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Exploring the Effects of Incorporated Personal Response System (PRS) on Iranian Learners' Motivation and Participation

Samad Oliaei [1], Mostafa Zamanian [2*], Samad Mirza Suzani[3], ShahramAfraz [4]
[1] PhD Candidate, Department of English Language, Qeshm Branch, Islamic Azad University, Qeshm, Iran
[2] Assistant Professor of TEFL, Department of English Language, Shiraz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shiraz, Iran
[3] Assistant Professor of TEFL, Department of English, Marvdasht Branch, Islamic Azad University, Marvdasht, Iran
[4] Assistant Professor of TEFL, Department of English Language, Qeshm Branch, Islamic Azad University, Qeshm, Iran

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Abstract
This study aimed at investigating the effect of Personal Response System (PRS) on Iranian EFL learners' motivation and participation. A mixed-methods design was selected to investigate this matter. Participants of this study included 60 Iranian (eighth grade students studying at Bahonar secondary school, Kazeroon in Fars, Iran) and were recruited based on convenience sampling in the form of two intact classes. The researchers implemented the following instruments for the purpose of data collection: Oxford Placement Test (OPT), Motivation Questionnaire, Observation Checklist, and PRS. Both groups of participants took part in 12 English language sessions (each session lasted about 90 minutes) in their high school once a week. The only difference between the two groups was that during the class sessions, the experimental group benefited from PRS. However, in the other group, no use of PRS was made. Data analysis was conducted through descriptive statistics, independent samples t-test and qualitative content analysis of the observed data. The results showed that PRS had a statistically significant effect on the motivation of Iranian EFL learners. Moreover, it was indicated that PRS significantly impacted Iranian EFL learners' participation. Accordingly, EFL teachers are recommended to use this tool in an attempt to increase EFL learners' motivation and participation.

Keywords: Motivation, Participation, Personal Response System (PRS), Technology

INTRODUCTION

Using of technology in language learning and teaching began in early 1970s and since then, it has found its way into the field rapidly (Elyasi & Pourkalhor, 2014). Agca and Ozdemir (2012) believed that technology makes foreign language materials easy to access and to use. It also makes language learning more meaningful through personal engagement. Technological developments in ubiquitous computing and wireless communi-

*Corresponding Author's Email: mustafazamanian@yahoo.com

cation together with the adoption of mobile multimedia devices and applications have been converted into huge opportunities for English as a foreign language (Rodríguez-Arancón & Calle, 2013). Technology can be used in different forms in different fields of studies/professions. As in other fields, the use of technology has become increasingly widespread in education but selecting the most proper technology tools is controversial because of such a variety of hardware and applications. An important issue in selecting technology tools is that the task of acquiring a second language should not be made more difficult by using unnecessary and complicated tools. Many research studies have been conducted on the use of technology in the instruction of English language learners (Dooley, 2009; Sahin, 2008). Technology skills are identified as critical for professional success in the 21st century, and English language learners expressed satisfaction about these skills .This may be especially important in the case of English language learners because development of their own technology knowledge may help them provide direction to their future children in an increasingly technological world and help students feel comfortable and less inhibited when speaking aloud in their second language.

Gibson (2008) asserted that simplicity of directed guidelines, active learning opportunities, and joint learning settings may help achieve a balance between English language acquisition and the development of relevant 21st century skills. In addition, classroom activities that are repetitive and restricted may help the creation of these kinds of learning opportunities, especially in technology skills classes taught in English.

One such technological tool that can be used for student responses and to provide controlled activities is the personal response system (PRS). It is suggested that the inherent features of response system technology is well suited for the instruction of English language learners. Stuart, Brown and Draper (2004) argued that the PRS gets students' minds to work and influences their learning. Its engagement of students is a pioneer to student-directed and improved learning because when the teacher engages students in the classroom, their level of active construction of knowledge increases (Kay, LeSage, Knaack, 2010). Consolidating the debate on the use of PRS in enhancing learning, Havill (2007) argued that the use of PRS for teaching and learning gives students more time to think and construct personal responses because there is always a gap between the questioning time and the time learners respond to questions. Apart from the fact that PRS helps students' learning, Simpson and Oliver (2006) report that students are also able to track their progress in the class as teaching and learning progresses. Advantages associated with the use of response systems include anonymity, simultaneous active involvement of all students, immediate feedback for the teacher and students, and reduced anxiety for students (Patry, 2009; Trees & Jackson, 2007). Other possible advantages of using response systems that have been explored include heightened levels of learner engagement and motivation, improved academic performance and understanding of content, learner empowerment by enabling all participants to have a voice in discussions, and higher levels of satisfaction with courses by students and teachers .Application of PRS allows students enough time and patience to complete tasks and assignments and keep them reluctant computer users engaged as well(Coryell & Chlup, 2007).

