



Shahid Rajaee
Teacher Training University



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RICeST

The **1st** National Conference on Technology-enhanced Language Learning and Teaching



Accomplishments and Challenges amid the COVID-19 Pandemic

Book of Abstracts

February 9, 2023

Bahman 20, 1401

Tehran, Iran





The 1st National Conference on Technology-
enhanced Language Learning and Teaching
(TELLT)

Accomplishments and Challenges amid the COVID-19 Pandemic

February 9, 2023 (Bahman 20, 1401)

English Department
Faculty of Humanities
Shahid Rajaei Teacher Training University

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Conference at a Glance

Thursday, February 9, 2023

Bahman 20, 1401

Program

9:00-9:15	Opening Ceremony	Holy Quran Recitation The National Anthem
9:15-9:30		President's Welcome message
9:30-9:45		Video Clip
9:45-10:00		Scientific Chair's Welcome message
10:00-10:15		Executive Chair's Report
10:15-10:30	Break	
10:30-12:30	Parallel Sessions	1 Instructional practices
		2 -Testing and Assessment -Teacher Education
		3 Materials Development/Media effect
12:30-13:30	Poster Sessions	

Useful Links

Conference Websites	1tellt.sru.ac.ir
Conference Ceremony	https://vc.sru.ac.ir/re51g1dtjzly/
Session 1- Virtual Room 1	https://vc.sru.ac.ir/r0fq6tkwte79/
Session 2- Virtual Room 2	https://vc.sru.ac.ir/rfu7xwz9w1vy/
Session 3- Virtual Room 3	https://vc.sru.ac.ir/rv8yttea1iji/
Poster Sessions	https://1tellt.sru.ac.ir/en/news.php?rid=53

Conference Program

Parallel sessions

Session 1. Instructional Practices

Room 1

Chair: Dr. Zahra Cheraghi

Time	Title
10:30-10:45	The role of self-directed learning and personal self-concept in reading comprehension; a case of intermediate-level students
10:45-11:00	Practicing Multiliteracies Pedagogy in an Iranian EFL Secondary School Context: Exploring Hurdles and Rewards
11:00-11:15	Critical Reflections on the Revised Curriculum of ELT at Bachelor-degree Level on Two Planes of Intention and Enactment: A Documentary Analysis
11:15-11:30	Different Forms of Mediation for Enhancing Iranian male EFL learners' Reading Comprehension through Implementing Critical Thinking-oriented Dynamic Assessment (CT-DA)
11:30-11:45	ESP Students' perception toward online learning during the COVID-19
11:45-12:00	On the Relationship between Text Familiarity and Cognitive Load of Reading Comprehension in Post-pandemic Period: A Comparison across High-school Students of Grades 10 and 11
12:00-12:15	The Effect of Language Aptitude on the Efficacy of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning

Session 2. Testing and Assessment/Teacher Training and Development

Room 2

Chair: Dr. Mehrak Rahimi

Time	Title
10:30-10:45	The Effects of Corona Pandemic on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) University Instructors' Teaching: A Qualitative Approach
10:45-11:00	Investigating the Level of Iranian Teachers' Self-efficacy in Distance Education during the COVID-19 Pandemic
11:00-11:15	EFL Teachers' Burnout amid COVID-19 Pandemic: A Focus on the Contexts of Teaching
11:15-11:30	A Study on Online Assessment at High Schools amid Covid-19: Iranian EFL Teachers' Perception
11:30-11:45	Developing Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge of EFL Teachers through Action Research
11:45-12:00	Iranian Teachers' Perceptions and Practices of Oral Corrective Feedback in English Language Virtual Classrooms during the COVID-19 Pandemic
12:00-12:15	Junior High School EFL Teachers' Perceptions of their Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (TPACK) of Technology Integration in COVID-19 Epidemic

Session 3. Instructional Content Development

Room 3

Chair: Dr. Maryam Meshkat

Time	Title
10:30-10:45	The effect of social media on English language learning during the pandemic COVID-19 using Shad software
10:45-11:00	Opening the Black Box of Comprehensibility Criterion Used for Machine Translation Evaluation
11:00-11:15	The Impact of a Personalized Listening App on the Development of Listening Comprehension: The Case of Basic Language Learners
11:15-11:30	The Effect of E-Comics as an Edutainment Tool on Elementary EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension and Reading Motivation
11:30-11:45	EFL students' perceptions of Grammarly application in language learning
11:45-12:00	Students' Perception of Using Shad Program: Post-Covid era

Conference Committee



President
Dr. N. Tahmasebi Pour



Chair
Dr. M. Rahimi



Scientific Chair
Dr. R. Nejati



Executive Chair
Dr. M. Saidi

Conference Committee's Message

The goal of education in the third millennium is to transform traditional education and improve the teaching-learning process through the use of innovative educational approaches, environments, and tools. The development of technological infrastructures and the ubiquitous presence of technology in almost all human endeavors and activities have created a link between formal and informal education and increased the motivation to learn by paving the way for the inclusion of learners' diverse needs in instruction. Technology-enhanced learning environments are learner-centered, personalized and appealing to both teachers and students. While some researchers were skeptical about the practical applications of technology in education, experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic showed that the creation and expansion of technological infrastructures in accordance with the needs of the society can help the inception and thriving of a responsible and responsive education. Appropriate integration of technology into pedagogy would lead to the preservation of education amidst social crises. During the pandemic, many teachers, professors, and policy makers realized the value of purposeful and scientific use of online teaching and learning and found negotiated ways to exploit this type of education for the benefit of the students. In this situation, the 1st National Conference on Technology-enhanced Language Learning and Teaching (1TELLT) was organized with the mission of sharing the findings of research on Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) in this era with language educationists. 1TELLT secretariat received valuable articles from researchers, professors and students across the country who paid special attention to the Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) and the challenges and opportunities it created for language teachers and pedagogues in Iran. It is hoped that this conference can provide a realistic portrayal of technology use in education in general and language teaching in particular. In the end, we would like to take this opportunity to thank all respected researchers who shared their valuable research findings with the audience of the 1st TELLT and wish them the best of luck.

Dr. N. Tahmasebi Pour
President

Dr. M. Rahimi
Chair

Dr. R. Nejati
Scientific Chair

Dr. M. Saidi
Executive Chair

List of Scientific Committee and Executive Board

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Book of Abstracts and Proceedings

Rahimi, Mehrak

Shahid Rajaei Teacher Training University

Art Work

Moshtaghi, Mohammad

Shahid Rajaei Teacher Training University

Rahimi, Mehrak

Shahid Rajaei Teacher Training University

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Junior High School EFL Teachers' Perceptions of their Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (TPACK) of Technology Integration in COVID-19 Epidemic

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Background and objectives: Covid-19 has disturbed the educational system in Iran at all levels and has brought about unpredicted challenges in all aspects of education, in general, and in language teaching, in particular. Ironically, the ups and downs the Iranian teachers and researchers have undergone during the lockdown and social distancing were not without benefits. The unwanted challenges pushed them to adopt technology-enhanced methods which in turn challenged their technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge (TPACK). The objective of the study was to probe junior high school EFL teachers' perception of their technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge (TPACK) for integrating information and communication technologies (ICT) into English skill development.

Materials and Methods: The TPACK model was the theoretical framework of this study. A mixed methods approach was adopted, and a sequential quantitative (TPACK survey) and qualitative (semi-structured interview) design were used. The sample consisted of 81 EFL teachers teaching English in different junior high schools. They included both female (n = 58) and male (n = 23) teachers with various years of experience (11-22 years). Later, 14 of them voluntarily participated in interview sessions. A valid questionnaire with 54 Likert-type items was distributed



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among the teachers to measure their self-assessment of the seven dimensions of the TPACK model. The interview was conducted afterward on a virtual platform (Skype). The interviews were recorded and transcribed to be analyzed using MAXQDA (version 2020).

Results and findings: The results show that EFL teachers have a relatively low perception of TPACK with regard to their ICT use. The results of the correlational analysis indicated that all components of the TPACK model were significantly and directly correlated; however, they ranged from moderate to very strong. They also, as reflected in interview data, acknowledged their lack of TPACK for the pedagogical application of ICT. Above all, they identified their imperfect ICT training which influences their pedagogical performance in English classes during the COVID-19 epidemic. Moreover, with regard to content knowledge, they emphasized the motivating role of virtual classes in terms of re-studying the content they were presenting to their learners. With regard to technological and pedagogical knowledge, they considered their inability in planning and evaluating the integration of technology into English classes as the main challenge. Finally, it was concluded that the teachers were aware of their TPACK weaknesses.

Conclusions: Based on the results and findings of this study, it seems essential that teacher training courses, both pre-service and in-service, invest on the development of skills facilitating ICT integration in junior high school English classes. Also, more research is needed to test simplified measures to promote ICT integration. Additionally, it is essential to develop a variety of reflective practice procedures for teachers, either in groups or individually to help them raise their awareness of their lack of TPACK for ICT integration, as well as other aspects of educational technology use in junior high school classes. Last but not least, observation and supervision of junior high school English classes are also needed. This approach is not only adoptable as a part of teaching practice, but also as a line of (action) research which would be informative to both teachers and experts in the field.



