Shahid Rajaee
Teacher Training University

01220-41756

RICeST

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

Accomplishments and Challenges amid the COVID-19 Pandemic

Proceedings

Februrary 9, 2023
Bahman 20, 1401

Tehran, Iran


بسم الله الرحمن الرحیم

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 Rajaee Teacher Training University

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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 society can help the inception and thriving of 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 policymakers 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 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	**Dr. M. Rahimi**	**Dr. R. Nejati**	**Dr. M. Saidi**
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Shahid Rajaee Teacher Training University

The First National Conference on Technology-Enhanced Language Learning and Teaching:

Accomplishments and Challenges amid COVID-19 Pandemic

ISC 01220-41756 RICeST

February 9, 2023 Bahman 20, 1401 Tehran, Iran

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

Masoome Hayati

University of Qom, Qom, Iran

Masoome.hayati1999@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This paper tries to figure out students' perception of online classes after the coronavirus 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 Fatemezahra high school using a 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 the Shad program can be known as these crucial factors i.e., impact, convenience, and support. The understudies believe that the 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 the 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

1. INTRODUCTION

In late 2019, all around the world began to struggle with an unknown virus which is now referred to as Covid-19. Different aspects of our lives including education have undergone a change since the pandemic. Universities and schools had to close down. After some days of closing down the schools and universities, the government decided to use online platforms in order to call a halt to the spread of the pandemic and improve students learning (Mulyadi, 2018). As Hussin (2018) stated, Teachers' roles are facilitators of learning. So, they needed to adapt themselves to the new situation and face the challenges of online learning.

Different platforms were used that each carried their own advantages. One of the most common platforms was Zoom. According to Serhan, D. (2020), Zoom is a great online platform in which you can explain concepts on a virtual whiteboard, have group activities in breakout rooms, and record your voice and video with high quality. The other popular platform was Google classroom. As Rhidho (2019) stated, Google classroom is an online platform which makes the interaction of teachers and students possible for free.

In Iran, the government decided to create its own application which is named, Shad. According to Khojasteh (2022) Shad program is a program in which teachers and principals can assist students in their learning process. Every platform has its own advantages and disadvantages. Shad is not an exception. As Chenani et al. (2022) mentioned in their research, although remote classes through the internet are great adventures and make students more innovative than before, but the economic situation in Iran has made numerous students deprived of having electronic devices and internet connection. So, Shad will not be accessible for all the students.

Perception is the method of person treatment that's giving reactions, meanings, images, or translations of what is seen, listened, or felt by ability within the form of states of mind, opinion,

and behavior (Setiadi & Makassar, 2020). The researches have been conducted on using Shad during the pandemic. There is a gap that I suppose we need to know the post-covid perception of students of this program. In this research I am trying to fill this gap and figure out the answers to the following questions.

1. What are the students' attitudes toward using Shad?
2. How do students perceive the effect of using Shad on their learning?
3. Are the students willing to continue using Shad after the pandemic?
4. Do students prefer the Shad classroom or the traditional face-to-face classroom?
5. What are the students' perceived advantages and disadvantages of using Shad?

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed method research design and a survey as the data collection method. The questionnaire consisted of 12 questions which were divided in three important categories: impact, convenience, and support. 45 participants have filled out the online

questionnaire which was sent to them through Shad. Two intact classes of 10th grade students of Fateme zahra high school, a state high school in district 19 of Tehran, were chosen. All the participants were female. 19 students were studying human science and 26 students were studying experimental science. Since the students' proficiency levels differ, the questionnaire was translated into Persian before sending to them. The students were consent, since I didn't conduct the survey in the class and asked them to open the link at home if they intended to. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. After analyzing the data mean scores were interpreted by mean scores as proposed by Moidunny (2009) in Raamani & Arumugam (2018). Afterwards For further research 6 students were chosen through purposive sampling for the interview. I chose those who had a better proficiency in order to perceive the questions and answer them in English.

Table 1. Interpretation of Mean Score

number	Mean score	interpretation
1.	1.00 - 1.80	Very low
2.	1.81 - 2.60	low
3.	2.61 - 3.40	medium
4.	3.41 – 4.20	high
5.	4.21 – 5.00	Very high

3. RESULTS

The following data in Table 1 show the students' perceptions regarding Shad's use after covid-19 from 45 participants. The data were analyzed and calculated to derive a mean score and standard deviation Descriptive statistics reveal an overall mean of 3.006 (SD=0.7547)

Table 2. Perception of Students on Using Shad

Indicator	Mean	SD	Interpretation
impact	3.006	.7547	Medium
convenience	3.520	.6947	High
support	2.637	.5066	Medium

Table 1 briefly summarizes the index percentage and mean values of impact, convenience, and support. Impact of Shad on students has mean of 3.006 (SD=0.7547) and the amount of support

student get from Shad has a mean of 2.636 (SD=0.5066), which means they both belong to the medium category. On the other hand, Convenience of using Shad has a mean of 3.520 (SD=0.6947) that means it belongs to the high category.

To sum it up, based on the analysis of data in Table 2, students don't consider Shad that much effective or supportive. On the contrary, the students discern Shad rather convenient.

In profundity clarification towards the use of online learning program of Shad, 5 students participated in the interview. Most of them agreed that Shad is time and cost-effective (uploading and downloading is free in Shad). They liked to learn at the comfort of their own homes. Students also highlighted that they can download the files later and it gives them an ease of mind. Besides, they liked the fact that they can realize the results of their tests on the spot. On the other hand, their major complaint was the poor connection and the bugs of this program which caused missing some parts and sometimes the whole class. They even mentioned they had to find a place with a better connection speed and sit there during the class. Their general tendency was to participate in face-to-face classes rather than using Shad.

4. CONCLUSION

Going forward, the role of e-learning will become vital as the world witnessed the changes that took place during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is becoming necessary to know and examine the factors that influence students' perceptions of online education. In this research Impact, convenience, and support were considered significant. Students attach importance to these on-line training factors. Although they welcome the convenience and comfortability of staying at home and learning on Shad, but they still are not pleased with Shads` influence on their learning along with the amount of support they get from the teacher. Since unpredicted disasters such as pollution

will occur in the future and we have no choice, but to hold online classes, we need to point out the flaws of Shad and make it a better program for everyone to use.

This research was conducted on the students who lived in the capital. The Capitals` conditions are always better than deprived areas. For further research I suggest the scope becomes extended to the students of other cities especially deprived cities of Iran.

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ISC 01220-41756 RICeST

February 9, 2023 Bahman 20, 1401 Tehran, Iran

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

Forough Rekabizadeh

Shahid Rajaee Teacher Training University, Tehran, Iran

Forugh.Rekabizade@gmail.com

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

1. INTRODUCTION

Covid-19 is an international concern that has had an impressive effect on the education in recent years. It has led to significant changes. Schools and institutions were closed and education continued virtually by making the use of technology. Teachers and students have been moved to a new era of teaching and learning. Online language courses have become increasingly popular thanks to a number of advancements in computer assisted language learning (CALL), which not only include more application of course management sites, but also other diverse online tools (Enkin & Mejías-Bikandi, 2017). Shad is a notional mobile application was developed by stakeholders in ministry of education for online teaching and learning. Besides SHAD, some schools made the use of other tools or platforms for online meetings such as LMS, Sanavid, Sky room, google meet, etc. The implementation of technology in education also caused some challenges to both novice and experienced teachers. There was no more chance for face-to-face teaching so they needed to be familiar with the technology, training tools and applications, learn how to develop content and how to evaluate learning. Absence of physical interaction between teachers and leaners has its own consequences which leaves teachers with limited options for assessing their learners online. (Abduh, 2021).

Assessment is a significant step in the teaching process. Much has been written about the influence of testing on teaching. 'Washback' (sometimes also known as 'backwash') is the influence that writers on language testing, syllabus design and language teaching believe a test will have on the teaching that precedes it (Alderson & Hamp-Lyons, 1996). It helps teachers to know how much the students learnt, how much they have progressed, and what their strengths and weaknesses are. But shifting from face-to-face teaching to online teaching has changed the teaching and assessment methodologies and caused several challenges for the teachers in finding and using the suitable methods, tools or applications to assess the learning.

Since there is no much research conducted on exploring teachers' methods and tools of assessing online learning in the Iranian EFL context, the present study tries to investigate the assessment tools used by EFL teachers in high schools and highlights the challenges encountered.

Research questions:

The focus of this study is to address the following questions:

1. What applications or technological tools do the teachers prefer to use to assess the students' learning? and why?

2. Which kinds of assessment do the teachers use more? Summative or formative?

3. What challenges do the teachers face in using online assessment tools?

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. Assessment

Assessment is a crucial part of an instruction. Subsequently, it affects the syllabus design, and determines whether the teaching method has met the pedagogical goals or not. Assessment also provides immediate feedback for teachers to shape their teaching practices according to the learning styles of their students (Tosuncuoglu, 2018). Regular assessment is a useful way to rate the students' progress and motivate them during the course. Regular assessment provides students and parents with useful feedback regarding how well the student is building important skills and knowledge (Wolf, 2007). The processes of assessment and feedback are often seen as coexisting activities (Winstone & boud, 2022).

Perera-Diltz (2014) identified two forms of assessments (i.e., formative and summative) in the learning environment. He believed formative assessment provides on-going evaluation of a student's learning and could occur with repeated use of the same assessment form (e.g., a quiz four

times in a semester) or with the use of multiple assessment forms (e.g., a quiz, an essay, and an experiential activity). He also defined summative assessment as an end product achievement such as a final project or a comprehensive final exam. Harlen & James (1997) determined the different characteristics of these two types of assessments. They noticed that the characteristics of a formative assessment are that:

• it takes into account the progress of each individual, the effort put in and other aspects of learning which may be unspecified in the curriculum; in other words, it is not purely criterion-referenced;

• it has to take into account several instances in which certain skills and ideas are used and there will be inconsistencies as well as patterns in behavior; such inconsistencies would be 'error' in summative evaluation, but in formative evaluation they provide diagnostic information;

• even more than assessment for other purposes, formative assessment requires that pupils have a central part in it; pupils have to be active in their own learning (teachers cannot learn for them) and unless they come to understand their strengths and weaknesses, and how they might deal with them, they will not make progress.

In contrast, the characteristics of a summative assessment are that:

• it takes place at certain intervals when achievement has to be reported;

• it relates to progression in learning against public criteria;

• the results for different pupils may be combined for various purposes because they are based on the same criteria;

• it should be based on evidence from the full range of performance relevant to the criteria being used.

2.2. Online assessment

Online assessment is more than just testing and evaluation of students. online assessment must be used to measure both learning objectives and application of knowledge (Robles & Braathen, 2002). the assessment should not only use grades, but also use a combination of items, such as task performance, to measure student learning (Robles & Braathen, 2002).

During the Covid-19 outbreak, schools from home allow teachers to perform complete online evaluations due to enforcement of physical and social distancing (Fitriyah & Jannah, 2021). According to Yulianto & Mujtahin (2021) assessing students' learning is crucial in any educational environment, especially in online assessment during the Covid-19 pandemic where traditional test items using paper and pencil are replaced by online test items on an internet page. Meanwhile, they believed that conducting online assessments may improve students' autonomous learning style.

2.3. Online assessment tools and techniques

the online educator should use assessment techniques to straightly reflect the pedagogy of online courses. Many current assessment techniques can be modified to use in online courses. Robles & Braathen (2002) claimed that online educators can adapt their assessment activities to provide useful feedback, accountability, and opportunities to demonstrate quality. They also pointed out some for online assessment such as discussion to assess the student's depth of understanding and conceptualization of ideas; and using the help of computer scoring as a self-test with immediate feedback. random-based tests can have a number of major advantages over fixed assessments, including: increased lifespan, security and flexibility, improved student motivation for study; and use as a learning resource. (Thelwall, 2000)

Yulianto & Mujtahin (2021) have done the same research in Indonesia and revealed that the most common strategies for online assessments among teachers were giving tests, multiple choice, and using online tools, google form, WhatsApp, E-mails, respectively. They also claimed the teachers mostly used online platforms such as Edmodo which is filtered in Iran. The current research focused on the most useful tool for online assessments among Iranian EFL teachers. Iranian teachers supposed to use Iranian media for education, so their assessment tools would be different as well.

2.4. Online assessment challenges

The new type of assessment, online assessment, can be totally different from paper assessment in traditional classes. Same as any new methods, it has some difficulties, concerns and challenges for both teachers and learners. García-Alberti et al. (2021) included effort in preparing new material, lack of digital competences, lack of training in the use of technology among the concerns and challenges instructors have been faced. Not only the lack of face-toface contact but the value of authentic assessment activities is another issue listed in the online learning evaluation (Kim et al., 2008). Students who lived in remote areas lack internet connectivity and make it difficult to take the tests and Then, teachers who are an immigrant in technology also face difficulty in online assessment (Yulianto & Mujtahin, 2021). Moreover, Yulianto & Mujtahin (2021) found out some obstacles among Indonesian teachers in online assessments such as connection problems, consume a lot of internet data, and students' economic problems. they also indicated some obstacles in conducting the assessment test such as the internet connection, the validity of the assessment, and the low of students' enthusiasm.

2.5. Advantages of online assessment practices

in practice, during Covid-19, the use of online assessment helps the teachers in distributing the material and assessing students' achievement (Yulianto & Mujtahin, 2021). The online assessment system would help the teachers to evaluate at any time and place, and the teachers can follow students' performance at another time (Seifert & Feliks, 2019). According to Yulianto & Mujtahin (2021) technology has made the interaction between teachers and parents easier and faster, as the teachers can send a private text to the students and parents who do not finish their assignments or tasks in the due time.