Moreover, it is believed that language learning is a hard task and requires much time and effort. One step that can be taken in making this task easy is the enhancement of learner participation. Participation of learners is really fundamental, both in spoken and written form (Long, 1996). Research on learner participation is conducted within the framework of the interaction hypothesis, which states that conversational interaction "facilitates language acquisition because it connects input (what learners hear and read); internal capacities particularly selective attention; and output (what learners produce) in productive ways (Long, 1996).Participation tasks may be the easiest way to facilitate a learner's focus. They

may contain group work, teacher talk, role plays, etc. The communicative language teaching theory reveals that communication and interaction are the purpose of language learning (Richard & Rodgers, 1986). Previous studies on communicative language teaching (e.g. Nunan, 1993) show that participation facilitates the learning of language function as well as of target language form.

Furthermore, learners' affective factors play an increasingly significant role in their learning English as a foreign language (EFL). Brown (2000, p. 26) posited that "the affective domain is emotional side of human behavior and it may be juxtaposed to cognitive side". Krashen (1982) argued that affective filter is a kind of psychological obstacle that prevents language learners from absorbing available comprehensible input completely. Krashen believed affective factors function as a filter that reduces the amount of language input the learner is able to understand. Affective factors include certain emotions such as motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety, etc. Motivation is considered to be one of the most important factors, which affects the learners' input and intake. Gardner (1985) defines motivation as a combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitudes toward learning the language. Williams and Burden (1997) believed that the best lesson in world does not work if students are not motivated. This means that learning cannot take place in the absence of motivation.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Although learners' ability to use English properly and completely in communication is the main purpose of English language classes (Davis & Pearse, 2000). Learners' participation produces anxiety in the learners. Students begin to study English from junior high school to the end of pre-university courses in Iran educational system. They study English for seven years in formal education. In addition, most learners who are able to afford, register in English language institutes for more practice. Apparently these huge amounts of time or budget have not been effective and most Iranian learners experience different challenges. The problem is more serious in oral skills (Dolati & Seliman, 2010).Indeed, what adds to the importance of speaking and participation of learners in English classes is the necessity of English communication in today's globalized world. Globalization has turned communication in English language into an inevitable element in today's life. In the so-called global village, individuals should learn to enhance their communication abilities within the socio-cultural environment, better interact in a global setting, and find new solutions for their communication problems. However, in spite of significance and inevitability of speaking skill, it is seen that the majority of the students are afraid of speaking. They are anxious when they were required to speak. It often happened, for example, that the researcher, as an English language teacher, asked someone to volunteer to speak but nobody raised their hands, nobody; however, it is true for almost everybody to first reach the proficiency level before they love speaking.

What was said describes a situation that many second language (L2) teachers confront in their classes: pupils who do not attend classes, who do not take part, who are bored, and who are scared of speaking in the L2; in summary, as most teachers say, students are not motivated. As said by many teachers, it seems that the main problem behind the scenario is that mostly students are not motivated. "Unfortunately, we see increasingly unmotivated students in our classes."

The other side of the problem is that, in spite of the proved potentials of technology in education, it can be seen that in the Iranian educational system, using technological tools is not common in the academic settings including universities, schools, etc. In other words, having a glance at Iranian educational system shows that still traditional teaching methods and techniques are prevalent in many educational settings and just recently some forms of technological methods including Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) has come to be applied in some educa-

tional environments. But the use of many tools including PRS is not so popular in Iranian educational systems. Thus, generally, not much research has been conducted in this regard. Patry (2009) confirmed that "although much research has been done with audience response systems, it tends to be focused on its use in specific fields such as science, and more must be done in other settings to determine its educational value" (p. 2).