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Keywords: COVID-19 Epidemic, English Teachers; Information Communication Technology (ICT); Junior High School; Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge



Iranian Teachers' Perceptions and Practices of Oral Corrective Feedback in English Language Virtual Classrooms during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Background and Objectives: The COVID-19 pandemic caused an inevitable shift from face-to-face to virtual language teaching. One of the challenges that language teachers encountered in virtual classrooms was to provide the learners with appropriate oral corrective feedback that would aid in learning. On account of the importance of corrective feedback and due to the crucial role of teachers, attention should be paid to teachers' perceptions and practices of corrective feedback. However, very few studies, if any, have focused on oral corrective feedback, in teaching English through virtual classrooms during the COVID-19 pandemic, from the teachers' perspective, in the foreign language context of Iran. Therefore, in order to address this gap in the literature, the present study aimed to explore English language teachers' perceptions and practices of oral corrective feedback in virtual classrooms during the COVID-19 pandemic in Iran. Another purpose was to investigate inconsistencies between the teachers' perceptions and their practices.

Materials and Methods: Participants of this qualitative study were sixteen teachers who taught adult learners of English as a foreign language in virtual classrooms held via Adobe Connect. The participants were selected through purposive sampling. The instruments of the study were classroom observation and semi-structured interviews. To gain naturalistic insight into the participants' practice of oral corrective feedback in virtual classrooms, two sessions of each participant's virtual classrooms were observed, recorded, and selectively transcribed. In sum, 32 virtual classroom observations were conducted. Further, to explore the participants' perceptions



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of oral corrective feedback, each participant took part in a virtual semi-structured individual interview, held via Skype. The interviews were also recorded and transcribed. Content analysis was used to analyze the data.

Results and Findings: Analysis of the data demonstrated that the participants believed in the importance of oral corrective feedback in virtual classrooms. They had a positive attitude toward peer correction and self-correction. Nonetheless, in their virtual classrooms, teacher correction was dominant. In practice, they almost never allowed peer correction, and they rarely encouraged self-correction. They emphasized their preference for implicit and output-prompting types of corrective feedback. Nevertheless, explicit and input-providing types of corrective feedback were dominant in their virtual classrooms. The participants asserted that in order to deal with the contextual challenges they faced in virtual classrooms, they had made modifications in their practices accordingly.

Conclusions: Teaching in a virtual environment caused mismatches between teachers' perceptions and their practices of oral corrective feedback. There seemed to be a need for an in-service teacher education program, through which teachers could improve their knowledge about oral corrective feedback in virtual classrooms. The findings of the present study have implications for language teachers and language teacher educators.

Keywords: Corrective Feedback; Teachers' Perceptions; Teachers' Practices; Virtual Classroom



Investigating the Level of Iranian Teachers' Self-efficacy in Distance Education during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Background and objectives: Due to covid19 pandemic and school lockdown, there was a transition from face-to-face education to online classrooms. This shift affected teachers' self-efficacy opinions and promoted teachers to adapt their teaching methods. As covid-19 has spread since 2020 and schools were closed, distance education was the only choice for learning and affected teachers' self-efficacy. Accordingly, teachers were forced to provide some educational experiences to their students referring to distance learning. This study investigates the Iranian English teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and opinions about online teaching during a pandemic.

Material and methods: To carry out the survey research method, 47 EFL teachers whose average experience is 8 years from different public and private schools across Tehran Province, were invited to complete an online questionnaire. The questionnaire includes three parts; the first part discovers demographic characteristics, the second part perceives teachers' self-efficacy perceptions about distance education and their technical knowledge of virtual classrooms by ten 5-point Likert type items, and the third part includes 18 close-ended and open-ended questions about teachers' personal opinions. Data were collected through the questionnaire in April 2022 to find out, the level of teachers' self-efficacy beliefs, and the effective factors on teachers' self-efficacy opinions about distance education. Data was analyzed by descriptive statistics through SPSS 23, independent sample t-test, and content analysis.



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Result and findings: Descriptive statistics by analyzing teachers' demographic characteristics revealed teachers don't have high-level beliefs about their ability. T-test shows the majority of teachers did not received any training on distance education during their university life. 54.2 % believes that cannot be in live classes and manage it. 78.5% think cannot assess and evaluate their students and 69.0% think are not capable enough to use technology such as computers, cameras, and sounds systems effectively. The small Etta Square effect size values in t-test shows the teachers who have a higher degree, receive distance education training, work in private schools and actively use technology before pandemic in their classes have a higher level of self-efficacy in comparison to others. Teachers' problems with distance education such as systems errors and infrastructures problems, inequality of opportunities in education, problems with student attendance and motivation, teacher-related problems, problems with live classes and technology, and parent-related problems were uncovered through content analysis.

Conclusions: This study attempts to realize the pure teachers' beliefs, opinions, concerns, and limitations on distance learning. Based on the result, the efficiency of distance education will be increased by the higher level of teachers' self-efficacy. Irrespective of the limitations of this study such as the small number of participants, and a single time point for data collection, the findings of this study helps administrators and teachers to recognize the limitations and problems of distance learning that directly impact the teaching and learning process in order to overcome to increase its efficiency. Furthermore, Future study can be conducted with large number of participant in more provinces.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic; distance education; teacher's self-efficacy



Developing Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge of EFL Teachers through Action Research

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Background and objectives: New advancements in technology and the COVID-19 pandemic have led English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) teachers to work in new virtual contexts. However, using technology for educational purposes needs special type of knowledge for integrating technology into education which is referred to as Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK). Integrating technology effectively into educational settings is of considerable importance as learning environments are increasingly influenced by advances in instructional technology. In order to help a group of EFL teachers become more familiar with the concept of TPACK and its potential for educational purposes, the present study asked a group of EFL teachers to conduct an action research (AR) study in their classrooms by emphasizing on one technological problem they had observed during their online teaching.

Materials and Methods: The participants were five male EFL teachers who were teaching online general English courses at a private English language teaching institute. They were all inexperienced teachers with less than three years of teaching experience. They were between 23 to 25 years old. The present study is of qualitative nature and semi-structured interview was used as the instrument for data gathering. The interview questions focused on exploring the effect of AR on solving one particular technological problem the teachers faced during their online



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teaching. The interviews were first transcribed and then analyzed by coding different categories of knowledge with respect to technology as they emerged in the data.

Results and findings: The findings of the present study showed that conducting the AR study developed the EFL teachers' TPACK. More specifically, it was found that conducting AR increased the EFL teachers' content knowledge about technology. In addition, different stages of the AR study helped the teachers to adopt more effective pedagogical strategies for teaching by using the new technology.

Conclusions: The findings of the present study highlight the close relationship between various stages of AR and how they contribute to developing the EFL teachers' TPACK. The stages of the AR study provided important opportunities for the teachers to build their knowledge of technology by continuous observation of their performance and finding out how technology could help them overcome the barriers of teaching in their classroom context. Regarding the EFL teachers' knowledge of more effective pedagogical strategies for teaching, revisiting their teaching practices and techniques confronted these teachers with constraints and opportunities that they had to embrace to find ways to improve their teaching habits by taking into account new technology. One important pedagogical implication of this study is the need to design effective teacher training programs to develop AR studies and make pre-service teachers aware of the importance of each stage of the AR process in developing their TPACK. One limitation of the present study could be attributed to the small sample size which affects the generalizability of the results. Future studies should make use of a larger sample size so that the results would be more generalizable.

Keywords: action research; content knowledge about technology; EFL teachers; pedagogical strategies; technological pedagogical content knowledge



EFL Teachers' Burnout amid COVID-19 Pandemic:

A Focus on the Contexts of Teaching

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Background and objectives: The protracted crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic has imposed unfavorable living and working conditions on people and has placed an especially unbearable burden on teaching professionals, who have already been proven to suffer from severe burnout under normal circumstances. The imbalance between excessive job demands and insufficient resources caused behavioral, attitudinal, and physical problems such as stress, fatigue, and pressure, and ultimately high levels of job burnout among teachers. Burnout involves three distinct dimensions (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment) caused by personal and organizational factors, experienced by novice and experienced EFL teachers in different contexts. Thus, preventing teacher burnout not only improves personal status and teachers' professional life but also improves students' online behavior, creates a sustainable learning environment, and stimulates students' motivation and learning. This study thus examined EFL teachers' burnout amid the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on the teaching context.

Materials and Methods: Three-hundred and seven EFL teachers took part in the study. The teachers had the experience of working in public schools, private language institutes, or both at the time of the pandemic. Teachers' burnout during the COVID-19 crises was assessed by MBI-ES. MBI-ES has 22 items and evaluates teachers' job burnout with respect to three aspects of burnout syndrome including emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment, and depersonalization. The factor structure of the scale was put to test and the item loadings on each



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component were found to be exactly similar to the original MBI-ES. The study utilized a descriptive design. The data were analyzed by a one-way Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA).

Results and findings: Teachers' dimensions of burnout in three contexts of teaching were compared by MANOVA. A significant difference between three groups' burnout was observed [Wilks' Lambda = .946; $F = 2.827$; $p = 0.010$; $\eta_p^2 = .027$], therefore, Tests of Between-Subjects Effects were considered. The differences between the groups with respect to three dimensions of burnout were found to be statistically significant. Examining the descriptive statistics showed that teachers who worked in two contexts had the highest emotional exhaustion and depersonalization during the pandemic. However, teachers of public schools had a higher level of burnout in personal accomplishment during the pandemic.

