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Effects of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning through the 'Listen English Daily Practice' App on EFL Learners' Listening Comprehension and Self-Efficacy

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ABSTRACT

The present study adopted a quasi-experimental research design to investigate the effects of MALL on enhancing listening ability and self-efficacy of EFL learners. Accordingly, the "Listen English Daily Practice" App was utilized through a case study to find its effects on EFL learners' listening proficiency and self-efficacy. To do so, 60 female intermediate EFL learners were selected based on a convenience sampling procedure and the results of the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) from a private language institute. They were then divided into two homogenized groups, i.e. an experimental (MALLG) and a control group (CG). In order to measure the participants' language proficiency, the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was administered. Furthermore, the listening section of the Longman TOEFL Preparation was used as a listening pre-test and post-test. Moreover, learners' listening self-efficacy beliefs were assessed using an English listening self-efficacy questionnaire. The findings suggested that using MALL through Listen English Daily Practice App had a significant effect on the EFL learners' listening comprehension ability. Furthermore, it was found that the integration of mobile-technology within the language learning process could lead to a significant enhancement of English self-efficacy. Based on the finding, policy makers and syllabus designer are recommended to consider incorporating MALL or similar apps into language curricula to provide learners with additional opportunities for practice and development of listening skills.

1. Introduction

English listening instruction is crucial for promoting EFL learning since this ability is required to promote efficient oral communication. However, due to a heavy reliance on conventional teaching techniques, EFL learning contexts such as the one in Iran may lack opportunities for verbal and aural practice (Demir & Tavil, 2021). For EFL learners, speaking and listening skills continue to be major obstacles. Although listening might be the foundation of other aspects of language acquisition, it is considerably undervalued in the Iranian public schools. Despite the importance of listening comprehension, other skills still receive more attention in English language lessons in the Iranian language schools (Barjesteh & Isaee, 2023). Similarly, in an EFL context like that of Iran, both language teachers and students tend to overlook the necessity of listening comprehension abilities since their focus is solely on their ultimate goal, speaking. Thus, it is common for Iranian students to have difficulties with listening comprehension. Additionally, this skill seems to have not been developed because Iranian students are not exposed to understandable listening input in their classes or in the outside world. Teachers must therefore develop strategies to help English language learners improve their listening abilities.

Listening is a challenging skill and a source of frustration among learners since the natural flow of words and the timing of their delivery create listening anxiety which can demotivate learners and reduce their self-confidence (Folkerts & Matz, 2024). Second language listening is a skill that is less visibly apparent than writing and therefore appears less controlled; thus, low self-confidence may be particularly severe in this area. Some experts argue that a low level of listening self-confidence among EFL learners may be linked to the way listening is taught, as in many language classes, listening is treated as an activity to be 'delivered' rather than a skill to be developed in its own right (Helwa, 2017). Technology-based listening instruction is believed to improve EFL learners' listening self-confidence, reduce their listening anxiety, increase their motivation, and ultimately ensure effective and successful listening comprehension (Aysu, 2020; Taghizadeh & Emam, 2023).

Due to its qualities, including the ownership of mobile devices and mobility, MALL has been recommended by some researchers in listening and speaking instruction. Some studies have attempted to employ MALL in listening and speaking learning activities using various types of mobile technology, including mobile phones (Moghaddas & Bashirnezhad, 2016), social communication applications (Andújar-Vaca & Cruz-Martínez, 2017), and digital games (Hwang et al., 2016). However, despite numerous investigations into the use of MALL in English-listening education (Burston, 2014), little is known about the essential processes that underlie its pedagogical design (Kukulska-Hulme & Viberg, 2018). Like any other approaches and methodologies, students and educators play a pivotal role as active participants in the MALL environment (Stockwell & Hubbard, 2013; Stockwell & Liu, 2015; Viberg & Grönlund, 2012). Embracing this active role means that students should take responsibility for their own learning, while teachers act as facilitators, guiding and supporting their educational journey. Within the vast array of learning tools available to students, it is crucial for teachers to demonstrate effective strategies for selecting and utilizing the most valuable content, as well as recommending the most efficient tools and methods for learning (Churchill et al., 2016). Simultaneously, students must demonstrate a sense of discernment, maturity, and accountability when using technology (Herrador-Alcaide, et al., 2020). It is important to recognize that students do not directly learn from technology itself, but rather, these electronic tools serve as intermediaries, facilitating the thinking and learning process (Chen & Qi, 2024). In this regard, learners must exhibit a high level of self-monitoring, allowing for individual choices while engaging in goal-setting, self-

regulation, self-evaluation, synchronization of psychological activities, and self-efficacy (Khaddage et al., 2009). Therefore, in a learning environment that incorporates mobile technology, learners must cultivate self-sufficiency, autonomy, and uniqueness (Traxler, et al., 2015)

Given the rapid advancements in language-learning software, some academics have suggested that such programs be used as effective learning tools for EFL students (Ahn & Lee, 2016). In this study, the "Listen English Daily Practice" App was used as an example of MALL to enhance EFL listening achievements and self-confidence. Kim (2013) explains that students need to be exposed to real-world and relevant listening resources in order to develop their listening skills. According to this perspective, mobile listening applications can be a useful tool for students who do not have the chance to listen to real content and be exposed to a foreign language outside the classroom (Bai, 2024; Tuong & Dan, 2024; Wang, et al., 2022).

Previous studies found that mobile apps were used in EFL classrooms, particularly for listening instruction (Shaheen, et al., 2024), and that they included WhatsApp (Li & Singh, 2024), SMS through mobile phones (Elfiona et al., 2019). However, there have been few studies on mobile learning tools that EFL teachers have created to meet the requirements and preferences of their students. In addition, while most of the previous studies have adopted experiments, quasi-experiments, or case studies to explore the effectiveness of MALL in listening ability, very few studies focus on listening self-efficacy in this respect. Based on the objectives of the study, the following research questions were posed:

RQ1. To what extent are the effects of Listen English Daily Practice App and summarizing audio files on EFL learners' listening comprehension different from each other?

RQ2. To what extent are the effects of Listen English Daily Practice App and summarizing audio files on EFL learners' listening self-efficacy different from each other?

2. Methodology

In the present study, a non-equivalent quasi-experimental design was adopted. A non-equivalent group design, then, is a between-subjects design in which participants have not been randomly assigned to conditions. In a quasi-experiment where the groups are not random, they may differ in other ways. They are nonequivalent groups.

2.1 Participants and Setting

The participants of the study were 60 female EFL learners selected based on a convenience sampling procedure from Safir language institute in Tehran. Based on the obtained scores in the Oxford Placement Test (OPT), those students who achieved scores between 61 and 70 were considered as the main participants of the study, upper-intermediate level learners. All the participants spoke Persian as their first language and language of education. They also learned English as a foreign language. Furthermore, all the selected sample had at least four years of English studying in the language institutes. The selected participants were divided into two experimental groups labeled as the MALL group (MALLG, N=30) and Control Group (CG, N=30). The experimental group underwent teaching and learning of listening courses using the Listen English Daily Practice App, and the control group received the traditional teaching of listening without using mobile-assisted learning procedures.

2.2 Instrumentation

In this study, in order to collect the required data three measuring instruments including two tests and a questionnaire were employed.

In order to determine the participants' English language proficiency level, an Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was used. The test consists of reading, vocabulary, and grammar sections. It consists of 60 questions divided into two parts. The first part contains 40 multiple-choice items in 4 subparts, including grammatical questions about prepositions (items 1-5), a cloze passage test where one option out of three should be selected (items 6-10), cloze passage tests where one option out of four should be selected (items 7-20), and finally, testing grammatical knowledge (items 21-40). The second part of the test includes two subsections. In the first one, learners are required to read two cloze passages and select the correct option (items 41-50), and the second section assesses learners' vocabulary (items 51-60). The participants were given 60 minutes to answer the questions. The results are classified based on the OPT ranking rubric.

Another measure of the study included the listening section of the Longman TOEFL Preparation test used as a listening pre-test and post-test. The only difference between the pre- and post-tests was the sequence and organization of the items, which was done to prevent the influence of learning and memorizing. The test consisted of 50 multiple choice questions adapted from the post-listening test of Longman TOEFL Preparation 2004. The test included thirty questions on short dialogues, eight questions on long conversations, and twelve questions on long talks. The reliability of all the tests was calculated using the KR-21 method. The correlation coefficients for the pre-test and post-test were found to be 0.89 and 0.83, respectively.

Learners' listening self-efficacy beliefs were measured using an English listening self-efficacy questionnaire developed by Rahimi & Abedini (2009). This questionnaire assesses learners' confidence and self-perception during listening comprehension tasks and in communication with native speakers and teachers. It consists of 18 Likert-scale items, and participants are required to read and indicate their level of agreement on a scale of (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) have no idea, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree. To ensure the internal consistency of the items and assess the questionnaire's reliability in this study, the Cronbach alpha was employed. The coefficient obtained was .89, indicating an acceptable and satisfactory level of internal consistency.

2.3 Materials

Listen English Daily Practice App as a free tool for learning English was employed in the present study. Furthermore, listening section of the Top Notch 3 textbook was utilized as the teaching material to present the required listening courses in the treatment sessions.

2.4 Research Procedure

To carry out the study, the researchers implemented the following procedure:

In the first step, the participants were selected based on convenience sampling and the results of OPT from Safir private institute. Then, the participants were divided into two groups, i.e., one experimental group (N=30) and a control group (N=30) to participate in the present quasi-experimental study.

The two selected measurement instruments were administered as the pre-test to ensure that all the participants were homogeneous in terms of listening self-efficacy and listening comprehension ability. The measurement instruments were given to the participants in two separate sessions. The administration of the listening test lasted 60 minutes and self-efficacy questionnaire was given 20 minutes to be completed.

In the fourth step, the treatment was initiated, consisting of 10 sessions of instruction on the listening course for both the experimental and control groups. Each session lasted 45 minutes. The participants in the experimental group were taught and practiced listening courses using the "Listen English Daily Practice" app. They were instructed to install the android version of the app on their mobile devices and use it either in the classroom or at home. During the treatment sessions, the participants in the experimental group utilized the listening courses and practices provided in the selected app and answered the following listening quizzes both inside and outside the classroom.

The participants in the second experimental group received instruction without the use of any computer apps. In each session, they were tasked with summarizing a listening audio file in the classroom. During the teaching sessions, two 10-minute listening files were played for the participants in the control group, and they were instructed to write a summary of the intended listening passages and then verbally present it to the teacher.

In the next step, at the end of the treatment, the questionnaires and the listening test were administered as the post-test. Finally, the collected data from the pre-and post-survey were inserted into SPSS 23 to be analyzed. T-test analysis was used to answer the research questions.

In order to analyze the obtained data, different statistical procedures were used. Then, descriptive statistics including means, standard deviations, variances, skewness, and kurtosis were calculated for all the variables (group discussion and vocabulary development) of this study. In addition, to answer the research questions, inferential statistics like independent sample t-test analysis were conducted.

3. Data Analysis

In this section, the statistical analysis concerning the normality of the test scores, as well as the homogeneity of the participants in terms of listening comprehension ability and self-efficacy are demonstrated.

In order to ensure that the scores of listening pre-and post-test for each of the control (Pre1-Post1) and experimental group (MALLG) (Pre2-Post2) were normally distributed, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was employed. The obtained results for the normality of the pre-tests are illustrated in Table1 below.

Table 1

The Normality Test for Listening Pre-tests and Post-test Scores for the Two Groups

		Pre1	Post1	Pre2	Post2
N		30	30	30	30
Normal Parameters [a,b]	Mean	34.11	37.23	33.26	42.39
	Std. Deviation	3.23	4.12	3.54	4.11
Test Statistic		.221	.328	.334	.398
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.102[c]	.108[c]	.114[c]	.137[c]

In Table 1, the Sig value represents the significance level associated with each Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. A Sig value greater than 0.05 indicates that there is no significant difference between the observed data and a normally distributed sample at a 5% level of significance. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test revealed a significant level of normality of the listening pre-test (W (30) = 0.221, p = .102) and post-test scores (UTDG) (W (30) = 0.328, p = .108) for the experimental group. Furthermore, the results indicate a significant level of normality of listening pre-test (W (30) = 0.334, p = .114) and post-test (W (30) = 0.398, p = .137) for the control group. Therefore, the assumption of normality was met for the listening test scores in both groups. Furthermore, the obtained results for the normality of self-efficacy pre-test (Self 1) and post-test scores for each of the control and experimental group is indicated in Table 2 below.

Table 2

The Normality Test for the Self-efficacy Pre-test and Post-test Scores for the Two Groups

		Pre 1	Post1	Pre2	Post2
N		30	30	30	30
Normal Parameters [a,b]	Mean	3.22	3.57	3.44	4.21
	Std. Deviation	.242	.253	.112	.342
Test Statistic		.223	.265	.318	.387
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.122[c]	.176[c]	.124[c]	.112[c]

According to the results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, a significant level of normality was found within the pre-test (W (30) = 0.223, p = .122) and post-test scores (W (30) = 0.265, p = .176) of self-efficacy for the experimental group. Furthermore, the results revealed a significant level of normality in the pre-test (W (30) = 0.318, p = .124) and post-test (W (30) = 0.387, p = .112) scores of self-efficacies for the control group. Therefore, it can be concluded that the pre-test and post-test scores for both the experimental and control groups in the study were normally distributed.

In order to assess and ensure the homogeneity of the participants in terms of listening comprehension before the treatment, the obtained scores by the two groups in the listening pre-test were analyzed and compared using an independent-sample t-test to determine if there were any significant differences in initial listening comprehension ability. The descriptive statistics for the two groups' scores in the listening pre-test are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for the MALLG and CGs' Scores on Listening Pre-test

	ID	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Listening Post-test	MALLG	30	34.11	3.23	2.13
	CG	30	33.26	3.43	2.87

- MALLG= Mobile-assisted Language Learning Group
- CG= Control Group

As the descriptive statistics indicate, the mean score of the experimental group (MALLG) (M= 34.11) and the control group (CG) (M= 33.26) did not show considerable difference. It means that, on average, the mean scores of the two groups within the pre-test of listening were relatively close to each other. The small difference in their mean scores suggests that there may not be a significant disparity between the two groups. However, to ensure the significance of the results an independent-sample t-test was conducted and the summary of results is presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4

T-test for the Two Groups' Comparison in terms of Listening Pre-test Scores

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean. D	Std. E.D
Pre-test	Equal variance assume	.04	.432	.643	58	.113	-.85	1.32
	Equal variance not assume			.643	57.8	.113	-.85	1.32

Independent-sample t-test analysis showed that there was no significant difference between the mean scores obtained by MALLG and CG within the pre-test of listening ($t(60) = .643$, $p > 0.05$). It means that all the participants had the similar level of listening comprehension ability before the treatment. Therefore, based on this analysis, it was concluded that before receiving any treatment, all the participants in the two groups were homogeneous in terms of initial listening comprehension ability.

In order to examine the homogeneity of the participants in terms of English self-efficacy, their pre-test scores on English Listening Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (ELSEQ) were compared using an independent-sample t-test. The descriptive statistics for the two groups' scores in the vocabulary pre-test are presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for the MALLG and CGs' Scores on Self-efficacy Pre-test

	ID	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Vocabulary Post-test	MALLG	30	3.22	.234	.654
	CG	30	3.44	.276	.876

- MALLG= Mobile-assisted Language Learning Group
- CG= Control Group

As the descriptive statistics indicate, the mean score of the experimental group (M= 3.22) and the control group (M= 3.44) are similar in the pre-test of self-efficacy. The small difference in their mean scores indicated that there might not be a significant disparity between the two groups. However, in order to ensure the significance and meaningfulness of these descriptive findings, an independent-sample t-test was conducted and the summary of results is presented in Table 6 below.

Table 6

T-test for the Two Groups' Comparison in terms of Self-efficacy Pre-test Scores

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		**t-test for Equality of Means**				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean. D	Std. E.D
Pre-test	Equal variance assume	.123	.212	.342	58	.104	-.22	.643
	Equal variance not assume			.342	57.8	.104	-.22	.643

As the results on the above table indicate, independent-sample t-test analysis did not show any significant difference between the mean scores obtained by the two groups in the pre-test of self-efficacy ($t(60) = .342$, $p > 0.05$) which means that all the participants had a similar level of English self-efficacy before the treatment. Therefore, based on this analysis, it can be concluded that before receiving any treatment, both groups were homogeneous in this regard.

The first research question of this study sought to examine the effects of Listen English Daily Practice App and summarizing audio files on EFL learners' listening comprehension. In order to answer this research question, the mean score of the experimental and control groups on the listening post-test were compared. To do so, an independent sample t-test analysis was conducted. The descriptive statistics for the two groups are shown in Table 7 below.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics for the MALLG and CGs' Scores on Listening Post-test

	ID	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Post-test	MALLG	30	42.39	4.76	2.76
	CG	30	37.23	4.82	3.91

- MALLG= Mobile-assisted Language Learning Group
- CG= Control Group

Table 7 indicates that the mean score of listening post-test for the experimental group (MALLG) (M = 42.39, SD = 4.76) was higher than the control group (M = 37.23, SD = 4.82). However, these findings are merely descriptive and to ensure the significance of the results, an independent sample t-test analysis was conducted and the summary of results is presented in Table 8 below.

Table 8

T-test for the Two Groups' Comparison in terms of Listening Post-test Scores

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		**t-test for Equality of Means**				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean. D	Std. E.D
Post-test	Equal variance assume	.543	.387	6.91	58	.000	5.16	1.05
	Equal variance not assume			6.91	57.8	.000	5.16	1.05

As it is illustrated in Table 8, the independent sample t-test indicated statistically significant difference ($t(58) = 6.91$, $p < 0.05$) in the listening post-test scores for the experimental group which received MALL and the control group which underwent traditional summarizing. Furthermore, in order to identify the effect size, Cohen's d was calculated to be 0.45, indicating a moderate effect size. This suggests that the use of MALL had a significant, though moderate effectiveness on improving listening skills compared to traditional summarizing methods. The findings of this study support the effectiveness of incorporating technology into language learning instruction and highlight the potential benefits of utilizing mobile devices in educational settings. Based on the obtained results, the first null hypothesis was rejected.

The second research question of this study sought to examine the effects of Listen English Daily Practice App and summarizing audio files on EFL learners' listening self-efficacy. To investigate this research question, the obtained mean scores by the experimental and control groups were compared using an independent sample t-test analysis. The descriptive statistics for the two groups' scores on self-efficacy post-test are shown in Table 9 below.

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics for the MALLG and CGs' Scores on Listening Post-test

	ID	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Post-test	MALLG	30	4.21	.321	.154
	CG	30	3.57	.336	.154

- MALLG= Mobile-assisted Language Learning Group
- CG= Control Group

Table 9 indicates that the mean score of the experimental group in the self-efficacy post-test (M = 4.21, SD = .321) was higher than the mean scores of the control group (M = 3.57, SD = .336). To ensure the significance of the results, an independent sample t-test analysis was conducted and the summary of results is presented in Table 10 below.

Table 10

T-test for the Two Groups' Comparison in terms of Self-efficacy Post-test Scores

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean. D	Std. E.D
Post-test	Equal variance assume	.271	.112	5.21	58	.000	.64	.123
	Equal variance not assume				57.8	.000	.64	.123

As it is demonstrated in Table 10, the independent sample t-test indicated a statistically significant difference ($t(58) = 5.21$, $p < 0.05$) in the self-efficacy post-test for the two groups. To further investigate the effectiveness of the treatment, effect size was calculated in which Cohen's d was found to be 0.31, indicating a small effect size. This suggests that the treatment had a small impact on participants' self-efficacy levels.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The study employed a quasi-experimental research design to evaluate the impact of MALL on enhancing the listening ability and self-efficacy of EFL learners. The "Listen English Daily Practice" App was utilized to find its effectiveness for listening and self-efficacy.

The first major finding of the present study suggested that using MALL through Listen English Daily Practice App had a significant effect on the EFL learners' listening comprehension ability. The results suggested that application of this language learning app had a positive effect, though relatively with moderate effect size, on the listening comprehension. This finding highlights the potential of

MALL as an effective tool for improving listening comprehension skills in EFL learners. The convenience and accessibility of using apps like Listen English Daily Practice App make it easier for students to practice and improve their language skills outside of the classroom. Additionally, the positive impact, albeit moderate, suggests that consistent use of such apps can lead to gradual improvement over time. This underscores the importance of incorporating technology into language learning to enhance students' overall proficiency in listening and other language skills. Further research could explore ways to optimize the effectiveness of MALL apps and investigate their long-term impact on language acquisition. EFL learners were able to practice listening skills anytime and anywhere, allowing for more consistent and frequent practice. Additionally, the interactive features of the app may have engaged learners more effectively compared to traditional methods, leading to improved comprehension (Xu, 2020). The personalized nature of the app (Read & Barcena, 2016), with tailored exercises and feedback, may have also contributed to the positive impact on listening. Overall, the findings highlight the potential benefits of incorporating MALL in EFL instruction for enhancing listening comprehension abilities.