Particularly, the researcher found that while technology and language learning have been touched by some researchers in different studies(19-22), so far, no Iranian study has touched the effect of PRS on Iranian EFL learners' motivation and participation. This is the gap this study aimed to fill. To fulfill the purpose of the present study, the following research questions were addressed:

1. How does the use of PRS affect learners' motivation in comparison with the use of the traditional lecture method?
2. How does the use of PRS affect learners' participation in comparison with the use of the traditional lecture method?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The last decade of the 20th century has been characterized with the development of technology in human life. The role of new technologies in changing education and improving learning and teaching in education cannot be ignored. Today, some universities and institutes use various technologies to apply virtual and distance education. Appearance of new technologies has an enormous effect on all levels of human life. Moreover, education also has been affected by these technologies. The belief is that technology can motivate students to write and do research and also read other studies, give students a platform to explore and analyze the various internet materials they gain both independently out of the class and in the classroom (Orlova, 2003).Applications of technologies is considered as a shift of paradigms through which learners learn "How to learn" instead of "learning certain subjects and materials" and using them in education makes achieving this aim easily by providing students to write and publish their ideas, read other experts writings, create a cooperative and collaborative environments (Du & Wagner, 2005).

The impact of Personal Response System (PRS) on students' attendance rate in a class was studied in a trial test of this technology by Thornton (2011) on 84 students and 2 tutors of Worcester University. The majority of the students agreed that the use of the technology significantly and positively affected their attendance in the class, but the tutors had mixed opinions about the impact of PRS on students' attendance. Since students find it difficult to concentrate beyond 20 minutes in the class, using PRS is sometimes fun and a way of bringing liveliness to the classroom environment. The results of the study by Lymn and Mostyn (2010) at Nottingham University showed that all 33 participants surveyed agreed that they enjoyed the use of PRS for teaching and learning. Meedzan and Fisher (2009) investigated 29 undergraduate nurses' satisfaction with the use of PRS in a health assessment course. The results showed that most of the students (89%) concur that PRS is an excellent tool for gauging learners' level of understanding of concepts. In the study by Thoms and Williams (2008),it was found that PRS has the potential to support a variety of learning styles. The majority of students participating in this study expressed high levels of satisfaction associated with the use of response systems, reporting that such systems made lecture classes more engaging, motivating, and participatory. Participants also enjoyed having the ability to see one another's answers to quiz questions or polls while also having the benefit of anonymity, causing them to feel more comfortable with participating in class discussions in this nonverbal way. Kennedy and Cutts (2005) in a study of 241 first year computer science students at the University of Glasgow in the UK, found that frequent users of PRS performed better than other infrequent users in formal assessment tasks. Similarly, Stuart, Brown, and Draper (2004) reported that PRS promoted interaction and improved levels of academic performance among second year phi-

losophy students. In another study with engineering freshmen who had introductory computer programming, Fan and van den Blink (2006) also found that PRS helps teachers clarify what students know and what they do not know. Beatty (2004) showed that as students answered questions through PRS keypads, they developed a deeper understanding of concepts presented to them because when they decide the best possible answer, they are actively engaged in critical thinking.

METHODS

Because the nature of this study was so that its research questions could not be answered within just a qualitative or quantitative approach, the study benefited a mixed methods design. Mixed methods research combines quantitative and qualitative research methods in different ways, with each approach adding something to the understanding of the phenomenon (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010).In the quantitative phase of the present study, the effect of PRS on the learners' motivation was investigated using descriptive statistics and independent samples t-test. In the qualitative phase, the observation data was qualitatively analyzed to explore the effect of PRS on the learners' participation. PRS served as the independent variable of the study, and motivation and participation as the dependent variables.