Conclusions: Teachers who bear more workload have more discomfort and dissatisfaction, and finally occupational depression with their teaching and working conditions. They will feel less of a sense of commitment, they are also more callous, more hostile and are more likely to leave their jobs. Also, teachers of public schools experience more ineffectiveness in their professions during the COVID-19 pandemic. This elucidates how knowledge empowerment and reducing teachers' workload can affect experiencing low levels of burnout. Further investigations in the light of examining individual and organizational factors while considering gender are recommended.

Keywords: burnout; context; EFL; teachers



The Impact of a Personalized Listening App on the Development of Listening Comprehension: The Case of Basic Language Learners

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Background and objectives: The cognitive complexity of listening comprehension and the efforts the processing of the oral input demands make listening tasks very challenging for language learners. To address this issue and promote the efficiency of listening instruction, a wide range of instructional approaches and techniques emerged in the 70s and 80s. With the advent of CALL and MALL, more potential for creating personalized learning spaces was provided and language learners' self-directness in developing their communicative competence was encouraged. Despite the availability of many software and applications for language learning, the development of mobile apps based on the needs of the students still requires language educationists' attention. This study thus examined the effect of a personalized listening app designed based on the listening strategies profile of the learners on the development of their listening comprehension.

Materials and Methods: Fifty basic language learners took part in this study and were assigned to the experimental (n=25) and the control (n=25) groups. Their entry-level listening proficiency was assessed by the A2 Key test. A personalized listening app was designed with a branching option to direct the learners into their path of learning considering their listening strategy awareness. The application was designed as a self-study supplementary material to support the listening parts of Prospect 1. The study utilized a pre-test-posttest control group design, hence both groups participated in the A2 Key test at the end of the experiment. The data were analyzed by a one-way Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA).



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Results and findings: As no violation of preliminary assumption testing (multivariate normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and homogeneity of variances) was found, MANOVA was conducted. A significant difference between the control and experimental groups' performance in combined dependent variables was observed [Wilks' Lambda = .17; $F(44) = 42.94$; $p = 0.000$; $\eta_p^2 = .83$], therefore, Tests of Between-Subjects Effects were considered. The differences between the two groups with respect to post-test scores of five parts of A2 Key were found to be statistically significant. Examining the effect sizes showed that the strongest effect for the intervention was in part 5 of the post-test that involved listening and filling in the blanks ($\eta_p^2 = .759 > .14$). Based on descriptive statistics, the experimental group outperformed the control group in the post-test scores of all five parts of the A2 Key test

Conclusions: Based on the results of the study it can be inferred that one way to optimize language learners' cognitive processing is to address their needs and make them aware of their weaknesses and strengths in doing difficult tasks. This elucidates how learner-centered instructional materials, particularly for basic language learners, can be designed by the ministry of education and language teachers. Follow-up studies on the effects of personalized apps on the development of other language skills considering individual differences are recommended.

Keywords: comprehension; listening; m-learning; personalized app



EFL Students' Perceptions of Grammarly Application in Language Learning

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Background and objectives: With the development of technology, digital writing tools have been more widely used and accepted as instruments for language acquisition. As a result, a number of online tools for computer-mediated writing have appeared. Grammarly application, a digital writing tool that detects duplicate content and problems in grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, and linguistic style, is one example of such technology. In addition to easy editing, it can also check for contextual variables, word choices, and plagiarism. For this purpose, the current study aimed to identify the impact of Grammarly application on improving writing skills among EFL students and their perceptions toward this program.

Materials and Methods: The purpose of this study was to investigate the learners' perceptions of ameliorating their writing skills toward the use of Grammarly software. In conducting the investigation qualitative research has been employed to the 20 EFL students' experiences in the form of their answers in the interview and questionnaires conducted. Then, a further justification of the data was also gained by taking the documentation of these students' Grammarly accounts. The students' answers were coded and arranged into certain them; covering the strengths and weaknesses of using this program in evaluating their academic writing.

Results and Findings: According to the results of the interview, these students have discussed how applying Grammarly has enhanced their academic writing. Several of this program's merits and demerits were made clear by their opinions. Beyond the advantages of the correction of grammatical indicators of the software, easy accessibility; learners had no trouble receiving the



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evaluation's results and could readily follow the suggestions and corrections that were made rapid evaluation rates; it can help individuals revise and analyze their academic writing in a shorter amount of time, and free service was mentioned as the main benefits. Grammarly does have certain flaws, though. Students asserted that if they access the website, a stable internet connection is required. The technical issue with this software is a network connection issue. Another problem is; over-checking on the reference list which means that the name, title, and article listed on the reference list cannot be changed, even for a grammar correction and students were unsure how to resolve this issue with Grammarly.

Conclusions: The study scrutinized students' perceptions of applying Grammarly software in the process of writing. From the result, it can be seen that Grammarly still has a few restrictions and shortcomings in giving the service. However, the majority of students perceived positive responses to Grammarly as an online grammar checker during the writing process, Grammarly offers pupils a number of benefits. Students believed that Grammarly helped verify their language style, spelling, and grammar. It might boost their confidence in writing procedures as well. They thought Grammarly was simple to use and took short time to utilize. On top of that it demands students to independently assess their own work with the aid of the system's feedback feature, which promotes students' independence and autonomy during learning. However, students whose writing was assessed using Grammarly had stronger English as a Foreign Language writing skills.

Keywords: EFL students' perceptions; Grammarly application; language learning



The Effect of E-Comics as an Edutainment Tool on Elementary EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension and Reading Motivation

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Background and objectives: Reading is a vital language skill, one that forms the foundation upon which communication in the form of writing, listening, and speaking can be developed. Recent advances in understanding comprehension processes point to visualization and mental representation as important factors. In fact, most reading comprehension theories place emphasis on readers constructing coherent text representations. Therefore, the present study aimed to explore the impacts of E-comics on the reading comprehension and reading motivation of Iranian elementary-level EFL learners.

Materials and Methods: a quasi-experimental design as a quantitative kind of research was employed to conduct the present study at Tak language institute located in Tehran. The initial population was 100 female elementary EFL learners. To homogenize the participants, the Oxford placement test (OPT) was administered and then 40 EFL learners whose scores fall 1 Standard deviation above and below the mean were selected and randomly divided into two groups, namely the control group and the experimental group, and each group consisted of 20 EFL learners aged from 12 to 14. Then, the translated reading motivation questionnaire and a reading test were administered as the pretests. Next, the experimental group received the reading instructions using E-comics selected from the *Asterix series* while the participants in the control group did not receive a similar treatment, and the hard copy of the selected texts from *the Asterix series* was taught to them without using E-comics. After eight sessions of treatment, another reading test with the same



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level of difficulty as the pretest was administered to the participants as the reading post-test took 30 minutes. Besides, the participants were required to answer the reading motivation questionnaire as another posttest. In the end, Independent T-tests were run in order to find out the differences between the control and experimental groups.

Results and findings: The findings indicated that using E-comics rather than comics in hard copies had a significant effect on reading comprehension and reading motivation of Iranian elementary EFL learners. In fact, the results confirmed that using e-comics makes reading more enjoyable and understandable since it can encourage and support EFL learners, particularly those with lower proficiency levels.

Conclusions: Taking into account the proficiency level of EFL learners as well as visual aids cognitive complexity and numbers, teachers and material developers can benefit from the results of the present study to promote advanced thinking in the classroom which results in improving comprehension of EFL learners.

Keywords: E-comics; elementary learners; reading comprehension



ESP Students' Perception toward Online Learning during the COVID-19

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Background and objectives: All facets of human life, including education, are impacted by Covid-19 a global pandemic. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the entire teaching and learning process was done online or through the use of e-learning. Due to the importance of implementing effective ESP programs and the scarcity of online learning experiences, it is critical to investigate the quality of classes in terms of materials and assessment. This study aims to look at the level of ESP students' perception of online ESP learning courses.

Materials and Methods: A quantitative method survey was used to design the study, with a questionnaire distributed to Pharmacy Ph.D. students. The data in the study are based on students' experiences taking an online ESP course during the crackdown. A sample of 72 Pharmacy students from Mazandaran University of Medical Sciences completed a two-part questionnaire. The Cronbach's alpha analysis results (0.85) indicated that it was highly reliable. The age of the participants varies from 20 to 23 years.

JASP, a statistical package, was used to analyze the data collected. In this study, a descriptive-correlation survey method was used.

Results and findings: Responses in the first section about students' perceptions of the learning materials used in their online ESP course showed that Skyroom was the most effective and convenient media for ESP classes. students reported their ability to work independently with the ESP teachers' guides (mean = 0.834. Max =1). Students understand ESP course requirements better in an online ESP course than in an in-person ESP course (0.840). They are very satisfied with the



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online resources selected by the ESP teachers (0.820). Generally, students are pleased with the online classes and the tools used to deliver them.