Different assessment devices are provided to assess an online course. Robles & Braathen (2002) identified a rubric called "Rubric for Assessing Interactive Qualities of Distance Learning Courses" developed by Roblyer and Ekhmal (2000). This rubric helps to assess the level of course's interactivity by focusing on social goals, instructional goals, types and uses of technology, and impact of interactivity changes in learner behaviors.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Participants

The current study was a qualitative one in which the researcher addressed the Iranian EFL teachers' perception toward benefits and challenges of technological tools of online assessments. To that end, an interview was conducted with 13 EFL teachers who were recruited based on convenience sampling. The EFL teachers are involved in teaching English as a foreign language in state high schools.

Table1. Information about EFL Teachers

ID number	Gender	Rank	Years of teaching experience
1.00	Female	BA	21-30
2.00	Female	MA	21-30
3.00	Male	PhD	21-30
4.00	female	BA	1-10
5.00	Male	BA	11-20
6.00	Female	BA	1-10
7.00	Female	BA	1-10
8.00	Female	BA	1-10
9.00	Female	MA	1-10
10.00	Female	BA	1-10
11.00	Male	BA	11-20
12.00	Female	BA	11-20
13.00	Female	MA	21-30

3.2. Materials

In the current study, both open-ended and close-ended questions were asked through an online interview. Close-ended questions included to gather information about teacher's knowledge of

technology, the most using tools of assessment and types of assessment they used, then open-ended questions were asked to probe the perspectives of EFL teachers about the online assessment tools they have used; and the benefits and challenges they have faced. To that end, the researchers asked open-ended questions about the teachers' experiences and how the technology has helped them in online assessments during Covid-19. Moreover, the teachers were asked about their challenges in using technological tools.

3.3. Procedures

Qualitative data in the form of interviews were used utilizing what's up application to gather information about online assessment, and were analyzed using a thematic content analysis method. Themes were analysed through the online interview includes: (1) teachers' perception towards online formative and summative assessment; (2) the most used tool for online assessment and teachers' perception toward it; (3) the challenges of online assessment

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the demographic characteristics of participants and the views related to EFL teachers' perceptions of types of online assessments, the most used tools and challenges will be given respectively.

Table 2. The demographic characteristics of teachers participating in the study.

Gender	Rank	Years of teaching experience in high schools	Years of teaching experience online
Female (76.9%)	PhD _	1-10 (60%)	1-5 (100%)
	MA(30%)	11-20 (10%)	6-10
	BA(70%)	21-30 (30%)	–
Male (23.1%)	PhD(33%)	1-10	1-5 (100%)
	MA _	11-20 (66.7%)	6-10
	BA(66%)	21-30 (33.3%)	–

The table above shows that most of the participants are females (76.9%) who are BA holders (70%). Most of them (69/2%) have between 1-10 years of teaching experience. And all of the participants (100%) have between 1-5 years of online teaching experience.

1.teachers' perception towards online formative and summative assessment

Table 3. The most used assessment type used by EFL teachers.

	Frequency	Percent
Only formative assessment	1	7.7
Only summative assessment	9	69.2
Combination of both kinds	3	23.1

Table4. Technological knowledge of the EFL teachers.

	Frequency	Percent
Having technological knowledge	11	84.6
Lack of technological knowledge	2	15.4

Table5. EFL teachers' perception toward using paper assessment in online classes.

	Frequency	Percent
Using paper assessment	10	76.9
Not using paper assessment	3	23.1

Although most of the teachers (84/6%) have technological knowledge, they (76/9%) still use paper assessment in online classes. Most of them (69/2%) use summative assessment. Lack of enough time, low internet speed and dependence of students on grades are among the most common reasons why teachers are focusing more on summative assessments. Below are some responses of teachers expressing their attitudes toward these two types of assessments in online exams.

Teacher 2:

"Summative assessments take less time and effort."

Teacher 3:

"It is in accordance with the methods of face-to-face examination. Teachers rarely use formative assessment since they are not familiar with the processes and purposes of this kind of assessment."

Teacher 5:

"Formative assessments take lots of time, so I prefer to use a summative assessment after a few sessions and spend my time on designing standard questions."

Teacher 6:

"I had to use summative assessments in online classes since my students were willing to do activities and compete with each other only if they received a grade."

Teacher 7:

"I tried to use both forms, but because of saving time I had to use summative assessments more."

Teacher 8:

"Both of them should be considered in each class. If only the final grade is important, the student will not pay attention to the course during the semester."

Teacher 10:

"Summative assessments have higher accuracy. Grades can be more motivated for students since they can find out their strengths and weaknesses and try to act better and improve their grade in future assessments."

Teacher 12:

"More attention should be paid to the formative assessments. Most of the time the students' performance in summative assessments is lower than expected because such assessments are associated with stress."

2.The most used tool for online assessment and teachers' perception toward it

To have more details in online assessment tools and challenges, the data collected from the interviews were analyzed. The most common tool which has been used in online classes was DigiForm. the following data come from interviews in which the teachers talk about DigiForm and the practical issues on why they suggest other teachers to use it:

Teacher 2:

"You can make different types of questions by DigiForm and this variety makes students more motivated."

Teacher 3:

"Forms like DigiForm and google form make it possible to shuffle the questions order."

Teacher 5:

"Auto correcting, cheating detector and providing the excel file of students' function are the reasons why I am using DigiForm."

Teacher 7:

"There is no longer any difficulties on teachers' shoulders as it can correct and score the papers automatically. I think its results are also more credible."

Teacher 10:

"It makes the correction easier for me. I can attach any kinds of pictures and texts to make it more interesting."

Table 6. Online media used by teachers for assessing the students.

Online media	Participants
DigiForm	6
GoogleForm	3
Shad	2
Websites like Testmoz	1
Survey Heart application	1

Although teachers claimed they used different media to add variety to their assessments, most of them stated that they still use paper assessments. They couldn't eliminate paper assessment even in online classes due to the lack of time, lack of knowledge, low speed of the

Internet, and lack of software and hardware infrastructure. Below the teachers' perception about paper assessment is provided.

Teacher 3:

"Students are used to written tests. The validity and reliability of such tests are higher than online tests."

Teacher 5:

"Designing online questions is a bit time-consuming."

Teacher 10:

"Some teachers don't know how to design the online test and They have no motivation to learn and still use traditional methods."

The vast majority of the remaining teachers stated the reason for using the written exam or paper assessment was the lack of time and low internet speed.

3. Teachers' perception toward the challenges of online assessment

Due to the sudden shifting from traditional classes to online, this new generation of teaching has definitely created challenges and limitations for teachers. This study tried to find out the kinds of challenges that Iranian teachers faced during the implementation of an online assessment.

Table7. The challenges of online assessment

The challenges	Participants
Internet problems	9
The lack of enough time	5
The lack of understanding of applications.	4
High probability of cheating	4
Software problems	3

As you see based on the above table most of the teachers stated that the problems of the Internet such as disconnection, lack of access and low speed are among the biggest challenges of the online assessment. The lack of time and lack of understanding of applications are among other challenges the teachers pointed out.

Teacher6:

" Some teachers don't have enough knowledge about different applications, so they face lots of problems in preparing the online assessment. The students also do not have the application knowledge and it was necessary to spend some time teaching them how to use them."

Teacher 9

"Designing online questions takes a lot of time and energy from the teacher because the teachers are not so much skillful in such areas specially immigrant teachers."

Software problems such as Hanging, exiting the link automatically, not opening some links and applications on some phones and also being worry about the probability of cheating in online assessments are considered as other challenges among EFL teachers.

5. CONCLUSION

This study investigated 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.

The results showed that the vast majority of EFL teachers expressed more willing to use summative assessments and paid less attention to the formative assessments during online classes. For online assessments, they used various programs. the most common one among EFL teachers was DigiForm which most of them had a positive attitude toward it and recommended it to be used. However, the discussion revealed that teachers found it difficult to conduct an online exam as the majority of teachers encountered serious challenges in online assessments. The most important challenge discussed was related to the problems and infrastructure of the Internet. Accessing to the participants was somehow difficult due to the Covid-19 concerns. So similar researches can be conducted with higher numbers of participant. Moreover, Iranian students' perception can be analyzed to check whether DigiForm had any positive effects on their learning process or not.

This research suggests that teachers need to develop their technology skills. Teacher training centers and the Ministry of Education should pay special attention to this issue. On the other hand, by considering the problems of the Internet in Iran, teachers should be able to understand the students' conditions and consider a longer period of time for each online exam especially in rural places. Applications and websites designers can also use these results to develop the security and facilities of their programs to be more noticed in educational fields.

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Shahid Rajaee Teacher Training University
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Accomplishments and Challenges amid COVID-19 Pandemic
ISC 01220-41756 RICeST
February 9, 2023 Bahman 20, 1401 Tehran, Iran

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

Mahdieh Jamali

Department of Humanities, Technical and Vocational University (TVU), Tehran, Iran

mjamali@tvu.ac.ir

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

1. INTRODUCTION

Corona virus outbreak affected most systems of the world. This includes the universities that consist of millions of active students and professors, who had regular classes in their institutions and were forced to change their teaching and learning process to online methods. Over the past two decades, online learning has been activated in some global institutes. However, most schools, colleges, and universities do not use this education mode, and their staff does not know what is involved in e-learning (lynch,2004). Online learning is considered as a good choice to continue the teaching and learning process during the pandemic because it can eliminate distance and time with the help of internet-based digital platforms. Accordingly, it greatly helps the learning process without any physical interaction (Lengkanawati et al., 2021).

Distance learning is a term often used synonymously with online learning, e-learning, distance education, correspondence education, external studies, flexible learning, and massive open online course. Common features of distance learning are the teacher learner separation by space or time, the use of media and technology to enable communication and exchange during the learning process (UNESCO, 2020). Hodges et al. (2020) described distance education as “all arrangements for providing instruction through print or electronic communications media to persons engaged in planned learning in a place or time different from that of the instructor or instructors”.

Switching to online learning has had many advantages such as flexibility, affordability, accessibility, and personalized learning experience. However, it has created a lot more difficulties in universities around the world and has faced several barriers such as infrastructure deficit, extracurricular activities, technical issues, and the most essential provision of adequate resources to ensure effective and efficient dissemination of knowledge. (Patricia Aguilera-Hermida, 2020). According to Aaron, online learning brings the flexibility aspect. It means that the traditional course environment requires a building and students to meet together to receive instruction from

the teacher. Meanwhile, online classes are virtual; and coursework can be completed anywhere when there is a computer and an internet connection (Aaron, 2016). In fact, students are able to manage their time to accomplish learning anywhere and anytime.

The Covid-19 Pandemic transformed the whole education process to online. In the beginning, most of the learners came online for the first time. They were not ready for this change and suffered a lot in the first semesters. They lacked the experience and confidence to learn online using technological tools. After some time, most learners could overcome the technical problems related to online learning platforms.

The objective of this study is to assess TVU learners' view towards online learning. The study analyzed the survey responses gathered from the Technical and Vocational University students taking English as a general course. In this university it was the first time for the students to be engaged in e-learning. Therefore, this study explored the influence of online education on learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic. It focuses on the challenges and the opportunities of online learning faced by students during this situation.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Electronic education and the possibility of teaching and learning in a completely personalized environment have provided a suitable platform for the development and improvement of key skills of a person in the lifelong learning process. When the COVID-19 pandemic started and face-to-face education switched to online learning, the students faced many challenges to learn online.

According to Dhawan (2020), online learning is a learning experience in synchronous or asynchronous settings using different devices such as mobile phones, laptops, etc. with internet access. In the synchronous learning setting, the instructor and the students interact with the course

content and with each other simultaneously but from different places. The instructor interacts with students in real-time using electronic devices. Whereas, in the asynchronous setting, learning process happens in different places and time. The instructor and the students all interact with the course content at different times and locations. The instructor provides students with a sequence of units that students take according to their schedule. Further, Dhawan (2020) explains that online learning can make the teaching-learning process more student centred in which students can learn anytime and anywhere, schedule or plan their time in completing the course, increase their learning potential and develop new skills for lifelong learning.

The findings show that before the pandemic, students and teachers were not fully prepared to use online learning. Therefore, in this emergency, it was not easy for teachers to prepare their students to study online. In this case, teachers should identify the factors that affect the process of learning. In a study of the main issues of university online teaching, Stodel et al. (2006) identified five major areas of neglect in this type of teaching: lack of in-depth conversation, lack of creative ideas, lack of understanding and being understood by others, lack of knowing others, etc. According to a study by Shahid and Mughal (2020), lack of specific learning space in homes, especially for rural students, lack of personal motivation and professional time management skills, and less academic interaction between students and faculty members are some of the issues to pay attention to make the e-learning experience effective. In addition, the attitude of the educational community (university administration, faculty, students, and parents) towards online learning mode is not very positive (Gul and Khilji, 2021).

In a study conducted by Nazir, M. A., & Khan, M. R. (2021), participants in urban areas experienced fewer interruptions in their available internet connections, but participants in rural areas experienced more problems with their low-speed internet connections when attending online lectures during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this study, lack of access to quality internet connection

has emerged as a dominant issue in learning online during COVID-19. Students with high speed internet access were slightly comfortable to learn online as compared to the students who faced poor connectivity.

Another study explored online learning challenges in medical education during the COVID-19 outbreak (Rajab et al. 2020). It reported that the challenges were communications, assessment, online education experience, technology use tools, time management, anxiety, and coronavirus disease stress. Mahyoob (2020) focused on the challenges of e-learning and concluded that learners confronted some problems accessing online classes, materials downloading, online exams conducting, etc. Some students could not open online exams on their mobile phones because of some format or extension not supported by their devices. There were also some other issues that the learners faced; such as, the lack of digital skills in using the involved platform, lack of real English language practice with the teachers and their classmates, etc.

However, Zolfaghari et al. (2009) mention some benefits of online teaching such as easy access to a large amount of global information and knowledge, fast and timely access to information, reducing teaching costs, improving the quality of accuracy of textbooks and scientific materials, and scientific promotion of students and instructors.

3. METHOD

3.1. Type of Research Method

The research method employed for this paper was a quantitative method in terms of a questionnaire. The questionnaire was utilized to identify the benefits and challenges that Technical and Vocational University students have faced during their online learning experience due to the pandemic.