After a scrutiny of those studies included, three possible reasons could be tentatively concluded to explicate the pedagogical benefits of MALL for EFL listening skill development. First, the mobility feature of MALL in its own right supports ubiquitous and autonomous learning (Karakaya & Bozkurt, 2022). In other words, EFL learners can use MALL to autonomously practice listening comprehension from anywhere and at any time (Ameen et al., 2021), which will increase the input exposure rates of learning materials compared to the highly temporal and spatial-constrained traditional methods, e.g., indoor computer classroom (Chang et al., 2005) and conventional paper and pencil (Azar & Nasiri, 2014).

The increased input exposure rates of MALL also lend support from the old saying-practice makes perfect. The multimodal materials of MALL reduce working memory loads and facilitate listening comprehension process. According to the Dual Coding Theory, there are verbal and non-verbal channels of working memory that process information independently from one another (Heidel, 2018). When the two channels are interconnected with each other, working memory loads will be decreased and the learning outcomes will be improved (Li & Singh, 2024). Compared to the unimodal presentation of the traditional methods, EFL learners who used MALL can make full use of multimodal materials to practice listening comprehension (Ma & Yan, 2022; Mayer, 2009). For instance, EFL learners' listening skill was greatly improved with a mobile virtual reality due to the multimodal virtual presence and the high degree of immersion (Chen & Yuan, 2023). Third, the interactivity of MALL affords enjoyable listening experiences, which increases EFL learners' flow experiences (Li & Singh, 2024), motivation and engagement (Ameen et al., 2021), and self-efficacy (Ameen et al., 2021; Li, & Singh, 2024). For instance, within a mobile VR environment, the interaction between realistic environment and spatial audio allows learners to feel "being there" and "being participants", which triggers their flow experiences, motivation and engagement, and facilitates listening skill development in turn (Chen & Yuan, 2023).

The positive and significant effect of MALL on Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension can be explained through various studies and research findings. For instance, Rahimi and Soleymani (2015) found that MALL technologies can reduce listening anxiety and improve listening comprehension. Additionally, Ameen et al. (2021) and Li & Singh (2024) have recognized the potential of MALL to autonomously and ubiquitously develop learners' listening skills with sufficient exposure to multimodal listening materials. Researchers such as Alabsi (2020), Li, & Singh (2024), and

Saeedakhtar et al. (2021) have also confirmed the positive impact of MALL on EFL learners' listening skill development. Salih's (2019) study at Al Iraqia University demonstrated that mobile learning devices were effective in developing EFL students' listening sub-skills. These studies and findings collectively suggest that MALL can be a powerful tool for enhancing Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension by providing ubiquitous learning environments, sufficient exposure to listening materials, and reducing listening anxiety.

The findings of the study might be in line with Alzieni (2020) who showed the advantages of MALL for enhancing students' listening abilities, particularly for those who exhibit a lack of motivation. The results are also in line with Helwa (2017) who found a positive effect of MALL on listening comprehension and vocabulary knowledge. Furthermore, the results corroborate the findings of Kassaie et al. (2021) who revealed that the inclusion of podcasts significantly improved the participants' speaking and listening abilities.

The second major finding of the study showed that integration of mobile-technology in the form of Listen English Daily Practice App within the language learning process could lead to significant enhancement of English self-efficacy. In other words, students who used the app reported feeling more confident in their English language abilities. This increase in self-efficacy can have a positive impact on overall language proficiency and motivation (Zohoorian et al., 2022) to continue learning and improving their English skills. The convenience and accessibility of mobile technology make it a valuable tool for language learners (Yedla, 2013). To practice and engage with the language outside of traditional classroom settings, ultimately contributing to their success in mastering English.

The positive effectiveness of MALL on EFL learner's self-efficacy can be justified and explained by the theory of social cognitive theory. Social cognitive theory, developed by Albert Bandura (2011), posits that individuals learn through observation, imitation, and modeling of others. In the context of MALL for EFL learners, this theory suggests that exposure to language materials and interactions with native speakers through mobile devices can enhance learners' self-efficacy by providing them with opportunities to observe and imitate proficient speakers. Additionally, the interactive nature of MALL allows learners to receive immediate feedback on their language skills, which can further boost their confidence in their abilities (Hwang, et al., 2024). Overall, the positive effectiveness of MALL on EFL learners' self-efficacy can be attributed to the principles of social cognitive theory (Ahmed, et al., 2024; Istikharoh & Utami, 2024).

Furthermore, the use of mobile devices in language learning also promotes a sense of community and collaboration among EFL learners. Through various language learning apps and platforms, students can engage in group activities, share resources, and communicate with each other in real-time. This collaborative aspect not only enhances their language skills but also fosters a supportive learning environment where learners can motivate and learn from each other. By creating a virtual community of language learners, MALL not only improves self-efficacy but also encourages social interaction and peer support, ultimately leading to a more enriching language learning experience (Viberg & Kukulska-Hulme, 2022).

The study aimed to investigate how incorporating mobile devices into language learning activities can positively influence students' listening skills and boost their confidence in their own abilities. By utilizing technology in the language learning process, it is hoped that students will become more engaged and motivated to practice their listening skills outside of the classroom. Additionally, by building self-efficacy through successful MALL experiences, students may feel more confident in

their overall language proficiency and be more willing to take risks in using the language in real-world situations. Ultimately, the findings of this study could provide valuable insights for educators on how to effectively integrate mobile technology into language learning curricula to enhance student outcomes.

The obtained results from the study revealed that integration of such mobile-based software as Listen English Daily Practice App could lead to significant development and improvement of EFL learners' listening comprehension, as found by Nguyen (2023), as well as enhancement of their English self-efficacy. This suggests that incorporating technology into language learning can have a positive impact on students' language skills and confidence. By using mobile-based software like Listen English Daily Practice App, students have the opportunity to practice listening in a convenient and engaging way. This not only helps them improve their comprehension skills but also boosts their belief in their own abilities to learn and use English effectively. More general conclusion which can be drawn from these findings is that incorporating technology into language learning can have a positive impact on students' language skills and confidence. This suggests that educators should consider integrating mobile-based software into their teaching practices to enhance the overall learning experience for EFL learners. Additionally, these results highlight the importance of providing students with opportunities to practice listening skills outside of the classroom, as it can greatly contribute to their language proficiency and self-confidence (Ningias & Indriani, 2021).

Overall, the study underscores the potential benefits of utilizing technology in language education and emphasizes the need for further research in this area to fully understand its impact on student learning outcomes. In conclusion, the study's results demonstrate the potential of mobile-based software, such as the Listen English Daily Practice App, in enhancing the listening comprehension and self-efficacy of EFL learners. The findings suggest that incorporating such tools into language education could be a promising approach to improving language learning outcomes. The use of technology in language learning has become increasingly prevalent in recent years, and this study provides evidence of its effectiveness in improving the listening skill. Furthermore, the study's results highlight the importance of providing EFL learners with opportunities to practice their listening skills outside of the classroom. The Listen English Daily Practice App offers a convenient and accessible way for learners to engage in regular listening practice, which can lead to significant improvements in their language proficiency.

Policy makers should consider incorporating MALL into national language curricula to provide learners with additional opportunities for practice and development of listening skills. Syllabus developers should also create lesson plans and teaching materials that leverage MALL to enhance EFL learners' listening comprehension and self-efficacy. English teachers and instructors should also consider integrating MALL into their language teaching practices to provide learners with additional opportunities for practice and development of listening skills.

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The Orthographic Component of Mental Lexicon: A Review of its Structure, Development, and Implications for Second Language Acquisition

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A B S T R A C T

The mental lexicon is essential for language processing, delineating the structural and conceptual relationships between words. While considerable research has focused on phonological, semantic, and morphological aspects, the orthographic component has received less attention. This review aims to comprehensively analyze the orthographic subcomponent of the mental lexicon, examining its structure and storage. We define orthography as the written form of language and emphasize its critical role in language development, particularly in reading and writing. The relationship between orthography and phonology is explored, highlighting that phonological knowledge typically precedes the acquisition of orthographic knowledge. Furthermore, we analyze empirical studies regarding orthographic representations' organization in alphabetic languages and logographic systems such as Chinese. Our findings suggest that while the orthographic component significantly contributes to language processing in alphabetic languages, its role in logographic languages remains less defined. We also discuss the implications of orthographic representation for language acquisition and advocate for further research in this area. Lastly, we recommend that educators integrate orthographic instruction and metacognitive strategies into their teaching practices to enhance spelling skills and improve literacy outcomes for learners.

1. Introduction

Among the language skills, vocabulary has been announced by many scholars to have a dominant place in the process of language acquisition. Besides grammar, pronunciation, and spelling, words are considered a fundamental language component, also called micro-skill. According to Nation (2001), vocabulary constitutes a crucial element of language, encompassing the entirety of words that an individual can access and employ in communication. Like first language acquisition, in L2 learning, a good mastery of words is considered an important linguistic ability that can affect general outcomes in language learning (Schmitt, 2010). However, as Aitchison (2003) contends, every person's storage of words is much wider than that used in everyday speech. In fact, in every human, there is a reality known as a mental lexicon, which lies somewhere in the mind and contains a limitless number of words, most of which are rarely used in communication.

Various researchers in the field of linguistics have described the concept of the mental lexicon. According to Handke (1995, as quoted in Bonin, 2004), it is the core part of a language processing system that communicates with other components and carries detailed linguistic information for both production and comprehension (p. 50). Singleton (2000) expands on this concept by referring to the mental lexicon as the internal lexicon constructed by individuals within their cognitive structure (p. 161). Aitchison (2003) also highlights that the mental lexicon is, at its most basic, about the relationship between words (p. 248). This framework proposes that the mental lexicon is a distributed network of several local sub-networks that can be flexibly adapted for different contextual uses. Bonin (2004) thereby confirms this idea by defining the mental lexicon as "a store containing all the representations of words (p. 1) ".

Several studies in second language acquisition research have tried to capture the character and structure of the mental lexicon. Levelt (1995) has shown that this lexicon includes a variety of representations, such as phonological, semantic, morphological, syntactic, and orthographic features. The organization and storage of mental lexicon has been an interesting area of research and has led to favorable results concerning the phonological, semantic, and morphological syntactic representations of mental lexicon. Nevertheless, despite the great importance of the orthographic component of the mental lexicon, there seems to be a shortage of research in the literature about the structure and storage of this fundamental component.

Accordingly, this paper attempts to provide and reveal more information about the orthographic representation of mental lexicon, an aspect often overshadowed by phonological, semantic, and morphological representations. Specifically, this review focuses on three interrelated objectives: (1) to examine the structure and organization of the orthographic component within the mental lexicon, (2) to explore its development in both first and second-language acquisition contexts, and (3) to evaluate its pedagogical and theoretical implications for second language learning and teaching. By addressing these aspects, this review aims to fill the existing gap in the literature on orthographic representation and provide a comprehensive framework for understanding its role in language processing and acquisition.

2. Theoretical Foundations

2.1 Organization of the Mental Lexicon

The mental lexicon serves as a vibrant storehouse of linguistic knowledge, playing a crucial role in processing language by holding various representations of words. These representations encompass phonological, semantic, morphological, syntactic, and orthographic features, all interacting within a complex network (Levelt, 1995). This intricate setup allows quick and efficient access to linguistic information in different situations. Bonin (2004) describes the mental lexicon as a "mental repository of all representations that are intrinsically related to words" (p. 1), highlighting its integrative character.

The organization of the mental lexicon can be likened to a distributed network. This perspective suggests that words are not stored in isolation but are interconnected through various associative links. Aitchison (2003) refers to this interconnectedness as a "web of words," where semantic, phonological, and orthographic relationships form clusters of related terms (p. 138). This networked structure aids in retrieving words, as activating one word can trigger related ones. For example, when you think of "cat," it may bring to mind related terms like "feline," "kitten," or "purr."

This distributed nature of the lexicon allows it to adapt flexibly to different contexts. Taylor and Taylor (1990) note that the mental lexicon operates on shared features, organizing words based on common phonological, semantic, or orthographic traits (p. 175). This means multiple words can be activated simultaneously, improving processing efficiency. For instance, words like "unhappy," "undo," and "unlock" may be grouped due to their similar prefixes or suffixes (Aitchison, 2003).

An important feature of the lexicon is its adaptability across different languages. Research indicates that the mental lexicon is influenced by the linguistic structures of a person's language. Singleton (2000) argues that bilingual and multilingual individuals often develop separate yet interconnected lexicons for each language. He states, "L2 words are often stored separately from L1 words, but the two systems remain in communication, enabling transfer and interference effects" (p. 161). This adaptability showcases the lexicon's ability to incorporate new linguistic information while preserving its structure.

Additionally, how language is used affects how the mental lexicon is organized. Spoken and written forms activate different but overlapping representations; for instance, orthographic knowledge plays a more prominent role in reading, while phonological representations are more significant in speech (Liberman et al., 1980). This dual access mechanism illustrates the lexicon's flexibility in meeting the specific needs of various communication tasks.

Regarding the above points, the organization of the mental lexicon is a complex phenomenon that mirrors the intricacies of human language. Integrating diverse linguistic representations and adapting to contextual needs enables the smooth processing and retrieval of words. As Aitchison (2003) aptly observes, "The mental lexicon is not a static storehouse but a living, evolving system, constantly reshaped by our linguistic experiences" (p. 248).

2.2 The Orthographic Component of the Mental Lexicon

Building on the distributed network organization of the mental lexicon, the orthographic component emerges as an essential yet often overlooked dimension of lexical knowledge. The written form contributes significantly to how words are processed, stored, and retrieved for languages with a writing system. Singleton (2000) and Aitchison (2003) describe orthographic knowledge as the "sequence of letters" that defines a lexical item (p. 4). This dimension complements other linguistic features, such as phonology and semantics, in forming a comprehensive representation of words within the mental lexicon.

The orthographic component is intricately linked to the lexicon's network-like structure. Models proposed by McClelland and Rumelhart (1981) and Caramazzae et al. (1988) conceptualize the lexicon as a system of interconnected units where activation spreads when these units are accessed. While some studies, such as Laudanna et al. (1989), argue that lexical organization is predominantly morphological, others, like Lupker and Williams (1989), provide evidence supporting the coexistence of orthographic and phonological networks. Glushko's (1979) seminal experiment demonstrated that presenting a word activates orthographically similar words, emphasizing the role of orthographic relations in adult mental lexicons. Despite these findings, no single model comprehensively explains how orthographic representations operate within the lexicon.

A critical area of inquiry involves the comparison of orthographic systems in alphabetic and logographic languages. While alphabetic languages like English rely on systematic grapheme-to-phoneme correspondences, logographic systems such as Chinese are characterized by characters that represent morphemes without direct phonological cues. In Chinese, each character occupies a square space, representing both a visual and semantic unit. This distinction raises questions about whether findings derived from alphabetic languages can be generalized to logographic systems (Liberman et al., 1980).

In logographic systems, the interaction between orthography, phonology, and semantics is particularly complex. Connectionist models suggest that these elements form overlapping networks within the mental lexicon, allowing for multidirectional activation. For example, in Chinese, homophony—where a single syllable corresponds to multiple characters with distinct meanings—complicates retrieval processes. The syllable "ba1," for instance, can map onto various characters, each associated with different meanings and contexts. This phenomenon underscores the unique challenges of orthographic organization in logographic languages, as opposed to the more linear structure observed in alphabetic systems.

Interestingly, phonological knowledge often precedes orthographic knowledge in both L1 and L2 acquisition. Liberman et al. (1980) proposed that access to the mental lexicon is initially phonological, with orthographic information being recoded into phonological forms during early print processing. This efficiency allows readers to leverage their existing spoken language knowledge when learning to read. Grapheme-to-phoneme correspondences serve as a bridge between written and spoken language, reducing the cognitive load required to develop orthographic competence.

Orthographic and phonological representations do not exist in isolation but are closely interwoven in the mental lexicon. Aitchison's (2003) "bathtub effect" highlights the prominence of word shapes in memory, with individuals recalling the beginnings and endings of words more effectively than their middles (p. 138). This principle is reflected in patterns like c_____ate, which links words such as calculate, communicate, and confiscate. Furthermore, McCarthy (1990) observed that L2 learners often perceive words based on both their orthographic and phonological shapes, as illustrated by silent "k" words like knife, knock, and knew. These findings underscore the role of orthographic patterns in structuring the lexicon and facilitating retrieval.

Ultimately, the orthographic component of the mental lexicon represents a complex interplay of visual, phonological, and semantic features. This interconnectedness enables efficient word processing and retrieval while adapting to the unique demands of different writing systems. Researchers can gain deeper insights into the cognitive mechanisms underlying language acquisition and processing by examining the orthographic dimension alongside other components.

2.3 Development of Orthographic Knowledge

Development of the orthographic knowledge is a gradual and complex process which is shaped by various cognitive, linguistic, as well as contextual influences. It entails understanding the rules and patterns that govern a written language. This includes recognizing how letters correspond to sounds, following spelling conventions, and also acquiring specific word knowledge (Ehri, 2014). Such foundational knowledge is essential to become proficient in reading and writing, as it allows learners to decode (read) and encode (write) words successfully.

In the case of first language (L1) acquisition, children typically build their orthographic knowledge in conjunction with their phonological consciousness. Ehri and Snowling (2004) describe such a development as occurring in phases, starting with pre-alphabetic awareness and progressing through partial and complete alphabetic phases. During these stages, children learn to connect graphemes (letters) to phonemes (sounds), which is helpful in recognizing and decoding unexperienced words. As Ehri (2014) points out, "Orthographic learning begins as children internalize grapheme-phoneme correspondences and gradually build a repertoire of sight words" (p. 5). Such orthographic skills expanded during early reading contributes to more advanced abilities, such as understanding morphology (the structure of words) and syntax (sentence structure) later on.

For second language (L2) learners, the development of orthographic knowledge is often influenced by their L1 orthographic system. Learners coming from logographic or syllabic backgrounds may encounter specific challenges when learning alphabetic languages like English. Koda (2007) notes that L2 orthographic learning can be affected by transfer effects, where learners apply patterns and rules from their native language to the new language, which can sometimes lead to mistakes. For instance, learners whose first language is Chinese might struggle with English spelling because their native logographic system does not have the same grapheme-phoneme correspondences (Geva & Wang, 2001).

Several factors play a significant role in developing orthographic knowledge for both L1 and L2 learners. One critical element is print exposure; regular interaction with written texts helps

learners internalize orthographic patterns and specific word knowledge (Stanovich & Cunningham, 2004). Furthermore, explicit instruction in spelling rules and word patterns greatly enhances orthographic learning. Treiman and Kessler (2014) emphasize that "Direct teaching of orthographic principles helps learners make connections between letters and sounds, reducing the cognitive load in decoding and encoding tasks" (p. 314).

Phonological awareness also plays a vital role in this process by providing a foundation for mapping sounds to symbols. Goswami (2019) points out that phonological awareness is a "predictor of early literacy success" and serves as a precursor to developing orthographic competence (p. 19). Learners with strong phonological skills are more likely to create solid orthographic representations, facilitating efficient word recognition and spelling.

Both L1 and L2 learners encounter challenges while developing their orthographic knowledge. The irregular spelling patterns found in English—such as silent letters and homophones—can complicate the learning process. Ellis (2020) highlights that "the inconsistency of English orthography presents unique difficulties, particularly for non-native speakers" (p. 72). Additionally, limited access to print-rich environments can impede the development of orthographic knowledge, especially for students from under-resourced educational backgrounds (Moats, 2020).

On the whole, the development of orthographic knowledge is a dynamic process influenced by various cognitive, linguistic, and contextual factors. Understanding how this knowledge evolves can help inform teaching practices and support learners in acquiring compelling reading and writing skills. By recognizing students' challenges and employing effective instructional strategies, educators can improve outcomes in orthographic learning across diverse linguistic contexts.

2.4 Implications of Orthographic Representations for Language Acquisition

Orthographic representations play a focal role in language acquisition as they affect comprehension and production of the language. Orthographic forms, or spellings, are particularly important for second language (L2) learners. Research recommends that experiencing orthographic input can progress vocabulary acquisition through facilitating the connection between sounds and their conforming written forms. For example, studies have demonstrated that learners who receive both auditory and orthographic input tend to retain spoken words more effectively than those relying only on auditory response (Chambré et al., 2017).

In first language (L1) acquisition, children benefit from exposure to words both aurally and in writing. This dual exposure strengthens their understanding of vocabulary and phonological structures. For instance, Ehri and Rosenthal (2007) found that children who encountered new words alongside their orthographic representations were more successful in recalling them later than those who learned the words without seeing the spelling. This suggests that orthographic knowledge enhances both word recognition and memory retention.

For adult L2 learners, the effect of orthographic forms can be more intricate. While orthographic input can assist in perceiving phonological forms of novel L2 words, it may also result in non-native-like pronunciations. Bassetti and Atkinson (2015) noted that Italian speakers learning

English often pronounced words according to their native spelling conventions, leading to less standard English pronunciations. This highlights how orthographic representations can interfere with accurate pronunciation, especially when grapheme-to-phoneme correspondences differ between languages.

Furthermore, orthographic representations affect learners' ability to retrieve and produce vocabulary. For instance, a study involving French participants learning English pseudowords showed that those who learned with orthographic forms performed better in naming tasks than those who only received the auditory form (3). However, this advantage may sometimes be accompanied by less accurate pronunciation due to the influence of the learners' native language orthography (Bassetti, 2017).