Results of the second part of the survey about students' perception of the transparency of the online tests indicated that learners were satisfied with the selected online exam platforms. Despite the high level of difficulty of the exam tasks, the final course result was unaffected by students' performance (mean = 3.630. Max =5). Besides, instructions were clear and easy to follow (3.109).

Conclusions: This study was designed to recognize the level of ESP students' perception of online ESP learning courses through a questionnaire. students are satisfied with the materials as well as the assessment types. Appropriate and available learning materials help ESP online courses to be more effective. Furthermore, Teachers' assessment plans are thought to be beneficial for gaining course knowledge and skills. Overall, based on the findings of the study, ESP learners are particularly satisfied with ESP courses offered online and an expected improvement in students' ESP learning outcomes.

Considering limited the results of this study to ESP students in pharmacy, larger samples can be used with the inclusion of other subject areas.

Further research is recommended on the satisfaction of both professors and students with their general perception, such as their need for educational technology. Furthermore, this study would be beneficial for educators and administrators who seek to increase the efficiency of ESP classes in possible future crises.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic; ESP; online learning; students' perception.



Practicing Multiliteracies Pedagogy in an Iranian EFL Secondary School

Context: Exploring Hurdles and Rewards

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Background and objectives: Throughout the last few decades, tremendous transformations have occurred to the traditional conception of literacy; the corollary to which is that literacy is no longer viewed as the ability to read and write but to master *multiliteracies*. Accordingly, the necessity of applying diverse modalities and digital technologies and integrating multiliteracies pedagogies into education, in general, and English as a Foreign or Second language (EFL/ESL), in particular, has recently been underscored in scholarly publications. The sudden outbreak of Covid-19 and mandatory migration of instructional activities from face-to-face to online domain inspired the researchers of the present study to explore the possibilities of integrating multiliteracies approaches into EFL secondary school context. To that aim, teaching materials and activities were developed for one of the units of a national textbook (*Vision 1*, Unit 2) based on four knowledge processes in *Learning by Design* framework, which is a specific multiliteracies pedagogical approach. The practices aimed at guiding the students through *experiencing* the known and the new meanings in different multimodal contexts, *conceptualizing* and *analyzing* meanings functionally, and *applying* the gained information appropriately and creatively.

Materials and Methods: The designed contents and activities were implemented in two English classes of a vocational school in the west of Tehran province and the hurdles and rewards of the practices were observed and documented. The participants of the study were 60 teenage students who were taking English as one of their compulsory school subjects. The data for the study were



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collected through multiple sources including a semester-long class observation, teacher-researcher reflective journals, student-generated documents, and focus-group interviews.

Results and findings: The findings of the study indicated that the students experienced a variety of challenges and changes in practicing multiliteracies. They faced challenges such as the lack of familiarity with cyberspace and online education, technical problems caused by low Internet connectivity, lack of access to digital devices like PCs, smartphones, or laptops, low computer literacy which caused difficulty in utilizing software tools, lack of familiarity with ethical issues in using and citing the Internet sources or assessing their credibility, lack of easy connection to peers in virtual classes, low motivation and engagement, as well as emotional distress experienced during the Covid-19 lockdown. Despite these challenges, the students experienced changes like stepping out of their comfort zone, loosening their dependency on the teacher and the school textbook, getting acquainted with digital and computer literacy, developing metalinguistic awareness by discovering the connections between lexical and syntactic forms and their functions, practicing to codecide and collaborate with each in doing joint activities, and using their strengths to creatively weave their acquired information to produce multimodal ensembles, to mention some.

Conclusions: Definitely, more research-based studies are required to explore the challenges and rewards of integrating multiliteracies into diverse foreign language educational settings. It is hoped that the findings of this study would be instrumental for English language teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers in developing language learners' multi-literacies.

Keywords: EFL classes; hurdles; Iranian secondary school; multiliteracies pedagogy; pedagogic materials development; rewards



Critical Reflections on the Revised Curriculum of ELT at Bachelor-degree Level on Two Planes of Intention and Enactment: A Documentary Analysis

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Background and objectives: Curricula are reflective of and lie at the interface of the aims, vision and mission, subject matter, and evaluation in a course or program of study. Even when assumed to be sufficiently thought through or revised by experts, they unveil (more of) their strengths and weaknesses to educational arena stakeholders as/if they are constantly probed into, especially at the implementation phase. Having said that, the present study has aimed at laying bare any possible setback in the way of proper (further) implementation of the revised curriculum of English Language Teaching at the Bachelor-degree level in Iran – a document having been (required to be) operative since the advent of the Persian academic year of 1400 in all Iranian higher education institutes (save for Farhangian University, which has already developed its own curriculum for the field of English Language Teaching).

Materials and Methods: The research, being of a documentary analytic type, has dealt with the existing policy documents at the level of intended curriculum embodied in a Ministry of Science, Research and Technology text lacking in sequencing and grading of courses, as well as at the level of the enacted curriculum in the form of sequenced and graded charts of subjects by the English/foreign language departments entrusted with the responsibility of making sure the program is smoothly in place.

Results and findings: Close reading of the Ministry document showed that, from the point of view of curriculum intention, the said curriculum contained shortcomings such as terminological



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variation and confusion vis-à-vis the title of some courses, and undue attention to the dynamic and ever-changing nature of English Language Teaching both in Iran and internationally as realized in the form of exclusion of a set of content matter and competencies required of prospective teachers to perform at their best. Additionally, a critical reflection of the sequencing of the courses undertaken by various departments across the country attested to weaknesses at the level of enactment, including not considering issues of course requirements, sequencing some subject matter areas inappropriately, and being somewhat heedless of the cognitive load and complexity of some courses.

Conclusions: Suggestions for redressing such imbalance and making sure the program runs more smoothly at departmental levels are finally given.

Keywords: document analysis; enacted curriculum; English Language Teaching (ELT); intended curriculum



On the Relationship between Text Familiarity and Cognitive Load of Reading Comprehension in Post-pandemic Period: A Comparison across High-school Students of Grades 10 and 11

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Background and objectives: Reading comprehension is a complex cognitive activity consisting of both bottom-up and top-down information processing. It is evident that the difficulty of comprehending a text can be lowered when sufficient sources of working memory are allocated to the reading task. This phenomenon is known as cognitive load and consists of three basic types: intrinsic, extrinsic, and germane. The goal of instructional design should be lowering the extrinsic load, managing the intrinsic load, and optimizing the germane load. One way to achieve this goal is to activate students' background knowledge by selecting texts that have familiar topics. Considering the type of instruction students received during the COVID-19 pandemic, understanding the role of instructional materials learned in this period in their future success is of great importance. The current study investigated the interplay between text familiarity and the cognitive load of reading comprehension among high-school students of grades 10 and 11.

Materials and Methods: One hundred and seventy-seven high-school students of grades 10 and 11 participated in the study. They were asked to read two sets of reading passages one with a familiar topic taken from their textbook and one related to the topic of the text with more technical content. They then evaluated the cognitive loads of each passage, i.e., intrinsic (IL), extrinsic (EL), and germane (GL) using Kelpsch's cognitive load questionnaire. Their achievement on the reading tasks was assessed and scored by researcher-made reading tests.



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Results and findings: The data were analyzed by the Pearson correlation method and Fisher's Z Transformation. The result of the correlation analysis showed that reading comprehension of the familiar passage was inversely and significantly related to both IL ($r=-.202, p<.01$) and EL ($r=-.271, p<.01$) among grade 10 students. Reading comprehension of less familiar passages was found to be inversely and significantly related to GL ($r=-.277, p<.01$) among grade 11 students. The result of Fisher's Z Transformation showed a significant difference between the strength of correlation of the EL for the passage of the book among grade 10 and 11 students, indicating that this correlation was stronger for grade 10 students. Also, the result of Fisher's Z Transformation was significant when the strength of the correlation of the GL of the technical text was compared, indicating that this correlation was stronger for grade 11 students.

Conclusions: The association between text familiarity and extrinsic cognitive load among grade 10 students shows that active learning and exploiting the schemata can reduce the difficulty of the reading tasks of a given textbook and as a result increases students' comprehension. This can be related to the fact that grade 10 students began studying Vision Series in a face-to-face manner and had a normal type of instruction. Yet, the inverse relationship between GL and less familiar text shows that students of grade 11 could not benefit from the familiar topics presented in their book passages to read more technical passages. This can be related to the type of instruction they received during the COVID-19 pandemic and the closure of the schools, as this type of instruction evidently impacted students' learning gains, motivation, and interest. The findings have practical implications for EFL teachers and materials developers to include more extensive reading in the EFL curriculum to assist students' reading comprehension and fluent reading.

Keywords: grade; post-pandemic; reading comprehension; text familiarity



The Effect of Language Aptitude on the Efficacy of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning

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Background and objectives: Mobile-assisted language learning is an extension of computer-assisted language learning. With a smartphone or tablet, language learners can now access resources via marketplaces for online language tutors and self-study language learning applications, whenever and wherever they wish. A voluminous body of research suggests that mobile-assisted language learning augments L2 learning. Further, language aptitude is an individual's cognitive ability which can predict the speed and ease of learning languages. The present study aimed at investigating whether language aptitude is a predictor of the efficacy of mobile-assisted language learning programs.