3.2. Participants

The participants of this study were 115 female students taking general English in Technical and Vocational University, their age range was 18- 23 years old. Most of the participants never participated in any online learning programs before the pandemic. The study was conducted in the second semester of 2021-2022.

3.3. Research Instrument

The platform selected for using technology toward the learning process in this regard was Adobe Connect. This platform is a video conferencing tool which can be used for synchronous presentation, communication and providing access to educational resources. The classes were settled by the instructor on a pre-specified date and time and the participants had access to the recordings of synchronous classes.

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. The questionnaire consisted of four parts; the first part was about students' demographic information, also students were asked to describe their IT skills, the second part was about the problems which they encountered during online learning, the third part was about the students' perspective about the benefits of online learning, and the last part consisted of open-ended questions to get any extra information about online education students wanted to add or mention.

4. RESULTS

The method used to analyze the data from the survey was frequency and percentage response. All the participants in this study were female students and their ages range from 18 years old up to 23 years old.

Table 1. The students' age

Age	Number	Percent
18-20	107	93.04
21-23	8	6.96
Total	115	100

76.5% of the students rated their IT skills as moderate while 9.5% said they have low IT skills and 13.9% rated their IT skills as high (figure 1).

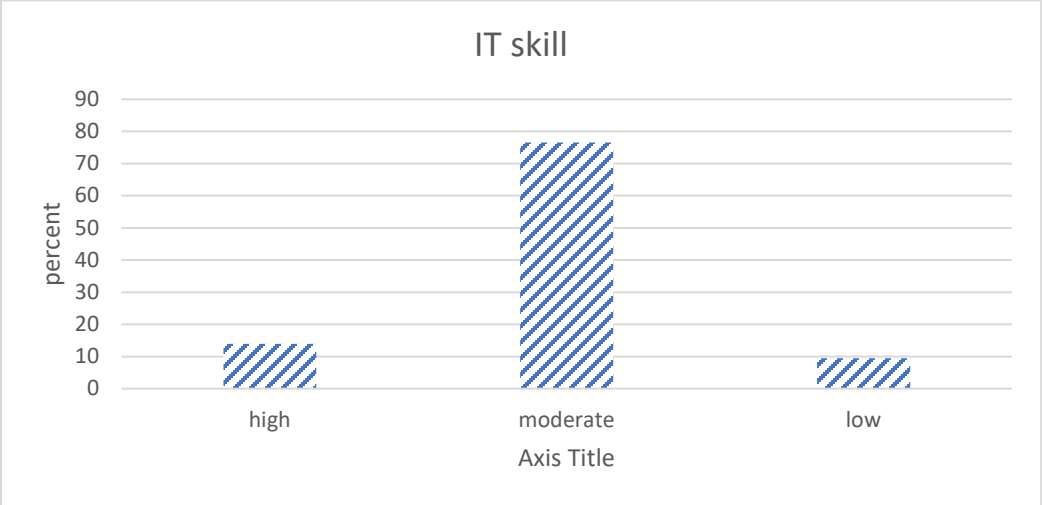

Figure 1. The students' perception of their IT skills level

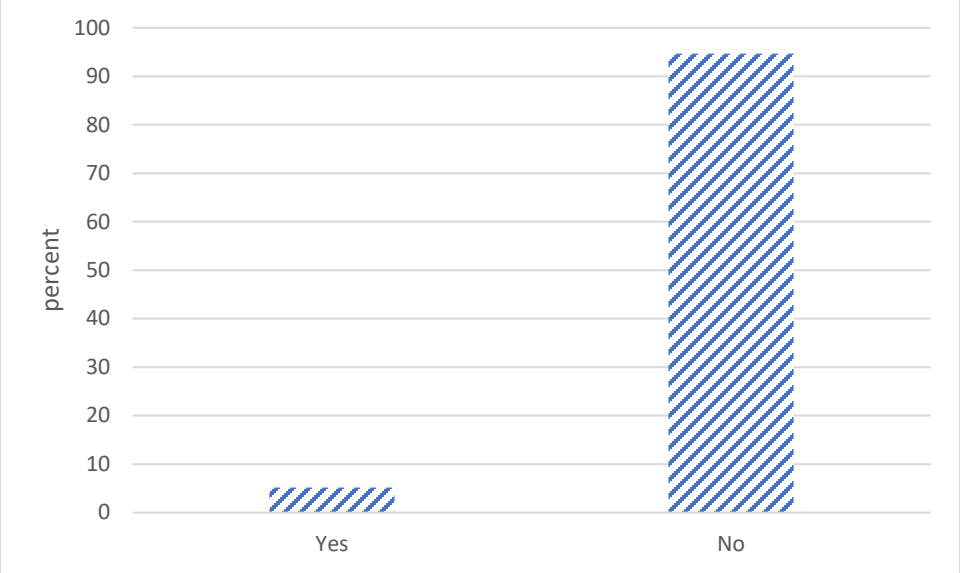

Figure 2. The students' participation in any online learning courses before the pandemic

The result showed that only 5.2% of the students had participated in online learning courses before the COVID-19 pandemic and 94.7% didn't have any previous experience with online learning.

In the second part, the students were asked to identify the significant challenges faced during online classes.

Table 2. Most of the challenges that students have faced during the online learning

Challenges of the online learning	Number	Percent
Lack of direct interaction with the teacher	97	84.3
Unstable internet connection and internet speed	102	88.6
Lack of interactions with other students	33	28.6
Poor learning conditions at home	65	56.5
Social isolation	52	45.2
Online exams conducting	77	66.9
Electricity interruption	29	25.2
Lack of understanding	79	68.6
Physical and mental discomfort	31	26.9

"Unstable internet connection and internet speed" was the most rated challenge that 88.6% of the participants confronted during their online learning experience. The next challenge that 84.3% of the participants reported was "Lack of interactions with teachers".

In the third part, the students were asked to pick all the possible answers that they find as a benefit of the online learning. Table 3 shows that the "Access to online material" and "Ability to record the session" were picked 98 times by the students and were the most rated benefits.

Table 3. The students' view about the benefits of the online learning

Benefits of the online learning	Number	Percent
Access to online material	98	85.2
Learning on your own pace	83	72.1
Classes interactivity	64	55.6
Ability to record the session	98	85.2
Comfortable surrounding	70	60.8
Flexibility of online learning place	85	73.9

The last part of the questionnaire included open-ended questions which asked the students to mention any extra idea about online education. Also, they were asked to determine whether they preferred to attend online classes or face-to-face classes. Despite its various advantages, like convenience and flexibility aspects, the majority of participants (73.04%) agreed that the implementation of online learning was not as effective as face-to-face learning in the classroom and they preferred to attend face-to-face classes (Table 4).

Table 4. The students' inclination towards online and face-to-face classes

Learning method	Number	Percent
Online	31	26.96
Face-to-face	84	73.04
Total	115	100

5. DISCUSSION

The Covid-19 Pandemic transformed the whole education process to online. The present study aimed to investigate the online education issues faced by TVU learners during the pandemic. In the beginning, most of the students didn't have any previous experience with online learning. They lacked the skill and confidence to learn online using technological tools. After some time, most learners could overcome the technical issues related to online learning platforms. The study revealed that there have been both positive and negative attitudes towards online learning by students. There are several challenges faced by students while learning English during the pandemic. As shown in table 2, "Unstable internet connection and internet speed" was the most rated challenge for almost all the students. Lack of access to quality internet connection was a dominant issue in learning online during the COVID-19. Students with high speed internet access were more comfortable to learn online as compared to the students who faced poor connectivity issues. In other words, students who lived in rural areas were more affected by online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic than students in urban areas due to lack of technology infrastructure. "Lack of interactions with teachers" was the next challenge opted by most students. The absence of one to one interaction between teacher and student during online learning influenced on students' attention, interest and motivation. Most of the students lost interest in online learning as there was very little or no interaction between teacher and student.

There are also some other challenges that the learners faced; such as, "online exams conducting" and "lack of understanding". In the last part of the questionnaire (the open-ended questions), the students expressed their opinions about the quality of online learning. Some students complained that while conducting online exams, there was internet interruption, and they failed to get grades. Also, because of connectivity issues the students' voice was not clear enough to be heard by the teacher and they lost the grade. According to some students, theoretical subjects were easier to

understand in comparison to analytical subjects like mathematic and language courses. Some other students mentioned that, sometimes they fell asleep during online classes and because of this, they missed part of the lecture. It seems that, due to the lack of physical presence, students felt less concerned about their responsibility to study.

The results showed a number of benefits of the online learning as reported by students. The most rated benefits of the online learning were "Access to online material" and "Ability to record the session". Recorded sessions allow students to access the session content and be able to review the content in case of facing any technical issues. Some of the learners referred to the flexibility of time and place in online learning and considered online classes more comfortable for non-native students, because they didn't have to come to the college campus and stay in the dormitory.

6. CONCLUSION

The main objective of this study was to explore the significant challenges and opportunities that students of TVU encountered during the sudden change to online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The study reveals that the students encountered several difficulties in learning online consisting of technical issues. Some learners faced internet connectivity problems, accessing classes, and problems in conducting online exams. Additionally, the study concluded that delay or interruption of communication can decrease student's motivation. Lack of direct interaction between students and teachers is another challenge encountered by general English learners. Students believed that direct student-teacher interaction is essential for proper learning.

The most common advantages of online learning are the accessibility of online material, the ability to record the session and flexibility of time and place that enables students to learn anywhere, anytime, in any rhythm. Despite the benefits that could help the learners, the challenges could have

a negative impact on the learning process as most students (73.04 %) agree that face-to-face classes are more effective.

The results of this research showed that e-learning mode can be an advancement in education, if it is well prepared and properly implemented. Students believe that the authorities of higher education institutions should resolve the problems related to the implementation of distance learning teaching mode. Additionally, students and teachers should be trained in technology. It is recommended that when new technologies and platforms are to be introduced to an inexperienced group of students, the teacher and the students need to meet at least once in a computer lab where the learners can actually experience the use of technology under the direct supervision of the teacher. This study explored the online learning issues from the perspective of TVU students. In order to improve the online learning environment, further research studies should be undertaken to investigate the teachers' views towards online education.

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ISC 01220-41756 RICeST

February 9, 2023 Bahman 20, 1401 Tehran, Iran

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

Vahid Reza Mirzaeian*(Corresponding author), Katayoun Oskoui

Alzahra University

mirzaeian@alzahra.ac.ir

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

1. INTRODUCTION

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) became a current pandemic worldwide and affected many countries. A global health emergency was announced by the WHO Emergency Committee in late January 2020, as COVID-19 confirmed that the number of cases had increased internationally (McAleer, 2020; Velavan & Meyer, 2020). COVID-19 spread to all continents and the latest news about COVID-19 overloaded the global mass media every day in 2020 (McAleer, 2020). On April 1, 2020, the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Iran reached more than 1,500 cases (WHO, 2020). The global spread of the COVID-19 pandemic led to an interruption of the class, which led to the requirements of online teaching (Moorhouse, 2020). To maintain the health of students, teachers and all educational staff, the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology (MSRT) and the Ministry of Education have instructed educational institutions to conduct online learning for the entire country since March 17, 2020 (Amini, Asgari & Asgari, 2020).

These guidelines result in students learning from home and instructors working from home. Personal classroom learning was completely replaced by online learning that lasted until the end of the academic year. Carrying out online learning has become a new challenge for both students and trainers. According to Cao et al. (2020), these measures undoubtedly had a profound impact on education, particularly on student growth. Online learning research typically examines standalone online learning tools, teaching methods or techniques, unique environments within a blended learning program, and the comparison between classroom-based and fully online learning. The focus is usually on student attitudes, perceptions, assessments, satisfaction, and performance (Gonzalez & Louis, 2018; Sun, 2014).

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Although a large number of studies have been carried out quantitatively and qualitatively to test the effectiveness of online learning (Gonzalez & Louis, 2018), there is rarely a study of online language learning during a pandemic, particularly in English as a foreign language (EFL) context in the university environment, since most online research on language learning was carried out in school education (Chin-Hsi Lin & Warschauer, 2015). This

pandemic led to full online language learning taking place in a sudden and completely unprepared situation. A special study examining full online language learning is very rare (Sun, 2014), especially during a pandemic.

English is the most famous foreign language in Iran and remains the first foreign language. It was officially taught in Iran a long time ago (Namaziandost, Imani & Ziafar, 2020; Kam, 2002; Dahmardeh & Kim, 2020; Hosseini & Shokrpour, 2020). As a foreign language, English has attained a special status among many foreign languages existing in Iran for many true reasons (Amirbakzadeh & Vakil, 2020). Students must take this subject as it is mandatory throughout the Iranian university system. This subject is determined as essential among other subjects. Students must also take this subject in the university entrance exam (Namaziandost, Imani & Ziafar, 2020; Dahmardeh & Kim, 2020; Hosseini & Shokrpour, 2020; Hoominian, Fazilatfar & Yazdani Moghaddama, 2020).

Almost all students learn English in formal education every year (Dahmardeh & Kim, 2020). In a global context, English has become a school subject to find a good job. It occurs when unemployment is high and English skills at work, in business and in tourism are highly valued. It shows people the economic benefits of mastering the English language (Namaziandost, Imani & Ziafar, 2020; Namaziandost & Imani, 2020). Not surprisingly, current topics and trends in English

teaching (ELT) are mainly affected by education experts, educators, language policy makers, and linguists (Namaziandost, Imani & Ziafar, 2020). The purpose of teaching English is to teach students to master four English skills, e.g. These include reading textbooks, communicating with and learning foreigners, and promoting Persian and religious culture in other countries (Namaziandost, Imani & Ziafar, 2020; Namaziandost & Imani, 2020).