PARTICIPANTS

The participants of this study included 75 Iranian who studied eighth grade at Bahonar secondary school, Kazeroon in Fars, Iran, who were selected to participate in the study based on convenience sampling in the form of two intact classes. Then, they were homogenized through Oxford Placement Test (OPT). Having being homogenized, the sample was randomly divided into two groups, each consisting of 30 students (15 learners were excluded after homogenization) One group received PRS and the other one received traditional teaching. The participants' age ranged from 14 to 15.This research study used the following instruments for the purpose of data collection:

Oxford Placement Test (OPT)

The first instrument was a version of Oxford Placement Test (OPT) which was employed to ensure about the homogeneity of the participants at the outset of the study. This test was composed of 40 multiple choice items (20 items on grammar and 20 items on vocabulary). Reliability of the test was reported as .80 and its validity was confirmed through factor analysis (Wistner, Hideki, & Mariko, 2013). For the purpose of this study, Cronbach's Alpha reliability of OPT was calculated 70.

Motivation Questionnaire

Motivation Questionnaire, developed and validated by Pintrich and DeGroot (1990), was used to measure the participants' level of motivation. It includes 81 self-report items designed to assess students' motivational orientation. In this study, Cronbach's Alpha reliability of the questionnaire was .81.

Observation Checklist

In order to measure the students' participation in the classroom, the researcher used an observation checklist taken from Taous (2013). The observation checklist included eight items on a four-option rating scale in a range from Always, Sometimes, Rarely, to Never.

PRS

Personal Response System (PRS) involves each student being equipped with a hand-held electronic transmitter, similar to a television remote control, called a PRS handset (d'Inverno, Davis, White, 2003) . In this study, the researcher, as the teacher of the classes, borrowed PRS from a non-profit intelligent institute and equipped the participants with PRS.

PROCEDURE

Before starting the process of data collection, the formal procedures including taking the agreement

of the authorities of the institute as well as the participants' consent, and ensuring confidentiality of the participants' information were conducted. To collect the data, first, the sample was selected through convenient sampling. Next, the sample was homogenized through OPT. Then, the two classes were randomly divided into two groups, one group used PRS as the experimental group in addition to the traditional teaching method, and the other one was exposed to the traditional teaching method in the absence of PRS as the control group. In the next stage, Motivation Questionnaire was administered in the two groups. Then, the Observation Checklist was filled for the two classes in the first three (for the purpose of validation) sections of the classes. Next, the two groups benefited from twelve English class sessions of the high school once a week. Each session lasted about 90 minutes. Indeed, both groups enjoyed the mainstream educational sessions of the high school. The only difference between the two groups was that during the class sessions, the experimental group benefited from PRS. However, in the other group, no use of PRS was made. The researcher, as the English teacher of the classes, borrowed PRS from a non-profit intelligent institute and equipped the participants with PRS. In fact, in the last 20 minutes of each class session in the experimental group, the researcher asked five multiple choice questions on the materials covered in that class session to which the students were to answer using PRS. One week after the end of the classes, the Motivation Questionnaire was administered in the two classes as the post-test. Moreover, the Observation Checklist was filled for the two classes in the last three sections of the classes.

DATA ANALYSIS

To analyze the data, and to check the normality assumption of the distribution of data, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was run. Descriptive statistics was calculated to see the participants' motivation and participation pattern in the pre-test and post-test. Besides, to investigate whether there is any statistically significant difference between motivation of the students who used PRS and those who did not received it, one independent samples t-test was run. Moreover, to investigate the effect of PRS on the learners' participation, the data obtained from the observation checklist was qualitatively analyzed.

To check the normality assumption of the distributed scores in the experimental and control groups, a one sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was run (Table 4.1):

Table 1.
Results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

	N	(Exp group, motivation in pre-test/post-test)	(Con group, motivationin pre-test/post-test)
N NormalDistribution	60	normal	normal
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		0.71/0.15	0.75/0.22
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		0.25/0.18	0.39/0.20

As indicated in Table 4.1, PRS group and traditional group were normály distributed in terms of their motivation scores. That is, data near the mean were more frequent in occurrence than data far from the mean.

Then, descriptive statistics was calculated to check the degree of the participants' motivation in the pre-test and post-test. Tables 4.2 shows the results:

Table 2.
DescriptiveStatisticsforMotivation in Pre-test

	Exp	Con
N	30	30
Mean	156.0748	148.0952
Std. Deviation	.72106	.96283

Table 4.2 shows that the mean scores obtained for motivation of the experimental and control groups were 156.07, 230.09 and 148.09, respectively. Moreover, the standard deviation values obtained included .72 and .96. As indicated in Table 4.2, the difference between the motivation scores of the two groups in the pre-test was not remarkable.

