social practice that occurs in the social and cultural contexts and closely interacts with the learner's developmental psychology (Kramsch, 1993, 1995; Kern, 2000; Lantolf and Thorn, 2006; Cole and Engestrom, 2007; Mackerras, 2011; Lantolf et. al., 2015; Poehner, 2018).

Sociocultural theory has introduced a special way of studying language learning in a specific context, especially the social and cultural contexts of second language acquisition. Its major argument is that learning is not an isolated or an intra-psychological process. Rather, it is an inter-psychological process that takes place through interaction and participation in social and cultural environments (Lantolf et. al., 2015). This means that SCT is a psycholinguistic theory in which mental functioning is based on communicative activities (Lantolf and Thorn, 2006). Within this framework, second language acquisition is looked at as a psychological developmental process that is influenced by the surrounding social and cultural environments. Based on that, language learning can be understood as the outcome of the interaction found between the learner on one hand, and the social and material environments (e.g. instructional settings) on the other hand. The theory is built on a number of major constructs including, but not limited to, mediation, regulation, internalization, and the zone of proximal development. The two concepts, mediation and regulation, are the most relevant aspects of the theory to the current study. Hence the study elaborates on these two aspects. In what follows, a brief overview of these constructs of the theory is introduced.

**Mediation.** Mediation is the core construct of sociocultural theory. It has its roots in the studies of developmental psychology. Basically, mediation refers to the process through which the human mental functioning takes conscious control over its biological actions via the use of cultural artifacts (Lantolf et. al., 2015). Thus, mediation is performed by virtue of either symbolic or material tools. Mediation through symbolic tools can be achieved by tools such as language, logic, numeracy, literacy, and categorization (Lantolf and Thorn, 2006). To put it simply, the voluntary execution of a symbolic tool, such as language, results in a mediated mental activity.

**Regulation.** Regulation is the process through which mediation is controlled. According to SCT, a human developmental activity (e.g. learning) goes through three steps of regulation: object-regulation, other-regulation, and self-regulation (Lantolf et. al., 2015). Object-regulation is

the preliminary step in which a human developmental activity is assisted through an object such as computer or toys. The medial step is other-regulation where the successful achievement of an activity is reached with the aid of another person such as parents or teachers. The final step of regulation is self-regulation, which means that a learner can perform an activity successfully without the assistance of another person. In the context of language learning, successful language learning is reached when learners become self-regulated. That is, they become able to use language efficiently on their own without an external assistance. An important indicator of self-regulation in language learning is a phenomenon known as *private speech* (Lantolf and Thorn, 2006). Private speech is the inward and self-directed language used in order to manipulate a specific mental activity for the purpose of comprehension or cognitive assistance (Smith, 2007; Steinbach-Kohler and Thorn, 2011).

**Internalization.** Internalization is the process of converting external mediation into an internal mediation (Lantolf et. al., 2015). Language learning is a developmental process that requires internalization in order to reach the level of self-regulation. In some sense, internalization means taking experience into a psychological level (Kozulin, 1990).

**The Zone of Proximal Development.** The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is an assessment tool in SCT. It refers to development that can be achieved with mediation as well as development in the absence of mediation, usually the kind of mediation connected to other-regulation (Lantolf et. al., 2015). The ZPD is different from other concepts of language learning assessment in that it pays particular attention towards both what the learner has already achieved and what can be potentially achieved by the learner. That is, what can be done with mediation at some level is an indication of what one can do without mediation in the future. Once the learner is able to perform a particular task independently, mediation should be removed (Aljaafreh and Lantolf, 1994).

### ***Previous Research on SLA within SCT***

Early studies on second language acquisition within the framework of SCT explored aspects such as private speech and how regulation is attained during the mastery of second language (See Lantolf and Thorn 2006 for a complete review). Studies have shown that higher-level L2 learners have more ability to self-regulate than low-level learners (Lantolf and Thorn, 2006). For example, during L2 task performance of storytelling in a study by Frawley and Lantolf (1985), self-regulation and object-regulation have been shown to be linked to the kind of language chosen by L2 learners. For example, low-level L2 learners used the present progressive tense more frequently than higher-level L2 learners who showed more usage of the simple past. The frequent use of the present progressive tense was interpreted as a difficulty in regulation by the low-level learners as they were object-regulated while the higher-level L2 learners showed more self-regulation. Language choice by L2 learners does not only reflect the level achieved in L2 acquisition but also the ability to regulate mental activities through L2.

Evolving from other-regulation to self-regulation was explored by a study on negative feedback by Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994). They show that learners will gradually develop from other-regulation in the form of providing negative feedback to language learners by others to self-regulation once they are able to function independently. Higher-level L2 learners will thus be able to show more self-reliance (i.e. self-regulation) during an L2 activity than low-level learners. This

can be seen as a dichotomy between the learner being regulated by objects or others and the learner's own ability to regulate through L2.

In all of these studies, self-regulation is seen as the ultimate goal of language learning development. Assisted L2 communicative activities are always object- or other- regulated. That is, language learners evolve from object-regulation and other-regulation towards self-regulation as the final stage when they become able to use and produce language independently. While self-regulation is not a stable condition, in some sense self-regulation in L2 acquisition can be interpreted as a higher level of L2 competence of the learner. Nonetheless, it is not clear how self-regulation and linguistic competence are related. It should be noted that *competence* as a *nativist* concept and *regulation* as a *sociocultural* concept originate from fundamentally different approaches to the study of language acquisition<sup>3</sup>. The link between the learner's L2 competence and regulation remains unclear to a large extent in the SLA literature. Thus, the current study investigates the relationship between competence and regulation in the context of foreign language learning. This is accomplished through the investigation of how L2 learners of English as a foreign language produce and use (*i.e. regulation*) English *content* versus *functional* morphemes during L2 activities (*i.e. competence*). A review of research on the acquisition of content and functional forms is in order. We start by highlighting the distinction made between content and functional categories.

### ***The Content-Function Distinction***

Human languages make a distinction between two categories in their lexicon. The first is content (*i.e. lexical*) categories that include the major parts of speech such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. These are also called open-class words or free morphemes in morphological terms. The second is functional categories that generally involve functional or grammatical elements in the language that are usually attached to a content form to add grammatical information such as tense, aspect, person, number, case and gender. For example, auxiliaries, determiners, prepositions, and complementizers. These categories are usually referred to as closed-class words or bound morphemes in morphology. Both categories, content and functional, are equally important in human languages to convey meaning, reference, and grammatical information.

### ***Previous Research on First & Second Language Acquisition of Content & Functional Forms***

Research on the acquisition of content and functional forms has shown that these categories have different patterns. For example, it was found that functional forms in early language acquisition are typically absent in language productions of children in many languages (Radford, 1990, 1997). This was explained as lack of access to functional forms in early stages of language acquisition and that children seem to have access only to content words during early language production as suggested by the *Semantic Bootstrapping Hypothesis* (Grimshaw, 1981; Pinker, 1982, 1984). An independent support for this view comes from the fact that children only produce single words that are essentially content (*i.e. not functional*) in their early stages of language

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<sup>3</sup> Nativism is a linguistic approach that has dominated the late research in linguistics and the SLA literature. It asserts that at least some aspects of language learning are innate. Later developments in special nativism are guided by Chomsky's theory of Universal Grammar and the theory of Principles and Parameters (Gass and Selinker, 2008).

development while functional words are produced in later stages of development (Tomasello, 2000, 2002).

Similarly, adult L2 learners seem to differentiate content and functional forms in the course of L2 learning. Empirical studies have demonstrated that there are differences in the neurolinguistic and psycholinguistic processing and representation of functional words versus content words in adult subjects such as differences in comprehension, reading time, and memory (Hicks, 2006; Kedar, 2007). These differences in processing and representation indicate that adult language learners are presumably treating these categories differently during language acquisition (Kedar, 2007).

In nativist approaches to SLA such as those related to the theory of Universal Grammar (UG), content and functional categories are considered as components of the innate linguistic knowledge of the learner (Gass and Selinker, 2008). For example, under the *Minimal Trees Hypothesis*, functional categories during SLA are regarded as independent of L1 and thus the development of L2 functional categories is only relevant to the appropriate L2 input for all learners regardless of their L1 background (Gass and Selinker, 2008). Hence no transfer is assumed from L1 to L2 on this view. Support for this view comes from studies on morphological acquisition order, especially those on the acquisition of English morphemes (Ortega, 2009). These studies show that the acquisition of English functional morphemes follows a specific learning pattern. That is, adult and young L2 learners have been observed to learn English functional morphemes in a certain order whether learning is instructed or naturalistic and regardless of L1 background.

In addition, VanPatten (2007), based on extensive L2 research, proposed a model for L2 input processing. The model contains an important principle he referred to as the *Primacy of Content Words Principle*, which states that L2 learners process content words before anything else (VanPatten, 2007). This means that even adult L2 learners access content categories before functional categories during L2 input parsing.

The preceding review demonstrates that considerable research has been carried out on the acquisition and development of content and functional forms in the learner's language. Nonetheless, research on the *sociocultural* development and use (as opposed to nativist research) of such linguistic systems is far more limited. Sociocultural research on SLA in general has been concerned with how language learners regulate their L2 activities. To the best of our knowledge, no study has focused on the link between sociocultural development and the innate structural development of certain linguistic systems before. Thus, by examining how content and functional forms (as an innate structural system) are used by the learner, we can reach a proper understanding of the factors that may contribute to the overall development of the learner's language. Relating the findings of research on the acquisition and development of content and functional forms in the learner's language to the current study raises the question of whether or not regulation development as a psychological factor is related to the innate content-functional linguistic system development.

## **Method**

### ***The Current Study***

The purpose of the current study is to investigate the relationship between sociocultural regulation and linguistic competence during an L2 communicative activity. More specifically, it addresses the issue of whether or not learners of English as a foreign language can use their L2 competence in order to self-regulate. We investigate two groups of learners with different

proficiency levels as low level (elementary) and high level (advanced) proficiency learners. Based on the findings of previous research (discussed in the preceding section), we assume that elementary learners have regulation difficulty, and thus they should display less competent language forms than advanced learners during an L2 performance task. We investigate these language forms in terms of how L2 learners display functional and content word forms in their L2 productions during an instructed language production activity.

Based on the discussion of previous literature, we also assume that the acquisition of content forms is prior to the acquisition of functional forms. In addition, we assume that content (i.e. lexical) categories are accessed for production and use before functional (i.e. grammatical) categories. Therefore, it is hypothesized that differences in proficiency levels of learners will result in differences in the amount of L2 functional forms produced and used by participants of the two groups. Furthermore, disparity in the displayed linguistic forms is hypothesized to reflect regulation levels that correlate with stages of object- and self-regulation. Our inquiry is guided by the following research questions:

1. Does L2 competence level reflect regulation level during an L2 activity?
2. How and to what extent does learner's self-regulation differ based on proficiency levels?

In order to reach adequate answers to these questions, we recruited participants, designed an L2 performance task, elicited data, and analyzed them. More details on how this was conducted are presented below.

### ***Participants***

Participants in the current investigation were 30 male students at college level. These students are studying English as a foreign language in formal instructional settings. All participants are Arabic native students at university level in Saudi Arabia. Participants are divided into two groups based on L2 proficiency level as low level and higher level L2 learners who are studying in an English program with eight levels of English study beginning from elementary levels to intermediate and advanced levels. Low level learners form a group of 15 participants who are studying English in their elementary stages (i.e. first to third levels) while the other group is 15 participants who are advanced level English learners in their seventh and eighth levels of study. Participants were aged between 18 to 23 years. Students were selected based on these criteria and recruited by their teachers in order to optimally serve the purpose of limiting the context of this research to adult language learners who are learning English as a foreign language.

### ***Elicitation Technique***

Individual appointments were scheduled with each participant of the two groups during a 3-week period. Each participant completed a picture-description task that lasted for 3-5 minutes per meeting. The task was designed to elicit instances of using functional forms in comparison with instances of using content forms during L2 productions. Each participant was asked to orally describe a picture with no interference or assistance. Productions were recorded by the researcher and written down later on for further analysis.

### ***Design of The Picture-Description Task***

Participants were individually asked to describe a photograph that shows two kids, a boy and a girl, buying an ice-cream. Each of the two kids performs a different activity. The photograph

also shows a young man selling ice-cream in a cart. The background in the photograph shows trees and a house. This photograph was selected for its richness of scenes and simplicity for potential description. The photograph was shown to the participants and each participant was asked to orally describe the photograph in a minimum of 3 full sentences. In cases when the participant elaborated and produced more than three sentences, only the first three sentences were selected for the analysis. This was done in order not to affect frequency values in the analysis, and in order to capture the first spontaneous productions by the learner.

### ***Data***

The research data were collected from the responses of the participants to the picture-description task described above. Responses were written down into sentences as much as possible. Fragments were not counted as they were not considered sentences. Samples of elementary and advanced learners' responses are presented in list (a) and list (b) below, respectively.

(a) Samples of elementary level learners' responses to the picture-description task:

- *I see house small and nice.*
- *The seller is look for money.*
- *The boy eat ice cream now.*
- *Nice view and beautiful nature.*
- *Someone sell ice cream.*

(b) Samples of advanced level learners' responses to the picture-description task:

- *A man give the children ice cream.*
- *The ice cream seller ringed the bell.*
- *There is a house behind the man.*
- *The man is selling an ice cream to the kids.*
- *I can see in the picture three persons.*

It can be noticed that productions of advanced learners appeared to be longer than those produced by elementary learners. While this was expected of learners with different proficiency levels, this also affected the total number of tokens collected from the two groups. However, this should not raise an issue for the analysis since qualitative production of sentences with proper grammatical use was the main focus of this study and not their quantity. At the same time, we are not concerned with grammatical errors in the present study as can be found in the samples above. Rather, we focused on what the learner can produce along the lines of the content/functional distinctions with no grammatical judgments.

Components of each sentence were identified as belonging to one of the two major categories: content and functional. Further detailed categorization for each token under each category was also identified as linguistic variables. The categories and the linguistic variables are summarized in Table 1 below. A sequence of [content+functional], such as [buy+ing] (i.e. verb+tense), was identified as two tokens.

**Table 1**

*Variables examined in the current study with their categories.*

I. Functional Categories	II. Content Categories
1. Pronouns	11. Verbs
2. Articles	12. Nouns
3. Prepositions	13. Adjectives
4. Conjunctions	14. Adverbs
5. Auxiliary Verbs	
6. Modals	
7. Qualifiers	
8. Quantifiers	
9. Tense (Present and Past)	
10. Aspect (Continuous)	

### ***Analysis***

To answer the first research question, an overall calculation of the linguistic variables in each major category was conducted to show the total amount of content forms versus functional forms for each group. This will determine if there is any relationship between competence and regulation. It is expected that the total amount of functional forms for the advanced-level learners group will outstrip that of the elementary-level learners group. To put it simply, the more functional forms are used, the less regulation difficulty can be. This is attributed to competence differences between the two groups since higher level learners have presumably developed a more advanced level of competence than low level learners. This part of the analysis shows whether or not regulation difficulty can be linked to competence level.

To answer the second research question, the study examined frequency of use of linguistic variables in the functional category and the content category for each group. This test will show us if there is any relationship between learners' proficiency levels and regulation development. For example, and based on findings of previous research, frequency of use of the simple past tense for advanced learners is expected to be higher than that of elementary learners due to regulation difficulty for low level learners. It is also expected that advanced learners will do better than elementary learners in frequency tests across various functional forms. This portion of the analysis shows whether or not competent use of functional forms can be predictors of self-regulation and object-regulation. It is important to note that we are not concerned with errors produced by learners in this analysis. For example, incorrect use of the present continuous aspect is counted as a token in our analysis as long as the progressive morpheme [-ing] is produced by the learner, regardless of its grammaticality<sup>4</sup>. What we are concerned with is how grammatical forms are used by the

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<sup>4</sup> As noted by an anonymous reviewer this could raise an issue regarding the assessment of the learner's competence. Nonetheless, since the study is qualitative by nature as a developmental psycholinguistic study, it is concerned with the use of the grammatical structure for the purpose of detecting grammatical ability (i.e. quality of grammatical choice) regardless of errors which could be corrected in later stages of competence development. This need not lead to positing that grammaticality and competence are in contradiction here

participants and how frequently they are invoked in their actual use of language even if that does not meet the correct grammatical structural requirements.

## Results

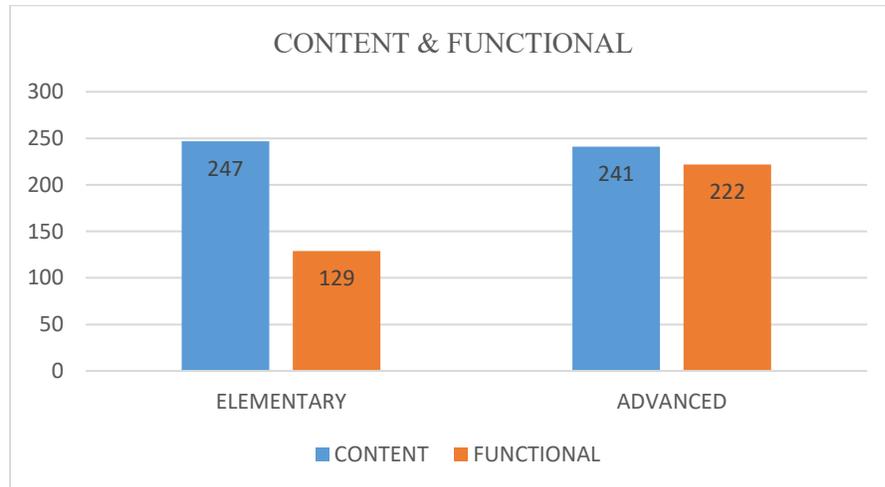
A total of 376 tokens were collected from productions of elementary level learners, and a total of 463 tokens were collected from advanced level learners' productions. The tokens were analyzed in terms of how frequently elementary level learners and advanced level learners demonstrate the following categories in their language productions: *content and functional forms, types of content forms, types of functional forms, and tense and aspect*. The results of how these categories were demonstrated by learners in their L2 productions are presented in the following.