Online learning continues to expand internationally as students and trainers feel comfortable and see the opportunity to set up and access alternative learning opportunities (White, 2008). Online learning means a series of learning activities in a subject, which are provided via a network and enable access and exchange of knowledge. This terminology particularly points to a teaching and learning approach that includes Internet technology. The online learning environment is useful not only for students to access knowledge and materials, but also to connect and collaborate with students (Krish, 2008).

Online learning is also perceived as using the Internet to access materials. Interaction with content, teachers and other students; and get support in the learning process to gain knowledge, gain meaning and make progress through learning experience (Ally, 2008). Online learning is defined as remote learning supported by electronic devices such as tablets, smartphones, laptops and computers that require an internet connection (Gonzalez & Louis, 2018). The widespread use of online learning inevitably brings students to alternative locations for online language learning (Plaisance, 2018). Online language learning (OLL) can indicate various learning adaptations, namely web-based learning, hybrid or mixed learning and completely virtual or online learning. In addition, online language learning in the EFL context takes place in secondary schools during the COVID 19 pandemic in full online language learning, as students and trainers are unable to meet in a personal context (Blake, 2011).

Given the COVID-19 pandemic and government policy to conduct online learning that resulted in students learning from home and instructors teaching from home, this study looked at how EFL University instructors online-EFLLearned and what challenges they also deal with as valid reasons. This study is based on written reflection data from university teachers from different cities in Iran and contributes to the field of online language learning research. It enriches the knowledge of how EFL university teachers in Iran have conducted online EFL learning in a sudden and completely unprepared situation due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It also sheds light on the challenges they encountered during their online learning practice. Therefore, questions that guide the present research are the following:

(1) How did EFL university teachers conduct online EFL learning during the COVID-19 pandemic?

(2) What were the challenges EFL trainers faced in implementing online EFL learning during the COVID 19 pandemic?

3. METHOD

3.1. Research context and participants

This research was carried out in Iran, where English is the first foreign language and a compulsory subject in public schools and universities (Namaziandost, Imani & Ziafar, 2020; Dahmardeh & Kim, 2020; Hosseini & Shokrpour, 2020; Hoominian, Fazilatfar & Yazdani Moghaddam, 2020) . However, English is not spoken in Iranian social life and is mainly used for academic, professional and business purposes (Dahmardeh & Kim, 2020; Hosseini & Shokrpour, 2020). Iranian EFL teachers typically use Persian for both written and oral communication in academic forums (Dahmardeh & Kim, 2020) and classrooms (Khodamoradi, Talebi & Maghsoudi (2020). As they do not retain their English skills after receiving formal teacher training, their knowledge will likely

decrease over time (Nasr, Bagheri & Sadighi, 2020). Not surprisingly, many Iranian EFL university teachers do not speak the language they teach (Dahmardeh & Kim, 2020).

English is determined as a foreign language in the present research (Nasr, Bagheri & Sadighi, 2020). The participants were 16 EFL university teachers, consisting of 12 women and 4 men from different cities. All instructors had a Ph.D. in teaching English as a foreign language. They had experience teaching English as a foreign language in the range of 1 to 18 years. Their mother tongue was Persian.

3.2. Data collection and analysis

16 EFL university teachers (Table 1) volunteered to participate in this research upon invitation. According to a list of questions, EFL trainers were asked to consider in writing their practices in implementing online EFL learning and the challenges they encountered. In addition, five of them were individually involved in a follow-up interview because they provided attractive narratives and topics in the written considerations and were found to be feasible to be examined further. Semi-structured interviews were carried out and took about 30 minutes for each respondent.

Table 1. List of participants in the study

No	Name	Gender	Age
1	Susan	F	40
2	Khadijeh	F	35
3	Fahimeh	F	33
4	Leila	F	40
5	Zohreh F.	F	48

6	Nahid	F	47
7	Mona	F	43
8th	Najmeh F.	F	50
9	Neda	F	47
10th	Nc	F	42
11	Nayer	F	45
12	Elahe	F	38
13	Bagher M.	M	40
14	Vahid	M	52
fifteen	Mohsen	M	38
16	Hamid M.	M	40

Participants were asked to provide detailed explanations of teaching procedures, online teaching materials used, as well as material examples, quizzes, assignments and projects, which were given to students to demonstrate the practices of online EFL teaching that they conducted during COVID. 19 pandemic, as stated in the written considerations. Trainers were also led to discover the challenges they had encountered in carrying out online EFL learning during the COVID 19 pandemic and to provide valid reasons for doing so. All interviews were recorded in audio format and transcribed for further analysis.

All participants agreed before the research was carried out. In light of research questions and recent online learning theories (Ally, 2008; Gonzalez & Louis, 2018; Krish, 2008), the data has been

carefully reviewed and important codes have been used to describe the practices of online EFL learning during COVID- 19 pandemic and pandemic reflecting challenges have been identified. The transcripts of the interviews were read several times in order to obtain initial information on the practices of online EFL learning and its challenges. Data coding was done to show classification and emerging trends. Repeated and unimportant data was also deleted. In the end, suitable extracts from the practices of online EFL learning and its challenges were provided in the results area. Some grammar changes have been made to ensure the linguistic effectiveness of the excerpts without changing their intent and meaning. To validate the data, data coding was done independently by the researchers and continued through several discussion cycles to reach agreement on the results.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section covers three key issues related to the practices of online EFL learning and the challenges that arise. It contains information about what applications and platforms teachers are using, how they have done EFL online learning, what challenges they have faced, and the valid reasons. For each of the three topics, the most representative excerpts were selected from the answers of the participants.

Applications and platforms used by teachers

The instructors used several applications and platforms, which could be divided into eight types. They are given below:

(1) learning management systems;

(2) chatting and messaging;

(3) video conferencing;

(4) content production;

(5) assessment;

(6) video streaming and sharing;

(7) online learning providers;

(8) miscellaneous resources

The instructors did not use games, artificial intelligence, virtual reality and augmented reality. They used Google Classroom and Moodle to manage their online learning in general.

I chose Google Classroom because it didn't need to be installed on their smartphones, so the students didn't complain that they were spending their internet quota and needed a stable internet connection. All the students had to do was log in with their Gmail account and enter the class code. So it was easier and more accessible than other applications (Mohsen, Written Reflection).

The first application I used was Moodle. I use it to publish materials related to proverbs and puzzles (Nahid, Written Reflection).

The instructors also use WhatsApp to perform many activities similar to learning management systems.

I used WhatsApp to exchange materials, to give information about tasks or projects, to hold discussions, to give questions and answers and to give personal feedback to the students (Mona, Interview).

Adobe Connect was chosen to perform possible activities in a conference call environment.

I used Adobe Connect to explain materials orally as in face-to-face meetings, to have oral discussions with students, and to provide question and answer sessions (Leila, written reflection).

The instructors also used several content maker applications. These were Autodesk SketchBook, TED-Ed and FastStone Capture.

The second application I used was Autodesk SketchBook. It is used to replace the function of a whiteboard for presenting materials. We could create materials in written and graphic form (Fahimeh, Written Reflection).

TED-Ed and FastStone Capture are both video maker applications.

I used FastStone Capture to create a screencasting video. In short, I explained the materials orally by showing PowerPoint slides. In the meantime, TED-Ed has been used to create a teaching video by editing available online videos (Najmeh, Interview).

Google Forms, Quizizz and Kahoot are assessment applications used by the instructors. They were used to create online tests for students in the form of multiple choices, essays, and true or false alternatives.

I used Kahoot to create multi-choice quizzes with four options and true or false alternatives. I also used Google Form to create quiz questions in four different options and essay formats. Kahoot needed a more stable internet connection, while Google Forms was more accessible when the internet connection was unstable. Google Forms also enabled the processing of scores (Vahid, Written Reflection).

I used Quizizz to create quizzes in multiple choice form (Nahid, Written Reflection).

YouTube was mainly used by teachers as a visual material resource in the form of videos and animations.

I attached YouTube video links in my Google Classroom classes to provide visual material (Khadijeh, Written Reflection) to my students.

Ruangguru was one of the applications for online learning providers. The instructor participated in some quiz items provided by this application.

I selected some quiz questions provided by Ruangguru that were relevant to the materials I taught. I took some screenshots with my smartphone to take some quiz items. Then I shared the selected quiz elements via WhatsApp and asked my students to answer them (Fahimeh, interview).

The instructors also provided several websites as additional resources for their students. These websites were: http://en.childrenslibrary.org/, https://belajar.kemdikbud.go.id and https://kelaspintar.id.

I asked my students to visit http://en.childrenslibrary.org/ and select a book that was available on the website. I gave them a week to read the selected book. They then had to write a review of the book they had read. It was typically a reading task, especially an extensive reading task (Najmeh, interview).

The activities of the trainers in carrying out online EFL learning

There were trainers who did their online learning in synchronous and asynchronous mode. The synchronous mode means that the instructors teach online at certain times in a week. On the other hand, the asynchronous mode means that the instructors conduct online learning in a number of longer periods, for example a week. The asynchronous mode is therefore more flexible than the synchronous mode. However, the majority of the trainers carried out their online learning synchronously as this was their university policy.

My school had set the schedule for this online learning, so I had to follow my institution's rules (Nahid, written reflection).

My school did not set a specific schedule for doing online learning. The most important thing was that each instructor had to perform teaching activities every week, such as providing materials or assigning tasks or projects to students (Bagher, written reflection).

First, the instructors checked the students' presence. The instructors then used materials in the form of PowerPoint slides, YouTube videos and Word documents or created their own materials in the form of videos, images, PowerPoint slides, Word documents and PDF documents. The materials were uploaded by the teachers to learning management systems such as Google Classroom and Moodle or shared via messaging applications such as WhatsApp. Then the instructors explained the materials with zoom, for example. The instructor's explanation could also be included in the materials, e.g. B. in videos, Word documents and PDF documents. The course leaders then created online tests in the form of multiple selections, essays, and true or false alternatives to assess students' mastery of the subject.

The instructors also commissioned the students with some tasks and projects, as some instructors used projectbased learning in their online learning. In order to gain a deeper understanding and to refine the students' lack of knowledge, the trainers held discussions with the students. The trainers also provided question and answer sessions to involve the students and solve their learning problems. The instructors then gave personal feedback on the students' work. The feedback should help the students to personally advance their learning. In the end, the instructors gave points for the assessment of each student.

I asked my students to state whether they were taking the online learning as planned, and to say that they were present in the comment on my contribution to the Google Classroom (Hamid, Written Reflection) exam.

I downloaded some ready-to-use materials on my teaching topics in the form of PowerPoint slides. I also downloaded some relevant videos from YouTube to improve student understanding of the topics. I then shared these materials via WhatsApp (Mona, Interview).

I have created some modules in PDF document format. I uploaded these modules to Google Drive. Then I gave my students the Google Drive links so they could access the modules and read them as study materials. I created these modules because I thought that the materials available in the students' textbook are difficult to learn independently of one another (Neda, interview).

I uploaded my materials to Moodle as a learning management system. I uploaded the materials in many classes because I taught two different courses, General English and ESP (Nahid, Written Reflection).

I explained the materials through a conference call made possible by the Zoom application. Here I explained the materials orally by seeing the faces of my students on my laptop screen (Bagher, Written Reflection).

I have created materials in Word documents. I have included my statement, which was usually made directly and orally, in the materials. So I wrote the important points and briefs of the materials and my explanation in the same Word document (Hamid, Written Reflection).

I created online quizzes in the form of multiple selections, essays and true or false alternatives (Vahid, Written Reflection).

I commissioned my students with a project to write a hortatory exhibition text and an analytical exhibition text on topics related to COVID-19 (Elahe, Written Reflection).

I conducted a discussion about the generic structure of the narrative text by first asking a few questions to stimulate the discussion. The questions I asked led students to understand the materials critically and to initiate their ability to ask and think. The students answered my questions and asked other questions. In this lively discussion there was an exchange of knowledge (Najmeh, interview).

I enabled a question-and-answer session via WhatsApp. This question and answer session took place in the WhatsApp group of every class that I taught. The pupils were allowed to ask questions about their learning difficulties and lack of knowledge about the subjects taught (Nahid, interview).

I have always personally rated my students' work through the private comments feature in Google Classroom and personal WhatsApp chat. I wanted my students to know what should be improved and how it can be improved to get better results. This resulted in the students making good progress (Susan, Written Reflection).

I always gave points for my students' work, as they had to be reported in the report books at the end of the semester. It also gave the students insights and considerations about how well they mastered the topic (Khadijeh, Written Reflection).

A number of activities carried out by the trainers were generally similar to teaching face-to-face activities. The chronological order of the activities was similar to that of classroom activities. The instructors have just moved the face-to-face course into an online learning environment. You still haven't thought much about the differences between classroom learning and online learning. The instructors have also not maximized the use of technology in online learning. They used no game, no artificial intelligence, no augmented reality, and no virtual reality. It seemed that educators' knowledge and skills in using technology in online learning needed to be improved.

The instructors were also creative and innovative in providing activities for students in online learning environments. In short, it was not enough to simply shift the classroom to an online learning environment. Instructors had to be knowledgeable and skillful to teach online learning. They had to master the content (the language they teach), the technology of online language learning and the pedagogy of foreign language learning.

The challenges and valid reasons

There were many problems with instructor online EFL learning. The problems came from the students, the teachers and the parents of the students. The valid reasons for these problems have been identified. The first problem was that some students didn't have their own smartphones. It was usually caused by her family's financial situation.

There were some students in my classes who didn't have a smartphone. Due to their financial situation, their parents could not afford a smartphone for their children (Fahimeh, Written Reflection).

The second was about an unstable internet connection. Cellular and internet coverage still became a problem in remote and rural areas. In fact, some students lived in remote, rural, and mountainous areas.

Some of my students complained about the unstable internet connection because they lived in remote and mountainous areas (Zohreh, Written Reflection).

The financial situation of the students and their families also led to another problem, namely the inability to afford an adequate Internet quota for online learning. They could only afford a small internet quota, which was not enough to comfortably take part in online learning. Sometimes my students didn't have an internet quota so they couldn't access the internet and participate in online learning. This problem occurred because income was not evenly distributed across all residents.