Several factors influence how orthographic representations affect language acquisition. The context in which learners are exposed to written forms—whether through direct instruction or incidental learning—can shape their understanding of orthography. Moreover, individual differences such as prior literacy experiences and phonological awareness affect how effectively learners incorporate orthographic information into their language processing.

2.5 Practical Applications of Orthographic Knowledge

The practical applications of orthographic knowledge are vital for enhancing learners' reading and writing skills. Orthographic knowledge refers to connecting sounds (phonemes), spellings (graphemes), and word meanings. This skill is critical for fluent reading because it enables learners to recognize words instantly through a process known as orthographic mapping. Linking spoken language to written forms allows students to identify words without decoding them repeatedly (Kilpatrick, 2019).

One key benefit of orthographic knowledge is the development of sight vocabulary—words that readers recognize automatically. A strong sight vocabulary allows learners to focus on comprehension rather than the mechanical task of decoding individual words. Research shows that proficient readers may have a sight vocabulary of 30,000 to 60,000 words stored in long-term memory through repeated exposure and practice (Ehri, 2014). For example, as learners map new words using orthographic techniques, they can quickly recall their sounds and meanings, improving reading fluency and efficiency.

Teachers play an important role in fostering orthographic knowledge by employing specific instructional strategies, such as:

- **Phoneme-Grapheme Mapping**: Using tools like sound boxes to help students break down words into sounds and link them to letters.
- **Word Sorting Activities**: Highlighting common orthographic patterns to help students identify similarities and differences in spelling.

- **Pattern-Based Spelling Lists**: Providing spelling lists focusing on rules rather than rote memorization.
- **Repeated Reading**: Encouraging students to reread familiar texts to reinforce automatic word recognition.

These strategies are particularly valuable for struggling readers, who often need extra support to develop their orthographic skills. Educators can help these learners build a solid foundation in reading and spelling by focusing on specific word patterns and offering targeted practice.

Another critical aspect of orthographic instruction is integrating phonological awareness into daily lessons. Strong phonological skills, such as blending sounds and segmenting syllables, are essential for successful orthographic mapping. Activities designed to strengthen these skills should be a regular part of the classroom routine (Ehri, 2014).

Finally, addressing the challenges of irregular spelling patterns, especially in languages like English, can improve teaching practices. For example, teachers can focus on high-frequency irregular words and explicitly teach spelling rules to help learners manage the complexities of English orthography (Ellis, 2020). This approach equips students to navigate challenging spelling patterns more effectively.

Below, there are some detailed tips that help to remember the orthography of words:

- **Use mnemonics and memory aids**

Mnemonics can be defined as cognitive instruments that can assist with storing specific orthographic data and reconstructing those memories because they establish connections between the material being learned and other information that is easier to memorize. For instance, the expanding word ‘‘accommodate” has the mnemonic, which is a phrase: A big cat catches all mice. This strategy aims at coming up with a catchy slogan or an image that is easily associated with the right spelling of a given word, both by audible and visual means. First, mnemonics become effective aids because material that is more abstract can be translated into more concrete and, therefore, more memorable forms. We have discussed this above (Miller & Gildea, 1987). This method fits with cognitive theories and how mnemonic devices assist in storing information that has been stored in long-term memory (Miller, 1956).

- **Practice word patterns and rules**

The other technique that may foster orthographic development is the routine use of past spelling conventions and drilled alphabetic patterns. When introducing words, systematic things like “i before e except after c” help in spelling mastery. It is recalled that implementing such rules aids in the learners' identification of familiar orthographic patterns, thus improving their spelling (Bear et al., 2008). What is taught in these lessons is the ability for the accumulated patterns that govern word spelling to become part of the student’s long-term memory. Research has indicated that when

children learn how to spell, they need to learn the rules that govern it, which improves their orthographic knowledge (Bear et al., 2008; Caravolas et al., 2001; Moats, 2000; Treiman, 1993).

- **Engage in repeated practice**

To reinforce orthographic competence, practice through different activities should be rampant. Group practices, dictation, spelling games, and constant revision sessions help the students develop orthographic memory and enhance spelling over time (Goswami, 2002). Regular use and practice of word forms allow learners to develop spelling through reinforcement, which conforms with the theory of skills acquisition, pointing to the fact that practice is an important facet of skill acquisition (Anderson & Lebiere, 2014). Goswami (2002) also pointed out that through daily practice, learners are also highly likely to retain their spell knowledge and, at the same time, put it into practice.

- **Utilize word visualization techniques**

Techniques of word visualization include segmenting words into parts that are easier to deal with and then demeaning aspects that can help out in memory strategies. For example, the teaching technique 'Be a U-tiful' for the word beautiful is a way of simplifying complex spellings by breaking down the work into manageable parts (Pressley et al., 2006). This is in relation to cognitive theories that hold that imagery facilitates the encoding and retrieval of orthographic data (Paivio, 2013). In writing, visualization procedures assist the learners in gaining perspectives on the formation of letters within words and the best way to recall proper spellings (Pressley et al., 2006).

- **Teach spelling strategies based on phonological awareness**

Sound-letter relationship activities such as phonemic awareness exercises become critical in spelling. Such activities as sound sorting enable the learners to associate phonemes with graphemes and boost their spelling skills (Lundberg et al., 1980). Phonological awareness is a component that is very important in spelling and is known to correspond to good spelling interventions (Goswami, 2002). These activities help the learners in phonemic awareness, or the relationship between sounds and letters, which is vital for spelling (Lundberg et al., 1980).

3. Empirical Studies on Orthographic Representations

This section explores empirical studies on orthographic representations across various writing systems, highlighting the distinct approaches to orthographic processing in alphabetic, logographic, and mixed systems. By examining these diverse methodologies, we can gain insights into universal strategies and system-specific techniques contributing to literacy acquisition.

Research on alphabetic languages—such as English, Spanish, and Finnish—has consistently underscored the significance of phoneme-grapheme correspondence in orthographic learning. For instance, Ehri (2014) demonstrated that children in English-speaking environments benefit from explicit phonics instruction, which aids in developing automatic word recognition. Similarly, Aro and

Wimmer (2003) found that children learning Finnish, a language characterized by a highly transparent orthography, acquire reading skills more rapidly than their English-speaking counterparts. This suggests that the transparency of an orthographic system can significantly impact the speed of literacy development.

Furthermore, studies have delved into the effects of orthographic depth on spelling accuracy and reading fluency. Katz and Frost (1992) proposed the orthographic depth hypothesis, which posits that readers of shallow orthographies tend to rely more heavily on phonological decoding. In contrast, those engaging with deeper orthographies must employ more advanced orthographic strategies. This distinction highlights how the structural characteristics of a language's writing system can shape the cognitive processes involved in reading and writing.

In contrast to alphabetic systems, logographic writing systems like Chinese and Japanese Kanji necessitate a fundamentally different cognitive approach due to their reliance on character recognition rather than phoneme-grapheme mapping. Research indicates that learners must cultivate strong visual memory and morphological awareness to master these systems effectively. For example, Shen and Bear (2000) investigated how Chinese learners develop their orthographic knowledge by recognizing radicals within characters. They concluded that understanding both semantic and phonetic components is crucial for enhancing reading comprehension. Similarly, Tan et al. (2005) emphasized the importance of visual-spatial skills in acquiring orthographic representations in Chinese.

Comparative studies have revealed shared and distinct orthographic learning processes across different writing systems. Ziegler and Goswami (2005) introduced the psycholinguistic grain size theory, which suggests that variations in reading acquisition stem from the size of linguistic units emphasized within various orthographies. Additionally, Share's (2008) comparative research highlighted the significance of self-teaching mechanisms in alphabetic and logographic systems. In this context, phonological recoding plays a vital role in alphabetic languages, while morphological decoding is more central to logographic systems. Perfetti et al. (2005) further analyzed the universal and script-dependent aspects of orthographic processing, emphasizing the interplay between phonological, morphological, and orthographic components necessary for achieving reading fluency.

In summary, empirical research on orthographic representations provides valuable understanding of how diverse writing systems shape literacy development. This knowledge enables educators to adapt their teaching methods to address the specific challenges associated with different orthographies.

4. Conclusion and Future Directions

Investigating the orthographic component of the mental lexicon has illuminated its vital role in language processing, acquisition, and literacy development. This review synthesizes theoretical frameworks, empirical studies, and practical applications to clarify how orthographic knowledge is organized, developed, and interacts with other elements of the mental lexicon, such as phonology and semantics.

One of this review's key insights is the mental lexicon's distributed and interconnected nature. Orthographic knowledge is integrated into a broader network of linguistic representations. Theoretical models, such as those proposed by McClelland and Rumelhart (1981), indicate that orthographic representations are not stored in isolation but are linked to phonological and semantic features. This interconnectedness facilitates efficient retrieval and processing of words, particularly in alphabetic languages like English, where grapheme-phoneme correspondences play a central role.

Moreover, empirical studies highlight the variability in how orthographic knowledge is organized across different writing systems. In alphabetic languages, the mental lexicon emphasizes systematic patterns and spelling conventions. In contrast, logographic systems like Chinese rely more on visual and semantic cues. This distinction underscores the need for context-specific approaches to understanding orthographic representation. Additionally, comparative studies reveal that transfer effects between first-language (L1) and second-language (L2) orthographic systems can both facilitate and hinder the development of orthographic knowledge in multilingual learners (Koda, 2007).

The review also identifies several challenges learners face when developing their orthographic knowledge. Irregular spelling patterns and limited print exposure can complicate this process. While phonological awareness is a foundation for orthographic learning, irregularities in languages like English may make decoding particularly difficult for L2 learners. This highlights the importance of explicit instruction and strategic teaching methods to help learners navigate these complexities.

Ultimately, orthographic knowledge is indispensable for literacy development and plays a crucial role in language acquisition. The insights presented in this review emphasize that the orthographic component should not be viewed in isolation but rather as an integral part of the mental lexicon. By bridging theoretical models with empirical findings, this review contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how orthographic knowledge evolves and functions across diverse linguistic contexts.

Despite the advancements made in this field, significant gaps remain in our understanding of the orthographic component of the mental lexicon. Future research could focus on several areas:

1. **Cross-Linguistic Comparisons**: There is a need for more studies comparing orthographic organization in both alphabetic and logographic languages, particularly within multilingual settings.

2. **Development in Special Populations**: Investigating how individuals with dyslexia, illiteracy, or other cognitive challenges develop their orthographic knowledge could yield valuable insights.

3. **Technological Integration**: Researching the role of digital tools and applications in supporting orthographic learning—especially in L2 contexts—can have practical implications for language education.

4. **Longitudinal Studies**: Tracking the development of orthographic competence over time in both L1 and L2 learners could deepen our understanding of how this skill evolves.

Based on these findings, educators should consider integrating orthographic instruction into the broader literacy curricula while emphasizing the relationship between phonology and orthography. Approaches such as explicitly teaching spelling rules, phoneme-grapheme mapping, and employing metacognitive strategies can enhance learners' ability to decode and encode words effectively. Additionally, fostering print-rich environments and providing access to diverse reading materials will support orthographic development—particularly for learners from under-resourced backgrounds.

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Functional Analysis of Engagement Markers in Academic Spoken Genre: Discussion Sessions in Focus

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ABSTRACT

The study investigates the use and functions of engagement markers in students' nine discussion sessions (making 74904 words) taken from the MICASE corpus which was analyzed using Hyland's (2016) taxonomy of engagement markers, including four main functions of listeners' mention, questions, appealing to shared knowledge, directives, and personal asides. The results showed that engagement markers were found to be frequently enough to be considered a significant feature in interactive spoken genres. Also, it was found out that about half of the engagement realizations were dedicated to the listeners' mention highlighting the engagement of the audiences and listeners adding an interactive sense to the discussion sessions. Moreover, within the four functions, some engagement markers were more frequent than others suggesting the importance of highlighting these features for students to use when participating in the similar genres. Thus, engagement markers can play a pivotal role in the realization of the interactive nature of spoken genres. The findings of this study could be used in teaching academic English spoken genres.

1. Introduction

Much has been done on academic spoken and written discourse. Regarding the former, most studies have paid attention to lectures (Richards, 1983), more specifically, the lecture comprehension process. As for the latter, academic writing is not considered an objective form of discourse anymore, rather viewed as a persuasive and rhetorical discourse imbued with the viewpoints of authors under the influence of the constructivist perspective. Additionally, academic discourse involves social communication between authors and their audience; the authors not only convey their ideas through the text but also try to establish an interpersonal relationship with the audience by expressing

attitudes, and certainty. Authors should consider the audiences' background knowledge, personal characteristics, processing limitations, and face needs. In this process, according to Hyland (2005), they usually attempt to claim solidarity with the audience, appraise previous works, and recognize alternative ideas; thus, in order to build a convincing argument, one should focus on the level of personality control in the text.

One of the devices used in academic discourse is meta-discourse, coined by Zelling Harris (1959) that is employed to describe words or phrases commenting on a sentence. It can be any phrase within clauses or sentences. More specifically, meta-discourse is used to show both the aim and the direction of a text. Hyland (2004) has defined it as linguistic devices used for organizing the text and presenting the authors' attitudes toward both content and the audience. Similarly, Crismore (1989) believes that meta-discourse can be referred to as a linguistic device in both written and spoken texts which helps the audience organize, decipher, and evaluate the information, but it does not add anything to the content. According to Vande Kopple (1985), researchers have divided meta-discourse markers into textual and interpersonal categories.

Through meta-discourse framework, communication can be understood as social engagement. It is the way one can project oneself within the discourse through focusing on the text content and its ultimate audience. Then, meta-discourse can be used as a welcoming facility by the writer to not only make the text more coherent and understandable through improving its readability, but it can also grasp the full image of the given context and how the text and its message can be conveyed and related through some other important factors (e.g. credibility, personality, and audience-sensitivity; Hyland, 2000).

As a multidimensional model which included the basic ideas of Thompson's model (1998), Hyland (2005) proposed a model of meta-discourse consisting of two major categories of interactive and interactional meta-discourse markers. The model added to the previous knowledge in that it included two main elements of stance and engagement markers as the focal points (Hyland, 2005). The way the text is organized and the readers' comprehension is enhanced deals with the interactive meta-discourse markers. If the writer is more concerned with the receiver of the message and tries to establish a satisfactory basis for his argument based on those targets and needs, he has highlighted the interactive part of the meta-discourse concerns. Contrary to this, through the interactional aspect, the writer's attitude and interest and how the reader can construct the text are made more explicit and hence, the reader can better anticipate his aims and predictions of the text (Hyland, 2005). Through Hyland's (2005) model, all of the necessary elements the justification of the interaction and the connection between the writer and his readers are elaborated. He believes that writing both illuminates an external reality and also constructs a social relationship with readers through producing some original texts. The main elements of stance and engagement enables the writer make interaction in academic writing. There are a variety of stance markers including the way one tries to make hedges and self-mentions and make use of some attitude markers and boosters. Engagement markers consist of how writers implement the shared knowledge, directives and questions and the way they utilize personal asides and reader pronouns (Hyland, 2005).

In the same vein, Halliday (1999) pointed out that textual meta-discourse shows how a cohesive and coherent text can be made through linking and making connections between different individual and isolated propositions and the way the building blocks of these propositions interact with other elements within the context to make a unified text. Hyland (2004) has provided a functional approach, suggesting two kinds of meta-discourse: interactive and interpersonal. The former refers to linguistic

devices associated with the ways of organizing texts and includes evidentials, coding words, and markers of frame and endophoric. The latter involves the audiences in the text by shifting their focus towards the information coming from the writer and the other audience. Interpersonal meta-discourse refers to using language to encode interaction, take roles, and express and understand feelings, explanations, and evaluations. It consists of makers, hedges and self-mentions and make use of some attitude and engagement markers, self-mentions, and boosters.

Then, Hyland (2005) asserted that engagement markers are different methods through which authors bring their audience into the text to involve them and wait for their probable reactions. He further states that they have two functions of acknowledging the audience using inclusion and disciplinary solidarity and positioning the audience. Regarding the former, using reader pronouns and interjections, the audiences are addressed as participants in the arguments. As for the latter, the authors attempt to pull the audience into the texts, predict their probable objections, and guide them to specific interpretations. Based on their function, engagement markers seek to both solicit the solidarity of the readers and craft their agreement (Hyland, 2005). The former could be conducted using pronouns of the reader and his personal asides; whereas, the latter can take the form of directives, appeals to common information and questions.

The features of the meta-discourse can also be taught to the learners which is highly valuable in three ways (Hyland, 2005); firstly, the cognitive demands of the texts and the way they can contribute to the understanding of the text becomes evident for them. Secondly, taking a sound and clear stance based on their assumptions is attained through the existing evidences. Thirdly, negotiation of the stance can be held with readers. Meta-discourse can also be prioritized within the classroom to have other benefits such as making context-related propositional information, improving the argumentativeness of the text and its comprehension and remembering, working on the text organization and its coherence, signaling writer's doubts and uncertainty based on the propositional information, giving readers some directions on where and how subjective ideas enter the text. It can also contribute to highlighting writers' interpretations and views to the readers, and the way he tries to help readers' processing system and parsing information through providing enough information and linkages.

1.1 Engagement Markers

According to Hyland (2005), language users can interact in written texts in the same way that they do in spoken text, however due to the use of different mediums, it would have different effects. This view is regarded as the perception of social engagement through the academic writing where writers can interact with readers. Therefore, the contexts in which the meta-discourse occurs, gives due importance to it as a cogent analytical tool (Hyland, 2005). It means that specific cultural, linguistic and professional communities with their particular needs and expectations are mutually connected with the ways writers engage and communicate with readers and negotiate meaning and argument. Based on such engagement, the writer evaluates the readers' expectations and needs for communication and provides enough cues to maintain communication with propositional content. As a result, in order to explore academic writing and its different genres and compare discourse communities with their specific rhetorical preferences, there is a need to refer to the findings of the metadiscoursal analysis.

Engagement markers are some text characteristics used to decipher the way writers recognize their potential readers and really interact with them based on their expectations and

communicate and have argument with them, and direct them as their discourse partners and participants (Hyland, 2005). These engagement markers are categorized into following five categories as directives, reader pronoun, questions, imperative, and shared knowledge. Common to all of these meta-discourse features is the way the writer is aware of his audience; hence they should have good command of the pragmatic competence of discourse (Hyland, 2005).

Hyland (2005) states that the first strategy of crafting reader agreement, directives, instructs the audience to perform actions or sets them the scene to view the author's expectations. He categorized directives into cognitive, textual, and physical acts. The first group guides the readers into another part or text, and the second one directs them to understand and be persuaded in a way determined by the author. Finally, the third one asks the readers to perform specific actions, which are done in the text. According to Hyland (2002a), directives can be identified in three ways, including the way an imperative is used, a modal referred to an addressee, and a predicative adjective that expresses the authors' statement of necessities. The second strategy appeals to the knowledge shared between the addressees and explains the audience's consent by making an obvious argument regarding what is relatively unchangeable (Hyland, 2001). The following is an example of the second strategy:

Physics as an important discipline is well known to be difficult for some students.

The third strategy, questions, is employed to establish a niche (Hyland, 2002b). As Webber (1994) declared:

> Questions create anticipation, arouse interest, challenge the reader into thinking about the topic of the text, and have a direct appeal in bringing the second person into a kind of dialogue with the writer, which other rhetorical devices do not have to the same extent (p. 266).

Consider the following example:

Why do they believe in these issues?

Having the importance of engagement markers on board, the study intends to evaluate the realizations and functions of engagement markers in discussion sessions.

1.2 Previous Studies on Engagement Markers

Hyland (1999) investigated how meta-discourse markers were used in textbooks and studies on Applied Linguistics, Biology, and Marketing. He observed that more hedges were found in those of Biology, while more observing evidentials and features of relational markers in texts of Applied Linguistics. Fewer evidentials and endophorics were observed in texts related to Marketing. In a similar study, Hyland and Tse (2004) focused on how meta-discourse markers were used in post-graduate dissertations in different fields including Applied Linguistics. He found that Humanities and Social Sciences used meta-discourse markers more than non-Humanities disciplines.

Hyland (2005) investigated engagement markers in a study corpus from different fields. He also interviewed some reviewers to ensure the engagement functions of the linguistic features used in the different research papers analyzed. He concluded his study by providing an improved model for the analysis of the engagement markers.

Dafouz-Milne (2008) explored four types of texts, including textbooks, student writings, science popularization advertisements, and research articles on how meta-discourse markers were used. He attempted to investigate the way meta-discourse markers were used in persuading the audience on a corpus consisting of 40 opinion columns. He found that two types of meta-discourse were used in columns of English and Spanish; however, logical markers and code glosses were used differently. Since he focused on the role of the use of the two types, persuasion was established.

In a study on 54 papers from natural and social sciences, Abdi (2011) observed that engagement markers were widely implemented in different studies. Furthermore, he found 39 engagement markers in the Introduction and 47 in the Method section, while there were 134 engagement markers in Result and Discussion. His research study proved engagement markers as one of the most common markers of meta-discourse in the Result and Discussion section.