### *Content and Functional Forms*

Figure 1 below shows the results of the overall use of content forms versus functional forms in the productions of participants of the two groups. It also shows the total number of the demonstrated forms as either content or functional. The designation of a specific form as content or functional is based on the distribution of content and functional forms outlined in table 1 in the previous section.

**Figure 1**

*Content and functional forms for elementary and advanced groups.*



As Figure 1 demonstrates, both groups seem to display content forms more frequently than functional forms in their productions. For elementary level learners, the displayed content forms seem to substantially outnumber functional forms. On the other hand, advanced level learners appear to achieve a balance between these two categories in their productions. Although there is a difference between content and functional forms for advanced learners, this difference is minimal. In addition, advanced learners seem to outnumber elementary level learners in the total amount of the displayed functional forms. All in all, content forms for the two groups are more frequently

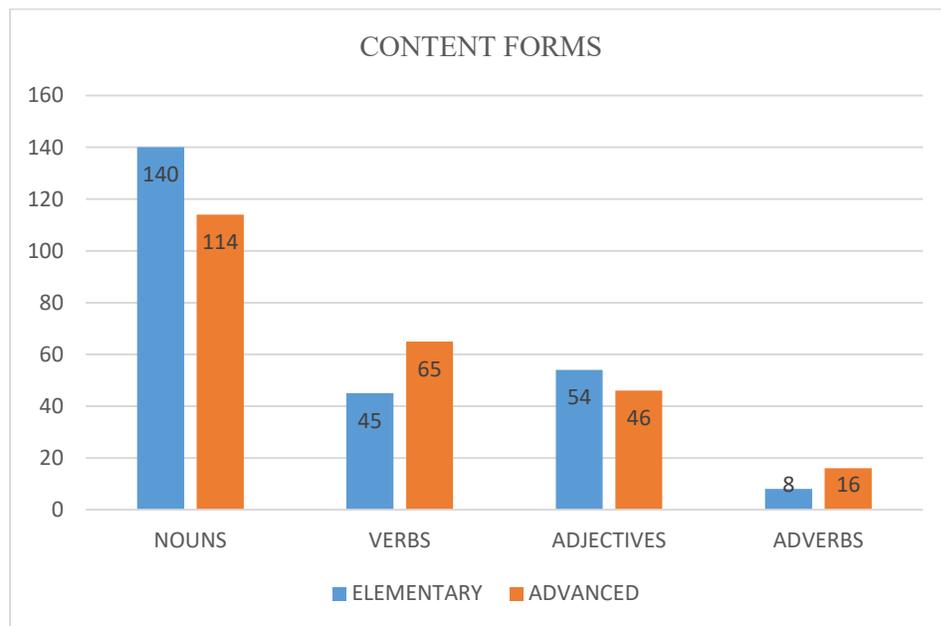
used than functional forms. This takes us to the issue of what types of content and functional forms are displayed more often in learners' productions. This is exhibited in the following sections.

### ***Types of Content Forms***

The types of the content forms displayed in participants' productions are presented in Figure 2. It shows how frequently elementary and advanced level learners display the following forms: *nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs*. It appears that elementary level learners display higher amount of content forms than advanced level learners across content forms such as nouns and adjectives while advanced learners display a higher amount of content classes such as verbs and adverbs. However, nouns as a major content form category, is the most displayed content form in productions of the two groups. Adverbs are the least displayed content class for both groups.

**Figure 2**

*Content forms for elementary and advanced level groups.*

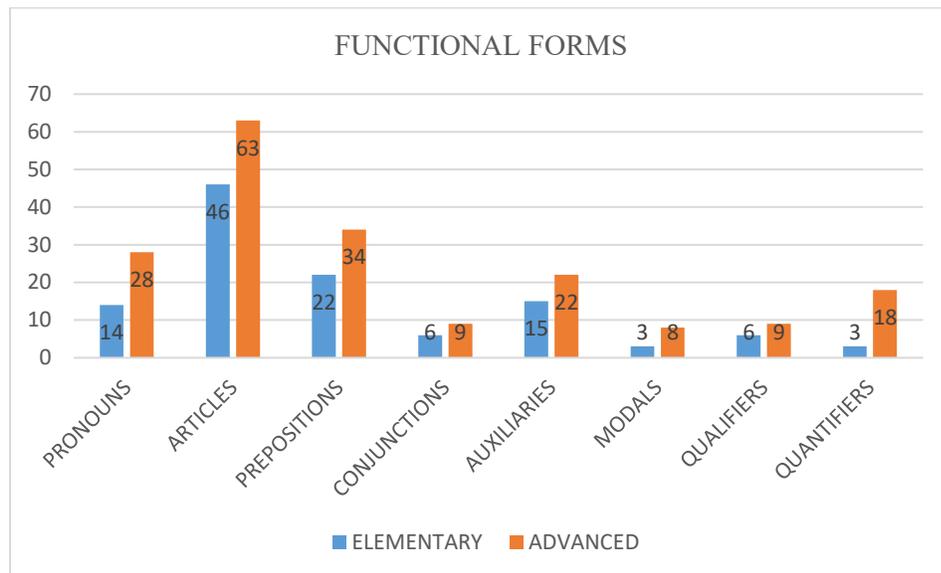


### ***Types of Functional Forms***

Types of the examined functional forms are more variant than types of the content forms. Figure 3 below demonstrates the results of types of functional forms displayed in participants' productions. The following functional forms were traced in the analysis of functional forms: *pronouns, articles, prepositions, conjunctions, auxiliaries, modals, qualifiers, and quantifiers*. While *tense* and *aspect* are major functional categories, we deal with them separately in the final section. As Figure 3 demonstrates, advanced level learners do better on functional forms than elementary level learners across all types of functional forms. However, the results of tense and aspect as functional categories are somehow different. This is shown in the following section.

**Figure 3**

*Functional forms for elementary and advanced level groups.*



### ***Tense and Aspect***

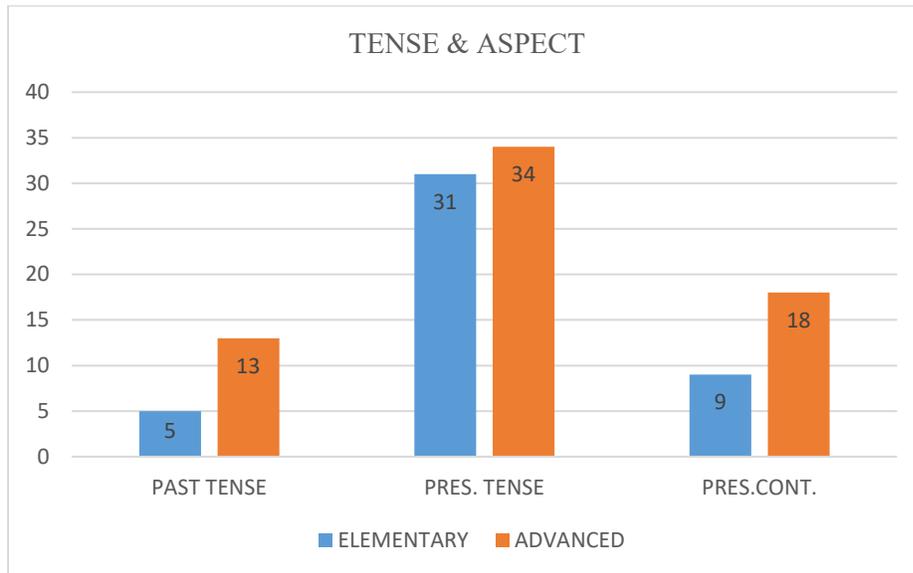
Figure 4 shows how elementary and advanced learners demonstrate tense and aspect in their productions in response to the performance task. Two tenses and one aspect were traced in the learners' productions: *past tense*, *present tense*, and *present continuous aspect*.<sup>5</sup> These were the only attested forms of tense and aspect in participants' productions. No *perfect* or *future* forms were traced in all productions.

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<sup>5</sup> Note that the present tense is not counted in the overall calculation of functional forms because in many cases the third person singular present tense marker [-s] is absent due to learner error. For this reason, we classify a present tense form, whether it is with a third person singular marker or not, as only content form (i.e. verbs).

**Figure 4**

*Tense and aspect for elementary and advanced level groups.*



As Figure 4 demonstrates, elementary and advanced learners seem to be using the present tense far more frequently than the past tense. However, differences between the two groups appear to be salient in the matters of how they display the past tense and the present continuous aspect. Advanced learners display the past tense and the present continuous more often than elementary learners do. Discussion of the study's results is presented in the following.

## **Discussion**

The current study sought to examine correlations between regulation and competence during language learning based on the hypothesis that high proficiency learners can develop self-regulation at advanced levels while low proficiency learners have difficulty developing self-regulation at elementary levels (i.e. object- or other- regulated). Self-regulation was hypothesized to be reflected in the competent or non-competent use of the content/functional categories as can be observed in language productions by the learners. The results of the study confirm that correlations between the two concepts (i.e. regulation and competence) can be found in the examined data. The findings of the current study expand on the previous literature by showing that self-regulation patterns relate to competence or proficiency levels, and that even foreign language learners seem to approach the content/functional dichotomy differently.

The results also show that frequency levels of content and functional forms in learners' productions appear to be different in the examined groups. While advanced learners balance between the two categories in their productions, elementary learners do not. For elementary learners, content forms are more prevalent than functional forms. This tells us that elementary level learners were object-regulated during the performance task. On the contrary, advanced level learners seemed to be self-regulated since functional and content forms were kept in balance in their productions. This is also supported by the overall usage of functional forms by the two groups.

In the examination of the overall frequency of content and functional forms for the two groups, two patterns were found to be related. The first pattern indicates that differences in

frequency levels of *content* forms between elementary and advanced learners are minimal. The only exception was found in verbs and adverbs frequency levels as these two classes were more frequently displayed by advanced learners. The second pattern denotes that frequency levels of functional forms are higher for advanced level learners than for elementary level learners across all functional categories. An explanation for the two patterns can be that content forms for language learners are easier and faster for access and use than functional forms. The limited display of content forms such as verbs and adverbs for elementary learners demonstrates that they depend mainly on non-inflected content forms for easier access and processing such as nouns and adjectives. It stands to reason that verbs and adverbs are the only content classes in which advanced learners hugely outweigh elementary learners as if verbs and adverbs were treated as functional forms by learners. In part, this might be related to the fact that verbs and adverbs are usually inflected with functional morphemes more than nouns and adjectives. Relating these findings to the current study, it seems that self-regulation development is affected by competence development. That is, while advanced and elementary learners seem to use content forms equally, self-regulated learners display more functional forms in their productions than object-regulated learners who focus mainly on what is available to them for production (i.e. the unmarked form).

Consistent with previous literature (e.g. Lantolf and Thorn, 2006), correlations between regulation level and language choice in terms of tense and aspect were found in the current study. In the present study's results, it is shown that advanced learners use the past tense more frequently than elementary learners usually do. Nonetheless, contrary to some previously reported results, advanced learners display the present continuous aspect more often than elementary learners do. Use of the past tense in contrast to the present continuous by learners was interpreted in previous studies as a higher sense of self-regulation over object- and other-regulation (e.g. Frawley and Lantolf, 1985). The findings of the current study expand upon the results of previous studies by showing that the present tense (aside from the continuous aspect) seems to be equally displayed by elementary and advanced learners, and it is the predominant tense in the overall productions by learners. Also, the current study's results contrast with previous results by showing that elementary level learners do not do better in the display of the present continuous compared to advanced learners who outweigh elementary learners in all functional categories including tense and aspect. A possible explanation is that the present tense for learners is far easier to access and process than other tenses and aspects, at least for the examined groups of learners in this study, in the sense that the present tense appear to be the unmarked structure. Our interpretation is that advanced learners display more variant uses of tenses and aspects in their productions as a result of higher competence level and more sense of self-regulation whereas elementary learners seem to be object-regulated and thus they rely more on the present tense to maintain the status quo (i.e. the way things are now) of the performance task.

## **Conclusion**

The presented study has shown that regulation development in L2 acquisition could be linked to language competence (i.e. linguistic knowledge). It was shown that elementary learners of English as a foreign language rely more on content forms than on functional forms in their L2 productions. One reason for this could be that elementary learners are object-regulated. Advanced learners, on the other hand, achieved a balance between content and functional forms in their L2 productions, reflecting a state of self-regulation during L2 activities. It was also shown that L2 learners, at least in the examined groups of the presented study, generally rely on the present tense

more than other tenses during the designed L2 performance task. Other tenses and aspects, specifically the past tense and the present continuous, were associated with advanced learners in the current study. This was interpreted as regulation difficulty for elementary learners. Support for this view was found in the kind of content forms elementary learners appeared to display in their L2 productions, such as nouns and adjectives, while advanced learners did better in verbs and adverbs. This was attributed to the importance of non-inflected forms in general which seemed to take precedence over inflected forms for elementary learners. This was shown to be a type of self-regulation difficulty that could be linked to ease of access and processing of linguistic forms.

There were some limitations of the presented study. The first issue is that it does not collect data at two different points in time. Instead, the study focused on data collected from two different groups of learners. Another limitation of the current study is regarding the measurement of the participants' proficiency levels. Since it was impossible to conduct a language proficiency test, the study relied on the participants' level of language learning as either a beginner or advanced. Future studies should incorporate a proficiency test to detect accurate levels of the participants' language proficiency level, and it will be more informative to collect data at two different temporal points. Also, the study employed one picture as a stimulus. Future studies following the same methodology should incorporate different pictures as stimuli.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the findings presented in the current study have potential implications for much of the work on L2 learning and acquisition. In particular, the study gives an insight into how psychological development during L2 acquisition/learning is not apart from linguistic development of the learner. It maintains that development of linguistic knowledge and psychological development are closely connected. Future work needs to compare other aspects of psychological development of the L2 learner with other aspects of linguistic knowledge development.

## **Bio**

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## **Content Analysis of Metacognitive Reading Strategies in the Reading Textbook *Mosaic Two***

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### **Abstract**

Research highlighted the positive effects of reading strategies among language learners on their reading comprehension. Studies investigated instructional programs and trained teachers and students to implement these strategies. However, there appears to be a lack of studies on content analysis of reading strategies in ELT textbooks. This study investigated the reading strategies implemented in an ELT reading textbook; *Mosaic Two*. Descriptive content analysis was conducted. The framework used was based on time and stage which are pre-reading and post-reading strategies, and the subcategories of reading strategies were based on metacognitive knowledge categorized as global, problem solving, and supporting strategies. The results show that the book implemented pre-reading and post-reading strategies extensively which can accommodate teachers and students in a reading course. Further research can examine more reading textbooks and compare results.

*Keywords:* metacognitive reading strategies, reading comprehension, ELT textbooks, EFL learners, content analysis

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Reading is a skill that has been regarded as one of the main components of language skills alongside writing, listening, and speaking and has been given particular interest in education (Pressley, 2002). Several taxonomies have been introduced in order to provide an instructional tool through textbooks that can help teachers train students on improving their reading comprehension skills such as Munby's taxonomy of micro-skills (Alderson, 2000). Munby (1978) listed several aspects of reading skills such as recognizing a script of a language, deducing the meaning, and using unfamiliar lexical items, skimming, scanning, interpreting the text and more. However, this list has been criticized for being overlapping and unclear (Alderson, 2000). This led researchers to look for alternative approaches and reading strategies to better understand the factors that can have an effect on improving reading comprehension such as Grabe (1991) who emphasized the role of metacognitive strategies. Pressley (2002) emphasized that reading comprehension is successful when metacognitive knowledge of reading occurs. This happens when readers predict what a text is about and connect it to prior knowledge before reading, ask questions during reading, and summarize what was read.

Further research found a variety of reading strategies which needed to be classified into smaller units. Different approaches classified reading strategies into different types such as Paris, Wasik and Turner (1996) who classified reading strategies according to time and stage. They categorized them into pre-reading, during, and post-reading strategies. Also, a reliable and valid tool called *The Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory* (henceforth, *MARSI*) investigated the reading strategies used by skillful readers to reach an understanding of how one can improve reading comprehension skills (Mokhtari and Reichard, 2002). It was first implemented regarding first language readers and then it was developed to accommodate second language readers and was called *The survey of reading strategies* (henceforth, *SORS*) (Mokhtari and Sheorey, 2002). It was based on three subcategorization of reading strategies, namely: global reading strategies, problem-solving strategies, and supporting strategies.

The importance of raising awareness of reading strategies among second language learners and teachers has been highlighted in recent attempts that investigated the use of reading strategies and their effect on comprehension (Muijselaar et al., 2017)

This study was set to investigate the reading strategies implemented in a second language textbook *Mosaic Two* by conducting content analysis. It aimed at analyzing the exercises to investigate the type of reading strategy used and the subcategorizations of each type and their frequencies. This would shed light on the appropriacy of the reading strategies used in the textbook for target students.