Then, descriptive statistics was calculated for the participants' motivation in the post-test. The results are shown in Table 4.3:

Table3.
DescriptiveStatisticsforMotivation in Post-test

	Exp	Con
N	30	30
Mean	202.9707	160.5067
Std. Deviation	.33781	.12158

Table 4.3 indicates the means of 202.97 and 160.50 for the experimental and control groups, respectively. Furthermore, .33 and .12 were obtained as standard deviation values of the two groups.

An independent samples t-test was run to investigate the difference between the motivation scores of the groups in the post-test:

Table 4.
Results of Independent Samples t-test for Motivation in Post-test

	I	Sig.	t	f	Sig. (2-tailed)	Std. Error Difference
Equal variances assumed	.07	.79	9.84		.00	.33

As indicated in Table 4.4, the difference between the motivation scores of the two groups was significant (t= 9.84, p<.05). Therefore, the two groups had significantly different motivation levels in the post-test in favor of the experimental group.

In the next stage, descriptive statistics was calculated to measure the students' participation in the first three class sessions:

Table 5.
Results of Descriptive Statistics for Students' Participation in the First Three Sessions

	Exp	Con
N	30	30
Mean	2.0805	2.3901
Std. Deviation	.2103	.1821

As seen in Table 4.5, the mean and standard deviation of the experimental group's participation were 2.08 and .21, respectively. The values for the control group were 2.39 and .18. The obtained means show that the participation level of both groups are not high in the first three sessions.

Moreover,asshownintheresultsofthequalitative contentanalysisoftheobservation data, in the first three sessions (in the two groups) the amount of learners' giving opinions, providing suggestions and sharing ideas in the classroom, either with the teacher or with other classmates was low. The learners' expressing willingness to speak in the classroom when dealing with a topic discussion was not amounted to a high level. The learners' expressing new ideas in the classroom situation was in a low level. The amount of learners' participation in the classroom was low. The learners hesitated much and expressed themselves in a difficult way in the classroom. The amount of development of students' speaking ability through classroom interaction was low. The students rarely corrected each other's errors in the classroom. The learners rarely showed readiness and motivation to work with peers and feel comfortable within the group. In sum, the amount of interaction in the classroom at the beginning of the study was low.

Then, to measure the students' participation in the last three class sessions, descriptive statistics was calculated with the following results:

Table 6.
Results of Descriptive Statistics for Students' Participation in Post-test

	Exp	Con
N	30	30
Mean	4.11389	2.1938
Std. Deviation	.5890	.3005

As seen in Table 4.6, the mean and standard deviation of the experimental group's participation were 2.08 and .21, respectively. According to the obtained means, the participation level of the experimental group is higher than that of the control group in the last three sessions.

Furthermore, as revealed by the results of the qualitative content analysis of the observation data, in the last three sessions, contrary to what was observed in the first three sessions, in the experimental group, the learners often gave opinions, provided suggestions and shared ideas in the classroom with the teacher or with other classmates. The learners expressed willingness to speak in the classroom when dealing with a topic discussion. The learners expressed new ideas in the classroom situation. The amount of learners' participation in the classroom was high. The learners did not hesitated much and expressed themselves easily in the classroom. The learners' development of their speaking ability was evident in their classroom interaction. The students often corrected each other's errors in the classroom. The learners often showed readiness and motivation to work with peers and feel comfortable within the group. In sum, the amount of interaction in the classroom in the experimental group was high. However, it was not true about the control group. This shows that as a result of using PRS, Iranian EFL learners' participation was developed significantly. In other words, this shows that using PRS has a significant and positive effect on Iranian EFL learners' participation.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this section, two research questions are answered based on the obtained results. Moreover, the results are justified and compared with the findings of the previous related studies. To answer the first research question which dealt with the effect of PRS on Iranian learners' motivation, an independent samples t-tests was run the results of which showed that PRS had a statistically significant effect on motivation of Iranian EFL learners. This finding is consistent with the findings of the studies by Ayari, Ayari, and Ayari (2012), Harris, Al-Bataineh, and Al-Bataineh (2016), and Murray (2016) wherein the researchers proved the significant effect of technology on students' motivation. As a justification for this finding, it can be said that since learners have a positive attitude toward technology, this leads to improvements in their motivation (20) Another justification is that technological tools increase learners' performance and this leads to higher levels of motivation in them (Kamalian & Sayadian, 2014).Moreover, the significant effect of technology on self-esteem of students can be a justification for this finding (Jan &Soomro, 2017).