Not all students came from a high- or middle-income family who could afford a decent living (Mona, Interview).

Many students had little digital literacy. They found difficulties in running the applications and platforms used for online learning. A logical reason for this was that students did not use it to learn through online learning and to interact with these applications and platforms.

At first, my students didn't know how to copy, paste, and edit text in WhatsApp groups to fill out the attendance list. Many of my students also had difficulty using Google Classroom because they had never tried this application before. I created some tutorial videos on using Google Classroom to help them understand how it works and how to copy, paste and edit text in the WhatsApp group (Neda, Interview).

Some students had not only little digital knowledge, but also little general knowledge. They could not understand Teacher's instructions well, even though it was clearly written. It was usually because they hadn't read the instructor's instructions carefully and were too lazy to read the instructor's instructions. Sometimes they skipped the instruction if the words were too many for them.

I had to repeatedly give the same information to my students just because they were not careful enough to read the information. Their literacy was not good (Neda, Written Reflection).

Some students did not attend online learning on time as scheduled by schools at certain times in a week. They were absent during the hours when online learning was scheduled and asked the instructors what had been taught and assigned in the afternoon. It happened because the students had wrong ideas.

In my students' eyes, learning from home was like a vacation. They went to bed from morning until almost afternoon. They did not participate in online learning from morning to noon as planned. They contacted me in the afternoon and asked if they had been given a task or a project. I didn't serve them when it wasn't working (Nayer, Written Reflection).

Some students submitted their work after the deadline. This can have various reasons. Some students were too lazy to complete the teacher's task or project. It could be that their internet quota has expired. They also had an unstable internet connection when they submitted their works in the

last few minutes. This could happen to students who didn't have their own smartphones, so they had to borrow their parents 'or siblings' smartphones, which were also used for online learning. It was also caused by their misperception that their works were not rated by the instructor.

Several students were able to meet the deadline for assignments. They recently submitted their work because they didn't have smartphones. They had to borrow smartphones from their parents or siblings. While her siblings also needed the smartphone to participate in online learning (Najmeh, Written Reflection).

Another problem that arose was the students' different mastery of the subject, which resulted from the knowledge and learning style of the students. It was common for students to master the subject differently in one class, even in the classroom. It became a new challenge to teach students with little knowledge and different learning styles in an online learning environment.

I found difficulties in providing the materials to the students who needed additional guidance on learning. It was because of their little knowledge. It was quite difficult for me to teach them through online learning (Mona, Written Reflection).

It was difficult to provide a learning experience based on each student's learning style. Therefore, my students could not master the subject optimally, because they did not get a learning experience that corresponded to their learning style. It was difficult and took a long time to prepare different learning experiences based on each student's learning style in an online learning environment (Nahid, Interview).

Some students complained about the workload of online learning. They suffered from many tasks and projects that were assigned to them with deadlines. Students felt more stressed through online learning. This was due to the fact that students learned about 14 subjects through online learning

and all of these subjects had tasks that the students had to complete with deadlines (Nahid, interview).

Some students had little awareness of online learning. They realized that online learning was not important. This problem occurred because the students had misconceptions about online learning. They assumed that learning online was informal and just like vacation, so they were too relaxed. Sometimes several students forgot to take part in online learning. They had little awareness of online learning. They found it informal. It seemed like a cliché to them, as they had never before experienced online learning (Mona, Interview).

Since the problems came from the students, the trainers also encountered challenges that came from them. Initially, instructors had difficulty creating materials that were easy to learn in an online learning environment, as some instructors only used low-technology applications due to the lack of facilities their students suffered from. This was also due to the lack of experience and knowledge of the trainers in carrying out online learning.

I had difficulty creating materials that were still core and basic and easily understood by students of independent learning, as many students did not have enough facilities to participate in online interactive learning, such as their own Smartphones with adequate specifications, stable internet connection and adequate internet quota (Neda, interview).

The instructors also found a problem in giving students personal feedback. It happened because the allotted time was still insufficient and several students had recently submitted their work.

I could give personal feedback on each student's work in real time. The time set by the school for online learning was insufficient. Some students have also recently submitted their work so that I can give personal feedback on their work as soon as possible. The students also responded to my

feedback at different times. It was better if we could give personal feedback on the students' work in real time (Susan, Written Reflection).

The lack of adequate facilities for the integration of high technology has become another problem in online learning. It was known that many students had problems with an unstable internet connection, the inability to afford an adequate internet quota, and the lack of smartphones. Without proper facilities, trainers would not be able to do interactive online learning. They could only give materials for independent home learning, assignments or projects, and quizzes. However, the instructors still had to choose the applications that didn't require a lot of internet quota and that could still run on a slow internet connection like Google Classroom, Google Forms, and WhatsApp.

I was unable to do interactive and engaging online learning because the opportunities for online learning were still very limited and far away to do interactive and engaging online learning. In addition, the financial situation of the students was still unable to afford the necessary facilities (Fahimeh, interview).

In addition, the instructors had difficulty in engaging less motivated and passive students in online learning environments. This was suggested by some students who took part in the discussion. Some students did not concentrate and even went to sleep when they were on a conference call. This was due to the laziness of the students, the unstable internet connection and the poor knowledge of English that demotivated them to attend discussion and question and answer sessions that were conducted in English. Students' English skills were another problem with this online learning. This was because students inside and outside the classroom did not use English for everyday communication.

My students were rather passive and didn't say a lot of words when I gave classes or had discussions in English. They then asked about my Persian classes. They usually actively participated in discussions when we used Persian. They did not use English in discussions and other daily activities. They were confused to express their ideas and questions in English. They had little knowledge of English (Elahe, Written Reflection).

The trainers also complained about their lack of preparation and willingness to conduct online learning. This was because online learning was not previously planned and prepared. There was a sudden response to the COVID- 19 pandemic.

I felt that I was not ready to switch from face-to-face classes to online learning because online learning was suddenly carried out in an emergency and not prepared in advance (Nahid, interview).

In addition, the instructors had difficulty conveying moral value to their students. It was difficult for them to educate their students' morals through online learning because the trainers and the students were far apart.

Because of the distance, it was difficult to convey moral values to my students through online learning, so I could not directly and intensively convey an exemplary attitude to my students (Nahid, interview).

Learning online was also difficult to strengthen the emotional bond between the instructor and the students. This was due to the lack of physical touch and interaction when learning online.

The emotional bond between the instructor and the students was not relieved very well because it was limited by long distances, which did not result in personal meetings and physical touches such as smiles and handshakes, which usually strengthened the emotional bond between the instructor and the student Students (Nahid, interview).

Communication and interaction between the trainer and the students were very important in the learning process. However, online learning still could not facilitate communication and interaction, as well as classroom instruction. It happened because the instructor and students were distant. Therefore, the communication and interaction between them has not been optimized.

My students couldn't reach me directly if they didn't understand the materials or had problems learning. They had difficulty communicating and interacting with me in an online learning environment. I also thought that online communication and interaction cannot replace face-to-face meetings in a learning context (Zohreh, Written Reflection).

Many parents have not monitored and supervised their children's learning through online learning. It was because they were busy at work and their work could not be done at home. They did not work from home because they worked in the informal sector (NC, Written Reflection).

The last problem was that excessive use of smartphones and laptops can cause eye pain. This was because the screen of the smartphone and laptop emitted radiation that was not good for our eyes and our health.

My students and I were tired and burnt out when we stared at our smartphone or laptop screens for a long time. This was due to the radiation effect from smartphones or laptops, which was not good for our eyes when we used them for a long time (Mona, Interview).

The results showed that the instructors conducted online EFL classes during the COVID-19 pandemic. The instructors used many applicable applications and platforms based on their knowledge and the ability of their students to access these applications and platforms because the students' facilities were not available. These applications and platforms ranged from learning management systems to additional resources. There were two ways to do online learning, synchronous and asynchronous mode. The majority of the trainers performed online learning

synchronously because their schools or institutions had specified the rule and the precise schedule for carrying out the online learning. In addition, the instructors carried out a number of activities to teach students through online learning. These ranged from checking the presence of the students to evaluating the students' work.

However, many challenges arose from the students, the trainers and the students' parents. The cause of each problem was examined and presented in the results area. Many online learning applications appear quickly every day. The instructors were allowed to deliver materials to their students' smartphones. Instructors could use some educational applications, references, and games to facilitate classroom activities (Sun, 2018). Synchronous-based applications were useful for creating contexts and enabling teachers and students to interact in real time. In addition, asynchronous applications could be used for low-technology use through discussions and written responses.

A thorough and balanced mix of activities could encourage students to learn online (Plaisance, 2018). The instructors had to provide simple, obvious and proper instructions on what to do, how to do it and where to submit their work. The activities had to be set with the goals in mind and sequentially arranged in tasks that reflect real situations in order to arouse and motivate the students (Gonzalez & Louis, 2018). Trainers had to be able to recognize engagement, present meaningful activities, offer question and answer sessions, and offer icebreaking activities to maintain student engagement.

Sufficient challenges, resources and feedback had to be made available to the students (Green, 2016). Challenges included pedagogy with technology, designing interactive activities, improving formal learning, gaining student support, and dealing with problems when using technology (Sun, 2018). Other difficulties with complete online learning were meeting planned participation and

regular learning, maintaining sustained engagement, becoming a self-directed learner with high motivation, and making contacts (Sun, 2014).

Problems also arose from the inability to afford a smartphone and internet quota for students and from the unstable internet connection. Good pedagogy would be nonsense if there were problems with access to technology (Burston, 2014; Cakrawati, 2017). Preparing online learning took more time than preparing face-to-face classes (Krish, 2008). Online learning required a larger investment than face-to-face classes to properly design and implement it (Green, 2016). It had to be done skillfully to avoid friction and detachment because online students could feel isolated and disconnected (Plaisance, 2018). It also required more responsible and more autonomous students. They had to be self-directed learners with high motivation to spend time effectively to prepare, maintain, manage and reflect on their learning and participation (Gonzalez & Louis, 2018).

In addition, student-teacher and student-material interactions had a significant and positive impact on student satisfaction. Therefore, the instructors had to build interactions between student-instructor and student material to improve student learning (Chin-Hsi Lin, Zheng & Zhang, 2017). The challenges had to inspire the trainers to be reflective, open, creative and adaptable to dynamic changes. It reminded trainers to continue exploring technology to improve language learning. Trainers had to identify applications and use them based on goals.

In order to select and use appropriate applications in a timely manner, instructors had to prepare and learn in practice to recognize applications, organize activities, maintain student engagement, and evaluate student learning. The instructors were encouraged to actively participate in career development opportunities to develop their technology integration skills in language teaching (Sun, 2018). Training had to be carried out to prepare them well for online learning in emergencies (Moorhouse, 2020).

5. CONCLUSION

The present study provided contributions to the literature on online language learning in the EFL context from the trainers' point of view. The EFL instructors conducted online learning through a series of activities ranging from checking student presence to synchronously or asynchronously evaluating student work, depending on the university policy due to the COVID 19 pandemic. Various applications and platforms were used for online learning, ranging from learning management systems to additional resources. However, many problems arose with the students and teachers. As a result, online learning did not go well because it was unprepared and planned.

Planning and preparation should inevitably be done for a better online learning in the future, since online learning takes more time than face-to-face classes to be well prepared and ready. Trainers must be trained and prepared with sufficient knowledge and skills to maximize their practices in carrying out online learning. Students need to be familiar with online learning to improve their digital literacy and refine their misconceptions about online learning. However, the lack of facilities for students on smartphones, the Internet quota and the stable Internet connection remain crucial due to the financial situation of the families of the students.

The future education and training of trainers must include the integration of technology into language learning, technology-based language learning, information and communication technology in language learning and online language learning courses in their curriculum, as the requirements of technology integration in language learning are inevitable. More research needs to be encouraged to examine the practices of online EFL learning in the context of low technology and the needs of professional development for trainers in technology integration in language learning. As suggested by Moorhouse (2020), it is also worthwhile to carry out extensive studies on converting face-to-face teaching to online learning.

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Shahid Rajaee Teacher Training University

The First National Conference on Technology-Enhanced Language Learning and Teaching:

Accomplishments and Challenges amid COVID-19 Pandemic

ISC 01220-41756 RICeST

February 9, 2023 Bahman 20, 1401 Tehran, Iran

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

Reza Nejati*(Corresponding author), Hossein Ilchi

Shahid Rajaee Teacher Training University

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

1. INTRODUCTION

Readers of a text, especially language learners, know that comprehension is very important. Most scholars agree that 'the purpose of reading is comprehension. Van den Broek and Espin (2012) state that "comprehension is a complex interaction between automated and strategic cognitive processes that enable the reader to create a mental representation of the text. Reading is one of the language skills which have a very complex process. It is a basic and essential skill for foreign learners because most of the target language's resources are provided in writing. When we read something, we try to understand the author's meaning." Comprehension also largely depends on the background of knowledge. Nunan (2003) argues that "good readers know what to do when faced with problems. Meaning is neither in the reader nor in the text. The reader's background knowledge is integrated with the text to create meaning. The text, the reader, the fluency, and the strategies together define the act of reading."

Kocak (2003) claims that "the role of language learners is highly influential in learning English and has been debated for many years." "There has been a noticeable growth of interest in learning autonomy (LA) in general and in language teaching and learning in particular" (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012; Humphreys & Wyatt, 2014). Al-Araj (2015) says that "since reading comprehension proved to be challenging in EFL classrooms, better comprehension can take place when learners act autonomously through social interaction and collaboration in the classroom where teachers need to provide learners with opportunities to become autonomous individuals who are self-motivated and responsible for their learning." Little (2012) indicates that "learner autonomy is "the product of interdependence rather than independence, which attends to the synergy between whole and individual activities. Consequently, the enhancement of autonomy in reading stems from the combination of social and reflective processes."