## **Literature Review**

Previous studies found positive effects of reading strategies on reading comprehension (Muijselaar et al., 2017; Ghahari and Basanjideh, 2017; Rastegar et al., 2017). Different types of reading strategies were used among first and second language learners such as global strategies, problem solving strategies, and supporting strategies (Chevalier et al., 2015; Al-Mekhlafi, 2018; Shehadeh, 2015; Li, 2014; Armbrecht, 2018). Other studies emphasized the advantages of explicit instruction of reading strategies in the classroom (Vollinger et al., 2018; Lee, 2015) and the benefits of content analysis of second language textbooks in reflecting implemented strategies (Richards, 2001; Harris, Fleck and Loughman, 2000; AlGhamdi, 2017; Alkatheery 2011).

## **Reading strategies and reading comprehension**

Muijselaar et al. (2017) examined the developmental relations between reading comprehension and reading strategies in a longitudinal study. They controlled three variables that might affect reading comprehension which are vocabulary, fluency, and working memory. The results indicated that it was a two-way relationship. They found that reading strategies affected comprehension and comprehension affected using the strategies.

Rastegar et al. (2017) conducted a study on second language learners majoring in English literature and English translation at an Iranian University. The study utilized SORS by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002) and a TOEFL reading comprehension test to investigate the correlation between using metacognitive reading strategies and reading comprehension achievement. The results showed that there was a positive correlation between them. Ghahari and Basanjideh (2017) investigated the awareness of language learners of reading strategies and their effect on autonomy, problem solving ability, and reading comprehension. The instruments used were the Learning Autonomy Questionnaire, the Problem-Solving Inventory, SORS, and a Reading Comprehension Test Battery. The results showed the awareness of learners had a significant effect on problem solving and reading comprehension; however, there was no significant effect on autonomy. Chevalier et al. (2015) studied reading strategies in addition to learning and studying strategies among university students with reading difficulties. They compared students with no history of reading difficulty and students who have difficulty in reading. They found that the latter were less likely to apply metacognitive strategies to reading especially selecting main ideas.

## **Reading strategies of L2 learners**

Al-Mekhlafi (2018) used MARSII to look at how frequently EFL learners who are studying in higher education institutions in Oman think they use selected EFL reading strategies. The results showed that all levels from beginners to advanced used all three types of reading strategies (global, problem-solving, and supporting) with no significant differences between them.

Shehadeh (2015) researched the type of reading strategies used by ESL University students with different proficiency levels in Palestine. A self-reported questionnaire and reading comprehension passages were utilized. Their findings show that the most prominent type used by students in all proficiency levels was allocated for the global strategies followed by problem solving and the least used were supporting strategies. Their results also indicated a correlation between global strategies and comprehension.

A study by Li (2014) investigated the use of reading strategies among EFL tertiary students. The study conducted a self-report study following Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002)'s SORS. The results showed that the most prominent reading strategy used was classified as problem-solving strategies such as re-reading, regaining concentration and guessing the text meaning. The least strategy used was supporting strategies such as reading aloud, questioning, paraphrasing and translating.

Armbrecht (2018) conducted a quantitative study on the reading strategies that college students use when reading in online courses. This study utilized the MARSII survey to collect data. The result showed that students with a higher GPA used all three types of reading strategies, whereas those with medium and low GPA scores depended on post-reading strategies.

## **Instruction of reading strategies and reading comprehension**

Vollinger et al. (2018) evaluated the effects of a reading strategy instructional program on reading competence of third-grade students. They assessed performance of the experimental group through multiple tests; 16 times before, while and after the intervention. The control group was assessed only 8 times. The results of a within and between-group analysis showed that reading strategy instruction had a significant positive effect on reading competence. Lee (2015) investigated the effect of explicit reading strategy instruction on Korean EFL learners. The results showed significant improvement in the posttest and the usage of metacognitive, cognitive, and supporting strategies. Explicit instruction raised students' awareness of the effectiveness of reading strategies and improved their attitudes towards English reading.

## **Content analysis of language textbooks**

Acknowledging the importance of explicit reading strategy instruction in developing reading comprehension among second language users, researchers investigated what is agreed to be the main instructional material in the classroom, the textbook (Richards, 2001). Harris, Fleck and Loughman (2000) found that textbooks can be investigated thoroughly by conducting content analysis. It helped in revealing the contents of the textbook and the strategies used in it, in addition to helping teachers select the appropriate textbook for the target learners. Moreover, content analysis on second language textbooks allows for the analysis of the explicit and implicit metalanguage of pragmatics content (AlGhamdi, 2017). It was also able to analyze the presentation of the cultures of Centre and Periphery countries in regional ELT textbooks (Alkathery, 2011).

From what has been mentioned, it can be deduced that research has highlighted the importance of reading strategies among language learners. The focus was on investigating the strategies that learners use and their awareness of these strategies. It also investigated instructional programs and emphasized the importance of training teachers and students to implement these strategies. However, there appears to be a lack of studies on content analysis of these reading strategies in ELT textbooks. Also, a content analysis of *Mosaic Two* has not been conducted. Therefore, this study attempts to fill in this gap and conduct a content analysis on the reading strategies used in the exercises of *Mosaic Two*. The study aimed at answering the following research questions:

1. What are the types and frequencies of pre-reading tasks mentioned in the textbook?
2. What are the types and frequencies of post-reading tasks mentioned in the textbook?
3. Which reading strategy was the most dominant in the textbook?

## **Methodology**

### **Material**

The study analyzed the reading tasks in the student's reading textbook in *Mosaic Two*. The reading tasks were the only items analyzed. This study excluded the rest of the elements in the textbook such as the titles, pictures, reading passages, footnotes and so on.

### ***Textbook selection***

*Mosaic Two* was selected because it is used as a textbook for a reading course in the department of English at the college of languages and translation at King Saud University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Also, it has not been analyzed to investigate the implemented reading strategies.

### ***Textbook description***

The textbook named *Mosaic Two* (6<sup>th</sup> edition) is published by Mc-Graw Hill in New York. The main focus of the book is reading skills and strategies with the aim of developing students' academic achievement in reading. It consists of ten chapters.

Each chapter is divided into three parts. Part 1 is allocated for reading skills and strategies. Part 2 is concerned with the main ideas and details. Part 3 is called tying it together. It addresses summarizing and making connections of what has been mentioned in the chapter. At the end of each chapter, a self-assessment log is provided where students are expected to check the reading strategies and vocabulary they have learned. The book states that it aims at developing students' reading skills to develop their academic achievement through a provocative, authentic, and strategic development program. The ten chapters in *Mosaic Two* are: (1) Language and Learning, (2) Danger and Daring, (3) Gender and Relationships, (4) Beauty and Aesthetics, (5) Transitions, (6) The Mind, (7) Working, (8) Breakthroughs, (9) Art and Entertainment, (10) Conflict and Reconciliation.

### **Data Collection**

The reading strategies in the exercises in the book were investigated. Each reading task was classified under pre-reading or post-reading. Then the type of each reading task was specified according to the subcategories defined in the theoretical framework. Finally, the number of occurrences and the percentages of each occurrence and the total was calculated. The results were then discussed.

### **Content Analysis**

The content analysis approach used to analyze the textbook of the study is considered a conceptual deductive one according to Huckin (2004). That is because the data was coded and categorized according to a specific framework to calculate occurrences and frequencies. The data was analyzed by identifying reading strategies and their subcategories following Paris, Wasik and Turner (1996) and Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002). The purpose was to investigate their occurrences and frequencies.

### ***Reading strategies and sub-categories***

This study investigated the reading strategies implemented in the exercises which were divided into pre-reading types and post reading types following Paris, Wasik and Turner (1996). Then these categories were further classified into more specified subcategories following Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002) which were global strategies, problem solving strategies, and solution strategies.

According to Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002), global strategies include the strategies readers use to manage their reading, such as setting a reading purpose, previewing the text, predicting or skimming, etc. Problem solving strategies involve adjusting reading speed, guessing the meaning of words, checking for comprehension, etc. Finally, supporting strategies are involve using external learning aids to comprehend a text such as using a dictionary, taking notes, underlining, highlighting, summarizing, etc.

### **Reliability**

Reliability was ensured by investigating repeatability and reproducibility (Allen and Knight, 2009). To ensure repeatability, the researcher piloted the analysis by analyzing a sample (3 chapters of the book) and after a week, the same sample was reanalyzed using the same scheme to ensure there were no differences in the frequencies and percentages. As for

reproducibility, another examiner assessed the same sample using the same scheme to ensure no differences were noted. The inter-rater reliability coefficient that was calculated was 1.

## Validity

Face validity, content validity, and construct validity were considered following Mackey and Gass (2016). Face validity was tested and showed that the analyses appear to analyze the data for types of pre-reading and post-reading tasks. Content and construct validity were measured by analyzing the data according to the categories identified by Mokhtari and Shorey (2002) which have been proven to be valid and reliable measures of reading strategies.

## Results

The analysis examined the exercises in the book and focused on the reading strategies used. All the pre-reading and post-reading types and subcategories found in the selected textbooks were then listed in tables for analysis. To answer the research questions, a content analysis was carried out on the selected textbook to collect data. The questions were answered based on the results of the qualification of the data to see whether the materials truly provide the students with pre-reading and post-reading tasks and what types they are. Quantifying measures were analyzed to have a better understanding of the most prominent exercises.

### Pre-reading Tasks

There were 11 pre-reading tasks occurring 57 times in the book. Two subcategories of reading strategies were found. They were global strategies and problem-solving strategies. The former occurred more prominently than the latter. There were no occurrences of supporting strategies in the pre-reading tasks. See Table 1.

Table 1

*Sub-Categories of pre- reading strategies*

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Global Strategy	30	52.6%
Problem-solving Strategy	27	47.4%
	57	100%

### *Global strategies in pre-reading tasks*

The global strategies found involved connecting prior knowledge to the topic which was the most frequently used pre-reading task. The second most occurring type was previewing which was found 9 times. After that skimming for main ideas occurred 6 times. The least occurring task was predicting occurring 5 times.

### *Problem-solving strategies in pre-reading tasks*

The tasks categorized as problem-solving strategies were varied. The most common type was guessing the meaning from context which occurred 12 times. Scanning occurred 8 times, and filling the gap with the correct word occurred 3 times. Making comparisons, answering WH-Questions, matching terms to their definitions and True and False statements are the least frequently occurring types.

## Post-reading Tasks

There were 38 post-reading tasks occurring 132 times in the book. All three subcategories of reading strategies (global, problem-solving, and supporting strategies) were found. The most subcategory used was the supporting strategy followed by problem-solving tasks. Global strategies was the least. See Table 2.

Table 2

### *Sub-categories of Post- reading strategies*

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Supporting Strategy	71	53.8%
Problem Solving Strategy	58	43.9%
Global Strategy	3	2.3%
	132	100%

### *Supporting strategies in post-reading tasks*

Supporting strategies were the most prominent types in post-reading tasks occurring 71 times in 16 types of tasks. The type of task used the most was the guided conversation which occurred 21 times. Reflecting occurred 11 times followed by researching 10 times. Writing practice, summarizing, making inferences, and paraphrasing occurring 8,7,3,2 times respectively. The least type used each occurring once were: sequencing, creating a story board, illustrating ideas, debating, ranking arguments, conducting interviews, role playing, underlining and glossing, and mapping.

### *Problem-solving strategies in the post-reading tasks*

The tasks categorized as problem-solving strategies were 21 and were used 58 times. Cloze-procedure which was found 12 times was the most commonly strategy used. Scanning for specific information and answering WH-questions were repeated 7 times each. Comparing and contrasting was found 5 times, and recalling information was used 4 times. Getting meaning from context, time-reading and true and false statements occurred three times each. Forming different parts of speech to complete sentences, forming Sentences, and matching expressions with their definitions occurred twice. The least types found each of which were used once were Problem solving, identifying supporting ideas, analyzing the passage for specific elements, vocabulary builder, identifying facts from opinions, correcting false statements, analyzing cause and effect, negative questions and sentence insertion questions.

### *Global strategies in post-reading tasks*

The global strategies found were three types of tasks, each of which occurred once. These types were expressing the theme, completing a schematic table, and skimming for main ideas.

## Reading strategies in the pre-reading and the post-reading tasks

The major differences between the sub-categories of the reading strategies used in both the pre-reading and the post-reading tasks were compared. Table 3 shows that the total number of tasks that included reading strategies were 189. There were only two sub-categories of the reading strategies in the pre-reading tasks which were global and problem-solving strategies, while the post-reading tasks included all three strategies which were: global, problem-solving, and supporting strategies.

Table 3

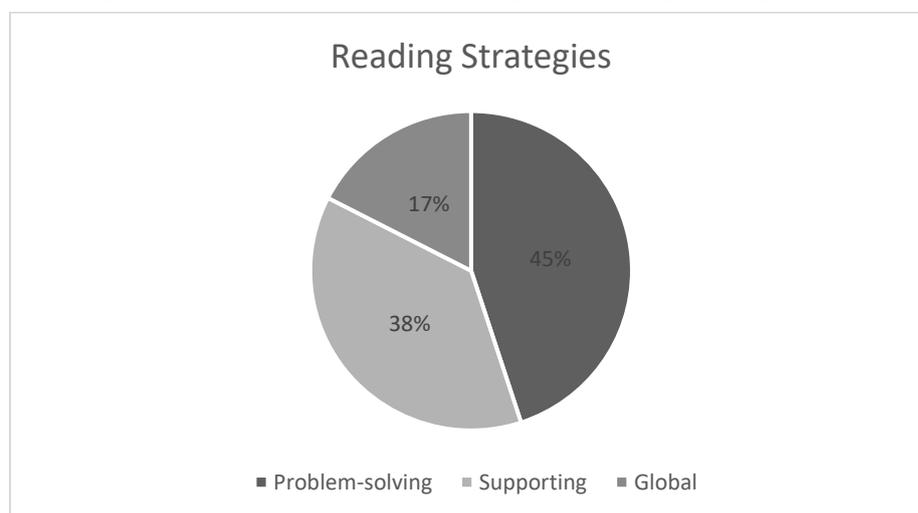
*Reading strategies in pre-reading and post-reading tasks*

Strategy	Pre-reading	Post-reading	Total of strategies	Percentage
Problem-solving	27	58	85	44.97%
Supporting	-	71	71	37.57%
Global	30	3	33	17.46%
Total	57	132	189	100%

Figure 1 shows that the most prominent reading strategy used in the book was the problem-solving strategy followed by the supporting strategy and the least strategy used was the global strategy.

Figure 1

*Reading Strategies in pre-reading and post-reading strategies*



**Discussion**

The study was set out to investigate the reading strategies used in the second language reading textbook called *Mosaic Two (6<sup>th</sup> edition)*. The aim was to investigate the type and frequency of the reading strategies used in the textbook. The results show that the exercises in the textbook included a wide range of reading strategies reaching 189 pre and post reading tasks. According to Pressley (2002) and Vollinger et al. (2018), this variety will allow students to practice using reading strategies before reading and implement more exercises after reading a passage which would facilitate their comprehension.

The results also show that the global reading strategies occurred more in the pre-reading tasks than the post-reading tasks because it helps students use their prior knowledge to predict what the passage is about and relate their schematic knowledge to what is mentioned in the text. Research has shown that schematic knowledge is one of the reader variables that facilitate comprehension (Alderson, 2000).

Furthermore, supporting strategies were not included in the pre-reading tasks, but were applied extensively in the post-reading tasks. This could be related to the characteristics of supporting strategies which involve using external supplementary material to increase comprehension on specific details of a reading passage which occurs after reading it. Mokhtari

and Sheorey (2002) mentioned that supporting categories allow students to further examine a passage after reading it by facilitating outside material which would enhance their understanding of what has been read.

Also, problem-solving strategies have been used more in post-reading than in pre-reading tasks due to the nature of these two stages. Wasik and Turner (1996) mentioned that pre-reading strategies are more concerned with general information whereas the post-reading strategies are more detailed oriented and require specific investigations of what has been read. However, applying some problem-solving strategies before reading can also help familiarize readers with the passage and lead to better comprehension.

Moreover, the results show that that the post-reading strategies and tasks were more in quantity than the pre-reading tasks and the types used were more varied such as researching, writing, summarizing, reflecting, and more. Armbrrecht (2018) found that learners with low GPA scores did not use post-reading strategies as much as learners with high GPAs. Therefore, including more post-reading strategies in the textbook would encourage students to use their metacognitive knowledge to investigate the passage further in order to achieve a comprehensible understanding of the passage. According to Lee (2015) and Vollinger et al. (2018), this variety in types and quantity would also raise the awareness of students on reading strategies and would instruct them on how to implement them to improve their comprehension skills.

The approach of this study shows that content analysis can reflect a detailed perception on the strategies used in a specific content. This is in line with Harris, Fleck and Loughman (2000) who emphasized the importance of content analysis in analyzing data. It is also in line with other research studies who have investigated second language textbooks for specific data and were able to find results that support their theory through content analysis such as AlGhamdi, (2017) and Alkathery (2011).

Finally, the content analysis show that the selected textbook has implemented pre-reading and post-reading strategies extensively including global, problem-solving, and supporting strategies. This variety facilitates students' comprehension skills. It also helps provide a rich instructional material to implement and practice reading strategies in reading courses.

To conclude, the overall results show that the content analysis of the selected textbook was able to investigate the type of frequency of the reading strategies used to facilitate reading comprehension skills of second language learners. It also showed that the book implemented global, problem-solving and supporting reading strategies extensively which accommodates teachers and students in a reading course.

### **Limitations**

This study has limited its analysis to only one edition of a textbook. Further research can investigate more reading textbooks and editions. They could also be compared in order to have a better understanding of the type of material provided by such textbooks.