Materials and Methods: In doing so, the most recent users of Busuu Language Learning were invited to enter the study through notifications including a link to online entry. Busuu is a mobile-assisted language learning program comprising a website (busuu.com), an iOS and an Android mobile application, which offers courses in 12 languages of which English and Spanish are the most popular and the second most popular, respectively. The research team collected the incoming data and the pool of participants was created. Random sampling was practiced and 141 subjects entered the study. Having Spanish as the learning language, age of at least 18, and consent to participate in the study were the main inclusion criteria. The incentive for the participants was that they could study Spanish for free for 2 months and after the study, they would get a free Busuu Premium to account for one year for themselves and a friend of theirs. The participants were



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instructed to use Busuu for two months to study Spanish with at least 2 hours of study time. They were recommended to study for at least 8 hours for the oral proficiency evaluation. They were not allowed to use other language apps or external language courses during this period. The study employed an experimental pre-test/post-test design. At the end of the study, all subjects who had at least 2 hours of study were asked to take the final tests. Data were received from 119 participants and this comprised the study sample. Prior to the period of Spanish learning, all the participants had to take the TrueNorth Test, which is a test of oral proficiency, the Web-based Computer Adaptive Placement Exam, which is a reading and grammar language evaluation tool, and Second Language Pragmatics Aptitude Test, which is a measure of second language aptitude. TrueNorth Test and Web-based Computer Adaptive Placement Exam were deployed as measures of efficacy of Busuu mobile-assisted language learning program. The subjects, then, studied Spanish for 8 weeks and had access to 2 free live lessons a week with teachers. At the end of the study, they were asked to take the same tests again. To analyze the data, the Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated.

Results and findings: The results indicated that language aptitude has a consistent and positive linear effect on the efficacy of mobile-assisted language learning through Busuu ($r = 0.2$ for both reading/grammar gain and oral proficiency gain).

Conclusions: It was concluded that language aptitude is among the factors affecting the efficacy of mobile-assisted language learning. The findings have implications for mobile-assisted language learning program designers, language app developers, language teachers and language learners.

Keywords: computer-assisted language learning; efficacy; language aptitude; mobile-assisted language learning



Are Two Heads Really Better Than One? Analysis of the Benefits of Collaboration from Teachers' vs. Learners' Perspectives

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Background and objectives: Learners' and teachers' attitudes are regarded as overriding constructs in second language (L2) in general; however, their perceptions toward collaboration/peer-mediation, a topic that is receiving a lot of research attention recently, have remained relatively unexplored in Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context in particular. Thus, the overarching purpose of this study was to investigate Iranian EFL students' and teachers' attitudes toward collaboration/peer-mediation.

Materials and Methods: To do so, this study employed a survey-based design. First, to ensure that the instruments and procedures were reliable and valid, the researchers conducted a pilot study. Then, during the main study, a total of 120 Iranian EFL intermediate male and female students within the age range of 16-18 as well as 50 teachers with at least six years of teaching experience filled out a researcher-designed collaboration attitude scale consisting of 8 items. The collaboration attitude questionnaire was designed according to the conceptual underpinnings of Socio-Cultural Theory (SCT). Based on α -Cronbach, the credibility of learners' and teachers' questionnaires was 0.83 and 0.80, respectively. Both scales were developed on a five-point Likert scale whose responses varied from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the quantitative data.



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Results and findings: The results of teachers' and learners' attitude questionnaires indicated that both instructors and learners held positive attitudes toward collaboration/peer-mediation.

Conclusions: The results as well as the theoretical and practical implications of this research study extend the literature on collaboration/peer-mediation and can be insightful to practitioners, teachers, teacher trainers, textbook designers, as well as material developers.

Keywords: collaboration; peer-mediation; perception; Socio-Cultural Theory; Survey-based Study



COCA as an Assistant in Teaching EFL

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Background and objectives: Educational technology is defined as a range of electronic tools and applications that help convey learning content and support the learning process. Technology enables the teacher to convey more information to a more significant number of students in a shorter time. Computer technology has been used in various fields of foreign language teaching and learning. Since computer-assisted language learning has a positive impact on English language learning, its correct use in any educational context can optimize students' anxiety and motivation for learning English. In this case, corpora are an essential source as it enables us to access reliable, authentic, and various information that can hardly be found in other sources. This study focuses on COCA as a corpora resource and an assistant in teaching. This study aims to scrutinize the impact of COCA in teaching English as a foreign language.

Materials and Methods: In order to carry out this research a qualitative method was employed. 10 EFL teachers were selected as the participants of the current study. In this case, the participants were interviewed about the applications of the COCA corpus. The participants' answers were coded and arranged into certain themes and categorized based on the strengths and weaknesses of COCA.

Results and Findings: As a result of the present research, it became clear that corpora have great potential in language teaching. A corpus is a valuable tool as it shows how native speakers of English use particular vocabulary items, language forms, and expressions. It contains millions of words taken from different genres such as newspapers, popular magazines, and academic texts. In



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addition, the idioms appear in the corpus and the corpus could be used to design teaching materials. The advantages of using COCA according to the participants are as follows: It provides accurate and enlightened information for teachers and learners about the use of English by supplying many options and functions that can enable them to do different searches for vocabulary. Teachers, students, and curriculum designers can use corpora to get more to the purpose of information by contextual analysis when misled by using particular grammar or vocabulary items. In addition, after teaching and explaining to the teacher about challenging words and their meanings, if students seem to be confused, then they can take advantage of using COCA as a reference tool, and authentic language samples are used to make it clear for them such as idioms, collocations, synonyms, etc. Moreover, it can integrate foreign language teaching and permanent and ordinary vocabulary teaching techniques as an additional substitute source. However corpora have proven useful, but there are specific challenges that every teacher must consider before using them. Both teachers and students should be adequately trained in using the corpus. It is the teacher's role to first simplify the corpus findings until the students have a better understanding of how to view and analyze the corpus findings.

Conclusions: Obviously, the importance of using technology in the classroom increases every day, and one of the technology-based educational tools for English language teaching is corpora. In this case, many studies have aimed to study the effects of using corpora as an instructional tool in teaching vocabulary, grammar, and language use in the English language classroom. After all, this study demonstrates the advantage of COCA in English classes and its implementations. In the direction of helping students to improve their English as a second language, besides traditional activities and techniques, this new one can be added to the classes.

Keywords: technology; COCA; corpus; EFL teachers



A Review of CALL-related Discourse Studies

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Background and objectives: Bulks of Knowledge circulate in various academic and professional communities. Individuals are exposed to a huge amount of scientific and technical information. Hence, this pushes scientists to cross the academic, objective boundaries of serious writing and transform their scholarly knowledge into non-scholarly and comprehensible accounts for the public. Computer-assisted Language Learning (CALL) is no exception. With the advent of COVID-19 and the sudden shift to online educational platforms, the public got even more eager to know about the features and potentials of virtual teaching and learning settings. Since learning a language has always been a need for people all over the world, the utilization of virtual settings to develop and enhance linguistic capabilities have gained more prominence. The current study aimed to present an overview of the existing literature on the way scientific and technical information in general and CALL in particular has been communicated in the public-friendly language by means of discursive features.

Materials and Methods: The relevant articles within the past twenty years were downloaded and reviewed. The articles with such keywords as popularization, popular texts, CALL, metadiscourse, and discourse markers were reviewed.

Results and findings: The results indicated that despite its importance, CALL has not received the desired attention and has not yet been viewed in terms of the possible discursive practices which may lead to a better understanding of the advancements in this area by the public. Scant



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attention has been paid to the way discourse features would contribute to the dissemination of CALL-related information.

Conclusions: The study revealed the existing gap in the literature on the way CALL findings can be linguistically programmed and become accessible to the public in order to enhance their CALL-oriented literacy and enable them to employ the best possible sources for learning a language through technological tools.

Keywords: computer-assisted language learning; metadiscourse; popularization of science



Teaching Experience and Iranian EFL Teachers' Technophobia in Using Online Teaching Platforms

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Background and objectives: Due to the universal pandemic, in 2020, traditional face-to-face education was alternated with a new form of online education called emergency remote teaching (ERT). This sudden shift to online education was followed by the vast use of online teaching platforms, which has been a demanding task for teachers and caused serious anxieties known as technophobia. The unreasonable fear and uneasiness that teachers faced in reaction to the use of the learning platforms differed with regard to different factors. Teaching experience has been identified as one of the influential factors. It is believed that experienced teachers have positive states of mind toward teaching and manage their classrooms more successfully than less experienced teachers. They have more control over classroom schedules and are less concerned about students' negative responses to class exercises or to the learning process. Therefore, the present study tried to investigate how Iranian EFL teachers' teaching experience related to their technophobia in using online teaching platforms.

Materials and Methods: To do so, based on convenience sampling, 18 Iranian EFL teachers (Experienced = 9, Novice =9) in a language institute in Tehran, equipped with a special LMS called Samane Jamee Madares, were selected for the present study. Experienced teachers were teachers with more than 5 years of teaching experience and novices were those with less than two years of experience. The data was collected through reflective journals and semi-structured



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interviews. Both experienced and novice teachers explained their anxieties with using LMS throughout a term that lasted for almost two months. The textual data were coded through qualitative content analysis and the themes and patterns were extracted.