Madariaga and Goñi, (2009) points out that "Personal development, in the broadest sense of the term, encompasses all those aspects related to the person, both individually and socially, including all the different aspects of human psychological development. However, in a more restricted sense, the term personal, as opposed to social, refers to those more specific, individual, or private aspects of this development." From the very beginning, the study of the scientific field of self-concept has attracted a lot of attention and continues to be of interest to researchers today. In short, self-concept is how one sees oneself, that is, in the most private and personal areas of life, not just physically and academically /professionally and socially. Without a proper perception of oneself as an individual, independent of physical self and social self, in aspects that have generally been examined under the heading of ethical-moral self-concept, self-perception of self, or emotional self, one cannot answer the question, 'Who am I?'. (Goni, 2008) states that "there is a definite lack of models that aim to integrate the various components or dimensions of personal self-concept that may fully and compensate explain this notion."

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

"Learning to read is lighting a fire; every syllable that is spelled out is a spark" (Victor Hugo). Due to studies, increasing attention to reading comprehension is undeniable because an information-based society requires high skills in reading comprehension. Brown (2001) points out that "research and study of the four language skills separately are less effective. Therefore, it is difficult to learn and even teach speaking without listening and reading without writing." Nunan points out that "reading is an interactive process, in which the reader constantly shuttles between bottom-up and top-down processes" (Nunan, 1999, p. 254). The role of language learners in learning has been heavily debated over the years in learning English (Kocak, 2003; Guglielmino, 2013; Mahboobe, 2014, cited in Xuan, Y., et al., 2018). Today, students play a more active and participatory role in the learning process in education (Kokak, 2003). It is the change in attitudes towards the role of

teachers and learners that is increasing the popularity of the concept of self-directed learning (SDL). Knowles noted that "it has its roots in middle-to-high level education and has been tested on learners in various cases. Although there are slight variations in how SDL is defined, they are essentially the same" (Knowles 1975). He also explained that "The process of self-directed learning includes identifying learning needs along with formulating goals. In addition, identifying learning resources, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes are very important. Learners can take the initiative alone or with the help of others."

People's perception and awareness of themselves and what they perceive to be is personal self-concept. Self-concept has a psychological aspect and is formed over time by many factors and may be changed by many issues. It is very important to understand the characteristics, thoughts and abilities (Gõni, 2009). In the West, the main promoters of self-concept were Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow. Roger says "the 'ideal self' is something that almost everyone strives to achieve." Self-actualization occurs when there is enough ability to achieve goals and aspirations. Individuals reach their maximum potential to grow in a healthy environment consisting of genuineness, acceptance and empathy. Abraham Maslow presented his theory of the hierarchy of needs, in which he applied the concept of self-actualization and explained the steps a person takes to achieve it. He says "by meeting the 'less deficit needs', one reaches the 'higher growth needs'." At this level the person grows and reaches self-actualization. But the experience of negative events and being at the level of lack of low needs are obstacles to the ascent of the hierarchy of needs. (Maslow, Abraham H. 2005).

Studies have been conducted on the relationship between learner autonomy and reading comprehension or the effect of autonomy on reading. Taherkhani, R., and Moradi, R., (2021) conducted a study to find out the relationship between students' understanding of language with

their emotional intelligence, autonomy, and self-regulation. According to the results of this study, the examined items have positive and significant relationships with reading comprehension. Yari Moghadam, N., Delawar, A., et al (2019) have studied factors affecting reading comprehension to develop a structural model primary school in the Hamedan city. To develop a structural model for fourth-grade male and female students in Hamedan, they examined individual cognitive factors (reading self-concept and reading attitudes) affecting comprehension. They pointed out that a predicted, these two variables had a significant effect on students' comprehension. This was explained by students' attitudes toward reading at 62% and self-reflection reading at 58%. Vaziri, A., and Barjesteh, H., (2019) conducted a study on whether teaching reading strategies to hotel employees and their autonomy affects their attitude or not: the results of this study showed that there is a significant relationship between ESP learners' autonomy and reading strategies. Also, a positive correlation between participants' reading comprehension with their reading strategies has been pointed out. But, it was no established statistically significant relationship between autonomy and reading comprehension. Shirzad and Ebadi (2019) investigated English language learners' independence and reading comprehension by comparing conventional and computer-aided contexts. According to the results of their research, they said the positive effect of the two approaches of jigsaw and scaffolding on the normal field and with the help of computer in both pre-test and post-test, the scaffolding method. Zarei and Ghahrmani (2019) conducted a study on the correlation between master's students' autonomy and their comprehension ability. They concluded that there is a correlation between these two variables. In addition, Zafarian and Nemati (2015) examined the comprehension of English language learners and the autonomy of the learner to see if they have an effect or not. The results of their study report the positive effect of learning autonomy on reading comprehension, and they also said that it is possible to predict the reading comprehension of language learners.

Gõni et al. (2015) conducted extensive research. They examined the relationship between life satisfaction in adolescence, youth, and adulthood with personal self-concept. This study examines four dimensions of self-concept and tests a structural model: self-fulfillment, autonomy, honesty, and emotion. The results revealed that in total, 46% of the mentioned variables are effective in satisfaction. And this number is equivalent to the effect of general self-esteem that has been observed in previous Gõni's research studies Piran, N., (2014) studied the relationship between self-concept, self-efficacy, and self-esteem with reading comprehension achievement among Iranian EFL learners. The results of his research showed that there was a significant relationship between self-concept and comprehension scale, as well as self-esteem and reading comprehension score. But there was no relationship between self-efficacy and reading comprehension scores. According to this research, reading comprehension scores were greatly affected by students' self-concept and self-esteem .Mustafa, ER. & et.al (2012) have studied the effects of active learning on foreign language self-concept and reading comprehension achievement. According to the results of their research, the group that actively used learning techniques showed increasing progress in reading comprehension. However, active learning had little effect on foreign language self-concept. Also, according to the high school from which the students graduated, there is not much correlation between foreign language self-concept and comprehension scores. Sahranavard, M. and Siti Aishah Hassan (2012) conducted a study on the relationship between self-efficacy, self-esteem, anxiety, and self-concept with scientific performance. Their participants were eighth-grade Iranian students. The result of their research showed science self-concept can affect science performance. But other variables: self-esteem, self-efficacy, science self-efficacy, anxiety, and science anxiety did not affect the performance of these students. One of the oldest studies on reading acquisition and self-concept was conducted by Karin Taube (1988). His participants were two groups of students with almost the same cognitive level. The first group with the inability to

read and/or spell and the second group without such problems. The results of his research showed that the first group had a lower self-concept. He says that "one of the vital factors that distinguish learning disabled pupils from normal achieving ones and unsuccessful underachievers from successful underachievers is attention and strategic behavior."

3. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to determine the role of self-directedness and personal self-concept on intermediate-level students reading comprehension performance. Two questionnaires to examine our participants' self-directedness and personal self-concept and a reading comprehension test are considered. The following research questions guided this

study:

1. Do self-directed learning and personal self-concept have a significant role in reading comprehension?

2. Do self-directedness and personal self-concept help Iranian EFL intermediate students improve their reading knowledge?

3. What are the Iranian students' attitudes toward their autonomous learning and personal self-concept in reading comprehension?

4. METHOD

4.1. Participants

The participants of this study include 170 intermediate female and male students from two institutes of language in Tehran and Karaj. They completed two questionnaires related to self-directedness and personal self-concept to realize their perspective due to described subjects. Also,

they answered the reading section of the Preliminary English Test (PET) to assess their reading comprehension.

4.2. Instrumentation

In the present dissertation, the instruments used for the topic discussed are the reading section of the PET test, the self-directed learning questionnaire, and the personal self-concept questionnaire. It should be noted that since the mother tongue of the students is Persian, the Persian translation of the questionnaires should have been used. A review of related sources, articles, and research did not find a translation of these questionnaires. As a result, I translated the questionnaires under the supervision of the supervisor, and to validate the translations, they were sent to the faculty members of Rajaei University, and they expressed their comments and suggestions with great grace, and then the questionnaires were administered. The description of the questionnaires is detailed below.

4.2.1. PET

PET, the Standard English language proficiency test, is a test to measure the level of language proficiency of language learners. This exam consists of two parts, reading, and writing, but due to the saving of time and money, and most importantly, the practical issues related to this study, only the reading part, which contains 35 four-choice questions, was implemented.

4.2.2. Goñi et al. Personal Self-Concept Questionnaire (2011)

PSC, the personal self-concept questionnaire, is a questionnaire containing 18 items. PSC assesses personal perceptions. According to Gõni, self-perception includes self-actualization (SF), honesty (HON), autonomy (AU), and emotional self-concept (ESC). This questionnaire is a Likert scale with five response options ranging from strongly disagree "1" to strongly agree "5". It should be noted that items 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, and 17 are reversed.

4.2.3. Self-directedness questionnaire

The items are included, 23 items from the Learner Autonomy Readiness Instrument (LARI) (Kocak, 2003); 9 items from Self-Rating Scales of Self-Directed Learning (SRSSDL) (Williamson, 2007); 12 items from the Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale (SDLRS) (Steward & Yan, 2007). They are divided into Motivation, Awareness, and Language Learning Strategies. It is a Likert scale with five answer options from strongly disagree "1" to strongly agree "5".

4.3. Data Analysis

In this correlational research, we found the level of students' comprehension skills from the quantitative analysis of the scores of the reading section of the PET test. Besides, by analyzing the data obtained from two questionnaires of self-directed learning and personal self-concept as independent variables, using the multiple linear regression technique, we found out their role in reading comprehension, as well as the relationship between the two independent variables. Finally, by reasoning from questionnaires and previous findings, we qualitatively analyzed the opinions and attitudes of the participants towards their role and their concepts toward learning.

5. RESULTS

5.1. Overall Result

The number of participants is 170, and according Table 3.1, there are three variables, in which Total3RC represents Reading Comprehension the dependent variable with the mean 21.32. Total1SD (Self-directed) and Total2SC (Self-concept) are independent variables of research and with the mean 185.85 and 8.596, respectively.

Table 4.1. Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Total3RC	21.32	4.079	170
Total1SD	185.85	11.089	170
Total2SC	8.596	8.596	170

The correlations between the variables in your model are provided in the table labeled Correlation and Table 3.2 may be the most important table to consider.

According to Julie Pallat in the SPSS Survival Manual, a complete relationship between two variables can be established when the correlation is above .3. In Table 2, we see that the correlation between our dependent variable, Reading Comprehension, and our independent variables, self-directed and self-concept, is .498 and .200, respectively. Therefore, students' self-direction contributes to their ability and skills in reading comprehension. While their perception of themselves has little to do with comprehension skills.

Table 4.2. Correlations

		Total3RC	Total1SD	Total2SC
Pearson Correlation	Total3RC	1.000	.498	.200
	Total1SD	.498	1.000	.333
	Total2SC	.200	.333	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Total3RC		.000	.005
	Total1SD	.000		.000
	Total2SC	.005	.000	.000
N	Total3R	170	170	170
	Total1S	170	170	170
	Total2SC	170	170	170

Table 4.3. Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. The error of the Estimate
1	500.a	.250	.241	3.554

a. Predictors: (Constant), Total2SC, Total1SD

b. Dependent Variable: Total3RC

There are two cases of tolerance and VIF in the table of coefficients. Tolerance less than 0.10 and VIF above 10 indicate the concern of multicollinearity. There is no concern in this study. Using

the 1-R formula, the tolerance value is obtained for each variable in the form of a square, and it indicates how much of the specified independent variable is not explained other independent variables in the model. And the inverse of the tolerance value (1 divided by the tolerance) is obtained as VIF (Variance Inflation Factor). Table 4.4 states that Tolerance is not less than 0.10 and VIF is not more than 10.

Table 4.4. Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95,0 %,Confidence Interval for B		Zero-order	Correlation Partial	Part	Collinearity Statistics	
1		B	Std. Error				Lower Bound	Upper Bound				Tolerance	VIF
	Constants	-12.908	4.601		-2.805	.006	-21.993	-3.823					
	Total1S	.179	.026	.486	6.832	0.0	.127	.230	.489	.467	.458	.889	1.125
	Total2S	.018	.034	.038	.534	.594	-.049	.085	.200	.041	.036	.889	1.125

a. Dependent Variable: Total3RC

The results related to Mahal. Distance and Cook's Distance are shown in Table 3.5. Mahal. Distance is analyzed according to the critical value. The critical value for two and three variables is 13.82 and 16.27, respectively. Tabachnick and Fidell (2013); originally from Pearson, E.S. & Hartley, H.O. (eds) (1958). The maximum value for Mahal. Distance is 7.890, which is less than the critical value.

About Cook's Distance according to Tabachnick and Fidell (2013, p. 75), cases with values larger than 1 are a potential problem. Here as shown in the table. The Maximum value for Cook's Distance is .075, suggesting no major problems.

Table 4.5. Residuals Statistics

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	16.04	25.49	21.32	2.037	170
Std. Predicted Value	-2.595	2.044	.000	1.000	170
Standard Error of Predicted Value	.274	.815	.٤٥٢	.136	170
Adjusted Predicted Value	16.13	25.40	21.33	2.030	170
Residual	-9.077	8.944	.000	3.533	170
Std. Residual	-2.554	2.516	.000	.994	170
Stud. Residual	-2.588	2.527	-.001	.003	170
Deleted Residual	-9.324	9.018	-.007	3.599	170
Stud. Deleted Residual	-2.634	2.569	-.002	1.008	170
Mahal. Distance	.007	7.890	1.988	1.868	170
Cook's Distance	.000	.075	.006	.010	170
Centered Leverage Value	.000	.047	.012	.011	170

Figure 4.1 shows the correlation between independent and dependent variables. The best case for L is from bottom left to top right, which is also true here.