### **Implications for Practice**

It is advisable that teachers, educators, department heads and directors conduct a content analysis that can highlight the types and frequencies of the implemented tasks in order to choose the suitable textbook or supplement required textbooks with materials that can fulfill the objectives of the curriculum. Content analysis can be simply conducted by (1) Investigating the reading strategies by analyzing the types and frequencies of the pre-reading strategies and the post reading strategies implemented in the textbook, (2) Classifying each reading task under

pre-reading or post-reading task, (3) Specifying the type of each reading task according to the subcategories defined in the theoretical framework, (4) Calculating the number of occurrences and the percentages of each occurrence and the total, and (5) Analyzing the most dominant reading strategy from the data collected.

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### **Bio**

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## Appendix 1

	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Type of Task</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	
Pre-reading	Global Strategy	Connecting prior knowledge to the topic	10	33.3%	
		Previewing	9	30%	
		Skimming for main ideas	6	20%	
		Predicting	5	16.7%	
		Total	30	100%	
			<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>52.6%</b>
	Problem Solving Strategy	Guessing meaning from context	12	44.45%	
		Scanning	8	29.64%	
		Fill in the gap with the correct word	3	11.11%	
		Making Comparisons	1	3.70%	
		Answering WH-Questions	1	3.70%	
		Matching terms to their definitions	1	3.70%	
		True and False statements	1	3.70%	
		Total	27	100%	
			<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>47.4%</b>
	Supporting Strategy	Guided Conversation on the topic	21	29.58%	
		Reflecting	11	15.49%	
		Researching	10	14.08%	
		Writing practice	8	11.27%	
		Summarizing	7	9.86%	
		Making Inferences	3	4.22%	
		Paraphrasing	2	2.81%	
		Sequencing	1	1.41%	
		Creating a story board	1	1.41%	
		Illustrating ideas	1	1.41%	
		Debating	1	1.41%	
		Ranking Arguments	1	1.41%	
		Conducting interviews	1	1.41%	
		Role playing	1	1.41%	
		Underlining and glossing	1	1.41%	
Mapping	1	1.41%			
			<b>Total</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>100%</b>
			<b>Total</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>53.8%</b>
	Problem Solving Strategy	Cloze Procedure	12	20.00%	

	Scanning for specific information	7	12.07%
	Answering WH-Questions	7	12.07%
	Comparing and contrasting	5	8.62%
	Recalling information	4	5.90%
	Getting meaning from context	3	5.17%
	Timed reading	3	5.17%
	True or false statements	3	5.17%
	Forming different parts of speech to complete sentences	2	3.45%
	Forming Sentences	2	3.45%
	Matching expressions with their definitions	2	3.45%
	Problem solving	1	1.72%
	Identifying supporting ideas	1	1.72%
	Analyzing the passage for specific elements	1	1.72%
	Vocabulary builder	1	1.72%
	Identifying facts from opinions	1	1.72%
	Correcting false statements	1	1.72%
	Analyzing cause and effect	1	1.72%
	Negative questions and sentence insertion questions	1	1.72%
	Total	58	100%
	Total	58	43.9%
Global Strategy	Expressing the theme	1	33.33%
	Completing a schematic table	1	33.33%
	Skimming for main ideas	1	33.33%
	Total	3	100%
	Total	3	2.3%
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>100%</b>

## **Translation of Taboos: A Case Study on Translating the F-Word Into Arabic**

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### **Abstract**

In this descriptive case study, I aim to explore the translations and translation strategies of taboo words into Arabic and the strategies used in the translation process. Particularly, my focus is on the translation of the *F*-word and the possible translations of this word into Arabic to present an acceptable product or translation to the target culture. For this purpose, I adapt Chesterman's (2000) comparative model and applied Baker's (1992) strategies of translation for classifying the collected data. The corpus of this study are two versions of *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F\*ck*: the source text (ST) is in English and the target text (TT) is translated into Arabic. I examine the source text to list all the *F*-words mentioned and detected the word 179 times. Then I compare the listed words or phrases to the target text, to examine the translation and strategies used by the translator of the target text. This is the first study, to my knowledge, focusing on the translation of the *F*-word into Arabic and exploring the possibility of translating taboo words into acceptable equivalents in the TT.

*Keywords:* translating the F-word, taboo translation, swear words

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Society's culture, norms, and religion influence language, which is a primary mode of communication. Any language is a mirror of the culture, and the speakers and writers' ways of practicing or dealing with taboo words and expressions are cultural reflections of a specific language. In this study, I focused on the *strategies* that translators employ to translate taboos, mainly from English into Arabic. Specifically, my focus is on a particular taboo word—the F-word—in Manson's (2016) book *The Subtle Art of Not Giving A F\*ck* and this word's translation into Arabic throughout the book. My aim for this study is to shed light on (a) the strategies the translator used to create an acceptable translation for the target culture and (b) the translation of the F-word and all its derivations and expressions mentioned in the book. My reason for choosing the translation of taboo words, in particular, is the noticeably growing use of taboo words—written or spoken (in TV shows, movies, social media, and books)—and the incapability of controlling the spread of these resources, particularly in the Internet and information era.

### Taboos

As defined in Cambridge Dictionary, a *taboo* is a subject, word, or action avoided for religious or social reasons (Cambridge University Press, 2020). According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, a taboo is

the prohibition of an action based on the belief that such behaviour is either too sacred and consecrated or too dangerous and accursed for ordinary individuals to undertake . . . they have proven to be present in virtually all societies past and present. (Britannica, 2020)

Taboos are governed by nations' cultural and societal guides, which are based on agreed-upon expectations and rules. Such taboos considerably affect people's lives, behaviour, clothes, food, and choices (Fershtman et al., 2011).

Taboos are associated with cultures and societies; thus, they vary by country. Hence, many scholars have confirmed the differences and classifications of taboos by country, culture, and even religion. For example, Gobert (2014) explored how taboo topics, such as drugs, alcohol, sex, religion, and death, are discussed in Gulf Arab classrooms. In Muslim Gulf Arab classrooms, which tend to be traditional and conservative, other topics that are considered taboo for religious and cultural reasons include boyfriends and girlfriends, nudity, dating, and superstitions (Gobert, 2014). Another study about taboos in the Iranian Arab community revealed that taboo topics include sex-related issues, death, health, disease, politics, religion, possessions, talent, abilities, and family relations (Sa'd, 2017).

Fershtman et al. (2011) classified taboos into several categories. The first category includes the restrictions on *sexual* behaviours, such as incest, animal and human sex, adult-child sex, and necrophilia. The second category includes *dietary*-related restrictions, like nonhalal and nonkosher foods for Muslims and Jews, beef for Hindus, and cannibalism for many people and societies. The third category included *offensive and appalling* actions, including some bodily functions. Most of these taboos are not universal; incest might be the only universal taboo.

Gao's (2013) classifications, on the other hand, include sexual issues and bodily excretions, in addition to *death and disease*, two concepts that are replaced by alternative words or expressions when discussed because of the fear of these words. For example, the word *die* may be substituted with *pass away*, *answer the call of God*, or, in Arabic, *departure to Allah's mercy* [انتقل الى رحمة الله]. *Terminally ill* replaces diseases, especially serious diseases such as *cancer*, or *the Big C*. In Arabic, *malignant* [الخبِيث] replaces the word *cancer* to avoid the term. The other category is *discriminatory language*, including *sexist* and *racist language*.

Sexist language refers to prejudiced language against females in favour of males, such as referring to an unknown baby as *he* rather than *she*, using the word *chairman* even if this position is occupied by a woman, and distinguishing between male and female titles that only show the marital status of the latter (e.g., *Mrs.* and *Miss* in English, Chinese, and Arabic [السيدة، الأئمة]). Racist language signifies a prejudice against racial or ethnic groups, such as the discrimination against *black* in English—be it Black people or the colour black—such as when *black* refers to wickedness and filth, such as in *blacklist* and *blackguard*, whereas the colour white is associated with purity and innocence. Privacy is another variety of taboo. For English speakers, it is inappropriate to ask personal questions related to age, weight, salary, marital status, politics, and religion. However, according to Gao (2013), salary and age issues are not taboo for Chinese. The next category is swear words. Several linguistic words, including religious and legal expressions, are considered swearing in Britain and Australia and cursing in the United States (Wajnryb, 2004). These taboo expressions reflect the individual's emotions such as hatred, annoyance, or disapproval. Some of these words and expressions are associated with body parts and functions; others refer to gods and devils, such as *God*, and *Holy Sacrament*. The last variety of taboos includes four-letter words, such as *damn* and the F-word. Gao (2013) concurred that these words are still considered unacceptable in conversation and writing.

### **The Translation of Taboos in the Arab World**

Translating taboos is regularly a challenging task during the translation process because of their different usages and their contextual dependence (Almijrab, 2020). However, translating taboos into Arabic could be more challenging because of the nature of Arab societies. Arab culture, according to Al-Yasin and Rabab'ah (2019), is conservative due to the influence of religion on society. Hence, translating taboos into Arabic limits translators' options so that they either "act in accordance with the norms of the source language and find an adequate equivalent to the tabooed term, or they can act according to the norms of the target language and find a euphemistic equivalent" (Al-Yasin & Rabab'ah, 2019, p. 4).

The target language, ideology, and audience play significant roles in determining the appropriate strategies for translating taboos and other cultural constraints. For example, Debbas and Haider (2020) found that euphemistic expression and word omission are the dominant strategies used in translating taboos from TV series into Arabic. This includes translating *rough sex* as *inappropriate position* and deleting bad words, such as by translating the phrase *serve it up, bit\** as *yes, serve it up*. Scene deletion, word omission, and word omission with justification are used in translating religious remarks. Debbas and Haider (2020) stated that the latter strategies are used when dealing with religious topics due to the sensitivity of religion in Islamic societies and the significant respect given to God in Arab culture.

In addition to euphemism, omission, and censorship, Almijrab (2020) suggested two more strategies that translators can adopt to translate taboo words into Arabic: substitution and rendering taboo for taboo. In the omission strategy, the translator can simply omit the taboo word or phrase from the source text (ST) while translating it into the target text (TT). However, omission would be inapplicable when the taboo word is a main word or phrase in the ST; therefore, the translator must adopt euphemism or substitution.

### **The F-Word**

The first written appearance of the F-word was in the 1400s, although O'Connor (2000) argued this word might have existed before when without documentation because it was always

considered a vulgar word that became unprintable after the invention of printing. Although it first appeared in a dictionary in 1671, this word—along with other vulgar words—was omitted from Samuel Johnson’s dictionary in 1755 but was included in John Ash’s 1775 dictionary, *New and Complete Dictionary of the English Language*. It then disappeared from dictionaries for approximately 170 years, before reappearing in the 1965 *Penguin Dictionary*. However, Gao (2013) declared that the F-word was contained in Eric Partridge’s 1963 *Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, which faced huge objections from schools and libraries. The word was not written fully—Partridge used an asterisk for the vowel *u*. Currently, Partridge’s dictionary is often unavailable on the open shelves of libraries.

The definition of the F-word varies by source. Contrary to its potential meaning of love and romance, the word denotes an act of pure animal self-indulgence: “In commonly used terms of contempt such as *I really got f\*cked over* and *f\*ck him*, it borders on having the same brutal, humiliating and demanding connotation of rape, an act of violence other than sex” (O’Connor, 2000, p. 134). The ambiguous usage and meaning of the word occasionally evolve from the context, but not always. For instance, O’Connor argued the F-word sometimes has a happy meaning and sometimes is completely meaningless, which confuses the reader or listener as to whether to interpret the intended meaning as good, bad, happy, or sad. As an example, O’Connor argued that a message from a friend saying “I got f\*cked up last Friday” could confuse the reader, who would not be able to recognise if he or she should congratulate the friend or recommend a lawyer.

Taboos are prohibited in any society to avoid hurting or embarrassing people or causing them anxiety or shame. However, according to O’Connor (2000), the use of the F-word is increasing as an exclamation; a stand-alone expression of anger, surprise, or frustration; a meaningless modifier; and an adjective for emphasis. Thus, O’Connor called for eliminating this word from one’s vocabulary for several reasons: (a) it is a bad word and by offending someone, one ruins the speaker’s self-image, (b) it is not a necessary word, and (c) there is no benefit to using the F-word. “The evolution of the language might someday make the word F\*\*\* as acceptable as the word flower, but we’re not there yet” (O’Connor, 2000, p. 140).

O’Connor’s (2000) call to eliminate the F-word obviously was not applied; rather, his expectation of the word’s acceptance has become factual. Although the F-word is still classified as a taboo word and is prohibited by the majority of middle-class people, it is one of the 3,000 most frequently spoken words, while the word *f\*cking* is among the 1,000 most frequently spoken words (Hughes, 2006). Furthermore, the F-word, according to an Internet study, is more frequently used than *mom*, *baseball*, and *hot dogs* (Howe, 2012). Some scholars associate the cumulative use of this word to music, films, and television, in which a word once considered so taboo is now considered commonplace (Murphy, 2009).

However, the increasing use of taboo words in Modern English has upset many people. For instance, Barbara Holland called for protesting the increasing use of offensive language in movies, radio, and television (as cited in Howe, 2012). The use of such words is not limited to movies and television; it also invades books, and the F-word explicitly has started to attack book titles. The corpus of this paper, *The Subtle Art of Not-Giving a F\*ck*, is not the only book with the word on the title and cover page. Several other books contain the F-word on the cover page, including *Everything is F\*cked* by Manson in 2019; *Unf\*ckology* by Amy Alkon in 2018; *F\*ck Feelings* by Michael Bennett and Sarah Bennett in 2015; *F You Very Much* by Danny Wallace in 2018; *Unfu\*k Yourself* by Gary John Bishop in 2017; *What I Mean When I Say Miss You, Love You and F\*ck You* by Robert Drake in 2019; and *F\*ck I’m Bored!* by Tamara Adams in 2018, just to mention few.

## The F-Word's Usage

There are two classification schemes of taboo words and expressions based on their usages. Andersson and Trudgill (1990; as cited in Habibovic, 2011) referred to *swearing* in their study as (a) expletive, (b) abusive, (c) humorous, or (d) auxiliary. According to Andersson and Trudgill (1990), the expletive category expresses feelings that are not directed towards a particular person or people (e.g., *damn it*). Contrastingly, the abusive category, which is directed towards a person or people, involves insulting and name-calling (e.g., *go to hell*). The humorous category is directed towards a person or people as well, but the function here is playfulness, instead of offensiveness. The last category, *auxiliary*, is not directed towards anyone or anything (e.g., *bloody* and *f\*cking*; Habibovic, 2011).

On the other hand, McEnergy and Xiao (2004; as cited in Santaemilia, 2019) referred to classifying the fundamental usage of the F-word. In addition to the expletive category, they added categories for personal insult (abusive), cursing expletive, emphatic intensifier, declinational usage, literal usage denoting taboo referent, idiomatic set phrase, and unclassified usage. Figure 1 shows these categories with examples.

**Figure 1**

*McEnergy and Xiao's (2004) fundamental usage of the F-word. Adapted from "The Translation of Sex-Related Language: The Danger(s) of Self-Censorship(s)," by J. Santaemilia, 2008, TTR: traduction, terminologie, rédaction, 21(2), p. 231.*

Description	Examples
GENERAL EXPLETIVE	<i>(Oh) fuck!</i>
PERSONAL INSULT REFERRING TO DEFINED ENTITY	<i>You fuck! / that fuck</i>
CURSING EXPLETIVE	<i>Fuck you! / me! / him! / it!</i>
DESTINATIONAL USAGE	<i>Fuck off! / he fucked off</i>
LITERAL USAGE DENOTING TABOO REFERENT	<i>He fucked her</i>
EMPHATIC INTENSIFIER	<i>Fucking marvellous! / in the fucking car</i>
'PRONOMINAL' FORM	<i>Like fuck / fat as fuck</i>
IDIOMATIC 'SET PHRASE'	<i>Fuck all / give a fuck / thank fuck</i>
METALINGUISTIC OR UNCLASSIFIABLE DUE TO INSUFFICIENT CONTEXT	<i>The use of the word "fuck" / you never fucking</i>

## Translation of the F-Word

Several scholars have examined the translation of taboos from English into other languages, such as Indonesian (Pratama, 2016); Turkish (Isbuga-Erel, 2007); Chinese (Gao, 2013); Arabic (Abbas, 2015); Italian (Varney, 2007); IsiXhosa, an African language (Mfazwe, 2003); Persian (Pishkar & Pishkar, 2015; Vossoughi & Hosseini, 2013); and Spanish (Ávila-Cabrera, 2015). Although few studies have focused on the translation of the F-word, Pujol (2006) studied the translation of the F-word into Catalan, including its compounds and derivations. According to Pujol (2006), the F-word is used in many forms (e.g., *f\*cking*, *f\*cked*, *f\*cker*) and many parts of speech (e.g., verb, noun, adverb, adjective, and interjection). Pujol's (2006) analysis for using this word in a movie indicated that it was used to convey emotions such as extreme anger, emphasis, disgust, contempt, surprise, and happiness; however, he

claimed these categories are not ultimate and occasionally overlap. In another study, Santaemilia (2009) focused on the translation of the F-word as a sex-related term into Spanish and Catalan. Santaemilia (2009) presented options for dealing with sensitive and taboo language other than public censorship, including self-censorship; individual ethics; and one's attitudes towards religion, sex, impoliteness, and indecency.

Although some studies have focused on translating taboos into Arabic, such as Almijrab (2020), Al-Yasin and Rabab'ah (2019), and Debbas and Haider (2020), no study has focused mainly on the F-word's translation into Arabic and on the strategies used to translate it. In this paper, my focus is mainly on how a selected taboo word is translated and the strategies used to present this word in the target text.