Ayuni's (2015) study explored speech performance of the learners, and observed that they frequently implemented engagement markers of reader/audience pronoun, directives, questions, and common knowledge. It was shown that learners noticed audiences' presence and engaged with them in communication, while also reporting the reader/audience pronoun (62.66%) as the most widely used engagement marker. Thus, the researcher concluded that learners noticed the referents of their speech. The next category, questions, constituted 18.28%, followed by directives (14.38%) and appeal to shared knowledge (4.48%).

Hyland and Jiang (2016) investigated the engagement realizations over 20 years from four disciplines. They ran their study on a fairly large corpus of words as large as 2.2 million one selected from the five great journals in four fields at different time periods. They found that more explicit markers of engagement were used than in the past. However, they observed no relationships between the length of research articles and this increase. They also traced some changes concerning the use and types of engagement markers in sections of papers.

Zou and Hyland (2020) investigated how bloggers from various disciplines engaged their audiences. Accordingly, they explored soft and hard fiends of around 132 posts from different blogs and found that those of soft disciplines had significantly used more mentions by the readers and other markers as directives, and questions. On the other hand, hard blogs in hard disciplines were based on resources that claimed more authority of the author and needed much more common understanding.

In a study on markers in a grammar textbook (A Student Grammar of the English Language), Markovic (2021) found all of the five engagement markers. He also reported that directives, reader pronouns, and appeals to common knowledge were used much more than personal asides and questions. He further argued that this large use of engagement markers in the textbook could be justified on the basis that it acquired the primarily informal tone of involving the audience in the text.

Although much has been done on engagement markers in various discourses (both spoken and written), few, if any, studies have paid attention to these markers in the discussion sessions as a spoken genre. Besides written discourse, spoken discourse is important in the academic setting. Therefore, considering the importance of this discourse and the ignorance of this area by previous studies, the current paper attempts to explore engagement markers in spoken discussions between students and speakers at the University of Michigan. More specifically, the current study explores the following research questions:

1. What kind of engagement markers are used in the discussion sessions as an interactive spoken genre?

2. What engagement markers are most frequently used in discussion sessions as an interactive spoken genre?

2. Methodology

To conduct the present study qualitative content analysis was employed. In this kind of analysis, as a systematic research method, textual and spoken data are used by researchers to explore different language aspects (Mayring, 2021).

2.1 Corpus

Based on the research objectives, discussions between students and instructors at the University of Michigan were analyzed. These discussions were selected from the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English. The selected discussion sessions were 9 and only these discussion sessions were available in the MICASE. The recordings with a duration of 532 minutes were prepared. The total number of words was 74904. Speakers spoke much more than students.

Table 1

Corpus Characteristics

Title	Department	Source	Quality of Interaction	Participants		Date	Duration (min)	Word Count
				Students	Speakers			
Philosophy	Humanities	Michigan University	Mostly Interactive	20	10	1998/04/16	51	8355
Biology	Biological and Health Sciences	Michigan University	Mixed	16	13	1998/06/22	55	7424
Economics	Social Sciences and Education	Michigan University	Mixed	30	8	1999/04/15	61	8526
Intro Biology	Biological and Health Sciences	Michigan University	Highly interactive	21	22	1999/02/10	59	6899
Intro Anthropology	Social Sciences and Education	Michigan University	Mixed	22	18	1999/04/09	51	7893
History Review	Social Sciences and Education	Michigan University	Mostly interactive	22	20	2000/06/20	119	15679
Heat and Mass Transfer	Physical Sciences and Engineering	Michigan University	Mostly monologic	10	4	2000/07/17	48	7570
Intro to American	Social Sciences and Education	Michigan University	Highly interactive	24	18	2000/07/27	55	7220
Politics Intro Astronomy	Physical Sciences and Engineering	Michigan University	Mixed	20	4	2001/01/10	33	5338
Total							532	74904

2.2 Data Analysis

Based on the taxonomy presented by Hyland (2005, pp. 222-223), engagement markers were analyzed. These markers are presented in the following table:

Table 2

The Engagement Markers of the Study

Engagement Features	Items
Reader Mentions	(the) reader's, one's, our, us, we, you, your
Questions	?
Appeals to Shared Knowledge	integrate, notice, recall, order, use, imagine, key, see, let x = y, look at, mark, measure, consider, mount, must, note, refer, find observe, pay, picture, prepare, recover, remove, regard, remember, review, state, select, set, show, suppose, turn, take, think about, think of
Directives	add, need to, allow, analyze, apply, should, arrange, assess, calculate, ought, demonstrate, choose, classify, let us, compare, connect, consult, insert, contrast, define, develop, determine, do not, input, employ, ensure, estimate, evaluate, follow, go, have to, increase, assume, let's
Personal Asides	by the way, and, incidentally

2.3 Procedure

The first step included collecting the corpus. Accordingly, the researchers downloaded the discussion sessions from the MICASE corpus and saved them in word document format. The second step was allocated to data analysis. In this step, the researchers searched the discussion sessions for the realizations of engagement markers following the taxonomy proposed by Hyland (2005). The third step was the reanalysis of the corpus to make sure of the analysis as some engagement features could have had more than one function or lack an engagement function. This step was very demanding as, in some cases, it was necessary to go through the text and read it multiple times to make sure of the functions of engagement markers. In the fourth step, a sample of 3 discussion sessions was given to two experts doing research in the same area of study to check the analysis. The researchers were selected based on the fact that they had publications on metadiscourse markers. The fifth step included the tabulation of the findings and discussion.

3. Results and Discussion

The results of the study were evaluated and discussed in the following order after the corpus analysis. First, the overall results concerning the realizations of engagement and its four categories are presented and discussed, following the evaluation and discussion of the study results related to each category and the most frequent engagement markers in the four categories. Finally, the possible pedagogical implications of the results are presented.

Table 3 displays how frequent the engagement markers are within the analyzed corpus. As shown, the realizations of engagement markers in this study are much more than the results reported in Hyland (2005; 2016). One possible reason for this difference could be related to the genres analyzed in these studies. It seems that engagement markers are more frequent in the spoken genres. Thus, it could be stated that spoken genres are more interactive compared to written genres. In spoken genres, the discourse is more listener-oriented, which is an aspect of interaction. However, writers are more inclined to have the readers follow the arguments and claims presented in written discourse. Thus, it is usual to have more realizations of engagement markers in spoken than written discourse.

Another justification comes from the presence of audiences in both discourses. In spoken discourse, the listener plays a pivotal role in the progress of discourse, making it necessary to use greater markers that could engage them in the interaction. Thus, in spoken discourse, especially in discussion sessions, we need to have the listeners' attention and complete engagement with the content to have the discussion continue.

Table 3

Realizations of Engagement Markers

	Frequency	**Per 1000**
Engagement Markers	7436	91.09

Pedagogically, students need to become aware that they should use engagement markers as a strategy for including and urging listeners to follow their discourse. They also need to know that they can use engagement markers to acknowledge and value the listeners' presence and guide them through the interaction as intended. The corpus was analyzed for the frequencies of categories of engagement markers and its results are provided in Table 4.

Table 4

Realizations of Engagement Markers' Subcategories

	Frequency	**Per 1000**
Reader/speaker mentions	4021	49.26
Questions	1537	18.82
Directives	1063	13.02
Appeals to shared knowledge	815	10
Total	7436	91.09

As Table 4 depicted, the speaker mentions category is the most frequent among other engagement categories, which is in line with earlier studies on engagement (Hyland, 2005, 2016). This result seems usual as listeners' mention is the most explicit and direct way to involve listeners in a discourse. This presence of the listener can be reached when different personal pronouns are used in a discourse.

Next on the list is the question category. It is found that we can expect more questions in spoken discourse for the sake of discourse flow, catching the listeners' attention, and ensuring their active participation.

The directives category has received greater attention compared with the appeal to the shared knowledge category. This result could suggest that we mostly need to ask the listener to perform actions or to follow the speakers' viewpoint in a spoken discourse. This kind of function could be realized through markers pointing to imperative, obligation, and the speakers' judgment of necessity or importance.

The results in Table 4 could suggest that speakers make a vast emphasis on binding listeners and speakers together by pronouns such as "we" and "you" in spoken genres such as discussion sessions. This engagement could signal the close relationship between speakers and listeners and treat them as discourse community members practicing the same level in discourse. Therefore, pedagogically, we should encourage participants in spoken genres to smooth the interaction by using pronouns and engage listeners by narrowing the broad distance between speakers and listeners.

It is important, pedagogically, to inform language learners that they need to use questions as a strategy to engage the listener in discourse. The answer to the question could show the comprehension of the content discussed in the sessions and guarantee the listeners' engagement in the discussion, which has a key role in the continuation of the discussion.

The listener's pronouns are the most explicit engagement markers that include listeners in the discourse (see Table 5). Accordingly, "you" and "your" (Examples 1-2) are the most explicit ways a speaker can regard the presence of listeners. The analysis of the corpus showed that these markers were the most frequently used engagement markers. It is worth mentioning that to keep the interaction moving, speakers use a self-mention pronoun to include listeners with them, treating claims, arguments, or common knowledge while simultaneously referring to themselves.

Example 1: Um w- what were the kinds of things ***you*** worried about or what are the things that ***you*** can think of right now, that may not have given ***you***, as accurate a picture as ***you*** wanted, of,

Example 2: Okay you could, you could make ***your*** points further apart, number one, you can also do what about the distance you're collecting data? This is what Mary was worried about too. You can put what?

Table 5
Realizations of Listeners' Mention Category of Engagement Markers

	Frequency	**Per 1000**
You, Your	2308	28.27
Me, Mine, My	900	11.02
Our, Us, We	813	9.95
Total	4021	49.26

The use of the pronoun "we" could highlight that in such a corpus as discussion sessions, most of the participants are students. Thus, they need such marker to clearly show that they are sharing similar understanding and goals (Examples 3-4).

Example 3: Um, well ***we*** didn't have any set [S1: okay] distances because ***we*** were doing spot mapping.

Example 4: ***We*** typically see those in the evening. How about owls? Did ***we*** sample owls? No, ***we*** didn't.

All the above pronouns act as devices that could show the dialogic nature of discussion sessions. To express their view or share them or ask for clarification, they need to refer to pronouns "I", "we", and "you" (Examples 5-7).

Example 5: - ***I*** did this the same this time as ***I*** did last time.

Example 6: ***We*** don't have a point count, but ***we***'re recording everything that that ***we*** see and hear along that.

Example 7: And then, following summer, ***you*** can tell them what the job was, tell them how many people were involved.

The current study results seem to be different from what Hyland (2005, 2016) found and it could be devoted to the dialogic nature of discussion sessions as a spoken genre. Hyland (2005, 2016) focused on written discourse, suggesting that in written discourse a pronoun such as "you" is absent as writing does not have dialogic nature.

Pedagogically, learners should understand that the use of such terms is linked to the discourse. The use of pronouns "you" and "your" could show that their application is necessary because such pronouns naturally show that the participants are not sharing the same ideas. It seems that in discussion sections, participants prefer to keep a firm stance concerning their comments, claims, arguments, or statements.

The results in Table 6 indicate that the question category of engagement has revived noticeable attention for speakers in the discussion sessions. This result is significantly different from and greater than the results reported by Hyland (2005, 2016), probably because raising questions is a favorite strategy to engage the listener actively in the discussion.

Table 6
Realizations of Question Category of Engagement Markers

	Frequency	**Per 1000**
Question/?	1537	18.82

As in example 8, it is clear that raising questions and providing answers could explicitly keep the listener's attention to the content of the discussion and have the listener following the track.

Example 8: What the bird community is? Let's say that the ……

In some parts of the corpus, speakers used questions to address the listener directly, which could result in more interactive discussion sessions (see Example 9).

Example 9: Anything else Mary?

In some examples (see Example 10), speakers include listeners with themselves, raise questions, and point out that they are both at the same level. In such cases, speakers do not intend to show the power of their knowledge but to decrease the distance between the speaker and listener. Sometimes the listener could be a student.

Example 10: What would we put this under?

Some of the questions in the corpus analysis function as clarifying the curiosity of listeners (see Example 11). Speakers notice this curiosity and present it in a form of a question. This strategy is very helpful as sometimes students are not brave enough to raise their questions.

Example 11: Mary, Con: put you on the spot? This is what make ….

Some questions are raised to seek agreement from the listeners and guarantee they are following the discourse (see Example 12).

Example 12: I emailed you, Okay?

Thus, pedagogically, we need to show this multi-functionality to students to help them use the question for these functions rather than merely for its general function of seeking information. It is also necessary to show clearly to students how a question is treated differently in spoken and written discourse. They should be provided with examples of how functions of questions are realized in spoken discourse.

Directives include utterances that require the listener to perform actions or understand everything as the speaker determines (Hyland 2001, 2002) (see Example 13). The results in Table 7 showed that the engagement markers directives are more frequently used in spoken compared to written genres. This higher rate of use could be due to the function of this kind of engagement marker, as imperatives and obligation modals are more needed in face-to-face relationships to ask listeners to perform actions in authentic context.

Example 13: ***Let's*** write it down in this room, in your very own room.

Table 7
Realizations of Directive Category of Engagement Markers

	Frequency	Per 1000
Directive	1063	13.02

In the written genre, we mostly report on an action or actions carried out in the experiment that has been done to make the discourse listener-oriented. Thus, in spoken genres, speakers are required to use more directives to make the interaction more meaningful.

This engagement marker helps to realize the interactive function based on the fact that it has three functions: a) imperative, which requires doing or performing an action; b) modal obligation to address the importance of utterance; and c) a predicative objective which express the writers' evaluation of the necessity to control a complement to a clause.

According to the results, the most frequent engagement markers that perform directive functions are "do not, go, let's, have to, and should" (see Table 8). These items could perform three functions. Directives "do not and go" were used to serve the functions of directives by ordering the listener to perform an action (see Example 14). This function is natural in spoken discourse to have the listeners' attention and keep them following the discourse.

Example 14: Okay? But do not try to guess in multiple choice.

In Example 15, "do not" was used to set speakers and listeners at the same level. This is naturally slowed in sentences with the subject pronoun "we".

Example 15: because we do not know what the distribution of a lot of …

In example 16, we have the obligation function realized through the use of "should and go" in the same sentence. This could show the obligation concerning the performance of action.

Example 16: You should do the essay first, and you should you should spend an hour on it.

Table 8
The Most Frequent Directive Markers

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Do not	304	28
Go	181	17
Let's	105	10
Have to	104	10
Should	86	7
Others	282	27
Total	1063	100

Less than other engagement markers' categories, the appeal to shared knowledge is realized in at least 10 per 1000 words. This category was found greater in this study compared to those carried out on written discourse by Hyland (2005, 2016). These results could be due to the fact that speakers intend to position the listener within the authentic realm of dialogic shared knowledge (Hyland, 2001). Taking the listener agreement into account as an important interactive factor, the speakers need to build their speech on what is implicitly agreed. The decision on what to be considered as shared knowledge between the speaker and listener is a challenging issue. Thus, it is important to give a list of terms and markers, which could involve a direct and explicit call for the listener to recognize that something talked about or referred to is common and shared knowledge to the discourse community.

Table 9

Realizations of the Appeal to Shared Knowledge Category of Engagement Markers

	Frequency	**Per 1000**
Appeal to shared knowledge	815	10

The most frequent engagement markers in appeal to shared and knowledge are "see, use, take, and remember", all of which refer to the shared knowledge (See Example 17).

Example 17: So, ***take*** Germany for example …….

4. Conclusion and Future Directions

The present study explored the way engagement markers were used in discussions between speakers and students at the University of Michigan. It was found that some markers were not used, while some – such as the reader mentions – were used more than others. Furthermore, some engagement markers such as directives were not used much. This may be associated with the fact that speakers prefer a humbler and friendlier way of talking in the academic setting. However, it is noteworthy that by 'academic setting', we mean spoken rather the written discourse. There are some differences between the written and spoken discourse. Generally, speakers prefer an informal pattern, which can enhance social support, affectivity, and shared goals (Bondi, 2018; Luzon, 2013).

Findings of this study could suggest the following implications. First, consciousness raising concerning the use of engagement markers and its multifunctionality in language education contexts in academic spoken genres should be considered. Second, speakers, especially novice writers, should be familiar with the most frequent engagement markers used in academic spoken genres.

Despite these implications, however, there are some limitations and suggestions. First, the corpus analyzed in this study is not large enough to be representative. Moreover, further research can be suggested to analyze discussions in different universities, especially universities from different cultures, to explore the role of culture. Besides, further studies can be suggested to investigate the role of gender, age, and experience to provide a more comprehensive view. Furthermore, future studies can be suggested to investigate the role of history. In other words, these discussions can be explored diachronically, investigating and comparing discussions of various decades.

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The Effect of Teaching Grammar through Consciousness-Raising Tasks on High School English Learners' Grammatical Proficiency

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ABSTRACT

This quasi-experimental study investigates the impact of teaching grammar through indirect consciousness-raising tasks. To this end, sixty-six male intermediate-level students of four intact classes at a public high school in Dashtestan, Bushehr, Iran, participated in the study. Two standardized pretests were administered to further ensure learners' homogeneity. Two classes formed two experimental groups receiving grammar consciousness-raising tasks, and the other two classes formed two control groups receiving traditional grammar lessons. Considering the first research question, pre-test and post-test mean values of the second-grade experimental group as well as the third-grade experimental group's pre-test and post-test mean values obtained through independent sample t-test indicated that consciousness-raising tasks were effective enough to help subjects make significant progress. Regarding the first research question, although the mean score of the second-grade experimental group was higher than the mean score of the control group, this difference was not significant. In the case of third-grade experimental and control groups values on the post-test respectively, CR task grammar instruction was more significantly effective than traditional grammar instruction.

1. Introduction

English occupies an important position in educational programs. Consequently, the country has implemented the teaching of the English language at various levels of education. English language has a significant importance in communication (Badpa, et al., 2023). The way of teaching English has been constantly changing through time. New methods have been designed to improve the process of teaching and learning. In the history of target language teaching the role of grammar has been an issue of controversy (Richards & Renandya, 2002). Grammar, known as the science of language, is an

essential component of language learning, which is a complex activity (Jasmina & Farmonovna, 2023). Although various approaches have been proposed to teach grammar, the inductive and deductive approaches are the best known due to their unique characteristics for teaching grammar effectively (Badpa, 2024). As many students have no experience of situational learning and therefore struggle to construct new sentences on their own, teachers continue seek their active participation in the lesson and help them to construct new sentences following the rules taught to them (Kim & Won, 2020).

The first approach is reflected in the grammar translation method and cognitive code learning while the second attitude is reflected in the natural approach and the strong version of communicative language teaching. In other words, target language educators have alternated between teaching approaches. Research suggests that empirical evidence helps in selecting methodologies for teaching grammar (Munir et al., 2023).

With the emergence of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the 80s, language instruction focusing on grammatical forms had been discouraged due to the assumption that the target language learners proceed in a fashion similar to the first language learners (Krashen, 1985). In first language acquisition, input is crucial in providing what is termed positive evidence. This refers to utterances that give the learner unconscious knowledge of what the language allows (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). Therefore, this notion became popular that instruction in the classroom should focus on providing a variety of comprehensible input. The grammar of any language is determined by its structure and system, which are expressed in syntax and morphology (Badpa, 2024).

In the field of English language teaching, there has been a debate on the appropriateness of different methods and techniques used by language teachers and scholars to teach grammar. The grammar debate has largely preoccupied theorists and practitioners. Nassaji and Fotos (2004) have argued that this focus has been motivated in part by discussions in the field of cognitive psychology over the role of explicit versus implicit language learning and whether such learning occurs through conscious manipulation of information or primarily through unconscious processes.

Grammar teaching has always been one of the most controversial issues in English language teaching (ELT) depending on the method or era (Brown, 2001). Some authors like Krashen (1997) deny the role of teaching in the acquisition of grammatical features, while current views agree on the importance of consciousness-raising tasks (CR TASK) which is the subcategory of form-focused-instruction. The rationale for the use of CR TASK is related to explicit knowledge as a facilitator for the acquisition of implicit knowledge. It is also supported by the cognitive psychological opinion that learning is more effective if it involves greater depth of processing like what is done by discovery learning through problem-solving (Ellis, 2003). Moreover, CR TASK is corroborated by Schmidt's noticing hypothesis. It is worth exploring how the use of CR TASK complies with contemporary second language acquisition theories.

According to Nassaji and Fotos (2004), "The 1980s hypothesis that language can be learned without some degree of consciousness has been found theoretically problematic" (p. 127). Schmidt (2001) suggested that conscious attention to form or noticing creates an essential condition for language learning. The role of this hypothesis in interlanguage development has been advocated by several researchers (Ellis, 1993, 1994; Fotos, 1993, 1994; Fotos & Ellis, 1991). In addition, investigators such as Skehan (1998) have presented findings indicating that learners are limited language processors

who cannot process target language input for both meaning and form at the same time (cited in Nassaji & Fotos, 2004).

According to Ellis (2003), CR tasks primarily aim to trigger cognitive comparison and develop awareness at the level of understanding as well as to build an explicit representation of the targeted feature, consequently, paving the way for the integration of the target structure at a later time rather than immediate acquisition.