Results and findings: The results of the data analysis indicated noteworthy relationships between teaching experience and teachers' technophobia in using online teaching platforms. Investigating the anxieties of experienced teachers with technology, they believed that as a result of their experience in classroom management, they had little anxieties with implementing online teaching platforms in terms of transferring materials, time management, and exchanging assignments. However, lack of social presence was the major cause of their anxieties. Due to their long-term experience in face-to-face classes, they mostly relied on evaluating their own teaching and the student's learning through facial expressions. They assumed being unable to see the students' faces, emotions, behaviors, etc. made teaching very difficult for them and caused anxiety with using technology for teaching. On the other hand, novice teachers related their major anxieties with using online teaching platforms to their lack of experience in face-to-face classes and their little mastery over classroom management, course materials, schedules, and assignments. Due to their insufficient practices in face-to-face classes, their lack of social presence did not cause any technological anxieties for them.

Conclusions: In general, there have been several factors influencing teachers' anxieties with technology during the quick shift to online education among which this study investigated teaching experience. Knowing the major causes of both experienced and novice teachers' anxieties can assist authorities in resolving them. Overall, ERT started in 2020 and significantly influenced actual online education in both positive and negative ways. This area needs vast continuous research to resolve the negative effects of ERT on online education.

Keywords: teaching experience; EFL teachers; technophobia; Learning Management System



The Impact of Multimedia-supported STEAM Activities on Language Learners' Development of Speaking and Listening Skills: The Case of Emergency Remote Teaching during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Background and objectives: The quick spread of the COVID-19 Virus had a devastating impact on education professionals and led to the closure of academic centers for more than two years. Many studies examined the impact of Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) on students' learning gains. Yet, there is a dearth of research on students' achievement in higher education in general and language learners in particular when innovative pedagogical approaches were integrated into the ERT. This study thus examined the impact of multimedia-enhanced STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics) activities on English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' development of listening and speaking skills in a university course that was delivered online during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Materials and Methods: A total number of 42 advanced EFL students who were at an advanced level of proficiency were recruited for this research and were assigned to the experimental (n=21) and control (n=21) groups. Prior to the study, both groups' listening and speaking proficiency was assessed by the listening and speaking sections of the IELTS. The experimental group received multimedia-enhanced instruction where the concepts of each domain of STEAM were presented by multimedia presentations along the course. Meanwhile, the content was taught to the control group by conventional teaching. The instruction was online and lasted for five months. The listening and speaking proficiency of both groups was assessed again after the study.



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Results and findings: The collected data were analyzed using a one-way Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA). The outcomes revealed a significant difference between the two groups' speaking and listening skills as a combined variable [Wilks' Lambda = .855; $F(39) = 3.295$; $p = .048$; partial eta squared = .145]. Also, when the dependent variables were considered separately, both differences reached statistical significance, indicating that there were significant differences between the control and experimental groups' listening and speaking post-test scores.

Conclusions: Based on the gained results, the study contributes to the literature in three ways. First, it demonstrates that STEAM and language education can be effectively integrated and this combination leads to more learning gains. Second, it displays the role of technology, particularly instructional multimedia, in promoting language learners' ease of cognitive processes both in the domain of receptive and productive language skills. Third, it supports the advantages the STEAM approach can offer to promote students' motivation in selecting more interesting topics to communicate orally in a foreign language.

Keywords: ERT; listening; multimedia; speaking; STEAM



Technology-Enhanced Language Instruction: EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension and Grammar Development through CALL

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Background and objectives: Nowadays, Technology is becoming an inevitable member of the teaching and learning family and Technology-enhanced instruction has attracted researchers' attention to a great deal and language teachers are concerned with incorporating technology into language instruction in order to encourage learners to be interactively involved in the process of learning. In this regard, the current study is an attempt to find out to what extent computer-assisted language learning or CALL can affect EFL learners' reading comprehension skill as well as grammar learning.

Materials and Methods: To meet the purpose of the study and understand how young learners respond to technology-enhanced instruction, 70 elementary EFL learners (17-25 years old), who were learning English at a private language institute in Chalous city, comprised the participants of the study through convenience sampling. After checking their homogeneity, they were fairly divided into one experimental group (n= 35) and one control group (n = 35). To check learners' initial proficiency, they took reading comprehension and grammar pre-tests adopted from Cambridge Key English Test. Subjects in the former group were exposed to both reading comprehension activities and grammar tasks through PowerPoint Presentation slides for 12 two-hour sessions for 6 weeks straight. However, the latter group enjoyed the same instruction conventionally. After administering the post-test, quantitative methodology was employed and the mean scores of the learners' pre- and post-test were analyzed through SPSS. Besides, Paired



samples t-test and independent sample t-test were run to look into the experimental group's performance and their comparison with the control group. In order to compare the mean scores of the four sets of groups, one-way ANOVA was run.

Results and findings: The learners' reading comprehension scores increased from the pre-test ($M=25.07$) to the post-test ($M=33.12$). Besides, paired samples t-test showed a level of significance less than .05 ($p= .001$, $df= 28$, $t= -11.99$), highlighting the significant differences in the learners' mean scores of reading comprehension for the experimental group. Moreover, learners' grammar learning increased from the pre-test ($M=26.46$) to the post-test ($M=32.27$), and paired samples t-test results indicated that the significance level was less than .05 ($p= .000$, $df= 29$, $t= -7.12$), which denotes a significant difference between the learners' grammar learning on the pre-test and post-test. Therefore, it can be concluded that CALL could pave the way for learners to improve their reading comprehension and grammar learning.

Conclusions: English language teaching through computer and mobile tools should be productively applied as an appropriate methodology. Being taught by technological devices not only provides an attractive learning atmosphere for learners to have interaction with their peers as well as their teacher, but also makes the input more comprehensible which subsequently helps learners develop their language skills and sub-skills. In addition, when learners are exposed to a noble learning environment, they are more motivated and reluctant to enhance their comprehension. Finally, further studies should be conducted as we didn't have access to ESL learners and we intentionally excluded middle-aged participants from this study the presence of whom might produce different results.

Keywords: CALL; grammar; reading comprehension; technology



The effect of Learning Management System (LMS) on autonomy and motivation of language learners

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Emerging information and communication technologies have severely affected the society particularly impact on educational systems. The learning management system has provided an appropriate way to speed up the process of educational development, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic in Iran. Therefore, there is one major purpose that this paper focuses upon; it is to find out the effect of the Learning Management System on language students' autonomy and motivation for learning. Individual differences such as motivation and autonomy have important roles in language learning. In the field of Learning Management System, which is just recently known among Iranian college students, more studies are needed to help the users and determine the effectiveness of this platform. Researchers agree that today language learners have more access to educational resources than they did before, due to the communication capabilities brought about by the Internet. There are noteworthy studies on e-motivation and autonomy in the literature. In the e-learning processes the conditions determining the level of motivation and autonomy are not always the same, since the learners are in interaction with content uploaded in computer and Internet environments. Park et al. (2013) inform that confusion and the design of learning materials may have benefits on the cognitive processes motivation of the learners. Even asynchronous and synchronous tools and activities may affect the level of motivation depending on "individual differences" between learners. Students' responses indicate they prefer to use asynchronous video conferencing with Blackboard technology for their course. An online setting with a qualified



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instructor who can manage and facilitate the Learning Management System resources will help students gain knowledge and experience beneficial outcomes. There are also technical issues that can impact student performance and impair learners to believe that online Learning Management System structures can be a barrier to interacting with their instructors. As central and constructivist online learning environments develop, students learn to manage their academics independently. Constructivist approaches allow learners to construct awareness through active participation and assign value to the learners' autonomy. According to Murcia (2016), online facilitators provide learners with opportunities to ask questions and use their previous knowledge to create new concepts. Facilitators allow students to retain their autonomy, enthusiasm, and motivation. Online instructors support learner engagement by maintaining their presence in the Learning Management System environment. Learning Management System integration into different forms of activities promotes student learning and self-regulation.

Keywords: autonomy; Learning Management System (LMS); motivation



Online Assessment in Academic Education During COVID-19 Pandemic: A Case Study of Iranian PNU TEFL Professors and Students' Experiences and Challenges

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Background and objectives: Online assessments are a part of the online learning processes. In line with the practice of online learning, online assessment has existed for many years. Despite the use of online assessments in many educational settings, many studies have reported barriers to practice of online assessment. The present study also aimed at exploring Payame Noor University TEFL MA instructors' and students' views on the challenges and experiences of online assessment during COVID-19 outbreak.

Materials and Methods: This qualitative study employed a survey research design, which was conducted at Payame Noor University, South Tehran branch. Five TEFL PNU instructors and 100 female and male students participated in the present study voluntarily by employing convenience sampling procedure. The semi-structured interview was designed and conducted with five TEFL MA instructors to explore the experience and challenges of them and Creswell's (2012) descriptive qualitative content analysis technique (Creswell, 2012) was employed to analyze the interviews. A researcher-made questionnaire. The researcher-made questionnaire was administered to 100 TEFL MA students and analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics.