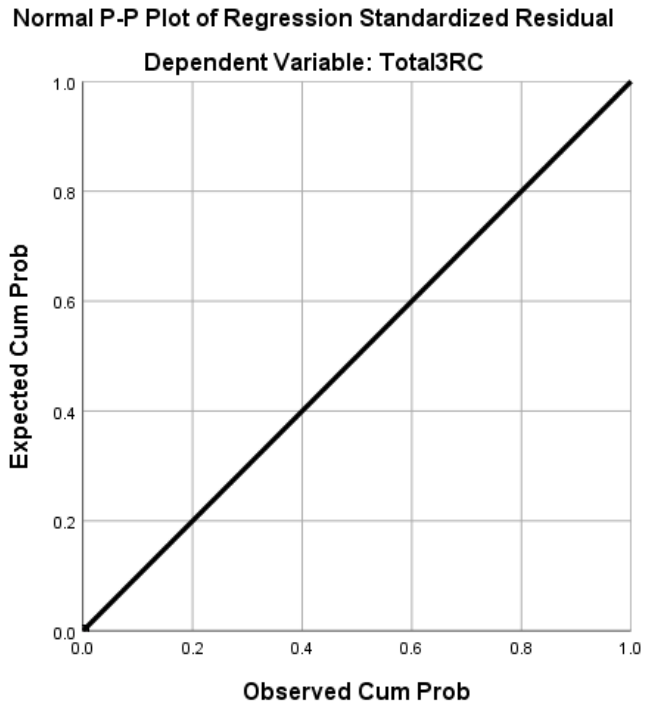

Figure 4.1. Normal P.P Plot Regression Standardized Residual

5.2. Results of the Research Questions

First Research Question

The first question was whether self-directed learning and personal self-concept play an important role in reading comprehension.

According to the correlation table and Normal P.P, we can answer this question that yes, by guiding students towards self-directed learning, there is a significant improvement in their understanding. In this study, it was shown that the more students learn independently with the class

and the teacher, the better their comprehension scores. The correlation between self-directed learning and reading comprehension was .498, which shows a significant relationship. In this study, students who were more aware of their learning role and sought self-directed strategies performed better.

But regarding the role of the second component, personal self-concept, on reading comprehension, the data show that although knowing who we are and what our attitude towards learning is, it does not have a significant role on the learning process. The correlation between self-concept and reading comprehension was .200, which is below the standard. As a result, students' grades have no significant relationship with their self-concept, or at least it is very low.

Second Research Question

The second question was whether self-direction and personal self-concept help intermediate level Iranian EFL students to improve their reading knowledge.

The answer to this question is closely related to the first question. Because it is obvious that a component plays an important role in understanding the content, it also helps to improve it. Although the progress of students in reading comprehension and other language skills depends on several factors, the results of this research showed that motivating students to use self-directed learning strategies and raising their awareness of not fully relying on the teacher leads to better learning and understanding. In this study, we argued that self-directed learning explains twenty percent of the variance in reading comprehension, and the results showed a correlation between learners' self-directed learning and their reading comprehension scores.

But it cannot be said that self-concept plays a significant role in learning, especially comprehension, in this research there was no significant correlation between comprehension scores and self-concept. But it can be said that anything that raises a person's self-awareness and

gives him a clear vision of himself helps progress and improve skills. Students should move towards self-awareness and self-directedness.

Third Research Question

The attitude of language learners towards learning and their own characteristics can be considered as a set of their opinions, whether they are competitors, who hinder or oppose them in the matter of learning, or acceptable, who support them and facilitate learning. It is obvious that the attitude differs from one course to another, from one skill to another, but as far as the researchers know and we proved in this study, the higher the success rate in a skill, the more positive the person's attitude towards it, but this does not mean that it is easy to reach that component.

Therefore, according to the data, it can be said that the attitude of English language learners in institutes towards independence in learning and the use of self-directed learning strategies in the direction of improving reading comprehension skills is favorable and positive. However, they should strive for self-awareness so that they have a better range of thinking about themselves and choose the right strategies and programs with proper self-awareness and personalize them in a way.

Learning English in Iran starts from the seventh year of high school and is implemented through the national school curriculum. One of the most influential things that plays a significant role in education is the attitude of students. This study was conducted among institutes' language learners, according to their motivation, perspective and attitude towards the English language, being self-directed in learning and self-concept is more desirable.

6. DISCUSSION

This study aimed to find the role of self-directed learning and personal self-concept on the reading comprehension of intermediate language learners. The research is one of the few studies that

measure the self-directedness and self-concept of language learners in a study, and the results are almost consistent with the research of other researchers who have examined these variables separately.

The results of the data analysis show that self-directed learning is correlated with comprehension (Table 4.1), i.e., that students who are moving towards independence and trying to cope with more language challenges, are more successful in learning and especially comprehension. These learners can synchronize their strategies and experience less academic failure in unpredictable situations such as the COVID-19 era. Another variable was students' self-concept, which according to the data obtained did not have a significant role on comprehension scores, ie the student may know well about himself, but according to the evidence, has no role in their scores.

As mentioned, the results of this study are consistent with other findings. We found that learners who learn more self-directed also use more learning strategies. Lim Ying Xuan, Abu Bakar Razali & Arshad Abd. Samad (2018) used the same questionnaire used in this study for their research on self-directed learning. They found that “it is really important as it can empower students to attain optimal success in language learning by engaging students to express their ideas confidently, think reflectively and make use of language learning strategies.” Kocak (2016) also found that students who are self-directed not only perform better but are also more motivated. It can be said that the findings of this study are reasonably valid because other studies can confirm the results. Recently Taherkhani, R., & Moradi, R., (2021) conducted emotional intelligence, autonomy, self-regulation, willingness to communicate, and reading comprehension were positive and significant relationships. And look back Zafarian and Nemati (2016) researched to measure the effect of independent learning on students' comprehension. According to the results, it can be said that there is a positive and significant relationship between learning independence and understanding. In addition, Zarei and Ghahrani (2010) conducted a study to find the relationship between master's

students' reading comprehension ability and their independence. The obtained results show that the higher the independence of the learner, the better the ability to understand the material, so there is a significant correlation.

Contrary to the findings of self-concept and comprehension, it is a bit contradictory. Goni et al. (2015) did not examine personal self-concept with one of the components of language, but their research proved the positive effect of self-concept on satisfaction. Piran (2014) also conducted a study on the components of language, according to this research, reading comprehension scores were greatly affected by students' self-concept and self-esteem.

In contrast, the present study did not show a significant relationship between self-concept and reading compression. That is, the correlation was lower than average. Research also confirms these results, including Mustafa, ER. & et.al (2012) have studied the effects of active learning on foreign language self-concept and reading comprehension achievement. As a result, there is no significant correlation between foreign language self-concept and reading comprehension scores according to the types of high schools the students have graduated from.

7. CONCLUSION

In the light of the findings of this study following conclusions can be drawn:

Self-directed learning as an important variable in the field of education has a positive correlation with reading comprehension as one of the important parts of the English language. Researchers, have almost pointed to the positive association with these on each other.

Second, there was no significant correlation between students' personal self-concept as a variable that greatly contributes to the individual's awareness of their abilities and talents with students' reading comprehension scores.

And finally, the point that was not given much attention was the correlation between self-directed learning and self-concept, which had a close connection between the things in people's minds about themselves and the realization of those thoughts.

Implications

Probably, the findings of this study provide a suitable perspective for teachers and educational designers to lead students to improve their reading comprehension skills by identifying self-strategy techniques. Also, they can teach the learner how to think correctly about themselves and use their thoughts about their abilities to strengthen their weaknesses and flourish their strengths. These findings also help Iranian EFL teachers to understand that their students are different and deserve different treatment.

The natural prediction of language learners is that being self-directed in language skills requires working independently from others, but this is not completely true, on the contrary, it is believed that teaching techniques to improve learners' self-concept and self-direction in understanding content should be collaborative and like other Language skills in the EFL context should be prioritized. With cooperative learning activities, language learners are likely to reach a higher level of self-direction and self-concept, therefore, there is a need to change competitive teaching techniques to cooperative teaching. Teachers are required to be familiar with collaborative teaching techniques, and curriculum designers and those involved in the preparation and development of materials are required to change the nature of the activities in the books.

Suggestions for Further Research

The importance of self-directed learning as well as personal self-concept cannot be ignored, and since this study examined 170 language learners in two foreign language institutes, researchers can conduct a study on a larger scale, i.e. more participants, or at the school level. A significant

number of school students do not participate in institutes classes to learn English, but it is essential for teachers and designers of books and educational programs to be aware of how students think and look at themselves and their independence and self-direction.

In addition, it is suggested that researchers examine other language dependent variables such as writing or listening or speaking and measure the role and relationship of self-directed learning and students' self-concept with them. Also, the focus of this study was on intermediate level English learners. Therefore, more research can be done to support the above findings on language learners at different levels.

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APPENDIX

Self-directed Learning Questionnaire

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Z8SmygXw7nBPQdHTiYKGkJPvkxYVk_L5/view?usp=drivesdk

Self-concept Questionnaire

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZJbcth-W_dxi0uVc2qYxVLCNzwSpjRDH/view?usp=drivesdk

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February 9, 2023 Bahman 20, 1401 Tehran, Iran

Literature Review of Automated Written Corrective Feedback

Sanaz Rahnavard * (Corresponding author), Maryam Meshkat

Shahid Rajaee Teacher Training University

sanaz.rahnavard1996@gmail.com

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)

INTRODUCTION

Writing is an inseparable part of language learning. It is the latest achievable skill for foreign language learners since it requires becoming familiar with both high-level skills of planning and organization and low-level skills of language use (Sadeghi & Mosalli, 2013). People use writing to express their emotions and thoughts and communicate with the reader (Olshtain, 2014). Moreover, writing can be a means of communication for learning disciplinary courses and exchanging information in universities (Coffin et al, 2003, as cited in Sanosi, 2022). Scholars need writing for publishing papers in different disciplines (Raitskaya and Tikhonova 2022, as cited in Sanosi, 2022). The knowledge of rhetorical conventions, linguistic knowledge, and the use of vocabulary, syntax, and cohesive devices are more important in academic writing in comparison to other genres (Utkina, 2021). On the other hand, students have a negative attitude toward writing, and asking them to write frustrates them (Graham et al., 2005, as cited in Arindra & Ardi, 2020). In this situation, each student needs to write accurately and instructors try to teach them how to write correctly and effectively (Hadfield & Hadfield, 2008; Brown & Lee, 2015). Writing is a skill that is being neglected in Iran's educational system (Biria & Jafari, 2013). As the result, the written products of Iranian learners do not have enough quality, and teachers are supposed to correct learners' errors (Farrahi Avval et al., 2021). One way to deal with the errors and improve the accuracy of the produced texts is the provision of written corrective feedback (WCF).

WCF can be delivered in paper and pencil format or through new technologies. Traditionally, WCF was provided on hard paper copies, but in recent years computer-mediated WCF has been used (Bitchener & Storch, 2016). Providing computer-mediated WCF instead of hard paper copies enables students to engage with the given feedback and understand it better since students had some problems with reading the teachers' handwriting and they misunderstood the comments (Crook et al., 2012). Moreover, taking advantage of new technologies makes the teaching and

learning process interesting for learners (Farrahi Avval et al., 2021), especially for the new generation who prefers to receive learning content via technology (Ko, 2019). Thus, utilizing it, whether in or out of the classroom, increases the motivation of technophiles (Stockwell, 2013). WCF is an inseparable part of a writing class, and it can benefit from new technologies too. Besides learners, teachers are also passionate about taking advantage of computer-mediated WCF because some of them neglect to provide WCF due to the large class sizes and time limitations. In this situation, computer-mediated WCF can remove these barriers (Xu & Peng, 2017).

The purpose of this literature review is to summarize the essential findings and new trends related to computer-mediated WCF, especially automated mode, and identify the mentioned problems and gaps in the literature.

This study has some benefits for teachers, teacher educators, and students. Teachers can become familiar with different automated writing evaluation tools and the way they can use these tools to reduce their workload and save class time. Also, teacher educators can take advantage of this study to inform teachers and student-teachers about new trends related to WCF and the existing gaps and drawbacks. Students can also utilize the study to identify the most suitable automated writing evaluation tool based on their needs.

Error Correction

Error correction has attracted the attention of researchers who conduct a study on second language acquisition (Sanosi, 2022). Some scholars make a distinction between ‘error’ and ‘mistake’. An error shows a gap in the learners’ competence, but a mistake is something related to performance, not competence (Corder, 1967). Therefore, error correction is more essential than the correction of mistakes (Corder, 1967). However, others believe that the distinction between error and mistake is not that strict, and it is somehow related to personal opinion (Ellis, 2009). Furthermore, there is

no clear theory to decide which type of error is simple and treatable for providing appropriate WCF (Ellis, 2009). Errors can be viewed from global and local perspectives. Global errors are those that hinder communication and affect the organization of a sentence. On the other hand, local errors are minor errors in some specific elements of a sentence and do not affect the comprehension of a message (Burt, 1975). Global errors are an obstacle to communication and need to be corrected, but local errors can be corrected when learners reach near-native fluency (Burt, 1975).

Based on the nature of the error and error correction, there are different theories related to error correction and the provision of WCF. According to behaviorists, language learning is a kind of habit formation that is based on stimulus, response, and reinforcement. Positive WCF can be a kind of reinforcement for learners, and students' errors should be corrected (Sanosi, 2022). Thus, accuracy is important for behaviorist theory, and committing an error is an obstacle to habit formation (Keshavarz, 2017). Later, the main focus of language learning shifted toward communication. In this approach, meaning is acquired prior to the structure, and making an error is inevitable (Krashen, 1982). As a result, continuous error correction is not desirable. According to Krashen (1982), correction is not a good reaction against students' errors, since it makes them defensive, encourages students to use avoidance strategy, and moves their attention toward form more than on meaning (Krashen, 1982). Focus on form came forth as the third approach. This approach merges the above-mentioned views by drawing learners' attention to accuracy while the main focus is on communication (Long, 2000). Based on this approach, error correction can be helpful by targeting the taught forms for providing WCF (Sanosi, 2022).