Mohamed (2004) found that indirect consciousness-raising was more effective than direct consciousness-raising when applied to high-intermediate ESL learners with various first language backgrounds but not to low-intermediate learners, suggesting that the proficiency of learners can determine the effectiveness of the CR task. Ellis (2003) also agrees with Mohamed that their effectiveness may be a function of learners' proficiency level, and without having this proficiency, they may not be able to benefit from a CR task. However, in a follow-up study, Mohamed (2004, p. 232) found that proficiency does not play any role in learners' task preference regarding CR. In this project, fifty-one students were studied in two groups to determine their attitudes to learning grammar by two types of CR tasks. One group was given a deductive CR task which provided explicit explanations of a grammar structure while the other group received an inductive CR task which required the learners to discover the grammar rules for themselves. Examining the two CR tasks suggests that deductive and inductive CR tasks are effective learning tools that can be used in the language classroom to make learners aware of forms where formal instruction is necessary.

Some other researchers do not consider these tasks as deductive and inductive. They attempt to find out "whether explicit knowledge acquired from the completion of the CR task aids subsequent noticing of the targeted feature" (Ellis, 2003, p. 166) and how it facilitates the acquisition of implicit knowledge. Schmidt's (1990) noticing hypothesis suggests that negative feedback helps learners to notice the gap between inter-language forms and target forms, and noticing the gap has been hypothesized to assist inter-language development. Other studies have focused on the role of consciousness-raising and noticing as corrective feedback. In line with this, Naeini (2008) focused on the role of error correction as an indication of consciousness-raising, aimed to explore the effects of form-focused instruction and feedback type on learning. The analysis of the data indicated the outperformance of the participants in the experimental group over the performance of the participants in the control group.

Consciousness-raising at the level of notice has also been the interest of the researchers who favored using first language (L1) in the classroom to facilitate second language acquisition (L2). For example, Scott and De La Fuente (2008) investigated the impact of L1 use in CR tasks and found that L1 use in a CR task led to more collaboration among dyads and more efficient language processing than in a corresponding task where only L2 was used. The findings of this study indicated that learners use the L1 even when they appear to be operating exclusively in the L2.

To investigate the effectiveness of consciousness-raising tasks versus the deductive approach as two types of form-focused instruction in teaching grammar to Iranian high school EFL learners Shokouhi (2009) conducted a study. The results of his study showed that in the short-run, CR tasks were as effective as the deductive approach in promoting the learners' grammatical knowledge while in the long-run the CR group maintained their gains more effectively than the deductive group. Along the same line, Behrouzi (2012) carried out a study to investigate the effectiveness of CR tasks on Iranian elementary EFL learners' syntax acquisition versus traditional grammar instruction. He found

that consciousness-raising tasks resulted in more significant gains in understanding the target structure than traditional grammar instruction.

Mohamed (2004, p. 229) has argued that grammar "CR tasks have not been fully researched". Hence, the evidence for the efficacy of grammar CR tasks as form-focused tasks is meager and the relevant literature is insufficient to extrapolate findings to language pedagogy. As all studies reviewed above focused on certain specific target structures, the findings are not necessarily conclusive and any attempts to generalize them are not warranted. Thus, a CR task that has been proven effective in facilitating the acquisition of one linguistic feature may not necessarily be effective when applied to other linguistic features. Perhaps, the problem is that different linguistic features have different degrees of linguistic complexity and different frequencies of occurrence in communication. The target rules that are less complex and have frequent occurrence in communication may be easier to learn and internalize, and grammar instruction is more likely to have an immediate effect; the target rules that are more complex and have less frequent occurrence in communication may pose learning difficulty, and grammar instruction seems to have a delay effect (Ellis, 1992). Therefore, the need for more research on different linguistic features and target structures is needed. Accordingly, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

RQ1. Does teaching grammar through CR tasks have any significant role in developing the grammatical proficiency of high school learners?

RQ2. Are there any significant differences between teaching grammar through CR tasks and teaching grammar through traditional approaches including practice and mother tongue explanation?

2. Methodology

2.1 Participants and Setting

Sixty-six male intermediate-level students being members of four intact classes at a public high school in Dashtestan, Bushehr, Iran, participated in the study. The intention was to put together a subject sample that was homogeneous concerning their proficiency. All the participants' language proficiency levels were determined through the Nelson Language Proficiency test of Flower and Coe (1976). The fact that the students were required to take part in the classes as a part of their school curriculum helped to achieve zero subject mortality by the end of the study. Language learners participating in this study were all native speakers of Farsi ranging in age from 16 to 17 years.

2.2 Instrumentation

To explore the answer to the research questions the researcher applied the following instruments and instructional materials:

2.2.1 Nelson English Language Test

The Nelson language proficiency test (from Cambridge Exam English.com) was administered to further ensure learners' homogeneity regarding their knowledge of grammatical structures in every grade. Every test consisted of 20 multiple-choice items and 10 gap-fill items constructed based on the

grammar points of students' textbooks. The 30-item pretest was used also as the posttest. The time allotted for the exam was 30 minutes. A reliability index of 0.70 was achieved which is, though low, considered acceptable.

2.2.2 Pre-test and Post-tests

After examining the homogeneity of the experimental and control groups through the administration of the Nelson language proficiency test, before the treatment a standardized grammar test was administered as a pretest to both groups in grade two, and another one was administered as a pretest to both groups in grade three. These tests (from Cambridge Exam English.com) were administered to further ensure learners' homogeneity regarding their knowledge of grammatical structures in every grade. Every test consisted of 20 multiple-choice items and 10 gap-fill items constructed based on the grammar points of students' textbooks. The 30-item pretest was used also as the posttest. The time allotted for the exam was 30 minutes.

2.3 Materials

2.3.1 Inductive Grammar Consciousness-Raising Tasks

Inductive grammar CR tasks used in this study were adapted from Alexander (1990) and Hopkins and Nettle (2003). These tasks met the main criteria established by Ellis (1992, 2003) and Willis, D. & Willis, J. (1996) in which the characteristics of tasks were as follows: linguistic feature isolation, provision of data illustrating the targeted feature through underlining, color-coding, boldfacing and italicizing, encouraging learners' utilizing intellectual effort to understand the targeted feature; clarification in the form of further data and explanation, and non-obligatory production.

2.3.2 Second and Third-Grade High School Books

Another source used for both the control and experimental groups was some of the grammatical points of second and third-grade high school books. Second-grade high school grammatical points chosen for the study were as follows: conditional sentence (type 1), conditional sentence (type 2), and the article "the", relative pronouns, verb+ to + verb, preposition of time, and reflexive pronouns. Third-grade high school grammatical points utilized in this study included: the gerund, verb + object + infinitive, the order of adjectives, linking verbs, present and past participles used as adjectives, and the passives. Moreover, there were different types of follow-up exercises in the textbooks that students did after each lesson.

2.4 Research Procedure

The first step in conducting this research was selecting four classes (two second-grade classes and two third-grade classes at high school level) as two pair groups: control groups and experimental groups. As mentioned earlier, the learners had one required 90-minute period plus a 45-minute make-up session in English per week. The research was conducted during the 90-minute session over nine weeks for each of the four classes. As the experiment was performed on two grades, the first session for all classes was devoted to administering the proficiency tests. A week after this proficiency test, two pre-tests containing grammatical points of second and third-grade textbooks of high school were administered to the students of second and third grade, respectively. Then, an independent t-test was for both groups in every grade.

Students in both groups at the two levels were exposed to an instructional program over six weeks. Every weekly 90-minute class was allocated to one grammatical point except passives which received a weekly 90-minute class plus a make-up session of instruction. The control groups (CG) were instructed through the traditional approach of PPP approach (presentation, practice, and production) and the participants in the experimental groups (EG) received their instruction through CR tasks. The same procedure was used in the other five weeks of instruction. After the treatment i.e., the last session of the experiment, both pair groups were post-tested and a series of t-tests were run to determine the probable efficacy of the independent variable and to compare the experimental and control groups' performances on the post-tests.

3. Data Analysis

This section presents the analysis of the study data.

3.1 Performance of the Subjects on the General Proficiency Test

Before the treatment, to observe whether the subjects enjoyed the same level of English general proficiency, a Nelson English Language Test was administered to four groups. One-way ANOVA was run to compare the mean scores of four groups to make sure that the groups did not differ significantly before the treatment. Results from the One-Way ANOVA test revealed that there was not a significant difference at the $p < .05$ level among the four groups (Table 1).

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of All Subjects on the Nelson General Proficiency Test

Performance	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Std. Error**	**95% Confidence Interval for Mean**				**Minimum**	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound	F	%		
Experimental G2	20	29.70	4.44	.99	27.61	31.78	12	6	2.07	.88
Experimental G3	22	30.13	3.31	.70	28.66	31.60	4	2	3.10	.95
Control G2	10	30.10	7.76	2.45	24.54	35.65	2	1	3.33	1.14
Control G3	14	29.71	2.43	.64	28.31	31.11	11	5.5	2.16	.77

Table 2 displays the number of participants, mean value, standard deviation, and standard error of means, interval of means, and minimum and maximum scores in both experimental and control groups for each grade. Table 2 shows that there is no statistically significant difference among groups since Sig. value is .986 which is greater than .05.

Table 2

One-way ANOVA of Groups on the Nelson general Proficiency Test

Performance	Sum Of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.90	3	.96	.049	.986
Within Groups	1226.54	62	19.78		
Total	1229.45	65			

3.2 Performance of the Subjects on the Pre-test

The homogeneity of the subjects was compared in two steps: first, the homogeneity of the experimental and control groups in the second grade, and then the homogeneity of the experimental and control groups in the third grade.

3.2.1 Performance of Two Second-Grade Classes on the Pre-test

The collected data from the pre-test were analyzed through an independent samples t-test. The homogeneity of the experimental and control groups in the second grade was the main concern.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics of Groups' Performances

	Role	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Performance	Experimental G2	20	8.05	1.93	.43
	Control G2	10	8.80	2.85	.90

The group statistics are displayed in Table 3. As indicated in this table, the number of subjects in the experimental and control groups was 20 and 10, respectively. Moreover, the subjects' pre-test mean scores were 8.05 for the experimental group and 8.80 for the control group in the second-grade high school. Regarding what is displayed in this table, subjects were at the same level of language proficiency regarding the targeted grammatical points.

The independent-sample t-test for the performance of the experimental and control groups in the second grade on the pre-test is shown in Table 4. Based on the results of the two groups, it was concluded that they were homogenous in terms of their grammatical ability.

Table 4

Independent-Samples T-test for the Performance of Two Classes on the Pre-test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Performance	Equal Variances Assumed	3.211	.084	-.852	28	.401	-.75	.87	-2.55	1.052
	Equal Variances Not Assumed			-.748	13.25	.467	-.75	1.00	-2.91	1.411

3.2.2 Performance of Two Third-Grade Classes on the Pre-test

The collected data from the pre-test were analyzed through another independent-sample t-test. The homogeneity of both experimental and control groups in the third grade on the pre-test is the main concern. The group statistics including several subjects, mean, standard deviation, and standard error mean are shown in Table 5. As indicated in this table, the number of subjects in the experimental and control groups was 22 and 14, respectively. The subjects' pre-test mean scores were 6.40 for the experimental group and 6.21 for the control group in the second-grade.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics of Groups' Performances

	Role	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Performance	Experimental G3	22	6.40	1.76	.37
	Control G3	14	6.21	1.76	.470

Table 6 shows the independent-sample t-test for the third-grade pre-test performance of the experimental and control groups. Based on the results of the two groups, it was concluded that they were homogenous in terms of their grammatical ability.

Table 6

Independent-Samples T-test for the Performance of Two third Grade Classes on the Pre-test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
performance	Equal variances assumed	.004	.951	.323	34	.749	.19481	.60273	-1.03009	1.41970
	Equal variances not assumed			.323	27.853	.749	.19481	.60260	-1.03985	1.42946

3.3 Data Analysis for Research Question One

The first research question aimed to investigate the probable impact of CR tasks on learners' grammatical proficiency; the hypothesis considered for this research question was a null/no-difference hypothesis. To test the null hypothesis one of the studies that predicted CR tasks have no significant effect on the intermediate EFL learners' grammatical proficiency, a series of paired-sample t-tests were run to compare the average scores of the second and third-grade experimental groups on the pre-test and post-test. The comparison of the pre-test and post-test of the second-grade treatment group revealed a remarkable achievement in the grammatical proficiency mean scores of the participants.

Table 7

Paired Samples Statistics for the Second-Grade Experimental Group

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest	8.05	20	1.93	.43
	Posttest	25.05	20	3.89	.87

The paired sample statistics of this experimental group are shown in Table 7. As indicated in this Table, the mean scores of the subjects on the pre-test and post-test were 8.05 and 25.05 respectively. The results of the paired-sample t-test for the performance of the second-grade experimental group on the pre-test and post-test are shown in Tables 7 and 8.

Table 8

Paired Samples Correlations of the Second-Grade Experimental Group

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Pretest & Posttest	20	.824	.000

Sig. (2-tailed) = p-value = .000 < 0.05 = ą

The paired samples correlation of the experimental group is displayed in table (8). The correlation is .824. If correlation is closer to number 1, two variables have more significant impact on each other. The comparison of the pre-and post-tests of the third-grade treatment group revealed a remarkable achievement in the grammatical proficiency mean scores of the participants Table 9.

Table 9

Paired-Samples T-Test for the Performance of the Second Grade Experimental Group on the Pre & Posttests

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pretest - Posttest	-17.00	2.55	.57	-18.19	-15.80	-29.76	19	.000

The paired sample statistics of this experimental group are shown in Table 10. As indicated in this table, the mean scores of the subjects on the pre-test and post-test were 6.40 and 24.27 respectively.

The results of the paired-sample t-test for the performance of the third-grade experimental group on the pre-test and post-test are shown in Tables 9 and 10.

Table 10

Paired Samples Statistics for the Third-Grade Experimental Group

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest	6.40	22	1.76	.37
	Posttest	24.27	22	3.66	.78

Accordingly, the results rejected null Hypothesis one of the studies that predicted CR tasks have no significant effect on the intermediate EFL learners' grammatical proficiency.

Table 11

Paired Samples Correlations of the Third-Grade Experimental Group

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Pretest & Posttest	22	.843	.000

Therefore, consciousness-raising tasks developed for the second and third-grade experimental groups were effective enough to help subjects make significant progress in their grammatical proficiency.

Table 12

Paired-Samples T-test for the Performance of the Third Grade Experimental Group on the Pre-test and Post-test

		Paired Differences					T	df	Sig. (2-Tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of The Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pretest - Posttest	-17.86	2.37	.50	-18.91	-16.81	-35.25	21	.000

Accordingly, the results rejected null Hypothesis one of the studies that predicted CR tasks have no significant effect on the intermediate EFL learners' grammatical proficiency. Therefore, consciousness-raising tasks developed for the second and third-grade experimental groups were effective in helping the participants make significant progress in their grammatical proficiency.

The comparison of the pre-and post-tests of the second-grade control group also revealed a remarkable achievement in the grammatical proficiency mean scores of the participants.

Table 13

Paired Samples Statistics for the Second Grade Control Group

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Posttest	23.80	10	4.49	1.42
	Pretest	8.80	10	2.85	.90

The paired sample statistics of this control group are shown in Table 13. As indicated in this Table, the mean scores of the subjects on the pre-test and post-test were 8.8 and 23.80 respectively.

Table 14

Paired Samples Correlations of the Second Grade Control Group

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Posttest & Pretest	10	.983	.000

Sig. (2-tailed) = p-value = .000 < 0.05 = ą

As Tables 13 and 14 indicate the positive form of critical t (+26.893) is greater than 2, therefore the differences are meaningful. The second-grade control group has shown a great improvement.

The comparison of the pre-and post-tests of the third-grade control group also revealed a remarkable achievement in the grammatical proficiency mean scores of the participants.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Needs analysis is the foundation step in designing courses (Almaiah & Alyoussef, 2019; Bernard & Zemach, 2003) and can be used for evaluating current courses for their weaknesses and strengths (Atefi Boroujeni & Moradian Fard, 2013). Through this sort of systematic collection of data specially that in the present study a mixed method was employed, a sound syllabus can be designed. While Thi-Qar University presents English for Academic Purposes course like many other universities, it seems that an on-going evaluation of the courses can have a contributing effect on the quality of courses. It has been stated that the English courses offered at Iraq Universities mostly ignore this important step and lack this stage. The theory which supports needs analysis is humanism which focuses on caring for human needs and looks for humanistic values (Seel, 2011).

The findings of the present study concerning the importance of the reading skill are in line with other researcher views such as Spector-Cohen et al. (2001) who believe in the inclusion of strategies for reading comprehension as well as linguistic forms. Furthermore, Taşçı (2007) also found similar results in the study conducted in Turkey on the students' needs. The participants viewed reading as a primary important skill. Moreover, in the Saudi context also Alsamadani (2017) stated that students prioritized reading together with speaking. The same findings are also reported by Zohoorian (2015), who conducted needs analysis in the Iranian context and found out that reading was the prominent skill. Other researchers who report the same findings are Rostami and Zafarghandi, (2014) based on whose study the main skill of concern was selected as reading by the majority of the students (85%). The reading skill was also selected as the only skill the students of law needed in the Israel context.

Unlike the findings of the present study, in Algeria listening and speaking were the most important skills according to the students' views. These findings were in line with the study conducted in Thailand by Prachanant (2012) where speaking was the most important skill. As for the speaking skill, seminar skills are also mentioned by Gillett (2016) as an important aspect for EAP courses. The findings concerning the problems in English language learning were also in line with Prachanant's (2012) study in which the participants emphasized their problems of inability in understanding foreign accents that relates to pronunciation as well as understanding vocabularies and difficult expressions.

As far as the four language skills are concerned, it can be safely concluded through the analysis of the quantitative data that reading skill was the prioritized skill followed by the speaking skill.

Moreover, it can be concluded that students suffer from their poor vocabulary as well as the complex use of Reading materials found in general and professional texts. Thus, the courses must tailor their focus on the reading and speaking skills. Also, it is concluded that more practice on pronunciation is needed which seems to be an ignored component. One of the sub skills to be focused on is 'understanding the main idea' which can be covered by instructors in their courses.

It can be inferred from the interviews that the students' needs are not limited to the campus use and they need this skill out of campus for reading English subtitles or e-books. While for the speaking skill the most important item was presenting in seminars or conferences, the students also needed it for off campus or for using the cyberspace conversation. The needs of the students for the listening skill were mainly limited to following instructions of the lecturers at campus. However, it seems that they also need it for listening to educational materials. The main concern of the students was the preparation of essays and term projects. Thus, it seems that the inclusion of complementary courses on academic writing can be helpful. It is also concluded that the students must be categorized and registered based on their proficiency levels. Moreover, having placement tests to determine the proficiency levels before sending the students to different groups can be supportive.

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Appendix 1

Table 7

Frequencies and Percentages of the Items on the students' attitudes and preferences

Item	Strongly disagree		disagree		Not sure		Agree		Strongly agree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Q1	0	0	1	.5	9	4.5	84	42	106	53
Q2	0	0	1	.5	13	6.5	123	61.5	63	31.5
Q3	14	7	150	75	28	14	6	3	2	1
Q4	1	.5	3	1.5	6	3	54	27	136	68
Q5	0	0	2	1	10	5	170	85	18	9
Q6	1	.5	0	0	11	5.5	43	21.5	145	72.5
Q7	3	1.5	3	1.5	22	11	155	77.5	17	8.5
Q8	0	0	0	0	15	7.5	37	18.5	148	74
Q9	0	0	0	0	10	.5	104	52	86	43
Q10	1	.5	0	0	9	4.5	105	52.5	85	42.5
Q11	0	0	0	0	21	10.5	121	60.5	58	29
Q12	1	.5	3	1.5	32	16	119	59.5	45	22.5
Q13	1	.5	0	0	35	17.5	115	57.5	49	24.5
Q14	0	0	0	0	12	6	111	55.5	77	38.5
Q15	0	0	93	46.5	55	27.5	34	17	18	9
Q16	0	0	2	1	11	5.5	53	26.5	134	67
Q17	1	.5	1	.5	9	4.5	118	59	71	35.5
Q18	0	0	1	.5	7	3.5	113	56.5	79	39.5
Q19	1	.5	0	0	13	6.5	94	47	92	46
Q20	11	5.5	32	16	110	55	47	23.5	0	0
Q21	6	3	40	20	40	20	112	56	2	1

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Interconnections of Iranian EFL Teachers' Identity, Ethics, and Self-Actualization

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K E Y T E R M S

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Self-Actualization

Commitment to Professional Ethics

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A R T I C L E T Y P E

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A B S T R A C T

Teachers in the post-method era play a vital role in education systems, where their professional identity and self-actualization influence their commitment to professional ethics. This research examines the interconnections among these variables, presenting a model and comparing gender differences. A model was proposed to explore the interrelationships among Iranian EFL teachers' professional identity, self-actualization, and their commitment to professional ethics. Further, it investigated the difference between male and female teachers' regarding these three variables. A sample of 253 Iranian EFL language teachers participated in the study selected through convenience sampling procedure. To examine the hypotheses, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and independent sample T-tests were employed. The results of SEM revealed that the proposed model had perfect fit with the empirical data. Based on the fitted model, professional identity predicts commitment to professional ethics positively and significantly. While self-actualization is a positive and significant predictor of commitment to professional ethics, professional identity is a predictor of self-actualization. Furthermore, the results of T-test showed that there are significant differences between male and female teachers regarding ethics and self-actualization. However, there is no significant difference between male and female teachers in terms of professional identity. The findings emphasize the importance of professional ethics in education and its critical role in fostering teacher effectiveness.