To answer the second research question, which addressed the effect of PRS on Iranian learners' participation, the results of the qualitative content analysis of the observation data can be referred to which demonstrated that PRS significantly impacted Iranian EFL learners' participation. More particularly, in the experimental group, the participants' participation was improved significantly as a consequence of using PRS. This was revealed by the following indications: giving opinions, providing suggestions and sharing ideas in the classroom, expressing willingness to speak in the classroom when dealing with a topic discussion, expressing new ideas in the classroom situation, participation in the classroom, development of students' speaking ability through classroom interaction, correcting each other's errors in the classroom, and showing readiness and motivation to work with peers and feeling comfortable within the group. In line with

this, d'Inverno, Davis, and White (2003) showed that the use of PRS leads to higher interaction levels among learners. Similarly, Heaslip, Donovan, and Cullen (2014) showed the effectiveness of using PRS on learner engagement. The researcher believes that a possible justification for the positive effect of PRS on learner participation is that PRS increases learners' autonomy and this in turn leads to their significant improvement in participation. It is also possible that the learners' self-confidence plays a mediating role in the effect of PRS on their participation level. Also, taking the effect of personal responsibility on participation into account, it can be hypothesized that personal responsibility of the learners have increased as a result of the use of PRS and this has led to more participation among them. Interestingly, as mentioned above, technology can significantly reduce learner shyness (Hughes & Coplan, 2010), and this can contribute to improving learner participation.

The results of the present study, however, confirmed that as a result of using PRS, Iranian EFL learners' motivation and participation improved significantly. Accordingly, EFL teachers are recommended to use this tool in an attempt to make English learning easier for EFL learners. Given that motivation and participation are indispensable parts of English learning, the finding of the present study is promising for ELT stakeholders especially EFL learners. Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded there is a need for some changes in the educational system of Iran so that English teachers and learners can benefit from more technological tools in English classes. Interestingly, in the existing literature, it has been shown that both teachers and learners had a positive attitude towards such tools and preferred to use them in the English classes. Therefore, it seems that the time has reached for the arrival of more technological instruments in the English classes in Iran, as supplementary to traditional methods of ELT.

The first implication of the study was that EFL teachers can use PRSas a supplementary tool in their classes in trying to improve their students' motivation. The second implication was that EFL learners should ask their teachers to use PRS in English classes. Finally, material designers should develop the educational materials in a way that the use of technological tools including PRS is encouraged in the English classes.

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Biodata

Mr Samad Oliaei is a Ph.D. candidate at the Islamic Azad University, Qeshm branch, Iran. This article was extracted from his Ph.D. thesis titled "Exploring the Effects of Incorporated Personal Response System (PRS) on the Iranian Junior Learners' Motivation and Participation", supervised by Dr. Mostafa Zamanian.
Email: Samadoliaei@yahoo.com

Dr Mustafa Zamanianisa full time faculty member of the EFL Graduate Department, Islamic Azad University, Shiraz Branch, Iran. He has published several books and research articles on different issues of language teaching, translation studies and language assessment. His field of interest is language teaching.
Email: mustafazamanian@yahoo.com

Dr Samad Mirza Suzani is an assistant professor of TEFL at English Department, Marvdasht Branch, Islamic Azad University, Marvdasht, Iran. His areas of interest are ESP, post method pedagogy, comparative linguistics and translation issues.
Email: smirzasuzani@yahoo.com

Dr Shahram Afraz is an assistant professor of TEFL at English Department, Qeshm Branch, Islamic Azad University, Qeshm, Iran. His areas of interest are teaching, linguistics and syllabus design.
Email: sharhram.afraz1352@gmail.com