## Methodology

I adopted Chesterman's (2000) comparative model in this paper. A product-oriented model centred on a relation of equivalence According to Williams and Chesterman (2002), the comparative model is useful "for studying shifts; differences, resulting from translation studies that involve changing something" (p. 51). In translation studies, this relation between two entities is presented as follows:

$$\text{Source text (ST)} = \text{Target text (TT)}$$

However, Williams and Chesterman (2002) argued about the relationship between the ST and TT. Instead of  $ST = TT$  (meaning they are equivalent), they proposed another equation because it is difficult to find a perfect equivalent in translation. Thus, the comparative model they used is  $ST \approx TT$  (approximately equal) or  $ST \neq TT$ , to indicate the difference between both entities. In 2019, Hendl proposed another equation to represent the absence of a TT when using the omission or deletion strategy:  $ST = \emptyset$  (null or does not exist).

In this paper, I employed the comparative model to examine both the ST and TT and, accordingly, to classify the appropriate representation of the relationship between the two entities according to Nida's (1964) dynamic and formal equivalence and Nida's techniques. Next, I explored the translator's strategies further, based on Baker's (1992) strategies for translation.

## Corpus

The corpus of this study is two versions of *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F\*ck: A Counterintuitive Approach to Living a Good Life*, The ST is in English, and the TT is the ST translated into Arabic (by Al-Hareth Al-Nabhan). Although the book contains several taboo words, my focus was primarily on the F-word and the derivations and phrases related to this word, such as *f\*ck-worthy* and *what the f\*ck*. I excluded all other curses that did not contain this word.

## About the Book

*The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F\*ck: A Counterintuitive Approach to Living a Good Life* is a 2016 self-help book by the American blogger and author Mark Manson. In the first year, 2,000,000 copies were sold, and, more than 6,000,000 copies had been sold by July 2019 (Manson, 2019). This book has been translated into 30 languages and was on the *New York Times* Best Seller List (Manson, 2019). Within the book's 224 pages, the F-word is mentioned 179 times. On a single page (Manson, 2019, p. 19), the word is mentioned 12 times. The F-

word was not the only taboo word used in this book, other taboos such as sh\*t, b\*llsh\*t, and cr\*p were used as well, however, the focus of this paper is on the F-word only.

## Results

I identified the F-word 179 times in words and phrase throughout the book (as shown in Table 1). The word is written clearly and completely throughout the book's chapters, except on the cover page, where an asterisk is used for the letter *u* in the F-word (*f\*ck*).

### Translation Strategies

After carefully reading the ST and comparing it to the TT, I determined that the translator mainly used Baker's (1992) strategies: (a) translating using a less expressive or neutral word, (b) translating using cultural substitution, (c) translating by paraphrasing using related words, (d) translating by paraphrasing using unrelated words, and (e) omission. Although Baker's strategies included more categories, my focus was on the strategies the translator employed and the literal translation strategy, which was also employed in the TT.

According to Baker (1992), translating using a more neutral or less expressive word occurs when the term in the ST implies confusion or embarrassment. Translating using a cultural substitution is a strategy in which a culture-specific word or expression is replaced with a term relating to the target culture because the target language does not have the propositional meaning but the related term will have a similar effect on the target readers. Translating by paraphrasing using related words is when the concept expressed in the ST is lexicalised into the target language but in a different form. Translators employing this strategy tend to use words in the target language with the same interpretation as those in the ST do. Translating by paraphrasing using an unrelated word occurs when the concept expressed in the original language is not lexicalized in the target language. This strategy is based on modifying a superordinate concept or unpacking the meaning of the source concept and presenting another concept in the target language with the same propositional meaning. Another strategy used in the corpus is the omission strategy. Baker (1992) claimed that omitting a word or a concept does no harm:

If the meaning conveyed by a particular item or expression is not vital enough to the development of the text to justify distracting the reader with lengthy explanations, translators can and often do simply omit translating the word or expression in question. (p. 42)

The last strategy is literal translation. As previously declared, the reason for including this strategy is that the *F*-word in the ST was translated literally twice. Literal, pure, or faithful translation refers to a translation that does not manipulate, delete, or modify the ST's meaning (Hendal, 2019).

### Results Representation

Table 1 displays the results according to the phrases and expressions containing the F-word in the original text. Expressions with different pronouns but similar structure (e.g., *the f\*ck he gives* or *the f\*ck they give*) or different tenses (e.g., *give a f\*ck*, *giving a f\*ck*) were classified and considered together. Thus, the table contains a sample of each phrase or expression used in the book along with the total number of times each phrase was used.

The results in table 1 also include the ST, TT, and back-translation (BT; if available) and the strategies employed. The rephrasing of the *F*-word in translation for the TT and in the BT are in bold. Because my focus mainly was on the *F*-word, I examined only the translation of this word, without referring to the strategies used for other words in the ST or TT.

**Table 1**

*Taxonomy of the F-Word's Usage in the Book The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F\*ck*

Example (ST)	Phrase	Times	TT	Back Translation	Translation Strategy
<i>Verb (give) + F-Word (noun)</i>					
1. Bukowski didn't give a f*ck.	Give a f*ck	49	لم يكن بوكوفسكي مباليا	Bukowski wasn't concerned.	
2. Giving a f*ck about more stuff	Giving a f*ck	25	الاهتمام أكثر	More <b>concern or care</b>	Paraphrasing using related words
3. Who gives a f*ck?	Gives a f*ck	2	ما أهمية ذلك؟	What's the <b>importance</b> of this?	
4. Then I gave a f*ck about	Gave a f*ck	1	صرت الآن مهتما	Then I <b>cared</b> about	
5. I have given a f*ck about many things.	Given a f*ck	2	اهتممت اهتمام زائد	I <b>cared</b> too much.	
6. We are essentially giving f*cks.	Giving f*cks	1	نهتم اهتماما زائدا	We <b>care</b> too much.	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>			
<i>Verb (give or hand out) + Adjective+ F-Word (noun)</i>					
7. To give too many f*cks is bad.	Give too many f*cks	5	المبالغة في الاهتمام	<b>Caring</b> too much	
8. By giving too many f*cks	Giving too many f*cks	3	المبالغة في الاهتمام	<b>Caring</b> too much	
9. They give way too many f*cks.	Give way too many f*cks	2	يهتمون اهتماما زائد أكثر مما يجب بكثير	They <b>care</b> much more than they should.	
10. Not to give a single f*ck is to	Give a single f*ck	1	عدم الاهتمام على الإطلاق	Not <b>caring</b> at all	
11. There is nothing as not giving a single f*ck.	Giving a single f*ck	1	لا وجود في الواقع الحقيقي لشيء اسمه عدم الاهتمام	Not <b>caring</b> doesn't really exist in the real world.	Paraphrasing using related words
12. Giving no f*cks whatsoever	Giving no f*cks	1	حالة اللامبالاة وعدم الاهتمام	<b>Careless</b> and lack of concern	
13. When you give better f*cks	Give better f*cks	1	تركز اهتمامك على أشياء أفضل	Concentrate your <b>concerns</b> on better things.	
14. I will teach you to give fewer f*cks.	Give fewer f*cks	1	الاهتمام بعدد أقل من الأشياء	<b>Caring</b> about fewer things	
15. We give tones of f*cks.	Give tones of f*cks	1	نهتم كثيرا جدا بأشياء كثيرة جدا	We <b>care</b> too much about many things.	
16. People who hand out f*cks	Hand out f*cks	1	يبالون بأشياء متعددة أكثر مما يجب	They <b>care</b> about many things more than they should.	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>			
<i>F-Word (noun) + Verb (give)</i>					
17. No f*cks given	F*cks given	3	لست مهتما بهذا	I don't <b>care</b> about this.	

18. Magic f*ck-giving fairy dust	F*ck-giving	1	مسحوق اللامبالاة السحري	The magical <b>careless</b> dust	Paraphrasing using related words
19. You have a limited amount of f*cks to give.	F*cks to give	1	مقدارا محددا من الاهتمام	Limited amount of <b>cares</b>	
20. It was the f*cks not given	F*cks not given	1	اللامبالاة التي أبديتها	The <b>careless</b> was shown	
21. Where f*cks do not deserve to be given	F*cks do not deserve to be given	1	لا تستحق اهتماما منا	Do not deserve our <b>concern</b>	
22. Changing the f*cks you're giving	F*cks you're giving	1	تغيير ما تهتم به	Change what we <b>care</b> about	Paraphrasing using related words
23. About the f*cks we're willing to give	F*cks we're willing to give	1	فيما يتعلق بالأشياء التي نحن على استعداد لإيلائها اهتماما	About things we're willing to <b>care</b> about	
24. Regardless of the f*cks he or she gives	F*cks he or she gives	1	بصرف النظر عما يهتم او ما لا يهتم به	Regardless of he <b>cares</b> or doesn't care about	
<b>Total</b>		<b>10</b>			
<i>F-Word (Verb)+ pronoun</i>					
25. a. F*ck you.	F*ck you	2	١. اللعنة عليك	a. Damn you.	a. Cultural substitution b. Omission
b. which (f*ck you) I still downloaded it			٢. لا أزال أشاهد هذا المسلسل	b. $\theta$	
26. They say f*ck it.	F*ck it	6	١. إلى الجحيم بهذا	a. To <b>hell</b> with this.	a. Translating using less expressive word b. Paraphrasing using unrelated words
b. but f*ck it			٢. فليكن ما يكون	b. <b>whatever</b>	
27. F*ck that kid.	F*ck that kid	1	هل هناك أغبي من هذا؟	Is there a stupider kid than this?	Paraphrasing using unrelated words
<b>Total</b>		<b>9</b>			
<i>Possessive Pronoun +F-Word (noun)</i>					
28. They reserve their f*cks.	Their f*cks	3	يحتفظون باهتمامهم للأشياء	They reserve their <b>concerns</b> .	Paraphrasing using related words
29. Your f*cks will be given.	Your f*cks	2	اهتمامك سوف يتجه	Your <b>concern</b> will go to	
30. We are able to divert our f*cks.	Our f*cks	2	توجيه اهتمامنا	Guide our <b>concerns</b> .	
<b>Total</b>		<b>7</b>			
<i>F-Word+ -ed (adjective)</i>					
31. You're going to get f*cked.	Get f*cked	1	ستخسر من كل الجهات	You'll <b>lose</b> from all directions.	

32. <i>F*cked-up values</i>	<i>F*cked-up</i>	2	قيمه السيئة	<b>Bad values</b>	<i>Paraphrasing using unrelated words</i>
33. <i>The world is totally f*cked.</i>	<i>Totally f*cked</i>	1	العالم مكان سيء	<i>The world is a <b>bad</b> place.</i>	
34. <i>Her values are so f*cked.</i>	<i>So f*cked</i>	1	قيمها سيئة	<i>Her <b>bad</b> values</i>	
35. <i>It's the belief that everything is f*cked.</i>	<i>Everything is f*cked</i>	2	*this chapter was not included in the target text, only in the original electronic source text		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>			

F-Word+ -ing (adverb)

36. a. <i>Everybody there is having a f*cking grand old time.</i> b. <i>I'm so f*cking pissed off.</i>	<i>F*cking+</i> <i>noun/adjective</i>	18	١. كل شخص في العالم يعيش وقتنا رائعا ٢. ما يجعلني منزعجا حقا بل غاضبا	a. <i>Everyone in the world is having a great time.</i> b. <i>which makes me really pissed off and <b>angry</b></i>	a. <i>Omission</i> b. <i>Paraphrasing using unrelated words</i>
37. a. <i>Problems never f*cking go away.</i> b. <i>Are you f*cking kidding me?</i>	<i>F*cking+ verb</i>	2	١. المشاكل لا تزول أبدا ٢. هل تمزحون؟	a. <i>Problems never go away.</i> b. <i>Are you kidding me?</i>	a. <i>Omission</i> b. <i>Omission</i>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>			

F-Word+ -ing (noun)

38. <i>indiscriminate f*cking</i>	<i>Adjective + f*cking</i>	1	الجنس المنفلت	<i>Indiscriminate <b>sex</b></i>	<i>Literal translation</i>
39. <i>Unravelling the logistics of f*cking</i>	<i>Noun + f*cking</i>	1	الأساليب العملية لممارسة الجنس	<i>The practical ways of <b>having sex</b></i>	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>			

F-Word+ suffix (adjective)

40. <i>They don't have anything more f*ck-worthy</i>	<i>F*ckworthy</i>	2	ليس لديهم شيء أكثر جدارة وقيمة	<i>They don't have anything more <b>valuable</b>.</i>	<i>Paraphrasing using unrelated words</i>
41. <i>These moments of non-f*ckery</i>	<i>Non-f*ckery</i>	1	بماذا كنت أبالي؟	<i>What did I <b>care</b> about?</i>	<i>Paraphrasing using related words</i>

42. We're totally neurotic f*ckwads	F*ckwads	1	إننا عصايبون فاشلون	We're neurotic <b>losers</b> .	Translating using less expressive word
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>			
<i>Prefix+ F-Word (adjective)</i>					
43. This is a total mind-f*ck.	Mind-f*ck	1	يتعب العقل حقا	This really <b>exhausts</b> the mind.	Translating using less expressive word
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>			
<i>Adjective+ F-Word (noun)</i>					
44. To give a legitimate f*ck	Legitimate f*ck	1	ما يستحق اهتماما حقيقيا	What deserves a real <b>concern</b>	Paraphrasing using related words
45. We reserve our ever-dwindling f*cks.	Ever-dwindling f*cks	1	القبول بقدرتنا المتناقضة على الاهتمام بالأشياء	Accepting our supposed ability to <b>care</b> about things	Paraphrasing using related words
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>			
<i>F-Word (verb)</i>					
46. F*ck more.	F*ck more	1	ضاجع أكثر	<b>Make love</b> more.	Literal translation
47. Who f*cked whom?	F*cked	1	تبادل الاتهامات	<b>Exchanging accusations</b>	Paraphrasing using unrelated words
48. a. We're going to lawyer the f*ck up and go after this a**hole b. if you f*ck up	F*ck up	3	نذهب للمحامي ونلاحق هذه الحقيرة ٢. إذا أسأت	a. We will go to the lawyer and go after this despicable person. b. if you <b>misbehave</b>	a. Omission b. Paraphrasing using related words
49. Brilliant businesspeople are often f*ckups in their personal lives.	F*ckups	1	رجال الأعمال اللامعون فاشلين تماما في حياتهم الشخصية	Brilliant businesspeople are totally <b>losers</b> in their personal lives.	Paraphrasing using related words(form)
50. Taking our f*cks out on everyone	F*cks out	1	نضايق الجميع	We disturb everyone.	Paraphrasing using related words

51. They are f*cking things up.	F*ck things up	1	يفسدون الأمر كله	They <b>devastate</b> the whole thing.	Paraphrasing using related words
52. It teaches us to not f*ck around near hot stoves.	F*ck around	1	ألا نعبث بالقرب من المدفأة الحرارية	Not to <b>mess around</b> near the stove	Paraphrasing using related words
53. The way ... or Jenna Jameson f*cks	F*cks	1	بمهارة جينا جاميسون في ممارسة الجنس	Jenna Jameson's talent in <b>sex</b>	Literal translation
	<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>			
F-Word (adverb)					
54. Always working an angle, whatever the f*ck that means	Whatever the f*ck	1	كان يبدو شخصا يسعى إلى هدفه حقا	He looked like a person who really seeks his goal.	Omission
55. Come the f*ck on	Come the f*ck on	1		θ	Omission
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>			
F-Word (interjection)					
56. Ah, f*ck!	F*ck!	1	اوه، اللعنة على كل شيء	Oh, <b>damn</b> everything!	Cultural substitution
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>			
F-Word (noun)					
57. Don't question the values and f*cks given b	Values and f*cks	2	القيم التي لدى الشريك و عما يهتم به حقا	The partner's values and what he really <b>cares</b> about	Translating using related word
58. Eighty years of f*cks will rain	Years of f*cks	1	سوف تمطره بما تجمع لديها من خيبات	She will rain on him with all her accumulated <b>disappointments</b> .	Paraphrasing using unrelated words
59. a. What the f*ck is the point of the book? b. What the f*ck you're doing	What the f*ck?	3	ما الغاية من هذا الكتاب؟	a. What's the point of this book?	a. Omission
			لا تعرف ما الذي تفعله	b. You don't know what you're doing.	b. Omission
60. Where the f*ck did the talking panda came from?	Where the f*ck?	1	أتساءل فيها عن المكان الذي جاء هذا الباندا منه	I wonder where this panda came from.	Omission
	<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>			

## Discussion

The results of the strategies used to translate taboo items were similar to those of Ávila-Cabrera (2016), who examined the translation of swear and taboo words from English to Spanish. He observed several strategies, but the most frequently used were omission, literal translation, and reformulation (rephrasing the ST). Moreover, the present results also correspond to those of Vossoughi and Hosseini (2013), who examined the norms of translating taboo words from English to Persian. Their results showed that the dominant strategies were euphemism, omission, and complete translation of the taboo words, with the latter being the literal translation of the ST items.

### Translating by Paraphrasing Using Related Words

In Table 1, I grouped examples under the translating by paraphrasing using related words strategy when the items in the target language were different in form from those concepts in the original text but conveyed the same meaning.