1. Introduction

Within the field of teaching and teacher education, many studies have concentrated on instructors' professional identity (Beijaard et al., 2004; 2008; Olsen, 2008; Vähäsantanen, 2007; Varghese et al., 2005). The idea of identity is defined in different ways in the more general literature. Renee (2013)

stated that teacher professional identity has an important role in teacher efficiency, maintenance, and their practice in classroom. Kostogriz and Peeler (2007) indicated that instructors' professional identity formation is not a constant process; rather it is instructors' endless negotiation in the situated setting.

According to Smethem (2007), teacher educators have been challenged "to recreate the space for construction of an individual, meaningful, and resilient professional identity underpinned by strong beliefs and values" (p.478). In the Iranian context, Salehnia and Ashraf (2015) claimed that "despite the importance of professional ethics for organizations, this matter has not been investigated much in the field of English language teaching" (p.135). In addition, Hedayati et al. (2019) mentioned that ethics impact the organization activities, outcomes, as well as instructors' productivity. Imanipour (2012) mentioned that the code of ethics is a strong ground for the instruction profession given its positive effect on the overall teaching process. Thus far, little research has been carried out on instructors' professional identity and the way they improve this identity in the Iranian context (e.g., Moslemi & Habibi, 2019; Sheybani & Miri, 2019). While some research efforts are currently underway, they often fail to provide a clear understanding of a teacher's professional identity (Eslamdoost, et al., 2019).

Ethics play important functions in the society generally and in the life of the teacher particularly. This commitment to the Code of Ethics of Profession assists instructors to achieve their purposes successfully and leads to an enhancement in the organization of professional and personal association among instructors and students. The significance of the research lies in its methodological effort to explore the relationship between instructors' commitment to ethics, identity, and their self-actualization.

Furthermore, it is critical that instructors know what factors impact their commitment to ethics. If instructors are to become ethically aware; then, the pre-service teacher education programs are the most important place for the inclusion of ethical content and commitments required in the teaching profession. Professionalism influences teaching approaches, enabling a shift from traditional, teacher-centered methods to dynamic, student-focused learning.

Teachers' professional identity is a developing research field (Beijaard et al., 2004). The improvement of a professional identity is a constant process, in which the teacher self-improves progressively through experience and identifies with the profession of a teacher (Flores & Day, 2006). Hammerness et al. (2005) noted that "developing an identity as a teacher is an important part of securing instructors' commitment to their work and adherence to professional norms of practice" (p. 383). Although professional identity is linked to instructors' views of themselves and their self-understanding (Kelchtermans, 2005), teaching context, teaching experience, and instructors' biographies also influence their professional identity (Beijaard et al., 2000).

Maslow (1943) defined self-actualization as intrinsic development of what is already in the living being or more precisely of what is the organism itself. Kaur (2008) defined self-actualization as growth not associated with physical features, but to maturity, social communication skills, and the ability to better understand the self. Ethics means mood, behavior, temper, and such things that are seen as the inner aspect of human being which can be understood by intuition as opposed to "people" which is utilized to human appearance and can be seen by eyes (Ng, & Feldman, 2011). According to Öztürk (2010), ethics has various concepts based on the context. "Sometimes, ethics means moral values;

other times, it means legal limitations on behavior and understood community standards" (Öztürk, 2010, p. 394).

Over the last two decades, the controversy over the ethics of teaching that occurred in the United States at the beginning of the 20th century has attracted renewed global attention (Ashraf, & Hosseinnia, 2016). Teacher commitment is one of the main factors in education and is arguably becoming an increasingly significant factor. The work educators engage in on a daily basis is complex as well as demanding and needs a good level of personal engagement and commitment (Crosswell, 2006). Different researchers have worked on the relationship between instructors' commitment, professional ethics and other variables.

Albishri (2006) conducted a research to explore the degree of commitment to the ethics of the profession by principals as reported by their instructors. The findings indicated that the commitment degree was high in all fields, and that no statistically significant differences were found attributed to the qualification and years of expertise variables. The findings also indicated statistically significant differences attributed to the gender and in favor of male instructors. Ashraf, et al. (2017) explored the association between EFL teachers' commitment to professional ethics and their emotional intelligence. Recently, Al-Hothali (2018) explored the ethics of the teaching profession among secondary school instructors from school leaders' perspectives. This research used the descriptive approach and a scale applied to 426 school leaders. The results revealed that there were no statistically significant difference in the sample responses based on school type, age, years of experience, and qualification. Thoker (2017) measured the level of professional ethics of higher secondary school instructors based on gender. The Professional Ethics Scale, designed and validated by Mattoo and Thoker (2016), was utilized for data collection. The findings indicated that gender has a significant influence on the level of professional ethics of instructors. Male instructors had a higher level of professional ethics than female school instructors.

According to Gee (2000) "identity is an important analytic tool to understand for schools and society" (p. 1), as it is acknowledged by different researchers that identity should not be considered as independent from contexts. Lasky (2005) defined teacher professional identity as "how instructors define themselves to themselves and to others" (p. 901). It can be mentioned that professional teacher identity is the instructors' interpretation of a function that they take on. In various studies, instructors' identity is characterized as a continuous process of negotiating between one's personal self and one's professional self when becoming a teacher (Beijaard et al., 2004).

Recently, the fields of teaching and teacher profession development have seen a number of investigations about the association between teacher professional identity and different factors in the Iranian EFL context. Meihami and Esfandiari (2022) examined EFL instructors' professional identity development in a computer-assisted language learning (CALL) teacher preparation program. The results revealed that CALL teacher preparation programs could have a positive role in improving EFL instructors' professional identity. The results also showed that EFL instructors' readiness to become CALL-oriented instructors increased after participating in CALL teacher preparation programs.

Motallebzadeh and Kazemi (2018) conducted a quantitative research to explore the association between EFL instructors' professional identity and their self-esteem. Structural equation modeling was used to assess the possible relationship between variables. The findings showed that all five sub-constructs of self-esteem are positive significant predictors of professional identity. Arpaci and

Bardakçi (2016) studied the relationship between prospective instructors' identity and their needs for cognition. They found that as the need of cognition increased, so did the instructors' early teacher identity scores.

Martin and Strom (2016), in an empirical review of the teacher professional identity and English learners' literature, investigated how teacher identity has been seen among instructors in an English dominant teaching context. Their findings claimed that three aspects of teacher identity including characteristics of teacher identity, factors given to teacher identity development, and finally contextual influence on teacher identity in the literature have been central aspects in the literature. In another research conducted by Kalali et al. (2021), the relationship between Iranian EFL instructors' professional identity and their goal orientation was studied. The outcomes demonstrated a positive and significant relationship between Iranian EFL instructors' professional identity and goal orientation.

Maslow (1943) declared that the phase self-actualization in the hierarchy can only be achieved when requirements lower down in the hierarchy are satisfied (cited in Vanagas & Raksnys, 1971). His hierarchy starts, at the bottom, with physiological requirements and develops to safety needs; love needs; self-esteem needs, and lastly the need for self-actualization (Vanagas & Rakšnys, 2014). The first researcher who brought self-actualization into discussion was Goldstein (1995). He introduced the term to define what he found in his extensive psychological research, a uniquely human requirement that separates humans from all other animals (Yang, 2003). Goldstein (1934) believed that the human is not a mere animal, to be understood in terms of its biology and behavioral reactions. He mentioned that human nature is special, and should be understood in its own terms (Yang, 2003).

Previous researchers have worked on the concept of instructors' self-actualization and its relationship with other factors. For instance, Rapheal and Paul (2012) supported the relationship between self-actualization and ethics in a research dealing with self-actualization and personal growth initiative among the instructors of adolescents. Živković (2018) supported the relationship between professional identity and self-actualization in the research on the dimensionality of student teacher professional identity. He concluded that instructors' professional identity is linked to the needs of self-realization and self-actualization.

Many contextual elements are involved in the creation of professional identity. As this area of teaching language has been an understudied area in the setting of Iran, studies which try to explore the professional identity of instructors of language institutes in the context of Iran seem essential. Having emphasized the importance of the variables and lack of the related studies concerning the relationship among instructors' professional identity, commitment to ethics, and self-actualization, the following research questions were proposed.

RQ1: Does the proposed model of associations among EFL instructors' professional identity, self-actualization, and their commitment to professional ethics fit the context of EFL in Iran?

RQ2: Is there any significant difference between EFL male and female instructors in professional identity, self-actualization, and their commitment to professional ethics?

2. Methodology

2.1 Participants and Setting

This research was carried out in English language institutes in Mashhad. The sample consisted of 253 Iranian EFL language instructors. They were both male (N=147) and female (N=106) instructors in different ages ranging from 26 to 47 (M=36.54, SD=3.41). They were considered as EFL instructors with university degrees (BA, and MA) as well as different teaching experience levels (M=6.77, SD=2.84). Their field of research was English language teaching, English translation, and English literature. The sample was selected using a convenience sampling method.

2.2 Instruments

The main instruments used in this research consisted of three questionnaires: Teachers' professional identity questionnaire (Beijaard et al., 2004), the self-actualization scale (Kaufman, 2018), and EFL instructors' commitment to professional ethics questionnaire (Jeffrey & Weatherholt, 1994).

2.3 Procedure

The research was conducted in English language institutes in Mashhad among 253 Iranian ELT instructors who were selected based on convenience sampling. Then, the questionnaires were spread to the subjects of the research within population. The probable time required for filling out questionnaires was 45-50 minutes. AMOS software and SPSS were used to analyze the results.

2.4 Study Design and Analysis

This research is based on a quantitative method within a correlational design. The three major variables were Iranian EFL instructors' Professional Identity, Self-Actualization, and their Commitment to Ethics. Further, gender was analyzed as a separate variable.

2.5 Proposed Model

The proposed model of associations among instructors' professional identity, self-actualization, and their commitment to professional ethics can be justified as follows:

Živković (2018) supported the relationship between professional identity, and self-actualization in the research on the dimensionality of student teacher professional identity. He concluded that, instructors' professional identity is connected with the needs of self-realization and self-actualization. Rapheal and Paul (2012), supported the relationship between self-actualization, and ethics on the research on Self-Actualization and Personal Growth Initiative among the Teachers of Adolescents. Gutiérrez and Jaramillo (2016) supported the relationship between professional identity, and ethics on research Professional Identity, Teacher's Ethics and Professional Culture as Context. In order to assess the first research question, "Does the proposed model of associations among EFL instructors' professional identity, self-actualization, and their commitment to professional ethics fit the context of EFL in Iran?" Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to verify the proposed model (Figure 1 the proposed Model)

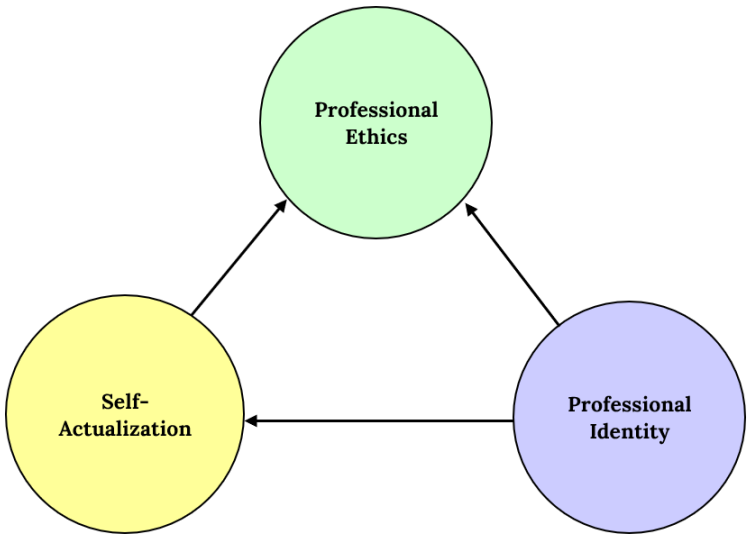

Figure 1 The proposed model

3. Results

To check the normality of the distribution, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to decide if a sample comes from a population with a specific distribution. The results of the normality test indicated that the sig value for all variables was higher than .05. Thus, it can safely be concluded that the data have been normally distributed across all variables.

In the following table (Table 1), the descriptive statistics for each of the scales used in the study are presented. The table includes the number of items, the possible range of scores, as well as the minimum, maximum, and mean scores for each scale based on the sample of 253 teachers. This summary provides an overview of the distribution of the participants' responses across the different dimensions of professional identity, self-actualization, and professional ethics.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for the Scales

Scale	Number of Items	Range of Scores	Min Score	Max Score	Mean Score
Professional Identity	14	70-14	39	68	58.05
Self-Actualization	15	75-15	38	67	53.30
Professional Ethics	32	160-32	98	158	127.90

Table 2 summarizes the information obtained from Cronbach alpha analyses for the main variables of the research.

Table 2

Results of Cronbach's Alpha Indexes for Reliability Analysis

Scale	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Professional Identity	14	.83
Self-Actualization	15	.70
Professional Ethics	32	.77

As can be seen, the utilized questionnaires gained acceptable indices of Cronbach alpha for all variables. The reliability of the Professional Identity scale with 14 items was .83, for Self-Actualization with 15 items was .70, and for Professional Ethics scale with 32 items was .77.

In order to answer the first research question, Pearson correlation analysis was used to examine the relationships among teachers' professional identity, self-actualization, and their commitment to professional ethics. Table 3 presents the results of this analysis including correlation values (r) and significance levels (p). R represents the correlation value which should be between -1 and +1, and if p is lower than .05, it means that the correlation is significant.

Table 3

Professional Identity and Ethical Commitments in Teaching

		Professional Identity	Professional Ethics	Self-Actualization
Professional Identity	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
	N	253		
Professional Ethics	Pearson Correlation	.415**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	253	253	
Self-Actualization	Pearson Correlation	.242**	.362**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	
	N	253	253	253

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As outlined in Table 3, there is a positive significant relationship between overall professional identity and overall professional ethics (r=.41, p<.05). Furthermore, there is a positive significant relationship between overall professional identity and overall self-actualization (r=.24, p<.05). Finally, it was found that self-actualization is positively correlated with professional ethics (r=.36, p<.05).

To check the strengths of the causal relationships among the components, the standardized estimates were examined. Figure 2 displays the model of associations among EFL instructors' professional identity, self-actualization, and their commitment to professional ethics.

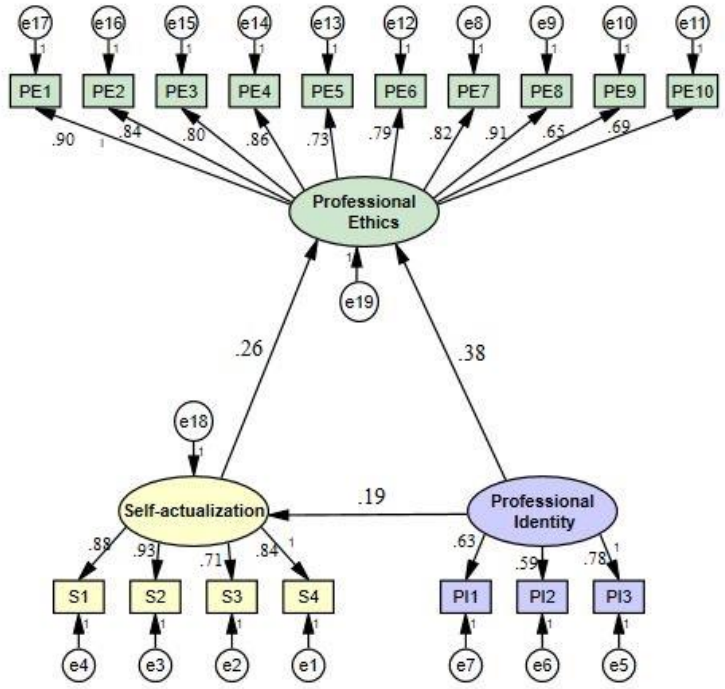

Figure 2 The model of associations among EFL instructors' professional identity, self-actualization, and their commitment to professional ethics.

As indicated in Figure 2, professional identity predicts commitment to professional ethics positively and significantly (β= .38, p<.05). In addition, self-actualization is a positive and significant predictor of commitment to professional ethics (β= .26, p<.05). Finally, the results of SEM showed that self-actualization is predicted positively and significantly by professional identity (β= .19, p<.05).

Table 4

Results of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) for Predicting Variables

Predictor Variable	Outcome Variable	β	p-value	Significance
Professional Identity	Commitment to Professional Ethics	.38	<.05	Significant
Self-Actualization	Commitment to Professional Ethics	.26	<.05	Significant
Professional Identity	Self-Actualization	.19	<.05	Significant

As indicated by results (Table 4), all fit indices lie within the acceptable fit thresholds: the chi-square/df ratio (2.41), RMSEA (.07), GFI (.93), NFI (.90) and CFI (.91). Thus, it can be concluded that the proposed model had perfect fit with the empirical data.

To answer the next research question, an independent-samples T-test was performed. The assumptions of T-test were checked. Table 3 reports the descriptive statistics of male and female instructors' professional identity, self-actualization, and their commitment to professional ethics. The results of the independent-samples T-test are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics of Male and Female Teachers

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Identity	Female	106	58.20	4.07	.39
	Male	147	57.92	4.91	.405
Ethics	Female	106	130.36	7.49	1.02
	Male	147	126.06	8.69	.88
Self-actual	Female	106	55.52	5.24	.51
	Male	147	51.74	4.40	.36

As observed in Table 5, the mean score of female instructors was higher than that of male instructors in all three variables. To find possible significant differences, T-test was run (see Table 6).

Table 6

Results of the Independent Sample T-test for Gender

	T-test for Equality of Means				
	T	**df**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**	**Mean Difference**	**Std. Error Difference**
Identity	.46	251	.64	.27	.58
Ethics	3.16	251	.00	4.29	1.35
Self-actualization	6.19	251	.00	3.77	.60

As indicated in Table 6, there are significant differences between male and female instructors in terms of Ethics (t= 3.16, p= .00) and Self-actualization (t= 6.19, p= .00). It shows that with confidence interval of difference of 95%, there is a significant difference between the mean scores of the two genders. However, there is no significant difference between male and female instructors in terms of professional identity (t= .46, p= .64).

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings emphasize the importance of incorporating gender-sensitive approaches in teacher training programs. Moreover, they underscore the role of self-actualization in enhancing professional ethics, which can directly impact teaching effectiveness. These results align with previous studies but highlight context-specific challenges in Iran.

The results of SEM highlighted significant relationships between identity, ethics, and self-actualization, emphasizing the critical role of teacher training in fostering these attributes. Gender differences observed in the findings suggest the need for differentiated approaches to support male and female instructors effectively. The results of the present research indicated that this collection of norms and standards can be predicted by instructors' professional identity. This finding is in line with a research conducted by Gutiérrez and Jaramillo (2016), which supported the relationship between

professional identity and ethics. The results of their research were consistent with the present research and found a positive relationship between professional identity and commitment to professional ethics. Rapheal and Paul (2012) supported the relationship between self-actualization and ethics on the research on self-actualization and personal growth initiative among the instructors of adolescents.

The findings of the present research also showed that self-actualization is predicted positively and significantly by professional identity. The result is in line with a research done by Živković (2018), which supported the relationship between professional identity, and self-actualization in the research on the dimensionality of student teacher professional identity. He concluded that instructors' professional identity is connected with the needs of self-realization and self-actualization. According to the results, a significant difference was found between male and female instructors in terms of self-actualization, which has been in line with a research carried out by Gilligan (1993).

Besides, this research examines the relationships among Iranian EFL instructors' professional identity, ethics, and self-actualization. Using SEM analysis, a validated model highlights significant gender differences and the implications for teacher training programs. This research provides insights into the practical implementation of ethics in teacher education, addressing the need for a stronger focus on professional identity development. The study also identified key relationships among Iranian EFL instructors' professional identity, ethics, and self-actualization, confirming the proposed model through SEM analysis. Contributions include practical insights for teacher training programs, emphasizing ethics and identity development. Future research could explore these variables across diverse educational contexts and investigate long-term impacts on teacher performance.

Furthermore, to examine the structural relations, the proposed model was tested using AMOS 24 statistical package. Professional identity predicted commitment to professional ethics positively and significantly. In addition, self-actualization was a positive and significant predictor of commitment to professional ethics. Finally, results of SEM showed that self-actualization is predicted positively and significantly by professional identity.

As the objective of the research, the researchers intended to uncover the relationship between instructors' professional identity, self-actualization, and their commitment to professional ethics among Iranian EFL instructors. Further, gender differences in professional identity, self-actualization, and commitment to professional ethics were explored.

Firstly, addressing the first question "Is there any significant relationship between EFL instructors' professional identity, self-actualization, and their commitment to professional ethics?", the researchers employed Pearson correlation. The results revealed a positive significant relationship between all three variables.

Secondly, addressing the second research question, "Does the proposed model of associations among EFL instructors' professional identity, self-actualization, and their commitment to professional ethics fit the context of EFL in Iran?" the researchers presented a new model of interrelationship among instructors' professional identity, self-actualization, and their commitment to professional ethics. The results of SEM indicated that the proposed model had perfect fit with the empirical data.