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Results and findings: The findings revealed that instructors faced challenges such as students' cheating, the possibility of impersonation, the poor internet connection, weak platform, unstable rules and inadequate digital literacy while employing online assessment during Corona Virus pandemic. However, they adopted some coping strategies including reducing the test time, providing themselves with digital facilities, and asking for help from others. Furthermore, Analyzing students' questionnaire indicated that the most important and stress-provoking challenges they faced were the short time of exams and the platform's problems. Moreover, they declared that instructors employed both multiple choice and essay type questions accompanied by several quizzes during the term to crosscheck and make sure about students' achievement.

Conclusions: Researchers hope the findings of the present study would eventually assist university policy makers to support instructors in particular and students in general by facilitating online assessment and granting instructors' autonomy.

Keywords: COVID-19; EFL students; online assessment; TEFL Instructors



Challenges of Using Learning Management Systems in General English Courses during Covid-19 Emergency Remote Teaching: Exploring the Professors' Perspectives

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Background and objectives: With the outbreak of Covid-19 in 2020, many public places, involving schools, educational institutions, and universities around the world, were closed to prevent the spread of this deadly virus. In response to this crisis, the majority of educational centers across the globe, including Iran, shifted their instructional activities from customary, face-to-face education to online education. Digital platforms like Learning Management Systems (LMS) became readily accessible, allowing instructors with almost no prior training or experience to offer Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) to students. Assessing the hurdles or challenges of online education in various educational sectors is beneficial if the emergency situation persists or in preparing for similar educational circumstances in the future. In this regard, the present study aimed at exploring the challenges of online general English language courses held through LMS in a selected number of state-run universities in Tehran from the professors' perspectives.

Materials and Methods: To collect data for this qualitative study, the researcher managed to conduct in-depth semi-structured electronic or face-to-face interviews, each lasting around 30 to 60 minutes, with nine professors from seven state universities who kindly agreed to participate in the study. The interview questions addressed the challenges the professors faced in teaching



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general English courses via LMS regarding designing materials, class activities, assignments, and exams as well as their practices and challenges of teaching English in synchronous online classes. Furthermore, in order to have a more profound understanding of the issue under investigation, the researcher managed to observe 32 sessions of online general English classes, each lasting around 90 minutes, at six state universities during two academic semesters from October 2021 to February 2022.

Results and findings: The data analysis procedure involved transcribing the interview and observation data, reading the transcripts several times, coding and recoding the segments of data, writing marginal memos, cross-checking the data, categorizing recurring codes, and eventually extracting several themes related to the professors' challenges of using LMS in general English classes. *Technical* challenges like problems related to network servers, Internet connection disruption during class time, the lack of access to digital devices, unfamiliarity with or inadequate utilization of LMS affordances and options in synchronous and asynchronous teaching; *communication* challenges like poor possibilities of turning on webcams, low participation of students in speaking activities, few opportunities for pair or group works; *pedagogic* challenges like students' diverse English proficiency levels, difficulties in preparing quality English teaching materials, particularly multimedia, and the time-consuming process of providing personal feedback on assignments submitted by the students via LMS; *ethical* challenges like cheating opportunities in online exams, difficulties in designing online quizzes, as well as concerns about equity issues; *managerial* challenges like large population of students in each class, as well as *psychological* and *physical* challenges were among the problems discussed by the professors or observed by the researcher.



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Conclusions: It is hoped that the findings of the study provide valuable information for universities and educational institutions wishing to offer online general English courses in the post-period of this pandemic.

Keywords: challenges; COVID-19; Emergency Remote Teaching; General English courses; Learning Management Systems



Iranian EFL Teachers' Beliefs about the Barriers of Online Assessment during COVID-19 Pandemic

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Background and objectives: In the last few years, there has been a growing interest in technology integration in the field of second/foreign language (L2) education in order to improve the quality of learning and teaching in L2 classrooms. The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic facilitated the integration of technology in different L2 contexts worldwide. However, the rapid shift to online teaching gave rise to unparalleled challenges which have not been considered by L2 teachers before. More specifically, many L2 teachers faced several barriers with respect to the online assessment of their students. In other words, the outbreak of COVID-19 made L2 teachers move from the traditional classroom-based assessment to the virtual online assessment which had its own specific requirements. So, investigating L2 teachers' beliefs about the barriers of online assessment during COVID-19 pandemic is considered important as such beliefs affect the teachers' practice regarding online assessment.

Materials and Methods: The participants were 12 English-as-a-Foreign-Language (EFL) teachers who were teaching at different branches of a private English language teaching institute in Mashhad, northeastern Iran. They were all male and were between 25 to 38 years old. Their teaching experience ranged from 3 to 15 years. To shed a deeper light on teachers' beliefs about the barriers of online assessment in L2 education, a qualitative mode of inquiry was used. In this way, a semi-structured interview was conducted with each teacher to reveal their beliefs. The interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed for further analysis. To analyze the interview



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data, qualitative content analysis was used. In this way, after several rounds of data analysis, the main themes in relation to the teachers' beliefs about the barriers of online assessment were identified.

Results and findings: The findings showed that the EFL teachers believed that barriers of the online assessment were either pedagogical or institutional. Instances of the former included lack of feedback opportunities, the washback effect of the online assessment, and developing reliable and valid online exams. The latter included barriers such as lack of clear guidelines for online assessment, lack of online training for the teachers on how to do online assessment, and lack of the financial support to provide the needed equipment for the teachers.

Conclusions: Considering the results, it is argued that, in order to improve the online assessment, pedagogical and institutional barriers should be taken into account. Paying more attention to such barriers would result in more integration of the technology in the L2 pedagogical context. It is then suggested that L2 pre-service and in-service teacher education programs design courses to develop teachers' knowledge and skills of using technology in their assessment. In addition, it is suggested that institutions provide the teachers with the needed technological facilities and knowledge in order to facilitate the online assessment. The limitation of the present study is its narrow scope as it only focused on teachers' beliefs about the barriers of online assessment. Future studies should investigate the beliefs of other stakeholders about the barriers of online assessment, such as students, parents, and administrators.

Keywords: barriers of online assessment; COVID-19 pandemic; EFL teachers; teachers' beliefs



The Impact of STEAM-based Pre-reading Activities on Language Learners' Reading Comprehension and its Associated Cognitive Load in Emergency Remote Teaching amid COVID-19 Pandemic

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Background and objectives: The closure of schools as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic from 2019 to 2021 had negative effects on students' learning gains, motivation, and interest. Iranian teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) like other teachers across the globe were forced to change the mode of teaching from face-to-face to virtual using the Students Social Network known as SHAD. To assist students to have better learning experiences, many innovative instructional practices were incorporated into emergency remote teaching (ERT). Research shows that utilizing interesting warm-up activities can affect students' achievement in a positive manner in online courses. However, the role of such activities within STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) pedagogy on EFL learners' reading comprehension needs further clarification. This study examined the impact of STEAM-based pre-reading activities on EFL learners' reading comprehension and its associated cognitive load.

Materials and Methods: A total number of 60 high school students participated in the study and were assigned to the experimental (n=30) and control (n=30) groups. Before the study, their reading proficiency was assessed by the reading section of the A2 Key Test. The associated cognitive load of A2 Key was assessed by NASA Task Load Index Questionnaire prior to the study as well. The experimental group received reading instruction through a pre-during-post reading approach where STEAM-based activities were utilized in its pre-reading phase for one academic



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year. Meanwhile, the control group received instruction based on the traditional method, where pre-reading activities of the textbook were used as warmups. The reading section of the A2 Key Test and the NASA TLX were used to examine the effect of the intervention on participants' reading comprehension and its associated cognitive load after the study again.

Results and findings: The data were analyzed by *t*-test and Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANCOVA). The result of the *t*-test showed that STEAM-based pre-reading activities had a significant impact on EFL learners' development of reading comprehension in favor of the experimental group [$t(58) = -3.728, p = .001 < .05$]. The result of MANOVA showed that the cognitive load of the experimental group was lowered significantly in mental demand, physical demand, and the hard work they did to accomplish the test in comparison to the control group. Yet, they felt less successful in accomplishing what they were asked to do.

Conclusions: The findings of the study have practical implications for curriculum designers, experts, the Ministry of Education, and material developers to put attempt to integrate STEAM-based pre-reading activities into the EFL curriculum and syllabus designs. Also, EFL teachers can include STEAM-based activities in their lesson plans to make students interested in STEAM topics and thus create a more joyful class atmosphere.

Keywords: cognitive load; pre-reading activities; reading comprehension; STEAM



On the Relationship between Mental Imagery, Vocabulary Knowledge, and Reading Comprehension

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Background and objectives: Dual coding theory (DCT) as a general cognition theory has received considerable attention in literacy literature in recent years. Based on DCT, a person can learn new materials using verbal associations or visual imagery but combining both is more successful in learning. The application of the DCT in teaching literacy shows that both visual and verbal information is used by the brain to represent information, contributing to better reading comprehension and writing quality. In spite of the wide use of DCT in L1 studies, its application in L2 research is still open to further research. This study thus was carried out to probe into the interplay between mental imagery, vocabulary knowledge, and reading comprehension among English as a foreign language (EFL) learners.