According to the results, if the F-word comes after or before the verb *give*, *gives*, or *given*, it connotes the meaning of concern, importance, or caring about something [اهتمام، أهمية أو يهتم], as in Examples 1–6, 7–16, and 17–24. The translation of this vulgar idiom—to *give a f\*ck*—is equivalent to the meaning given by some online slang dictionaries (*The Online Slang Dictionary* and *Urban Dictionary*), which is *to care*. Moreover, the same meaning applies to this word if it comes after a possessive pronoun (their, your, and our), as in Examples 28–30. For instance, in Example 1, the expression consists of a verb and a noun in the ST, which was translated into an adjective, but both have the same meaning:

Bukowski didn't give a f\*ck (ST) = Bukowski wasn't concerned (BT)

### Omission

I found 10 examples using the omission strategy. In most of the cases in which the words were deleted, doing so did not affect the meaning of the original text because the omitted words were originally used as accidental clauses or meaningless modifiers in the ST. Similar to Baker (1992), who believed omission does no harm if the meaning expressed by a particular item is not vital to the text, Gottlieb (1992; as cited in Tuhkanen, 2017) also believed that omission is acceptable if the deleted items are supplementary. In all of the omission examples in Table 1, the deletion did not affect the meaning of the original text, yet it affected the author's attitude and feelings being conveyed. According to Krouglov (2018), taboo words are used to emphasize the writer or speaker's idea and to reveal the author's feelings and attitudes. Pratama (2016) claimed that the function of taboo words—swearing—is to convey strong feelings about something and add emotional emphasis. Thus, the omission strategy may not affect the meaning in the original text, but it takes away the author's feelings. However, the taboo word or phrase was deleted (partial omission) in some examples, and whole sentences that contained the F-word were deleted (full omission) in other instances, such as Example 37:

Problems never f\*cking go away (ST) = Problems never go away (BT)

However, in Example 55, the whole phrase was completely deleted:

Come the f\*ck on (ST) =  $\theta$  (no TT)

### Paraphrasing Using Unrelated Words

Paraphrasing using related or unrelated words enables translators to choose the proper words for the TT. Translators apply paraphrasing using unrelated words when the ST's literal meaning is presented with another concept in the TT but conveys the same propositional meaning. In all the items in which this strategy was applied, the ST does not have the same literal meaning as the TT but has the same propositional meaning in Arabic:

but f\*ck it (ST) = whatever (BT)

F\*ck that kid (ST) = Is there a stupider kid than this? (BT)

You're going to get f\*cked (ST) = You'll lose from all directions (BT)

F\*cked up values (ST) = Bad values (BT)

The world is totally f\*cked (ST) = The world is a bad place (BT)

Her values are so f\*cked (ST) = Her bad values (BT)

I'm so f\*cking pissed off (ST) = which makes me really pissed off and angry (BT)

They don't have anything more f\*ck-worthy (ST) = They don't have anything more valuable (BT)

Who f\*cked whom (ST) = Exchanging accusations (BT)

Eighty years of f\*cks will rain (ST) = She will rain on him with all her accumulated disappointments (BT)

### Literal Translation

The literal meaning of the F-word related to sex appeared only when the literal translation strategy was applied (four times). Ávila-Cabrera (2016) declared that literal translation, or word-for-word translation, entails transferring a word or words from the ST to the TT by obtaining the ST's grammar and idioms. Newmark (2004) believed that this strategy is the basic translation procedure, that it is the first step in translation, and that "literal translation is acceptable and not be avoided, if it secures referential and pragmatic equivalence to the original" (pp. 68–69).

In the four items in which the translator used this strategy, the *F*-word was translated into *sex* (noun), *having sex* (verb + noun), and *make love* (verb). As mentioned earlier, sex as a topic is taboo, especially in Arabic and Islamic societies, but the translator chose to translate these taboo words, instead of deleting or paraphrasing these items:

Indiscriminate f\*cking (ST) = Indiscriminate sex (BT)

Unravelling the logistics of f\*cking (ST) = The practical ways of having sex (BT)

F\*ck more (ST) = Make love more (BT)

The way ... or Jenna Jameson f\*cks (ST) = Jenna Jameson's talent in sex (BT)

### Translating Using Less Expressive or Neutral Words

According to Khongbumpen (2007), the strategy of translating using less expressive or neutral words is used when the TT lacks an equivalent phrase; thus, the ST is replaced by a close equivalent in the TT that is less expressive and more formal. Table 1 shows the three times when this strategy was applied, none of which has an exact meaning in Arabic:

F\*ck-wads (ST) = losers (BT)

Mindf\*ck (ST) = exhausts the mind (BT)

F\*ck it (ST) = to hell with this (BT)

### Translating using cultural substitution

When translators want their readers to understand the ST clearly, they will replace a phrase with a related expression in the target language by introducing expressions with which the recipients in the target culture are familiar (Khongbumpen, 2007). This strategy was applied twice in the corpus—the ST was translated to *damn* in both TTs. This translation may still be considered offensive, but it is acceptable and understandable in the target culture, especially in formal Arabic.

F\*ck you (ST) = Damn you (BT)

Ah, f\*ck! (ST) = Oh, damn everything (BT)

According to Almiḡrab (2020), most instances of the English F-word are substituted when translated into Arabic because Arab culture is religiously oriented, and taboo and swear words are prohibited due to Islamic teachings. Thus, such taboos are usually translated into *curse be upon you* [عليك اللعنة], or as Al-Yasin and Rabab'ah (2019) stated, it can be translated as [سحقا], which means a curse on the person to go to dreadful depths, which maintains Arab norms and the connotative function of the taboo word to express frustration.

The overall results are parallel to Debbas and Haider (2020) who found that euphemistic expression and word omission are the dominant strategies used in translating taboos into Arabic. The results are also corresponding to Almiḡrab's study (2020), that translators can adopt omission-censorship-, euphemism, substitution, and rendering taboo for taboo when translating into Arabic.

### Conclusion

Some translators face significant challenges in filtering taboo words from an ST in any culture, especially during the Internet and technology age, when most censored items—books, movies, TV shows, and so on—can be found and accessed online. Arabic translators, in particular, have a complicated role because they are “bound to a number of authoritative, religious, cultural, and ideological factors that limit their handling of foreign taboo texts” (Abbas, 2015, p. 7). Their role is to present these materials in a way that is acceptable for the culture and for all ages, unless the materials are children's books. Ratings declaring the suitable age range for each book are rare; thus, any book is accessible by anyone.

The results of this paper show that the *F*-word is used in the ST 179 times in different forms (*f\*cking*, *f\*cked*, etc.) and in different parts of speech (noun, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs). Regarding the different meanings of the *F*-word, the translation of each ST item depended on the strategy used by the translator in different contexts. The translator used six main strategies to tackle the taboo items or expressions: the most commonly used strategy was translation by paraphrasing using related words, followed by omission, paraphrasing using related words, literal translation, translation using less expressive or neutral words, and translation using cultural substitution. There was no definitive evidence as to whether the translator was adhering to the publisher's censorship guidelines or if the translator used these strategies in self-censorship. Although the translator was expertly capable of presenting the ST's functional meaning in most of the translated items, Ávila-Cabrera (2016) argued that softening or deleting the taboo terms may jeopardize their intended function in the ST.

For future studies, it would be interesting to compare the strategies and translations of the *F*-word in this study to those adopted by another translator, whether in a translated book or

a translated movie. Finally, I must clarify that I did not intend for this paper to encourage the use of taboo words but rather to examine the translator's efforts and challenges in presenting these items to the audience in an acceptable and respectful way.

## Bio

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## **The relationship between Self-efficacy, Sources of self-efficacy, and Performance of EFL Students at University of Hafr Al-Batin**

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### **Abstract**

Since Bandura theorizes that self-efficacy stems from four sources, many studies have focused on understanding the different impacts of these sources on the construction of students' self-efficacy. Similarly, the connection between self-efficacy and performance has been of interest in many investigations. Still, there is a need for further research concerning the validity of these constructs in a variety of settings. This study investigated the validity of self-efficacy and self-efficacy sources as predicting variables of EFL students' performance at Hafr Al-Batin University. Findings suggest that self-efficacy was not an efficient predictor of students' performance. Findings also reveal that Bandura's hypothetical sources did not bear a significant relationship to self-efficacy. Results are discussed in the context of the possible causes that led to the current findings.

*Keywords:* self-efficacy, mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, physiological and emotional states, culture

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## **Introduction**

The desire to understand human behavior has led to the emergence of a variety of theoretical frameworks in a multitude of disciplines. The theory of self-efficacy emerged in an attempt to interpret variances between individuals when they are faced with the same challenge. Self-efficacy or the belief in one's capability to exert the required effort to reach a specific attainment is considered an important variable in human functioning (Bandura, 1977). In academia, self-efficacy has been shown to impact students' academic performance. Self-efficacy is linked to students' scholastic achievement, as those who believe in their capability to plan and perform the required action to reach success will actually attain their goal. In contrast, students who suffer from low self-efficacy may not sustain in the face of challenges or even try to avoid difficult situations and, as a consequence, experience failure. In this regard, Artino (2012) theorized that strong self-efficacy is created with repeated success while low or weak self-efficacy is a result of frequent failures. Bandura (1994) postulated that self-efficacy stems from four sources, mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and psychological states, among which mastery experience appears to be the primary influential source in constructing individuals' self-efficacy.

Most of the work on self-efficacy and academic performance was done in western contexts (e.g., Lent, Brown & Larkin, 1986; Bouffard, 1990; Bouffard, Parent & Larivèe, 1991; Pajares & Johnson, 1994,1996; Pajares, 1996). The result of such work indicates a consensus on the existence of a relationship between these two variables. Similarly, studies that investigated self-efficacy sources and overall achievements reported a connection between them. (e.g., Joet, Usher & Bressoux, 2011; Loo & Choy, 2013).

### **Study Purpose and Importance**

Despite the rich literature about the importance of self-efficacy in academia in the West, there is a paucity of self-efficacy research in the Arab context. With regard to Saudi students, there is a lack of research on the relationship between self-efficacy and performance in English. To the best of the author's knowledge, the influence of the four sources of self-efficacy on Saudi EFL students' self-efficacy, specifically, has never been investigated before. The only study concerned with self-efficacy in English language learners is that of Alrabai (2018). Alrabai investigated the association between the self-efficacy of EFL college-level students and their performance in English. He found that participants had a low self-efficacy about their English ability, which correlated with their achievement in their end-of-year exam. Apart from that study, there is no record of any research about the connection of self-efficacy and performance. Similarly, no research yet has explored the relationship between self-efficacy sources and performance in the Saudi setting. Further research is required in order to complement past research in other contexts and to increase knowledge about the influence of self-efficacy and its sources on academic performance across various contexts.

### **Study Objectives and Research Questions**

The current study addresses the research gap about the influence of self-efficacy in the Saudi context by investigating the relationship between Saudi EFL students' self-efficacy and their performance. It aims to answer the following questions:

- RQ1: What is the most rated source (most influential source) of self-efficacy of Saudi learners of English at the University of Hafr Al-Batin?
- RQ2: Is there a relationship between students' self-efficacy and their academic achievements in English?
- RQ3: Is there a relationship between the four sources of self-efficacy and self-efficacy? Which of the four sources has the most influence on self-efficacy?
- RQ4: Is there a relationship between the four sources of self-efficacy and students' academic achievements in English?

### **Literature Review**

Bandura (1977) theorized that self-efficacy is responsible for the variances in people's responses to a certain object in a certain situation. The theory of self-efficacy inspired a number of studies intended to help better understand the link between academic performance and self-efficacy. Honicke & Broadbent, (2016) conducted a systematic review of 59 studies that investigated the relationship between self-efficacy and academic performance of college students between September 2003 and April 2015. They found that academic performance moderately correlated with self-efficacy in the reviewed studies. A meta-analysis by Robbins et al. (2004) looked at the relationship between self-efficacy, among other psychological variables such as motivation, and students' overall outcome in 109 studies. It was found that self-efficacy had higher correlation with students' outcomes than the other variables. Similar results were reported by subsequent studies (e.g., Sanchez & Nichols, 2007; Recber et al., 2018). In the Saudi context, Alyami et al. (2017) investigated the relationship between self-efficacy, stress, and academic performance of Psychology students. They found a low correlation between self-efficacy and academic performance. Alrabai (2018) researched the association between self-efficacy and performance of EFL learners. He found that learners in general had low self-efficacy, which correlated with their achievement in English.

Self-efficacy develops from certain experiences individuals encounter in their life. According to Bandura (1994), self-efficacy originates from four sources: mastery experiences (past experiences), vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological and emotional states.

Mastery, or past experience, is regarded as the primary and most influential source of self-efficacy as people recall their sense of capability and their performance in the past and compare it with similar situations in the present. Accordingly, based on their past performance, the knowledge they constructed about their capabilities nurtures their confidence in their capability to deal with similar situation in the future. This does not mean, however, that success in the past inevitably leads to desirable outcomes with regard to self-efficacy in the present and future. Bandura (1994) explains that easily gained success does not result in a strong and resilient sense of self-efficacy since that is dependent on overcoming obstacles. Surmounting difficulties, in other words, is a prerequisite for establishing self-efficacy. When individuals encounter difficulties in the future, that is, following a mastery experience, they are unlikely to be deterred by complications and are therefore usually capable of maintaining the required effort to achieve their goals. However, if individuals construct their confidence in their capabilities based on effortless achievements, they may become frustrated in situations in which success is more difficult to attain than previously experienced and, as a result, may be discouraged from exerting further effort and undertaking more challenging tasks. In brief, mastery experience is related to successful or unsuccessful experiences

a student has accumulated. These past experiences seem related to the cognitive, behavioral and self-regulatory tools learners use to overcome the different kinds of challenges without minimizing their self-efficacy (Gutiérrez & Narváez, 2017).

Sometimes, individuals do not have sufficient experience at their disposal to rely on, especially when they go through an entirely new challenge. For this reason, they look for alternative sources that may help them estimate their self-efficacy. In such situation, self-efficacy can develop from vicarious experience. Seeing others with similar capabilities and similar circumstances succeed can lead to the belief that one has what it takes to succeed as well (Bandura, 1994).

Verbal persuasion is another source of self-efficacy. Feedback on students' performance can enhance their perceived confidence about their capabilities. Bandura (1994) theorizes that sometimes people's self-efficacy stems from the statements of influential others, such as parents, relatives, teachers, or friends. In such situations, it is suggested, the opinion of others is valued more than one's own experience. Moreover, the physiological and emotional changes individuals go through when they do an activity reflect their perceived beliefs about their own capabilities.

Although mastery experience is commonly believed to be the most influential source of self-efficacy, there is some evidence that other sources can, in fact, have a greater impact on participants' self-efficacy. For instance, it has been found that social persuasion had a stronger influence on middle-school girls than mastery experience and vicarious experience, in addition to the fact that social persuasion affected the self-efficacy of females in higher education subjects such as mathematics and science (Zeldin & Pajares, 2000). Mastery experience was the main source of men's self-efficacy in the two studies that provided the data for female learners (Usher, 2009). It seems that gender is a determining factor in self-efficacy sources. The findings indicate that females may construct their self-efficacy rather by seeking confirmation from influential others than by relying on their past experiences. Other studies, however, suggest lack of connection between one or all of the sources and self-efficacy. For instance, Panagos & DuBois (1999) investigated the self-efficacy of 96 LD high school students. They reported lack of correlation between self-efficacy sources and self-efficacy. Bandura (1997) argues that the inconsistencies of results regarding the significance of the four sources of self-efficacy may be due to the fact that self-efficacy is domain-specific, or that individuals interpret the sources' meaning in different ways. Klassen (2004) believes that ethnicity may mediate the predictive power of self-efficacy sources and render them uninfluential in some settings. Other researchers (e.g., Oettingen, 1995; Usher & Pajares, 2009) argue that cultural, and contextual and social factors, may also have an impact on the strength of self-efficacy sources as main predictor of self-efficacy.

### **Method and Design**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the degree to which the four sources of self-efficacy predict self-efficacy among Saudi college EFL learners. The study also aims to find out if students' performance is linked to self-efficacy or to the main sources of self-efficacy. Four research questions guided this study:

- RQ1: What is the most influential source (the most rated source) of self-efficacy of Saudi learners of English at the University of Hafr Al-Batin?
- RQ2: Is there a relationship between self-efficacy and students' academic achievements?

- RQ3: Is there a relationship between the four sources of self-efficacy and self-efficacy? Which of the four sources has the most influence on self-efficacy?
- RQ4: Is there a relationship between the four sources of self-efficacy and students' academic achievements in English?

### **Data Source**

The study was conducted at the Department of English in the girls' College of Arts at the University of Hafr Al-Batin.<sup>7</sup> Upon enrollment in the English programme, the students study courses like linguistics, literature, and translation, and are required to submit assignments and give presentations. The modules train undergraduate students of English in a variety of skills, e.g., cognitive, interpersonal, and psychomotor skills (Alrabai, 2018). According to the programme of study, these modules were taught in the third level (the second year). It was thought that students enrolled in those courses would form a suitable data sample for the study, so all sophomore students were targeted as respondents in this study. A questionnaire was distributed to 150 sophomores in the second term of the academic year 2019. The researcher explained to the students that the goal of the research was to identify the factors necessary to the learning and teaching of English in order to facilitate the learning process for the learners and to design the best possible teaching strategies. Students were informed that their participation in the research was completely voluntary and that they could withdraw from participation if they so wish. They were also assured that their data would be treated confidentially and only be used for the purposes of the current research.