The results of this research are contributing to instructors to pinpoint the importance of professional identity and for improving commitment to professional ethics and self-actualization. Further, focusing on instructors' professional identity seems very important and necessary, since

instructors especially novice ones are impressionable and try to make some decisions that may influence them during their career life. Thus, the identity they develop is a crucial factor for success in their profession. The findings of this research are also helpful for policy makers in designing teacher training programs or workshops which provide instructors with opportunities to promote different professional ethics, positive identities, and self-actualization, and familiarize them with these important concepts to improve their students' achievements.

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Attitudes towards Dialectical Varieties of English and Persian: Iranian EFL Teachers' Perspectives

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A B S T R A C T

This study investigated Iranian EFL teachers' attitudes toward standard and non-standard varieties of English and Persian. Attitudes towards English and Persian dialects were evaluated using modified versions of questionnaires developed by Taylor for the English language and Hoover and colleague for the Persian language. 212 EFL teachers from across Iran, representing a range of ages (23-57), teaching experience, and educational levels, participated in the study. The participants completed the questionnaires online or in print. Findings revealed a strong preference for standard dialects in both languages, with a significant correlation between attitudes towards Persian and English varieties. These results indicate a lack of awareness among Iranian EFL teachers regarding the importance of dialectal variation. Therefore, teacher training programs should integrate instruction on English and Persian dialect variations and the pedagogical implications. This includes equipping teachers to acknowledge and address dialectal diversity (e.g., through authentic materials and discussions about language variation).

1. Introduction

Linguists believe that dialects refer to natural linguistic variations common to a language that indicate cultural and geographical differences in how a particular language is used; however, many others consider dialectical differences as incorrect or poor (Cross et al., 2001). In other words, the public seems to believe that there exists only one standard dialect and many non-standard dialects in each language. This idea may cause problems when it comes to the assessment of students in educational contexts, as any divergent forms of the standard dialects are recognized as "poor, slovenly, broken, bastardized, or corrupt" (DeBose, 2007, p. 31).

The appeal of particular dialects and the positive attitudes towards prestige forms are influenced by various sociolinguistic factors. Research indicates that listeners often associate specific dialects to desirable traits, leading to dialect preference. Standard dialects are frequently associated with power structures and social status, thereby reinforcing their perceived prestige. This association is often the result of historical and sociopolitical factors rather than inherent linguistic superiority. For example, Received Pronunciation (RP) in the United Kingdom has achieved its "standard" status not through any intrinsic linguistic merit; but rather due to its historical connection to the upper classes and its subsequent adoption by institutions of power and influence (Andreiko et al., 2021). This phenomenon is not unique to English.

In Croatia, Škifić (2010) found that high school students exhibited a strong preference for the standard language over regional dialects, revealing a clear ideological bias towards the standard variety and its perceived social advantages. Similarly, Alajmi (2024) demonstrated that the Central Najdi dialect in Saudi Arabia is viewed favorably and linked to positive social attributes such as being civilized and educated, while other Najdi dialects are perceived less favorably. Yost (1977), in his study, affirmed the hypothesis that students who had listened to both Standard English and black nonstandard English, preferred the standard dialect as more understandable and credible. These findings across diverse linguistic contexts highlight how societal perceptions and power dynamics contribute to the elevation of particular dialects to "standard" status and the subsequent devaluation of others.

Of particular concern is teachers' attitudes and awareness of dialects since their failure to understand the notion of dialect variations can negatively influence their students' learning. For example, Goodman and Buck (1973, p.7) stated that "the only special disadvantage which speakers of low-status dialects suffer in learning to read is one imposed by teachers and schools. Rejection of their dialects and educators' confusion of linguistic difference with linguistic deficiency interferes with the natural process by which reading is acquired and undermines the linguistic self-confidence of divergent speakers".

Bowie and Bond (1994), for instance, conducted research on pre-service teachers and reported that 61% of them believed that African American language operated 'under a faulty grammar system' (p. 114). Choy and Dodd (1976) found that speakers of standard variety were judged to be more confident, successful and less 'disruptive' by teachers (p. 184). Similarly, Ren et al. (2016), Tajeddin et al. (2019), and Salehpour et al. (2023) reported a strong teacher preference for Standard English in the classroom.

Despite increased attention to linguistic variation, negative attitudes towards linguistically diverse learners persist. Beyond preparing teachers for EFL/ESL contexts, efforts should be made to develop linguistically responsive teachers. Cross et al. (2001) claimed that "if the majority of teachers believe that there is one "correct" dialect and that their duty is to uphold that dialect while eradicating all competing dialects, many students will come to believe that not only their language but their culture is invalid" (p.212). Studies by Baugh (2000), Rickford (1999), and Green (2002) highlighted how misinterpreting dialect features as errors can lead to inaccurate evaluations of students' abilities and hinder their academic progress. These studies underscored the importance of culturally responsive pedagogy that values linguistic diversity and recognizes the unique strengths of all students.

In other words, teachers' attempts to replace students' non-standard dialects with the standard dialect can be detrimental. According to Delpit (2006), criticizing children and youth for communicating through their dialect may cause them to develop negative attitudes towards school and education. Johnson (1971) claimed that when educators understand that some students do not speak the standard variety, they incorrectly assume that their speech is full of grammatical and phonological errors. These beliefs can lead to erroneous perceptions of students' intelligence, education, personal characteristics, and success, which can, in turn, lead to self-fulfilling prophecy. Thus, if teachers undervalue students' abilities and refer to their language as 'inferior,' 'street talk,' or 'broken language', it can lead to self-fulfilling prophecy for the non-standard dialect speakers and they may show poor performance in school (Cazden, 1988; Davies & Catherine, 2004). In other words, teachers will have low expectations for disadvantaged group speakers and provide them with less instruction "and so the students actually end up doing worse" (Gerard, 2012, p.179)

There are some studies on sociolinguistic aspects of English (e.g., Mirshahidi, 2017; Rezaei et al., 2019; Rezaei & Tadayyon, 2018) and Persian (Modarresi, 2001; Rezaei et al., 2014) in Iran. However, in contrast to the important role of teachers' attitudes discussed above, there has been hardly any research about Iranian EFL teachers' attitudes towards dialectal variations of English and Persian in Iran. In other words, English and Persian non-standard dialects are not given due attention in a multilingual country like Iran. Different variations of English exist all around the world, and they are categorized under the names of Inner Circle (countries such as England), Outer Circle (countries such as India), and Expanding Circle (countries such as Iran) (Kachru, 1992). It is pretty clear that Iranians learn English for various purposes such as business, education, tourism, and politics, among others.

A primary reason Iranian EFL learners study English is for international communication. Matsuda (2000) stated that international communication means interacting with speakers of various standard and non-standard dialects of English rather than only with American and British English speakers. She further emphasized the need to enhance students' and teachers' exposure and awareness of dialectal differences. The issue of different varieties of Englishes (World Englishes), however, has not been examined from teachers' perspectives in Iran. While Iranian EFL teachers may favor standard varieties of English, their attitudes can reveal the extent to which they accept non-standard varieties as teaching and learning models. As Canagarajah (2006, p. 26) maintains, "a proficient speaker of English today needs to shuttle between different communities, recognizing the systematic and legitimate status of different varieties of English… to be really proficient in English in the postmodern world, one has to be multidialectal".

Furthermore, it seems necessary to undertake some teachers' attitude studies in Iran, focusing specifically on perceptions of standard and non-standard forms of Persian speech. Although there are many dialectical differences in Iran, Ghafar Samar et al. (2010) stated that the educational system follows a 'monolingual' or 'monodialectal' approach, with the language used in textbooks and classroom communication being standard Farsi. They added that "one of the reasons for adopting a monolingual and monodialectal educational system despite of the existence of other languages such as Turkish, Kurdish, Baluchi, and Arabic may be the fact that the policy makers try to make the Iranian nation unified" (p.25). Clearly, Iran is a country with different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, so it is essential to conduct studies on teachers' attitudes towards Persian dialect differences (Negari, 2012). Furthermore, there is a dearth of research investigating Iranian EFL teachers' transfer of Persian dialectal varieties attitudes towards English dialectal differences.

It seems that Iranian EFL teachers' understanding of both standard and non-standard varieties of Persian may help them better address non-standard varieties of English. Concerning the Japanese non-standard varieties, McKenzie (2007), for example, stated that learners' familiarity with their L1 non-standard varieties can be beneficial. As McKenzie (2007) claims, "it would be of considerable value to incorporate discussion about and exposure to standard and non-standard varieties of Japanese into the English language classroom in Japanese schools in order to equip learners with levels of variation awareness sufficient to later cope with the cultural and linguistic bias that appears to exist towards particular forms of both non-standard native and non-native varieties of English and their speakers, both inside and out with Japan" (p. 240). However, it seems that prior to learners, teachers' awareness and acceptance of non-standard varieties of L2/FL is critical because teachers' attitudes and behaviors influence learners' performance. Therefore, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What attitudes do Iranian EFL teachers have towards standard vs., non- standard varieties of English?

2. What attitudes do Iranian EFL teachers have towards standard vs., non- standard varieties of Persian?

3. Do the language attitudes that Iranian EFL teachers hold towards varieties of Persian correlate with any perceptions they have of varieties of English?

2. Methodology

2.1 Participants and Setting

The participants of this study were 212 Iranian EFL teachers, consisting of 72 females (33.72%) and 140 males (66.28%). Among the participants, 41 were from Tehran, 36 from Guilan, and the remaining participants were from Mashhad (33), Ghazvin (31), Qom (15), Mazandaran (27), and Sistan and Baluchestan province (29). Of this sample, 138 participants (65.35%) were between 23 and 30 years of age, while 74 participants (34.65%) were above 30. Regarding the education level of the participants, 100 (47.17%) held a Bachelor's degree, 91 (42.92%) held a Master's degree, and 21 (9.91%) held a PhD. Their years of teaching experience ranged from 2 to 15 years or more. The participants were selected to fill out the questionnaire (either the online or paper version) based on their availability and convenience. It should be mentioned that the snowball sampling method was employed for the selection of the participants in this study. Efforts were made to ensure relative representativeness by including participants with diverse ages, genders, geographic locations, teaching experience, and educational levels.

2.2 Instruments

The Language Attitude Scale (LAS), developed by Taylor (1973), was employed to evaluate Iranian EFL teachers' attitudes towards the standard and non-standard varieties of English. The questionnaire was a modified adapted version. Formatted as a Likert-type scaling instrument, the questionnaire was

designed to collect data about standard and non-standard varieties of English and the teachers' acceptance of them in educational contexts. Opinions on the questionnaire were investigated through 15 language statements. The questionnaire involved the four content categories of "Structure of Nonstandard English", "Consequences of using and accepting Nonstandard English", "Philosophies concerning use and acceptance of Nonstandard English" and "Cognitive and intellectual abilities" of Nonstandard English speakers (Taylor 1973, p.196). Rating scales were numerically coded as "Strongly Disagree", "Mildly Disagree", "No Opinion", "Mildly Agree" and "Strongly Agree". Although this questionnaire is known as a valid and reliable instrument, the researcher reestablished its reliability and validity as the existing questionnaire was modified. The reliability of the scale was measured 0.89 using Cronbach's alpha formula. The validity of the questionnaire was also examined and ensured by three experienced EFL researchers.

This study did not require teachers to have in-depth knowledge of specific non-standard varieties. Instead, it asked them to reflect on their beliefs about language variation and their acceptance of different dialects in educational contexts. To do so, the statements within the questionnaire were carefully chosen to avoid overly specific references to any particular non-standard varieties that might have been unfamiliar to Iranian EFL teachers. Following the panel's recommendation (Miciak et al., 2016), Standard English in this study refers to the "language variety associated with education, government, media, and enterprise" (p. 824).

Hoover et al's. (1996) questionnaire was administrated to study Iranian EFL teachers' attitudes about standard and non-standard varieties of Persian in Iran. In other words, the questionnaire consisted of 15 items adapted with some modifications. The original questionnaire items reflected three different perspectives on African American Vernacular English: the "excellence perspective", "deficit perspective" and "extreme difference perspective" (Hoover et al., 1996, p.385). The teachers were required to choose from a five-point response Likert scale ("Strongly Agree", "Agree", "No Opinion" "Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree") to rate each statement. Hoover et al. (1996) evaluated the reliability and validity of the instrument. Due to the modification of the questionnaire, however, the researcher reestablished its reliability and validity within the context of this study. The Cronbach's alpha reliability index for the questionnaire was 0.79. To ensure the validity of the questionnaire items, the confirmation of three experienced EFL researchers was sought. Based on the feedback obtained, several modifications were done.

The Hoover et al. (1996) questionnaire, despite its original design for a different context, offered a valuable framework for exploring teachers' attitudes toward language variation. Its core constructs regarding the standard and non-standard language varieties are relevant across diverse language contexts, including EFL settings. Furthermore, this questionnaire has been previously employed in research on Iranian EFL teachers' attitudes towards dialect differences, as demonstrated by Negari (2012). In this study, "standard Persian is defined as the Tehran variety, which is widely 'used in Iranian media and the formal education system', and 'is spoken by people from the capital city, Tehran' (Mirshahidi, 2017, p. 147).

2.3 Data Collection Procedure

The data collection was undertaken over a two-month period. As detailed previously, the data was gathered by the researcher from Iranian EFL teachers in a total of seven provinces in Iran. The two attitude questionnaires were administered in two forms. The paper-based versions were distributed

manually in two provinces (Sistan and Baluchestan, and Tehran) and completed by 70 participants. The online versions of the questionnaires were administered electronically to 142 teachers. The respondents were sent email invitations to participate in online surveys. It should be mentioned that a participation information sheet was also included in both questionnaires. The initial section of each questionnaire gathered demographic information from the participating teachers, including age, gender, ethnicity, educational attainment, and years of teaching experience. The subsequent section comprised statements designed to evaluate teachers' attitudes towards standard and non-standard language varieties.

3. Data Analysis

3.1 Attitudes towards Standard vs., non- Standard Varieties of English

The first research question guiding the current research related to the Iranian EFL teachers' attitudes towards standard vs., non- standard varieties of English. Table 1 outlines the 15 statements from the questionnaire and the percentages of responses from the teachers for each item.

A majority of the teachers strongly disagreed that non-standard English sounds as good as standard English (92.5%) or is a clear, thoughtful, and expressive language (90.7%). Conversely, large majorities strongly agreed that non-standard English has a poor grammatical system (86.7%) and is imprecise or unclear (79.8%). Regarding the impact of accepting or rejecting non-standard English on abstract issues like national interest, welfare, and unity, most teachers (83.2%, 79.6%, and 81.2%, respectively) expressed no opinion.

Regarding the societal and educational acceptance of non-standard English for the development of self-esteem among non-standard dialect English speakers, 73.6% of teachers strongly disagreed that it is a significant aspect. Similarly, 85.3% strongly disagreed that rejecting a student's native language harms the student. 79.3% of teachers strongly believed that non-standard English offers no benefits. Regarding academic progress, 75.2% strongly agreed that Standard English is vital for academic success, while 74.9% strongly disagreed that non-standard English can lead to educational achievement. For classroom use, 85.5% strongly agreed that non-standard English should be eliminated. While 77.3% believed using of non-standard English wouldn't influence their evaluation of students, 80.6% strongly supported the standardization of English in schools.

Table 1

Teachers' Responses for Standard vs., non- Standard Varieties of English

Items	SD (%)	MD (%)	NO (%)	MA (%)	SA (%)
1. Non-standard English sounds as good as standard English.	92.5	2.3	0.3	3.1	1.8
2. Non-standard English is a clear, thoughtful and expressive language.	90.7	6.7	0.1	0.45	2.05
3. Non-standard English is an inferior language system.	2.9	3.1	0.4	6.9	86.7
4. Non-standard English is too imprecise to be an effective means of communication.	4.1	3.4	2.1	10.6	79.8

5. The encouragement of non-standard English would be beneficial for the national interest.	3.9	4.6	83.2	4.6	3.7
6. It would be detrimental to a country's social welfare if use of non-standard English became socially acceptable.	6.7	2.9	79.6	2.9	7.9
7. A decline in the use of non-standard dialects would have a positive influence on social identity.	0.5	7.4	81.2	9.5	1.4
8. Societal and educational acceptance of non-standard English is important for development of self-esteem among non-standard dialect English speakers	73.6	6.2	0.69	9.7	9.9
9. When teachers reject the native language of a student, they do him great harm.	85.3	9.2	1.2	3.2	1.1
10. The continued use of a non-standard dialect English accomplishes nothing worthwhile for an individual.	2.1	5.9	2.1	10.6	79.3
11. Allowing and accepting non-standard English in the classroom will retard the academic progress of the students.	75.2	14.9	0.8	5.7	3.4
12. If use of non-standard English were encouraged, speakers of non-standard English would be more motivated to achieve academically.	74.9	13.9	1.2	5.2	4.8
13. Teachers have a duty to ensure that students do not speak non-standard dialects of English in the classroom.	1.8	4.7	0.5	7.5	85.5
14. Use of non-standard English will affect teachers' evaluation of students.	77.3	6.9	2.3	8.7	4.8
15. One of the goals of the school system should be the standardization of the English language.	4.8	2.5	1.2	10.9	80.6

The following figure (Figure 1) presents the attitudes towards standard vs., non- standard varieties of English.

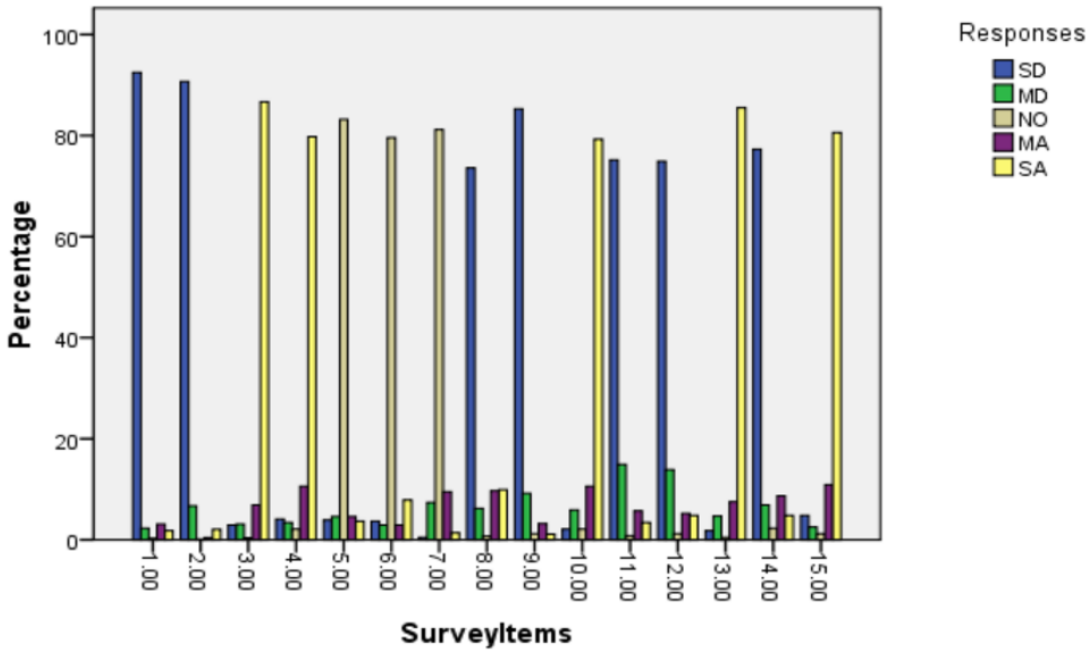

Figure 1 Attitudes towards standard vs., non- standard varieties of English

3.2 Attitudes towards Standard vs., non- Standard Varieties of Persian

Table 2 displays the percentages of teacher responses to 15 statements concerning attitudes towards standard and non-standard Persian. A large majority (91.1%) acknowledged awareness of language

variation and dialects. Regarding academic impact, 82.3% strongly felt that children using non-standard Persian might experience academic problems. A similar proportion (87.9%) agreed that non-standard dialects are 'lazy' forms of Persian. Concerning the use of non-standard dialects in teaching, 85.3% disagreed that they are adequate for subjects like social studies or math. 89.8% of teachers strongly agreed that students using non-standard Persian would not advance as far without standard Persian. For future job opportunities, 93.6% of the participants strongly agreed that standard Persian should be prioritized.

Regarding the role of standard Persian in schools, 85.6% strongly agreed that schools should ensure student proficiency and 79.9% strongly agreed it should be the dominant language. 90.1% of teachers disagreed that bidialectal education is the right of every child who does not speak standard Persian, and 94.2% strongly disagreed with allocating government funds for such programs. Regarding the characteristics of non-standard dialects, 81.3% strongly believed they have distinctive speech patterns, but few agreed with their widespread use (specific number not provided). Concerning grammatical structure, 92.6% strongly agreed that standard Persian's structure is superior. Regarding the impact of accepting non-standard dialects on school standards, 52.9% agreed it would lead to falling standards. Finally, 83.4% agreed that standard Persian expresses things better than non-standard Persian.