Materials and Methods: A total number of 105 grade 10 technical and vocational education and training (TVET) students took part in the study. Their reading comprehension was assessed by the Cambridge MOVER Test. Their mental imagery and vocabulary knowledge were examined by researcher-made tests. The reliability coefficients of the MOVER Test and vocabulary test were estimated to be 0.90 and 0.80, respectively. The mental imagery test was evaluated by two raters and the inter-rater reliability was found to be 0.93. The study utilized a cross-sectional non-experimental design and the data were collected at one point in time with no manipulation of the variables.



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Results and findings: The collected data were analyzed using the Pearson Correlation method and multiple regression analysis. The result of the correlation analysis showed that reading comprehension was significantly and positively related to vocabulary knowledge ($r=0.259$, $p<0.05$) and mental imagery ($r=0.336$, $p<0.01$). After inserting the two predicting variables into the regression equation, the result showed that only mental imagery was a significant predictor of reading comprehension and could predict more than 11% of its variance ($t=2.621$, $p=0.011$). Examining the standardized coefficients showed that mental imagery is a facilitator of reading comprehension ($\beta=0.310$, Std Error=0.668).

Conclusions: The findings of the study emphasize the role of mental imagery in EFL students' understanding of reading passages and corroborate the DCT main principle. Based on this principle, cognition in the reading and writing process is made of the activities of two separate coding systems of mental representation, one specialized for language-related input and the other for analyzing nonverbal objects and events. The study underscores the importance of multimodal input in teaching reading comprehension and has practical implications for EFL materials developers and teachers. The findings are also insightful for computer-assisted language learning (CALL) experts and researchers to integrate instructional multimedia in reading instruction.

Keywords: Dual Coding Theory; mental imagery; reading comprehension; vocabulary



Students' Perception of Using Shad Program: Post-Covid Era

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This paper tries to figure out students' perception of online classes after the corona virus pandemic. The main concern of this paper is to find out the perception of students on the Iranian educational application "Shad". This mixed method research was conducted on a sample of 45 students of Fatemehzahra high school using Likert-scale survey followed by an interview. The data were analyzed using Moidunny (2009) mean score interpretation. The results indicate that the perception of students about learning on Shad program can be known as these crucial factors i.e., impact, convenience, and support. The understudies believe that Shad program is quite convenient, but not so influential or supportive. The participants were willing to continue their learning classes in face-to-face classes rather than Shad. The scope is constrained to a state high school student in south of Tehran, the capital of Iran, only. It needs to be extended to other cities as well.

Keywords: online learning; perception; post-covid; Shad



A Study on Online Assessment at High Schools amid Covid-19: Iranian EFL Teachers' Perception

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This study aimed to better understand the teachers' perceptions of online assessment during Covid-19 lockdown in Iran EFL context. It intended to investigate three factors related to online assessment: (1) EFL teachers' perceptions of formative and summative assessments in online classes, (2) types of online assessment tools used, (3) challenges that teachers face while assessing students online. To that end, 13 EFL teachers who were recruited based on convenience sampling were interviewed. The interview was analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that EFL teachers mostly used summative assessments due to the lack of time and grade-centered education; and DigiForm was among the most frequent tools teachers use since it provides the possibility of designing various types of questions and saving time due to the auto correction. However, internet problems cause the most challenges for the teachers. The findings have implications for policymakers, teacher educators, and language teachers.

Keywords: assessment; COVID-19; Iranian EFL teachers; online assessment



The Challenges and Opportunities of Online Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic from the Perspective of Technical and Vocational University Students

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The Covid-19 Pandemic transformed the whole education process to online. The present study aimed to investigate the challenges and opportunities of online education from the perspective of students taking English as a general course in Technical and Vocational University during the COVID-19 pandemic. The platform selected for using technology toward the learning process in this regard was Adobe Connect. The implemented research instrument was a valid 19 item questionnaire designed to estimate the respondents' opinions on challenges and benefits of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic and the method used to analyze the data from the survey was frequency and percentage response. The participants of this study were 115 female students taking general English in Technical and Vocational University in the second semester of 2021-2022. The study reveals that the students encountered several difficulties during online learning including "unstable internet connection" and "lack of interactions with teachers". The most common advantages of online learning are the accessibility of online material, the ability to record the session and flexibility of the place of learning. Despite its various advantages, like convenience and flexibility aspects, most students agreed that the implementation of online learning was not as effective as face-to-face learning in the classroom. The results of this study showed that e-learning mode can be an advancement in education, if it is well prepared and properly implemented.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic; online education; learning challenges; learning opportunities



The Effects of Corona Pandemic on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) University Instructors' Teaching: A Qualitative Approach

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This paper reports an attempt to investigate how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) university instructors conducted online EFL teaching and addressed its challenges. To conduct this study, 16 such instructors volunteered to participate in this research. The instructors were asked to consider in writing their practices in conducting online EFL classes and the challenges they encountered. Five were also selected for a semi-structured follow-up interview. Data coding was performed and suitable extracts were collected. In order to validate the data, the data coding was carried out independently by the researchers, accompanied by several discussion cycles. The results showed that the instructors conducted online teaching through a series of activities, ranging from checking student presence to evaluating student work synchronously or asynchronously, depending on university policies. Various applications and platforms were used, ranging from learning management systems (LMS) to additional resources. However, many problems arose with the students and the instructors for good reasons. It can be concluded that online teaching did not go well because it was not prepared and planned. Implications for better online learning are also discussed.

Keywords: COVID-19; EFL; online EFL learning; technology-based language learning; technology in language learning



The Role of Self-directed Learning and Personal Self-concept in Reading Comprehension; A case of Intermediate-level Students

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This study aimed to investigate the role of self-directed learning and personal self-concept among intermediate-level students. This study states that self-directed learning plays an important role in reading comprehension as an effective component. This component received more and more attention during COVID-19. The next component was the students' self-concept, which is very important in students' attitudes toward themselves but does not play a significant role in raising reading comprehension scores. Participants in this study are 170 intermediate language learners in two foreign language institutes in Tehran and Karaj. Separate questionnaires were used to assess self-directed learning and personal self-concept. The reading section of the PET test was used to assess reading comprehension. SPSS software was used to analyze the data and multiple regression statistical criteria were used to deduce the observed data. The results showed that there was a significant correlation between students' comprehension scores and learners' self-directed learning, and in contrast, there was little correlation between their self-concept and reading comprehension scores. There is also a significant correlation between self-directed learning and personal self-concept. Based on the research findings, it was concluded that self-directed learning has an important role on students' comprehension, but not personal self-concept. It is possible to make students more successful in acquiring language skills by guiding students towards independence.

Keywords: intermediate-level students; personal self-concept; reading comprehension; self-directed learning



Literature Review of Automated Written Corrective Feedback

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Computer-Mediated Corrective Feedback (CMCF) is an emerging technology for providing WCF via a computer. It has two main formats called non-automated writing evaluation (non-AWE) and automated writing evaluation (AWE). AWE has attracted the attention of teachers and scholars in recent years. It is the type of WCF which is provided automatically through a program. AWE is totally useful for Iranian teachers since a large number of students are in each class and teachers have a heavy workload. Considering these points, this paper expresses some essential points related to error correction and WCF. Then, CMCF and AWCF are explained in detail. Finally, some AWE tools are introduced and the gaps in the literature are mentioned. EFL teachers can use these points to take advantage of AWE tools in their teaching in order to reduce their workload. Moreover, teacher educators can consider the mentioned points to inform teachers and student-teachers about new ways of providing WCF and the existing gaps and drawbacks related to AWE. Students can also benefit from the study by identifying the most suitable AWE tools based on their needs.

Keywords: AWE; CMCF; error; Written Corrective Feedback (WCF)



Different Forms of Mediation for Enhancing Iranian male EFL learners’ Reading Comprehension through Implementing Critical Thinking-oriented Dynamic Assessment (CT-DA)

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This study aimed to explore the different forms of mediational strategies which may improve the development of reading comprehension ability of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners during CT-DA. To this end, the study used a non-equivalent quasi-experimental design, and both quantitative and qualitative data collection method to provide a better picture and understanding of the results. Fifty-one Iranian male language learners who were homogenized in terms of their language proficiency, reading comprehension and critical thinking abilities participated in this study. Learners were randomly divided into three groups of CT-DA (n = 17), dynamic assessment (DA) (n = 17) and Control group (n = 17). The first two groups served as the experimental groups who received either critical thinking-oriented DA (i.e., CT-DA) or dynamic assessment (DA); and the third group served as the control group who underwent the traditional way of teaching reading (i.e., Control). The treatment for the experimental groups involved an interactionist DA approach. During the eight-week DA procedures, mediational strategies were only given to the experimental groups. Two tests, one as pre- and the other one as post-test, were administered before and after the treatment. Moreover, the interactions between teacher and learners were voice recorded to detect the types of mediation best nurtured the development of reading comprehension. A paired samples t-test, effect size and ANOVA were run; the quantitative analyses of the data revealed that



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CT-DA and DA groups outperformed Control group. The results signified the efficacy of the mediation which was presented through dynamic assessment procedure on enhancing the learners' reading achievement. The qualitative analyses of the data led to the detection of eleven mediational strategies which nurtured the development of reading comprehension ability of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners during CT-DA. The analyses of data of the present study provided some insights into the difficulties learners face in reading comprehension.

Keywords: critical thinking; dynamic assessment; mediation; reading; ZPD



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