### **Research Design**

The study employed a quantitative method to determine the significance of the self-efficacy sources and to investigate any potential association between participants' self-efficacy and their academic achievement in English. Data collection was undertaken in two stages. A modified version of the sources of self-efficacy scale by Usher & Pajares (2009) was used during the first stage of the study, in order to collect information about the learners' sources of self-efficacy and the degree of their self-efficacy about their performance when they learn English. The questionnaire has been used frequently in past research on the sources of self-efficacy in mathematics, science, and French. In the current study, the statements in the questionnaire were slightly modified to be applicable to EFL learners. For example, the word English was used to substitute for French in the statements. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were .83 for mastery experience; and .60 for vicarious experience; and .80 for social persuasions; and .81 for physiological and affective states. Also, the fact that the questionnaire has been well tried and tested by previous studies (e.g., Multon et al., 1991; Usher & Pajares, 2006; Usher & Pajares, 2009; Joet, Usher & Bressoux, 2011) contributes to its reliability. Therefore, it was assumed that the repeated testing of the questionnaire and the accuracy of the data obtained by using it in past studies were sufficient proofs of its reliability and validity when measuring self-efficacy in English. The questionnaire consists of 24 items designed to elicit information on the four sources of self-efficacy: mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and physiological and emotional states. Each source was assessed with six items. The responses to the statements

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<sup>7</sup> Hafr Al-Batin is a city in northeast Saudi Arabia.

were given along a three-point Likert scale. The participants had to choose either to agree or disagree with the provided statement or to state that they were unsure.

English language self-efficacy was examined using four items asking the participants to rate their confidence in achieving a particular grade in the final exam along a scale of 100. Since Arabic was the first language of the participants, all the questionnaire statements were translated into Arabic in order to make the questionnaire easy to follow for the participants and to avoid potential misunderstanding. To check its validity, the questionnaire was verified by two native speakers of Arabic teaching linguistics at the college where the respondents study.

The second stage required information about the participants' language skills. A criterion-referenced test (CRT) that assessed participants' knowledge in linguistics was taken as a measure of their performance. At the time of the evaluation, the students had been studying linguistics for 4 months, had taken midterm exams, submitted assignments and given presentations as part of their course assessment. Participants' grades in their final exam were used as indicators for their achievement.

## **Analysis and Results**

### **Survey Questionnaire and Study Variables**

The survey questionnaire consists of the following items: 24 items for self-efficacy sources, four items for self-efficacy ratings, and 1 item for academic achievement.

Self-efficacy sources were measured with 24 3-point Likert scale items (1 = disagree, 2 = neutral, and 3 = agree) adapted from Usher & Pajares (2009). These 24 items can be used to form the following four sub-scales:

- Mastery experience (q1, q2, q3, q4, q5, q6)
- Vicarious experience (q7, q8, q9, q10, q11, q12)
- Social persuasion (q13, q14, q15, q16, q17, q18)
- Physiological state (q19, q20, q21, q22, q23, q24)

Note that q3 and q19-q24 were items that needed to be reverse-scored when computing sub-scale scores (Usher & Pajares, 2009). For each sub-scale, a composite score can be computed by adding the response scores for the associated items (after reverse-scoring the negative items).

Self-efficacy ratings were measured with four survey items:

- How confident are you that you will get a grade of D or better in Introduction to linguistics this term?
- How confident are you that you will get a grade of C or better in Introduction to linguistics this term?
- How confident are you that you will get a grade of B or better in Introduction to linguistics this term?
- How confident are you that you will get a grade of A in Introduction to linguistics this term?

The rating for each survey item ranges from 0 (not confident at all, i.e., convinced of their inability) to 100 (very confident, certain of their ability).

As mentioned above, self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their capability to perform actions necessary to produce specific achievements (Bandura, 1997). Therefore, self-efficacy rating in this study was defined as the maximum rating of the items for self-efficacy.

Academic achievement was measured by one single item regarding students' grade. Possible grade levels are: A (best), B, C and D (worst).

### Analysis Methods

For analysis, data were imported into SPSS version 23 for Windows (IBM Corp., Armonk, NY). Participants' missing responses for any of the survey items were excluded from the data analysis. Frequency tables and descriptive statistics were used to summarize the survey responses. Descriptive statistics were computed for the composite scores of the four sources of self-efficacy and the self-efficacy ratings. Normality of the data (the four sources of self-efficacy and the self-efficacy ratings) was examined using QQ plots. Regarding descriptive statistics, for normally distributed variables, means and standard deviations were presented; for non-normally distributed data, medians and interquartile (IQR) were presented.

To answer RQ1<sup>8</sup>, descriptive statistics for the composite scores of the four sources of self-efficacy were computed.

To answer RQ2<sup>9</sup>, ordinal logistic regression, i.e., the proportional odds model (Agresti, 2002), was used. The dependent variable was academic achievement (a categorical variable with four levels (A, B, C, and D)). The independent variable was self-efficacy. The Wald chi-square test was used to determine if the independent variable was significant. Odds ratios and 95% confidence intervals were computed to determine the strength of the association. The validity of the proportional odds assumption was checked using the score test (Agresti, 2002). A non-significant test result indicates that the proportional odds assumption is satisfied.

To answer RQ3<sup>10</sup>, a multiple linear regression (Chatterjee & Hadi, 2006; Montgomery & Peck, 1992) was performed to investigate the relationship between the dependent variable, self-efficacy, and the independent variables, the four sources of self-efficacy. The *t* statistic was used to test whether the effect of each independent variable was statistically significant, under the assumption that the sampled populations were normally distributed. The standardized regression coefficients were calculated to determine which source of the four had the greatest influence on self-efficacy. The three assumptions of linear regression were checked:

- Independence of observations
- Normality (the distribution of the residuals is normal)
- Homoscedasticity (the residuals have constant variance (equal variance))

Normality was examined through the quantile-quantile (Q-Q) plot and the residual plot (residuals versus the fitted values) was used to investigate if the variance was constant/equal. In addition to the model assumptions, multicollinearity (a high degree of correlation among two or more independent variables) was also investigated as it commonly occurs when several independent variables are incorporated in a regression model. Issues of multicollinearity include misleading p-values, large standard errors of the coefficients, small changes in the data producing wide swings in the parameter estimates. In this analysis, the variance inflation factor (VIF) was used to assess multicollinearity (Chatterjee & Hadi, 2006; Montgomery & Peck, 1992). A VIF value greater than 10 was a concern of multicollinearity (Chatterjee & Hadi, 2006; Montgomery & Peck, 1992).

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<sup>8</sup> RQ1: What is the most influential source of self-efficacy of Saudi learners of English at the University of Hafr Al-Batin?

<sup>9</sup> RQ2: Is there a relationship between self-efficacy and students' academic achievements?

<sup>10</sup> RQ3: Is there a relationship between the four sources of self-efficacy and self-efficacy? Which of the four sources has the most influence on self-efficacy?

To answer RQ4<sup>11</sup>, ordinal logistic regression, i.e., the proportional odds model (Agresti, 2002) was used again. As with RQ2, the dependent variable was academic achievement (a categorical variable with four levels (A, B, C, and D)). In this case, the independent variables were the four sources of self-efficacy. The analysis procedure used was similar to that of RQ2, e.g. The Wald chi-square test. For any of the tests, a p-value less than 0.05 indicates significance.

### **Analysis Results**

Although the questionnaire was distributed to all sophomore students, a total number of 150 students, only 89 participants took part in the survey study. All participants answered the 24 survey items for source of self-efficacy. Of the 89 participants of the study, 13 (14.6%) answered all four questions concerning self-efficacy ratings, two answered three of them, while 69 (77.5%) answered one question, and 5 (5.6%) did not answer any of the self-efficacy ratings survey questions at all. Of the 89 participants of the study, only one did not answer the single survey item regarding the students' grade. Only participants with complete data were included in the data analysis. This resulted in a final sample size of 83. Table 1 shows a summary of the survey responses for the 24 items for self-efficacy sources.

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<sup>11</sup> RQ4: Is there a relationship between the four sources of self-efficacy and students' academic achievements?

**Table 1***Summary of survey responses for the 24 items for self-efficacy sources*

Qs	1 = Disagree	2 = Neutral	3 = Agree	Mean (SD)
Q1	3 (3.6)	33 (39.8)	47 (56.6)	2.53 (0.57)
Q2	3 (3.6)	49 (59.0)	31 (37.3)	2.34 (0.55)
Q3*	56 (67.5)	14 (16.9)	13 (15.7)	1.48 (0.75)
Q4	7 (8.4)	22 (26.5)	54 (65.1)	2.57 (0.65)
Q5	3 (3.6)	22 (26.5)	58 (69.9)	2.66 (0.55)
Q6	23 (27.7)	39 (47.0)	21 (25.3)	1.98 (0.73)
Q7	2 (2.4)	1 (1.2)	80 (96.4)	2.94 (0.33)
Q8	4 (4.8)	14 (16.9)	65 (78.3)	2.73 (0.54)
Q9	5 (6.0)	11 (13.3)	67 (80.7)	2.75 (0.56)
Q10	6 (7.2)	4 (4.8)	73 (88.0)	2.81 (0.55)
Q11	7 (8.4)	48 (57.8)	28 (33.7)	2.25 (0.60)
Q12	1 (1.2)	17 (20.5)	65 (78.3)	2.77 (0.45)
Q13	13 (15.7)	28 (33.7)	42 (50.6)	2.35 (0.74)
Q14	20 (24.1)	30 (36.1)	33 (39.8)	2.16 (0.79)
Q15	8 (9.6)	13 (15.7)	62 (74.7)	2.65 (0.65)
Q16	8 (9.6)	39 (47.0)	36 (43.4)	2.34 (0.65)
Q17	13 (15.7)	32 (38.6)	38 (45.8)	2.30 (0.73)
Q18	15 (18.1)	25 (30.1)	43 (51.8)	2.34 (0.77)
Q19*	47 (56.6)	16 (19.3)	20 (24.1)	1.67 (0.84)
Q20*	32 (38.6)	23 (27.7)	28 (33.7)	1.95 (0.85)
Q21*	35 (42.2)	14 (16.9)	34 (41.0)	1.99 (0.92)
Q22*	39 (47.0)	20 (24.1)	24 (28.9)	1.82 (0.86)
Q23*	58 (69.9)	14 (16.9)	11 (13.3)	1.43 (0.72)
Q24*	47 (56.6)	8 (9.6)	28 (33.7)	1.77 (0.93)

*Note.* \* Indicates items that needed to be reverse scored when computing sub-scale scores

Table 2 summarizes students' grades and self-efficacy ratings. Over half of the students (53.0%) had grade D. The majority of the students (81.9%) had a self-efficacy rating equal to or greater than 60, indicating that students in general had a moderately high level of self-efficacy.

**Table 2***Grades and self-efficacy ratings*

		N (%)
Grade	A	12 (14.5)
	B	6 (7.2)
	C	21 (25.3)
	D	44 (53.0)
Self-efficacy rating	30	1 (1.2)
	40	1 (1.2)
	50	13 (15.7)
	60	13 (15.7)
	70	13 (15.7)
	80	17 (20.5)
	90	19 (22.9)
	100	6 (7.2)

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics of the four sources of self-efficacy (mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and physiological state) and of the self-efficacy ratings. According to the results of the QQ plots (Figures 1-5 in the appendices), the four sources of self-efficacy were not normally distributed as the data points in the QQ plots seem to deviate from the 45-degree line. However, self-efficacy ratings seem to be normally distributed, as the data points in the QQ plots fell close to the 45-degree line. Consequently, for the four sources of self-efficacy, median and IQR should be addressed, while for the self-efficacy ratings, mean and standard deviation should be mentioned.

The median scores for the four sources of self-efficacy ranged from 14 to 17 (possible range: 6-18), indicating that students reported high levels regarding each of the self-efficacy sources (i.e., good mastery experience, good vicarious experience, good social persuasion, and good physiological state). The mean self-efficacy rating was 73.25 (SD = 16.68), which suggests that students in general had moderately high levels of self-efficacy.

**Table 3***Descriptive statistics*

Self-efficacy source	Mean	SD	Median	IQR
Mastery experience	14.59	1.98	15	3
Vicarious experience	16.25	1.42	17	1
Social persuasion	14.13	2.86	15	4
Physiological state	13.36	3.77	14	6
Self-efficacy rating	73.25	16.68	80	30

### ***Analysis Results for RQ1***

RQ1 asked: What is the most influential source (the most rated source) of self-efficacy of Saudi learners of English at the University of Hafr Al-Batin?

The median scores for the four sources of self-efficacy were 14 (physiological state), 15 (mastery experience), 15 (social persuasion), and 17 (vicarious experience) (Table 3), indicating that students reported high levels concerning each of the self-efficacy sources. Vicarious experience was the most rated source; it had the highest median score.

### ***Analysis Results for RQ2***

RQ2 asked: Is there a relationship between self-efficacy and students' academic achievements? To answer RQ2, ordinal logistic regression was used. The results are presented in Table 4. There was no statistically significant relationship between academic achievement and self-efficacy ( $\chi^2(1) = 1.087$ ,  $p = 0.297$ ). The validity of the proportional odds assumption for the ordinal logistic regression was checked using the score test, the results of which were not significant ( $\chi^2(2) = 3.915$ ,  $p = 0.141$ ). It can therefore be concluded that it was appropriate to answer RQ2 using ordinal logistic regression (Table 5 in the appendices).

**Table 4**

*Results of Logistic Regression – Parameter Estimates and Odds Ratios*

Parameter		B	SE	Hypothesis Test			Exp(B)	95% CI for OR	
				Wald	df	p		Lower	Upper
Threshold	Grade = A	- 2.746	0.9875	7.733	1	0.005	0.064	0.009	0.445
	Grade = B	- 2.246	0.9673	5.389	1	0.020	0.106	0.016	0.705
	Grade = C	- 1.076	0.9470	1.291	1	0.256	0.341	0.053	2.182
Self-efficacy		- 0.013	0.0126	1.087	1	0.297	0.987	0.963	1.012

*Note.* The dependent variable “grade” was measured with a 4-point scale (A (best), B, C, D (worst)).

### ***Analysis Results for RQ3***

RQ3 asked: Is there a relationship between the four sources of self-efficacy and self-efficacy? Which source of the four sources has the most influence on self-efficacy?

To answer RQ3, a multiple linear regression was performed to investigate the relationship between the dependent variable, self-efficacy, and the independent variables, the 4 sources of self-efficacy. The regression results are  $R^2 = 0.086$  (Table 6), indicating that the regression model

explained 8.6% of the variability in the dependent variable, self-efficacy. According to the regression results, there was no statistically significant relationship between self-efficacy and the four sources of self-efficacy, including mastery experience ( $t(78) = 1.550, p = 0.125$ ), vicarious experience ( $t(78) = -1.649, p = 0.103$ ), social persuasion ( $t(78) = 0.801, p = 0.425$ ), and physiological state ( $t(78) = 0.351, p = 0.726$ ).

**Table 6**

*Results of multiple linear regression*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p	95% CI for B		VIF
	B	SE	Beta			Lower	Upper	
(Constant)	74.093	23.073		3.211	0.002	28.158		
Mastery experience	1.624	1.048	0.193	1.550	0.125	-0.462	1.321	1.321
Vicarious experience	-2.158	1.308	-0.184	-1.649	0.103	-4.762	1.060	1.060
Social persuasion	0.572	0.713	0.098	0.801	0.425	-0.848	1.277	1.277
Physiological state	0.184	0.525	0.042	0.351	0.726	-0.861	1.200	1.200

***Analysis Result for RQ4***

RQ4 asked: Is there a relationship between the four sources of self-efficacy and students' academic achievements?

To answer RQ4, ordinal logistic regression was used. The results are presented in Table 7. There was no statistically significant relationship between academic achievement and three out of the four sources of self-efficacy, including mastery experience ( $\chi^2(1) = 1.390, p = 0.238$ ), vicarious experience ( $\chi^2(1) = 3.677, p = 0.055$ ), and social persuasion ( $\chi^2(1) = 1.442, p = 0.230$ ). However, there was a statistically significant relationship between academic achievement and physiological state ( $\chi^2(1) = 6.256, p = 0.012$ ). In particular, students with a better physiological state are, statistically, significantly more likely to have better academic achievements than students with a worse physiological state (OR = 1.180, 95% CI = (1.036, 1.344)).

The validity of the proportional odds assumption for the ordinal logistic regression was checked using the score test (Table 8 in the appendices). The proportional odds assumption was satisfied as the score test was not significant ( $\chi^2(8) = 11.385, p = 0.181$ ): it was appropriate to answer RQ4 using ordinal logistic regression.

**Table 7***Results of Logistic Regression – Parameter Estimates and Odds Ratios*

Parameter		B	SE	Hypothesis Test			Exp(B)	95% CI for OR	
				Wald	df	p		Lower	Upper
Threshold	Grade = A	1.897	2.9570	0.412	1	0.521	6.667	0.020	2192.377
	Grade = B	2.442	2.9658	0.678	1	0.410	11.494	0.034	3845.687
	Grade = C	3.736	2.9793	1.573	1	0.210	41.946	0.122	14409.298
Mastery experience		-0.158	0.1337	1.390	1	0.238	0.854	0.657	1.110
Vicarious experience		0.336	0.1751	3.677	1	0.055	1.399	0.993	1.972
Social persuasion		-0.110	0.0915	1.442	1	0.230	0.896	0.749	1.072
Physiological state		0.166	0.0662	6.256	1	0.012	1.180	1.036	1.344

*Note.* The dependent variable “grade” was measured with 4-point scale (A (best), B, C, D (worst)).

### Discussion

The main objective of this study was to investigate the strength of the hypothetical self-efficacy sources in developing the self-efficacy of sophomore EFL Saudi students, and to determine the relationship between self-efficacy and academic achievement. The results of the study suggest that other factors may contribute to the construction of self-efficacy and that self-efficacy is not, as it appears to be the case elsewhere, a significantly predictive variable for academic performance in some EFL educational settings in Saudi Arabia.