Table 2

Teachers' Responses for Standard vs., non- Standard Varieties of Persian

Items	SD (%)	D (%)	NO (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
1. People speak differently in different situations.	2.1	2.5	1.2	3.1	91.1
2. Some children do poorly in school because they do not speak standard Persian.	3.9	4.2	2.1	7.5	82.3
3. Dialects are lazy Persian.	1.9	2.5	1.3	6.4	87.9
4. Non- standard dialects would be adequate to teach subjects such as social studies or math.	85.3	4.5	1.9	5.9	2.4
5. Students with non-standard Persian would advance further in school without standard Persian.	89.8	6.5	1.5	1.2	1
6. Since only standard Persian is useful in getting a job, it should be preferred over non-standard Persian.	2.5	1.4	0.4	2.1	93.6
7. One purpose of schools is to make certain that all students graduate proficient in standard Persian.	2.7	5.2	2.6	3.9	85.6
8. Standard Persian must be the dominant language in schools.	5.6	4.8	3.4	6.3	79.9
9. Bidialectal education is the right of every child who does not speak the standard Persian.	3.6	90.1	1.3	2.9	2.1
10. Government funds should be used to support bidialectal education.	94.2	2.8	1.5	1.1	0.4
11. Non-standard Persian speakers have their own distinctive pattern of speech.	6.6	5.9	3.8	2.4	81.3
12. The use of non-standard dialects should not be restricted to particular region or social group.	93.7	3.1	1.1	1.8	0.3
13. Standard Persian is superior to non-standard Persian in terms of grammatical structure.	1.4	1.7	2.1	2.2	92.6
14. Acceptance of non-standard dialects of Persian by teachers would lead to a lowering of standards in school.	4.5	7.8	8.9	25.9	52.9
15. Standard Persian is more expressive than non-standard Persian.	3.7	4.6	3.1	5.2	83.4

The following figure (Figure 2) presents the attitudes towards standard vs., non- standard varieties of Persian.

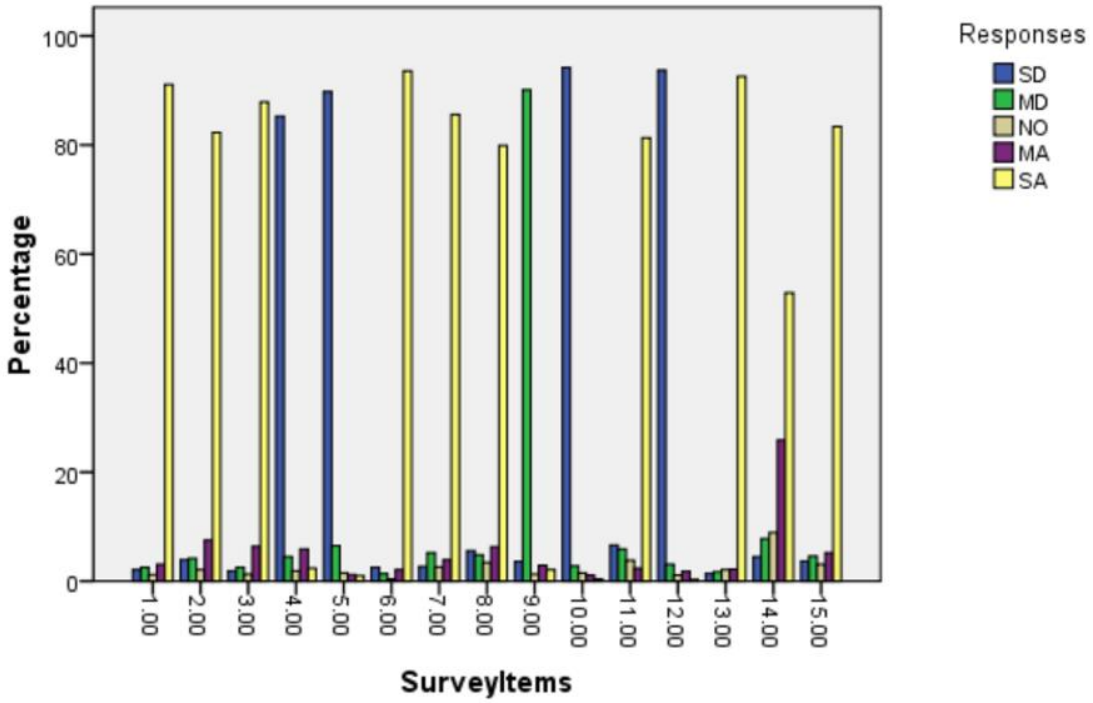

Figure 2 Attitudes towards standard vs., non- standard varieties of Persian

3.3 Relationship between Teachers Attitudes towards non- Standard Varieties of Persian and English

This study also examined the relationship between teachers' attitudes towards non-standard varieties of Persian and English. To this end, a correlation analysis was conducted on the collected data. As Table 3 shows, the correlation analysis revealed a strong, statistically significant positive correlation ($r = 0.981$, $p < 0.01$) between these two sets of attitudes. Specifically, teachers who expressed negative views towards non-standard Persian dialects were significantly more likely to hold negative views towards non-standard English varieties. Conversely, teachers who demonstrated more positive or accepting attitudes towards linguistic diversity within the Persian language were significantly more likely to also exhibit positive attitudes towards diverse forms of English.

These findings provide strong empirical evidence supporting the hypothesis that teachers' perceptions of language variation in their first language (L1) significantly influence their views on language variation in their second/foreign language (L2/FL). This finding aligns with previous research demonstrating a strong link between L1 and L2/FL language attitudes (Baker, 2011; Holmes, 2013). This correlation between teachers' attitudes toward their L1 language and their teaching practices has profound implications for language education, suggesting that teachers' L1 language attitudes may significantly influence their pedagogical approaches, classroom practices, and, ultimately, the learning experiences of their students.

Table 3

Relationship between Attitudes towards Varieties of Persian and English

		Varieties of Persian	Varieties of English
Varieties of Persian	Pearson Correlation	1	.981
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	212	212

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study sought to probe the attitudes of Iranian EFL teachers towards the standard and non-standard varieties of English and Persian and the probable correlation between them. The results revealed that Iranian EFL teachers have a negative attitude towards English and Persian non-standard varieties. The correlation between language attitudes towards variations in Persian and English proved to be very significant.

Addressing the first research question, which examined Iranian EFL teachers' attitudes toward standard versus non-standard varieties of English, the data presented reveal a consistent and strong preference for standard English (Survey item 1) among the Iranian EFL teachers surveyed, coupled with a corresponding negative evaluation of non-standard varieties. This pattern aligns with broader societal attitudes towards language variation, where standard forms are often perceived as superior and non-standard forms are stigmatized (Lippi-Green, 2012; Filson, 2018). The teachers' responses (Survey items 2, 3, and 4) indicated a belief that non-standard English lacks the clarity, expressiveness, and grammatical rigor of Standard English. This perception is reflected in the high percentages of teachers who disagreed with statements suggesting the equivalence of non-standard English and agreed with statements highlighting its perceived deficiencies. This binary view of language, where standard varieties are idealized and non-standard varieties are denigrated, overlooks the inherent linguistic validity and systematic nature of all dialects (Byrd & Mintz, 2010). It is important to emphasize that non-standard dialects are not simply "incorrect" or "lazy" versions of the standard; instead, they are distinct linguistic systems with their own rules and conventions (Fromkin, 2014).

The majority of the teachers had no opinion regarding the impact of acceptance or non-acceptance of the non-standard English dialects on the abstract issues such as national interest, welfare and unity (Survey items 5, 6, and 7). Therefore, it seems that there should be an attempt to increase teachers' stance on the non-standard language policy matters which can, in turn, play an important role in educational and other social phenomena. In fact, discrimination resulting from good English or bad English language policy has the potential to influence issues much more than the language itself. Thus, it is worthwhile to mention that any blind or uncompromising stance on non-standard dialects may result in different aspects of social harm. Furthermore, the teachers showed apparent dismissal of the impact of non-standard English acceptance on self-esteem (Survey item 8). This may mean that they do not consider the role of societal and educational influence, which can affect the self- esteem of the individuals and "the damage done to the self- esteem of non-standard speakers which was held to result from the repeated correction and denigration of their spoken

language" (McGill, 2000, p.76). Bettivia (2011) also claims that "allowing natural forms of expression encourages students and helps them increase their sense of self, which has a huge influence on future success" (p.172). The findings also revealed that a substantial percentage of teachers do not believe rejecting a student's native language is harmful (Survey item 9). Therefore, they may be less likely to welcome or allow non-standard English dialects in the classroom. However, Filson (2018) states that "language and culture are so intrinsically connected; a teacher's rejection of students' language can be interpreted as a rejection of the students themselves" (p.8). Furthermore, Milroy and Milroy (2014) stated that non-standard dialect is related to someone's personal and social identity. The teachers strongly agree that no benefits can be gained from the continuous use of non-standard English (Survey item 10). It seems that there is a need for a transition within teachers from unawareness to awareness of the value of non-standard English and they should also have a clear appreciation of the value of non- standard English when being used in education and community. For example, Yiakoumetti (2011) stated that speaking a non-standard dialect does not appear to be an educational drawback because researchers report very inconsistent results concerning the performance of standard and non-standard dialect speakers.

Mauranen (2012) also believed that some variables may interfere with the continued use of a non-standard language; still it is important to note that there is no need to look for an alternative standard form, provided that no negative feedback is received. The teachers' responses to the items 11 and 12 may indicate that to succeed in the academic world, Standard English is vital and only Standard English can predispose its users to academic achievement. The teachers' support for eliminating non-standard English from the classroom (Survey item 13) underscores the need for interventions that challenge these prevailing attitudes and prioritize standard English in the classroom.

Ellis (2013), however, stated that using non-standard English in the classroom can make some suspicions about the individuals' 'skill', 'intention' and 'level of education'. Most importantly, Brady (2015) added that instructors need to know how to provide students with the official language in a way that equips them with benefits associated with "privilege" and "power" but not underestimate their identities, which they may link to other dialects. Although most teachers claimed that they would not judge students based on their home dialects (Survey item 14), some researchers such as (Haller & Waterman, 1985; Mehan, 1987 as mentioned in Bowie and Bond, 1994) believe that these judgments and decisions generally occur unconsciously.

Cross et al. (2001) also mentioned that teachers' quick and negative attitudes towards non-standard dialects of the English in the classroom may be "reflected in their classroom management and evaluative processes" (p. 224). Finally, in response to the last questionnaire item (Survey item 15), the teachers strongly supported the standardization of English language in schools. As literature informs us, some external and internal factors such as language power, prestige, diversity reduction, education system, national unity, and best usage are influential in the process of language standardization. Teachers' negative attitudes towards non-standard dialects and its speaker "by perpetuating the myth that there is a correct way to speak English" can cause the standardization process in education (Filson, 2018, p.28). Furthermore, Lippi- Green (2012) states that "the education system may not be the beginning, but it is the heart of standardization process" (p.68).

The second research question examined Iranian EFL teachers' attitudes towards standard vs., non- standard varieties of Persian. The respondents demonstrated a high degree of awareness regarding the phenomenon of language variation and multiple dialects within spoken language (Survey

item 1). It seems that the respondents have realized that variations in language use can occur due to different social situations. In brief, the lexical, phonological, and grammatical variants seem to act dependent on the situations in which individuals find themselves. As Hopper (1973) states “dialects are sociolinguistic phenomena and should be viewed primarily as carriers of social information about situations. Dialects of a language differ largely in that different usages are most appropriate for particular speakers within particular contexts” (p. 212).

A substantial proportion of the teachers strongly believed that students who speak non-standard Persian in the classroom are likely to experience academic difficulties (Survey item 2). The respondents in this study rated non-standard Persian children as less able to do well academically than standard Persian-speaking children. However, there is no reason to attribute the children’s educational performance to features of any non-standard dialect of Persian. Some researchers such as (Taylor, 1973) and (Bowie and Bond, 1994) stated that teachers’ negative attitudes towards students’ non-standard dialect harmfully affect their chance, motivation and academic performance. Furthermore, some researchers such as Snowden (2014), Blake and Van Sickle (2001), and Van Sickle et al. (2002) expressed that including non-standard dialects into the educational system and engaging students in their language can help them to progress in school not only in their mother tongue, but also in the standard language. Most teachers agreed that non-standard dialects are lazy forms of Persian (Survey item 3).

However, most disagreement with this statement would be found among the teachers if they had been aware of the fact that non-standard dialects are rule-governed and systematic. As Byrd and Mintz (2010) claim, “every dialect is systematic in its structure and follows coherent patterns in its use” (p.64). They also add that “it would be completely out of realm of science to consider any dialect of any language as substandard, lazy or corrupt version of that language” (p.64). It is also worth mentioning that when a particular dialect is recognized as lazy, then students using that dialect may be wrongly judged to be lazy, too.

A substantial proportion of teachers disagreed with the proposition that non-standard dialects are appropriate for instructional purposes in subjects such as social studies or mathematics (Survey item 4). In the same vein, Blake and Cutler (2003) claimed that teachers were not informed about how non-standard dialects could be employed to teach subjects. It should also be mentioned that because most of text books are written in the standard dialect, the use of non-standard dialects can interfere with students’ understanding and impede their learning.

However, teachers should keep in mind that a standard dialect does not necessarily increase the intelligence of students and it will not teach them various subjects such as math, science, or geography (Delpit, 2012). Accordingly, Cross et al. (2001) states that “teachers of all subjects and grades should be made aware of linguistic implications of differences in dialect and understand that "different" is not necessarily "wrong" and that students should not be penalized or rewarded based on of their spoken or written dialects (p. 223).

Most of the teachers strongly disagreed with the notion that students who speak non-standard Persian would achieve greater academic success without proficiency in standard Persian (Survey item 5). The idea that the standard dialect may contribute to students’ further advancement is, to some extent, accepted. Teachers, however, should be informed that if there is no place for students’ dialect in schools, they may still be vulnerable to educational disadvantage. The purposeful use of non-standard dialect and a recognized need to use a standard dialect may bring more fruitful results. Regarding job opportunities in the future, almost all of the teachers strongly agreed that the

standard Persian should be given priority over non-standard dialects (Survey question 6). Many employers make judgments about individuals applying for a job based on their 'speech patterns' (Hopper & Williams, 1972) and unfortunately, the standard dialect may only be considered as the correct language in the job market. Deterding (1998) believed that although people do favor a change in society, it won't happen in a short period of time. He adds that "while society is the way it is, the future prospects of students are harmed if they are unable to use a variety of English that is close to the standard" (Deterding, 1998, p. 20).

The teachers overwhelmingly endorsed the view that schools have a responsibility to ensure student proficiency in standard Persian (Survey question 7) and, further, that standard Persian should be the primary language of instruction within educational institutions (Survey question 8). Teachers need to know the best way to help students become proficient in the standard Persian is not through a process of domination of the standard Persian. Teachers should not speak from the viewpoint of the "dominant language ideology".

The educational system is one of the institutions which can impose the superiority of standard variety over non-standard varieties (Dent, 2004). As a result, the standard dialect becomes the dominant language in schools for non-standard dialect students, largely due to the dominant language ideology. But attempts should be made to give more attention to the significance of non-standard dialects in schools and not to replace them with the dominant language of education. A majority of teachers expressed disagreement with the concept of bidialectal education as a right for all children who do not speak standard Persian (Survey question 9).

Furthermore, a substantial proportion of teachers strongly opposed the use of public funds for the implementation of bidialectal education programs (Survey question 10). Researchers who advocate the bidialectal education believe that it can provide students with bidialectal programs to "have a firm foot in both worlds" (Blundon, 2016, p.227).

Some other researchers, however, argue from the point of view of factors such as a threat to national unity and dialectical interference to disagree with the bidialectal education (Pavlou, 1990; Pavlou& Papapavlou, 2004). Blake and Cutler (2003), in their study found that 20 percent of the teachers agreed with the bidialectal education and 24 percent of them believed that federal funds should be devoted to bidialectal programs. A majority of teachers strongly assented to the proposition that non-standard dialects possess their own unique and identifiable patterns of speech (Survey question 11). Very few, however, agree with the widespread use of non-standard dialects (Survey question 12). In other words, although respondents judged a non-standard dialect to be distinctive enough to have its grammatical forms and vocabularies, almost all of the teachers strongly felt that its use should be restricted to a particular geographical location or a social or ethnic group. It is stated that distinctive patterns refer to variations in vocabulary and grammar (Seargeant& Greenwell, 2013) and the use of distinctive patterns of speech is limited to a particular region or a specific social or ethnic community (Forlini et al., 1990).

A majority of the teachers strongly agreed that the grammatical structure of standard Persian is superior to non-standard dialects (Survey question 13). Many people consider the syntax of non-standard dialects as inappropriate. Henry (2005) stated that even the grammatical judgments of native speakers of non-standard dialects "are likely to be clouded by their knowledge that many of the structures in their dialect are considered 'ungrammatical' or 'incorrect' by speakers of the standard variety" (p.1599). Thus, such forms could usually not find their ways into the educational system and researchers believe that these forms would be 'stigmatized' (Henry, 2005, p. 1599; Cheshire, 1989).

More tolerant attitudes may be necessary in working on the grammatical structure of non-standard language varieties. Fromkin (2014) stated that although the grammatical structures and usage of the standard dialect may be more appropriate in some occasions, linguistically standard dialects do not have inferior or superior grammars compared to less prestigious or non-standard dialects.

A substantial percentage of the teachers concurred with the idea that teacher acceptance of non-standard Persian dialects would negatively impact academic standards within schools (Survey question 14). In other words, the respondents report a possible relationship between low standards and non-standard dialects of Persian. Falling standards in schools is one of the reasons for the concern with standard dialects. However, it should be noted that it is not the presence or absence of non-standard dialects that contributes to standards in schools; rather, teachers' ignorance or negative responses towards non-standard voices can negatively affect educational standards in schools.

Finally, most of the teachers agreed with the assertion that standard Persian possesses superior expressive capabilities compared to non-standard Persian dialects (Survey question 15). However, many researchers (e.g., Fromkin, 2014; Spears, 1999; Trudgill, 1979) believed that from a linguistic point of view, no dialect is more expressive than other dialects. As Fromkin and Rodman (1998) state, standard dialects are "neither more expressive, more logical, more complex, nor more regular than any other dialect or language" (p. 409). Thus, it seems that both standard and non-standard dialects have the same expressive power and the respondents' opinions about superiority of the standard dialect can be due to social rather than linguistic reasons (Trudgill, 1979).

Regarding the third research question, the results indicated that the teachers' attitudes towards non-standard varieties of Persian may play a key role in their evaluations of varieties of English. Accordingly, a change in teachers' attitudes towards non-standard forms of Persian may account for their perceptions of non-standard varieties of English. Generally speaking, if non-standard varieties of L1 are viewed positively in the educational system, then both teachers and learners may tend to evaluate non-standard varieties of L2 or foreign language more favorably. This idea is in line with McKenzie (2007), who states that "the general attitude changes currently occurring amongst Japanese nationals towards a greater acceptance (and presumably, a greater awareness) of varieties of Japanese speech, may, in future, result in increased tolerance of local varieties of English speech amongst Japanese learners" (p.220). McKenzie (2007) argued that perceptions in L1 varieties (Japanese speech) can influence or form the attitudes held towards varieties of English. Kunschak (2003) in his study also found a positive correlation between learners' awareness of and perceptions of variation in L1 (English) and L2 (German). On the other hand, he stated that an understanding of language variation is a potential determent of perceptions both within and across languages.

The results of this study imply that teachers can be in a position to improve their support of non-standard dialects and their speakers only once they have developed their own and their students' understanding of non-standard dialects and gained a greater awareness and knowledge of the fact that the non-standard dialects exist as an important influence on language and educational success. Clearly for this to happen, Wodak and Corson (1997, p. 107), for example, state that "in-service education of practitioners in sociolinguistics of schooling would certainly be helpful in identifying undesirable prejudices and eliminating the practices that result from them". Thus, teachers do not present students' non-standard dialects as inferior but value the non-standard varieties in schools and increase the appreciation of the appropriate time and place for the use of standard and non-standard forms.

Furthermore, to value the non-standard varieties, school systems and policy makers need to move towards an informed policy that promote greater importance of both standard and non-standard varieties in classroom context as language variation contributes to education. As Corson (2000) states, "the absence of formal policies that give explicit respect to non-standard varieties actually creates a tacit form of language policy that legitimizes the standard variety" (p. 68). Attempts should be made to eliminate the bias against the non-standard varieties and not to label their speakers as 'educationally disabled', which can help make the necessary changes in attitude.

The strong correlation reported between attitudes towards language variation in LI and L2/FL can offer that developing teachers' positive attitude and awareness towards L1 variation could potentially influence their level of acceptance of L2 or FL variation and "promoting the integration of language variation into LI teaching may have some positive outcome on L2 awareness and attitudes" (Kunschak, 2003, p. 152). Further studies are thus required to investigate variables and courses which can prepare teachers and students learn about language variation and then probe how they can take advantages arising from their greater awareness of the role of language variation in educational contexts. While generalizability of the findings might be limited due to the study sample size, future research studies may employ a larger and more diverse sample. Triangulating data through methods such as classroom observations, interviews, or analysis of teaching materials could provide more in-depth data. Subsequent research could also examine how teachers' beliefs about standard and non-standard varieties influence their instructional choices, students' feedback, and classroom management strategies.

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