### Sources of Self-efficacy

Bandura hypothesizes that self-efficacy stems from four sources: mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and physiological and emotional states. One of the purposes of this study was to find out which source would be the most rated among the four sources (Research Question1). Vicarious experience appears to be the highest rated source by the participants; it had the highest median score. This suggests that participants value witnessing the success of similar others and consider them as models against which they compare their own capabilities. In this regard, Blumenthal (2014:10) states that ‘successful models have the greatest impact on observers when the observers believe the model to be similar to themselves in terms of ability.’ In the current context, the fact that participants were in their late adolescence and early adulthood may account for their favoring of vicarious experience. It is common that young adults adopt their peers’ view about learning more than other sources like family and teachers, and evaluate their success based on those views. Such findings need to be taken into consideration by teachers and language instructors when designing classroom activities.

Another purpose of researching the sources of self-efficacy in the current study, was to determine which source has the most effect on constructing self-efficacy (Research Question 3). Unlike past research (e.g., Pajares et al., 1999; Usher, 2009), none of the four hypothetical sources of self-efficacy had a significant relationship with self-efficacy. This means that the reported self-efficacy of the participants in this study must originate from different sources than the ones Bandura suggested. The current result is in line with the results of Panagos & DuBois (1999).

In cases in which the main sources bear no connection to self-efficacy, contextual and social factors, Usher & Pajares (2009) argue, could influence the relationship between the sources of self-efficacy and self-efficacy. Accordingly, it may be proposed that the four sources are not constant constructors of self-efficacy across different cultures. Culture could affect the information the students use in order to develop their self-efficacy (Oettingen, 1995) due to different educational settings and learning experiences. In other words, information that learners use as sources to self-efficacy in western cultures is not always available to learners in Saudi cultures. English in Saudi Arabia is taught as a foreign language, which means the application of English is limited, particularly in a city like Hafr Al-Batin. This means that classrooms are the only place where the students can practice the target language. In this context, classroom activities may not enhance and promote the accurate development of self-efficacy. Indeed, limited usage may be an obstacle to obtaining some of the information that, in other cultures, can be used as sources to construct self-efficacy. For example, in past research, mastery experience proved to be the most influential source in building learner's self-efficacy (e.g., Usher, 2009). In the current study, mastery experience was not connected to the establishment of learners' self-efficacy. It is possible that students may not have participated in activities designed to promote their mastery experience. Importantly, most Saudi undergraduates fail to develop proficiency in English (Alaraj, 2016). Failure in mastering a language hinders learners to evaluate their capability to use that language effectively, since they do not have sufficient amount of successful experiences at their disposal to support the evaluation process.

In a similar fashion, information related to vicarious experience is not directly accessible to the participants as there is very limited opportunity to learn about their classmates' achievements and, consequently, to use this information as a gauge of their own capability. EFL classroom practices in Saudi Arabian universities rarely promote collaboration and cooperation. Lack of cooperative learning strategies, Alarbia (2018) argues, makes it impossible for learners to observe others' successful leaning experiences and benefit from them.

The different pattern of the participants' self-efficacy is not unusual. It is well documented in the literature that self-efficacy varies across cultures. It appears that the participants in the current study developed their self-efficacy based on other factors than the sources postulated by Bandura. Accordingly, these factors proved a hindrance to an accurate evaluation of self-efficacy. If this is assumed to have been the case, we need a clear understanding of how the self-efficacy of these students developed.

The descriptive analysis showed that the mean of mastery experience was the highest among the sources in relation to self-efficacy, which suggests that participants rely on their past performance when they estimate their capabilities in performing similar tasks. Despite this interesting finding, neither mastery experience nor any other of the four sources appears to have a relationship with self-efficacy. Therefore, as discussed above, other factors may have contributed to the development of self-efficacy in the context of the current study.

## **Self-efficacy and Academic Performance**

One of the objectives of this study is to investigate the relationship between self-efficacy and academic performance (Research Question 2). The participants' self-efficacy was not associated with their performance. This result comes in contrast to past studies (e.g., Alrabai, 2018; Alyami et al., 2017; Sanchez & Nichols, 2007; Reber et al., 2018). This suggests that the students misestimated their abilities and anticipated higher scores than they had already achieved. In other words, they provided inaccurate ratings of their self-efficacy.

Many factors may contribute to the development of an inaccurate sense of one's own capabilities, for instance, the type of performance. The type of activity the students undertook could have nullified the predictive power of self-efficacy. It is possible that participants misunderstood the instructions or felt complacent about their past performance in the course and, therefore, did not feel the need to put much effort into studying and preparation.

Another possible reason, although exclusive to the context of this study, is the programme design. The English department at UHB offers two specializations: education and arts. The education branch follows an older plan and stakeholders decided to discontinue it and transfer all new admissions to the arts. The participants in this study represent the final group of students in the education branch at the department. Being aware of this fact, they may have thought that the teaching staff would be more lenient and award them the passing grades to accelerate the branch shutdown.

Unfortunately, if the students truly misjudged their abilities, they might feel confident about improving their current level. It has been documented that overconfidence in self-efficacy may have negative consequences. Kruger & Dunning (1999:1121) explain that individuals may suffer a dual burden because “[n]ot only do these people reach erroneous conclusions and make unfortunate choices, but their incompetence robs them of the metacognitive ability to realize it” Sometimes, when students are overconfident about their achievements, they are more prone to relaxation and, consequently, may devote less time and effort to their studies. It is moreover possible that participants did not feel the need to study harder as long as they were satisfied with their performance. Luckily, inaccurate self-efficacy is unlikely to persist. Bandura (1994) argues that unrealistic self-efficacy will quickly be disconfirmed once the individual is disappointed with the consequences of his or her performance. Only when students become aware of the discrepancy between their confidence and their inadequate results, do they realize their actual capabilities, and only then, may they adapt their constructed self-efficacy. Klassen & Klassen (2018) postulate that overestimated self-efficacy may reveal that participants are insecure about their capabilities and, as a defensive strategy, therefore, rate their capabilities higher than they actually are in order to appear more capable.

Researchers believe there is a relationship between self-efficacy at odds with students' performance and their academic level. In this regard, Bastola (2016) and Kruger & Dunning (1999) hypothesize that overestimation of ability is a feature of low-performing students. Talsma et al., (2019) suggest that 'weaker students' sense of efficacy may exceed their capacity to perform because they are unaware of where they are lacking – in this case, “unable and unaware”(p.20 ) To control this, researchers (Bastola, 2016, and Kruger & Dunning, 1999) suggest that self-assessment be carried out directly after participants' assessments. This, they believe, would allow students to access usable knowledge— students' knowledge— and knowledge of their performance.

Regarding performance and the four sources (Research Question 4), only physiological and emotional states had a significant relationship with the participants' performance. This finding suggests that students with better emotional and physiological states achieve better results than those who experience negative feelings, such as apprehension. This association indicates that, in the current EFL context, situational variables such as apprehension may have more influence on performance than gradually developed constructs, such as one's perceived beliefs about one's capabilities.

Since language learning is a stressful process, classrooms need to account for the influence of apprehension in order to support learners during this process. In Saudi EFL classrooms, there is still a lack of the appropriate approaches to deal with the physiological states the learners may experience (Alrabai 2018). Simple techniques such as appraisal and encouragement can help the students feel at ease in the classroom. However, careful consideration needs to be applied to these techniques. For example, if appraisals are utilized, instructors need to be careful not to use them excessively, because exaggerated appraisal could lead to false self-perception and to overestimated self-efficacy on the part of the students. Other implementations, such as educational support center can provide academic consultations and assistance to the students, which may consequently minimize the negative influence of these variables on the learning process.

### **Conclusion, Limitations, and Implication**

This study examined the relationship between self-efficacy and performance of Saudi EFL learners. Self-efficacy seems to be a significant variable in determining academic performance in a variety of contexts. However, this was not evident in the current context. In the present study, self-efficacy bore no connection to the subsequent performance. Likewise, sources of self-efficacy did not actually influence self-efficacy. As self-efficacy appears not to stem from the well-known four sources, it is possible that cultural contexts are significant factors in self-efficacy construction. Longitudinal research may help in investigating the impact of culture on the information the students select when they develop their self-efficacy. The influence of cultures was largely ignored in past research about self-motivation and evaluation. Peterson (2018:22) declared that “[t]here is still much that is unanswered in regard to cultural differences and self-assessment (p.22)”. Researching the probable causes from a cultural perspective could lead to interesting findings regarding the relation between motivational variables and cultures. As a construct that is basically developed in Western societies, this particular finding may be interesting to other researchers as it confirms that the predictive power of self-efficacy is not stable, and it varies according to the different socio-cultural settings and to the type of the performance. It has been suggested that ‘self-efficacy is effective but depends on the setting in which participants perform the activity in question’ (Salanova et al., 2012). The setting of this research could be considered as one of the settings where overconfidence may manifest due to specific circumstances (e.g., acceleration of education stream closure).

In general, it is relatively important to understand the calibration of self-efficacy. Although the research proposes different causes of miscalibration such as the dual burden theory and the defensive strategies, investigating the impact of context on mis-calibrated self-efficacy from different socio-cultural settings may offer different explanations to the ones exist.

Based on the results of this study, teachers should be warned not to unquestionably take self-efficacy as an indicator of students' awareness of their capabilities and of learning taking

place smoothly. The present finding can offer an explanation to the cases when students appear at ease until the end of the term and then rush to the course teacher complaining about their unexpected final results. In such cases, focusing on enhancing self-efficacy for the sake of improving the performance of the students will not always lead to the desired achievement. The aim rather should be on helping students construct a realistic sense of self-efficacy and recognize their strengths and weakness.

Teachers should assist the students to construct realistic self-efficacy by setting achievable goals at first. By putting attainable goals, learners are given the opportunity to regulate their learning and direct their effort towards a tangible achievement. Students can then gradually be introduced to harder tasks. Prompt feedback is essential in guiding the construction of learners' self-efficacy. It is necessary that teachers provide feedback after each task to control any unfavorable beliefs the students may develop regarding their capabilities. By so doing, students would be aware of their capabilities and, consequently, may be more inclined to exert effort to improve their weakness. If left without intervention, inaccurate or mis-calibrated self-efficacy may develop, and as a result, it could lead to negative outcomes. Overconfident students may underestimate the required effort to succeed in a task (Boekaerts & Rozendaal, 2010), which could lead to failure in course completion.

In sum, the present study gives an example of self-assessment in the Saudi culture. However, the small sample size needs to be taken into consideration; more research on the influence of culture and educational programmes on self-efficacy is required in this context to reach a definite conclusion. Similarly, the present study limitedly focused on female undergraduates from one university. Further research may include data from both male and female participants at different universities in Saudi Arabia to help understand the perception of self-efficacy among Saudi students and to explore its relation to performance in a larger context. The questionnaire used in this study contributes to the limitation of its findings. Although self-report tools are practical in collecting data, the validity of the given information cannot always be guaranteed. Some participants may not respond to questionnaires with positive attitudes; thus, they may not express their belief sincerely and honestly. As a result, some of the collected data may reflect intentionally false beliefs and attitudes. Other data collection methods such as interviews may add more validity to the results.

## **Bio**

Maram Alluhaybi received her PhD in linguistics from the University of St Andrews, UK, and is currently an assistant professor of linguistics at the University of Hafr Al-Batin. Her research interests include linguistics, EFL learning, sociolinguistics, language and communication, discourse analysis.

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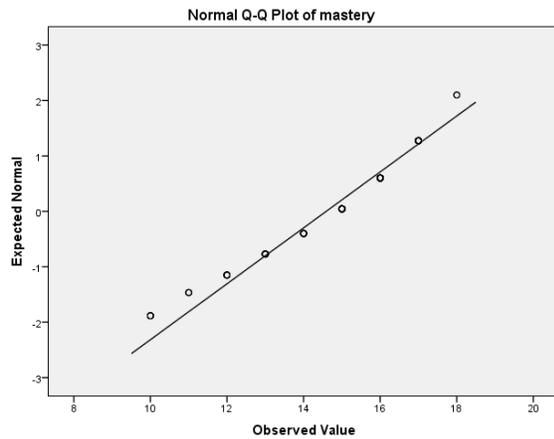
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## Appendices

The QQ plots of self-efficacy sources and self-efficacy rating

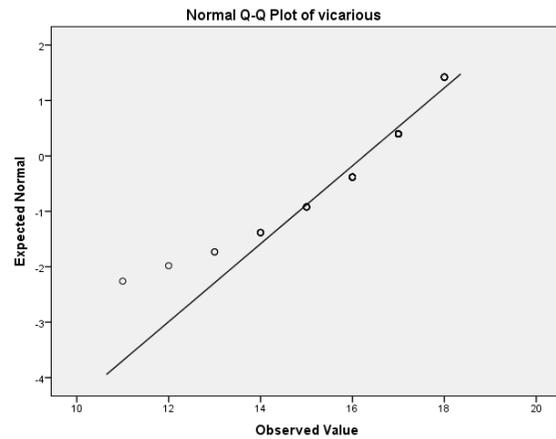
**Figure 1**

*QQ plot of mastery experience*



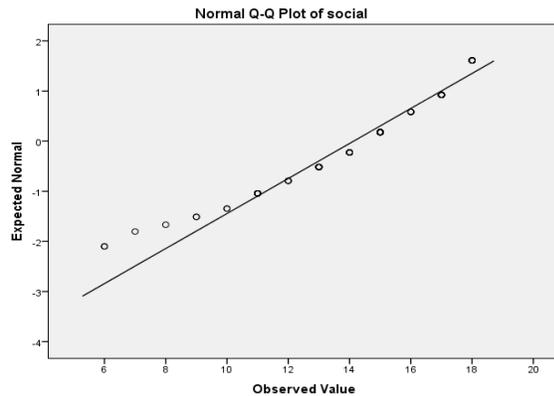
**Figure 2**

*QQ plot of vicarious experience*



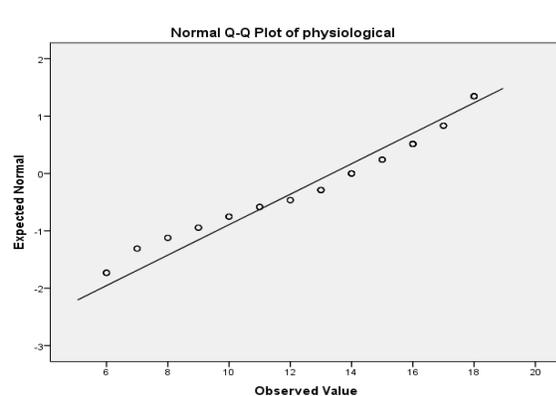
**Figure 3**

*QQ plot of social persuasion*

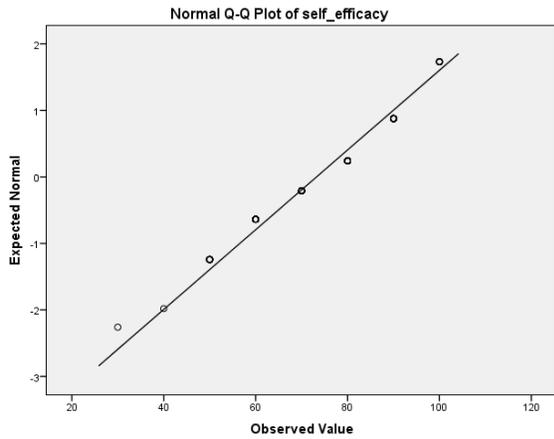


**Figure 4**

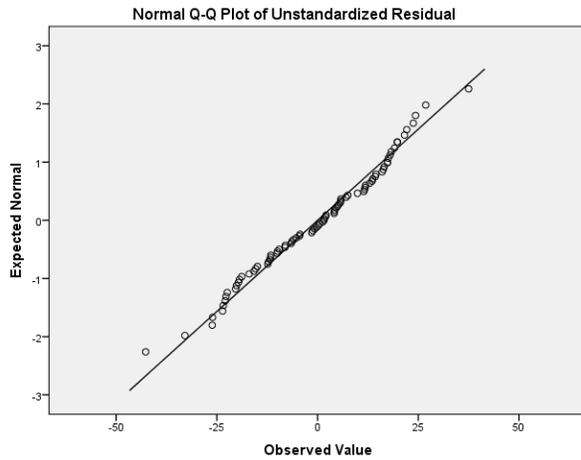
*QQ plot of physiological state*



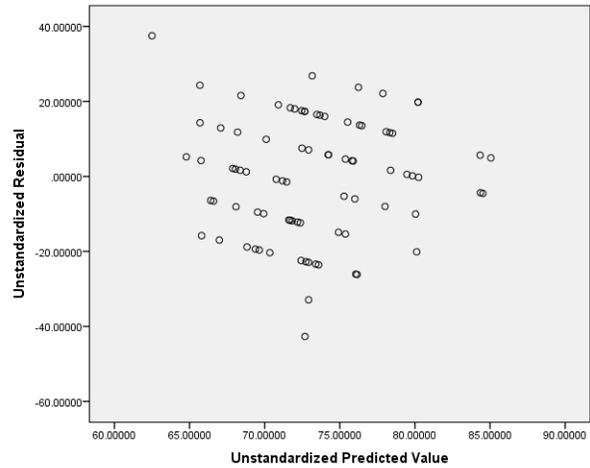
**Figure 5**  
*QQ plot of self-efficacy rating*



**Figure 6**  
*QQ plot of regression residuals.*



**Figure 7**  
*Residual plot*



**Table 5**  
*Test of parallel lines*

Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	p
Null Hypothesis	52.881			
General	48.966	3.915	2	0.141

**Table 8***Test of parallel lines (RQ4)*

Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	p
Null Hypothesis	176.062			
General	164.676	11.385	8	0.181