According to the mentioned points, the occurrence of an error in students' writing is undeniable, and teachers need to provide the best type of WCF to enhance students' writing accuracy. The important point here is to become familiar with the nature of WCF.

Written Corrective Feedback (WCF)

WCF refers to "responses to linguistic errors in learners' written work" (Mao & Lee, 2020, p. 1). It is the tool that allows learners to understand and correct their errors and develop their L2 writing (Mohsen, 2022). WCF can have two formats, namely positive and negative. WCF comprising positive evidence explains what is linguistically acceptable in the target language (Bitchener & Storch, 2016). Positive WCF can be a kind of reinforcement since the aim is to transform, refer to or demand the improvement of the learners' utterances (Chaudron, 1977). On the other hand, WCF comprising negative evidence explains what is not correct in the target language (Bitchener & Storch, 2016). The type of WCF which identifies an error and provides the correct form can be considered a negative WCF (Bitchener & Storch, 2016; Ceman & Dubravac, 2019, as cited in Klimova & Pikhart, 2022).

Negative WCF has an influential role in most of the theories and language learning approaches. It is viewed as an effective way for enhancing students' motivation and ensuring their linguistic accuracy (Ellis, 2009). Negative WCF has different types called direct, indirect, and metalinguistic WCF. Direct WCF identifies the place of an error and provides its correct form above or near the error (Bitchener & Storch, 2016). Direct WCF reduces students' confusion by providing immediate feedback in order to help learners solve complicated errors (Bitchener & Storch, 2016). The assumption behind this type of WCF is that learners cannot correct their errors. Hence, it is suitable for low-proficiency levels (Storch, 2018). The second type of WCF is indirect. Indirect WCF only shows the location of error by underlying, circling, or indicating the place in the margin of a text, but the correct form is not provided, thus learners themselves should correct their errors (Bitchener & Storch, 2016). This type of WCF involves learners in 'problem-solving and guided learning' (Lalande, 1982, p. 140). The assumption behind indirect WCF is that students can correct their errors based on some signals. Thus, it is appropriate for highly proficient learners (Storch,

2018). Metalinguistic WCF as the third type of WCF explains the correct usage of the linguistic feature and provides some examples of it (Bitchener & Storch, 2016). It also gives the reason for the error and the way learners can correct it (Bitchener & Storch, 2016). Metalinguistic feedback is helpful for students at any proficiency level (Bitchener & Storch, 2016).

In spite of the benefits of the traditional way of providing feedback, it is not possible for teachers to provide WCF to every single student in the classroom. Even delayed WCF is time-consuming (Mohsen, 2022). Hence, computer-mediated WCF came forth in recent years to help instructors reduce their workload and speed up the procedure of providing WCF (Burtstein et al., 2004, as cited in Sanosi, 2022; Mohsen, 2022).

Computer-mediated Corrective Feedback (CMCF)

Utilizing new technologies can make the provision of WCF and scoring procedures faster, cheaper, and more accurate. It also reduces fatigue and concerns about scoring reliability (Rudner& Liang, 2002). CMCF is one of these technologies which refers to "the textual input provided by software installed on a computer to correct learners' writing errors, either directly or indirectly" (Mohsen, 2022, p. 3). Based on the definition, CMCF can be either in the form of direct or indirect just like the traditional WCF. However, providing indirect digital WCF is more effective for improving both grammatical and non-grammatical accuracy in comparison to traditional indirect WCF (Elsayed & Hassan, 2020). CMCF produces an immediate reaction to students' errors, and the immediate reaction is the fundamental part of L2 learning. In this way, it can provide an opportunity for the development of learners' writing (Elsayed & Hassan, 2020). Taking learners' attitudes into account, CMCF has an influential effect on the learners' perceptions (Dawson et al., 2018, as cited in Elsayed & Hassan, 2020). Learners have a positive attitude toward it because it is clear and engaging, and learners can review the given WCF many times (Xu, 2021). Nevertheless, explicit WCF is the essential feature of digital language learning, and providing

explicit WCF makes digital foreign language learning complicated because explicit WCF has a challenging nature (Calvo-Ferrer, 2021, as cited in Klimova & Pikhart, 2022). Moreover, teachers need to consider that CMCF is not effective all the time. Digital WCF improves learners' writing accuracy rather than fluency (Mohsen, 2022). That is, unlike teacher-fronted WCF which can improve learners' macro-skills, CMCF is effective for micro-skills (i.e. grammatical competence) (Mohsen & Alshahrani, 2019; Mohsen, 2022). The reason lies in the easiness of correcting micro-level errors for a computer rather than content ones (Mohsen, 2022). This point has various effects on learners with different proficiency levels since beginner-level students consider WCF as a useful technique for developing writing accuracy, but highly proficient students consider it useless, as they think that they do not need it (Mohsen, 2022). That is, advanced-level students benefit from content feedback more than others because their main focus is on fluency rather than accuracy and they want to improve the content aspect of their texts. Therefore, teachers' WCF is more suitable for these students (Mohsen, 2022). However, lower-level students are unable to write fluently due to their lack of linguistic competence. Also, they are extremely worried about mechanical errors (Mohsen, 2022). Thus, they can highly engage with CMCF, and they are interested in receiving WCF via computer. CMCF improves beginner-level students' accuracy, such as grammar and mechanics more than teachers' WCF (Xu & Zhang, 2021; Mohsen, 2022). Based on the aforementioned points, it can be concluded that CMCF does not consider learners' proficiency level, their first language, and their previous learning experience (Ranalli, 2018). Hence, the best way to develop all the aspects of writing is to combine both CMCF with teacher-fronted WCF (Klimova & Pikhart, 2022).

Considering language learning theories, CMCF is supported by various theories. These theories are not only applicable to human-to-human interaction, but also to human-to-computer interaction (Barrot, 2021). The first one is cognitive theory. Based on this theory, the produced output by

learners can show learners' L2 competence and pushes them to process language more deeply and closely (Spada & Lightbown, 2008). If learners' writing is accompanied by some sort of input (i.e. WCF), it can boost the process of language learning (Van Beuningen, 2010). Interaction theory introduces four stages in the cognitive processing of input to change it into a modified output, namely noticed input, interaction, feedback, and output (Barrot, 2021). Learners take advantage of WCF when they notice their errors (Barrot, 2021). Noticing hypothesis of Schmidt (1990) indicates that the negative feedback provided by a teacher or computer helps learners to identify the gap in their language and develop their interlanguage (Mohsen, 2022; Bozorgian & Yazdani, 2021; Lyster & Mori, 2006). This noticing can be improved by awareness and understanding the generalizable features of the errors. This feature is met in CMCF since designers provide metalinguistic explanations, examples, and other information while providing WCF (Ranalli, 2021). After noticing and understanding the given WCF, students need to internalize it and connect it to their existing knowledge through interaction and feedback. Finally, the output is a proof that shows WCF has been internalized (Barrot, 2021). Moreover, skill acquisition theory as the subcategory of cognitive theory argues that explicit knowledge provided by WCF can be changed to automatic use of that knowledge through repetition and practice (Bozorgian & Yazdani, 2021). Thus, the important point here is repeating the act of the WCF provision (Bitchener & Storch, 2016). The second theory which supports WCF is sociocultural theory. Based on this theory, social interaction has a crucial role in the development of cognition (Lee, 2017). Interactionist theory argues that feedback leads learners toward the negotiation of meaning. This negotiation assists learners to notice their errors and overcome later errors in students' writings (Heift and Hegelheimer, 2017, as cited in Mohsen, 2022). In this situation, CMCF focuses on the interaction between the learner and the computer, and the emphasis is on the feedback provided by a computer since CMCF draws learners' attention to the gap in their interlanguage through salient modified

input (Heift and Hegelheimer, 2017, as cited in Mohsen, 2022). In other words, it is the computer that scaffolds learners' knowledge. Additionally, activity theory, which is a subcategory of sociocultural theory, views WCF beyond assistance, as an activity. This activity is shaped based on a specific purpose in the educational context (Bitchener & Storch, 2016). Activity theory contends that human activity is associated with people and tools (Bitchener & Storch, 2016), and students need to adopt the available learning tools in a specific learning environment. This construct is called appropriation (Grossman et al., 1999). Based on activity theory, we need to take the 'activity system' into account for understanding a situation (Mitchell et al., 2013). The activity system consists of a subject which is the students, an object which is the provided feedback, mediating artifacts which is the CMCF, rules which determine the appropriate type of CF (e.g., using the direct or indirect type), a community which involves the classroom and its components within which the activity takes place, and the power relationship between the teacher and students or stakeholders (Lee, 2014; Bitchener & Storch, 2016).

After mentioning the related theories, it is important to note that CMCF has two main types, namely non-automated writing evaluation (non-AWE) and automated writing evaluation (AWE). In non-AWE teacher provides WCF synchronously or asynchronously and the computer is just the medium for WCF provision. Synchronous WCF means that the teacher provides feedback online while the students are writing their texts (Mao & Lee, 2020). Asynchronous WCF, on the other hand, is provided offline after completing a piece of writing (Mao & Lee, 2020). Non-AWE can be provided via emails, wikis, chat rooms, Microsoft Word, Google Docs, and Annotators (Stevenson & Phakiti, 2019; Mohsen, 2022). The second type of CMCF is AWE. AWE programs provide WCF to learners and score the written products automatically (Mohsen, 2022). It is a new way of providing WCF that has attracted the attention of scholars in recent years. Hence, knowing about this type of WCF can assist teachers in their teaching procedure.

Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE)

A significant proportion of language learning procedures happens in an online format, thus focusing on emerging technologies for providing WCF, such as tools of artificial intelligence (AI) and AWE can be essential for both teachers and students (Klimova & Pikhart, 2022; Sanosi, 2022). AWE refers to software that can assess learners' writing automatically (Sanosi, 2022), and the WCF provided by an AWE tool is called Automated Written Corrective Feedback (AWCF) (Barrot, 2021). AWE utilizes complicated natural language processing (NLP) techniques, semantic analysis, and artificial intelligence (AI) in order to provide learners an appropriate WCF with the aim of not only increasing learners' writing accuracy, but also improving their fluency (Mohsen, 2022). The program works by comparing learners' written texts with a large database of writing in the same genre based on a specific rubric (Hockly, 2019). Each AWE program has a specific purpose and design that analyzes learners' errors based on that, but most of the AWE programs provide WCF in terms of both form and content (Cotos, 2014, as cited in Mohsen, 2022). In other words, they mainly correct errors related to the organization (i.e. the structure of the text and paragraph transitions), language use (i.e. grammar and vocabulary), mechanics (i.e. spelling and punctuation), tone, and plagiarism (Deane, 2013, as cited in Stevenson & Phakiti, 2019; Sanosi, 2022). Also, new and developed AWE tools can provide WCF on discourse coherence (Burstein et al., 2013, as cited in Stevenson & Phakiti, 2019). The newest generation of AWE tools can integrate into web browsers, office productivity software, Google Docs, and the keyboard of mobile devices with the aim of easier access to WCF in an environment where most of the students use for writing (Ranalli & Yamashita, 2022). They also utilize intelligent tutoring systems by incorporating learning and instruction tools, namely planning activities, strategy instruction, and information resources (Stevenson & Phakiti, 2019).

Looking back at the background of AWE reveals that it was developed due to the expensive and time-consuming nature of the traditional way of providing WCF, especially in large-scale tests. Furthermore, there was a tendency for developing a scoring system in order to reduce human errors and obtain a consistent and impartial evaluation (Stevenson & Phakiti, 2019). The first AWE system, Project Essay Grade (PEG), was developed in the late 1960s by Ellis Page and colleagues at the University of Connecticut. The first motive for developing AWE was to generate numeric scores for summative tests, and WCF provision was not the aim (Stevenson & Phakiti, 2019). Then in the late 1990s, three automated-scoring tools were developed in the USA, namely Intelligent Essay Assessor (IEA) from Pearson Educational Technologies, IntelliMetric from Vantage Learning, and E-rater from Education Testing Services. After that, many other AWE tools have been developed. After the 1990s, considerable growth in AWE tools encouraged scholars to take advantage of these tools for providing WCF. Thus, they were designed for pedagogical purposes in the classroom with the aim of saving teachers' time and enabling them to focus on other aspects of writing (Stevenson & Phakiti, 2019). AWE tools are now widely used in Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and Learning Management Systems (LMSs) due to the large-scale enrollments and the difficulty of scoring and providing feedback by teachers (Balfour, 2013, as cited in Stevenson & Phakiti, 2019).

Reviewing literature reveals that AWCF has a positive effect on writing accuracy, since utilizing it increases the scores and decreases the number of errors (Stevenson & Phakiti, 2014, as cited in Stevenson & Phakiti, 2019). The reason lies in the specific features of AWE that distinguishes it from the traditional way of providing feedback. As Barrot (2021) declared, AWCF corrects a wide range of errors. It provides comprehensive direct WCF in a few seconds. Furthermore, it gives consistent and accurate metalinguistic explanations that teachers are unable to provide due to the lack of time. Finally, the provided feedback is neutral. It means that it does not depend on the

teacher's mood or current state of mind (Barrot, 2021). Additionally, AWCF improves students' writing accuracy based on the three factors of adaptive CF, noticing of forms and gaps, and learners' engagement in self-directed learning. Adaptive CF is a type of feedback that adjusts dynamically to the learners (Barrot, 2021). This feature of AWCF is in agreement with the notion of psycholinguistic readiness which means that the students are ready to learn certain linguistic forms (Pica, 2005, as cited in Barrot, 2021). Since AWCF is provided on the linguistic forms that students have used in their pieces of writing, they are ready to receive WCF (Barrot, 2021). The second factor deals with the noticing of forms and gaps. Noticing of forms refers to the conscious cognitive attempt to give attention to the linguistic forms, and noticing of gaps refers to noticing the mismatches between what the students have used and the correct form (Schmidt, 1990, as cited in Barrot, 2021). These two factors are met in AWCF by color-coded underlying, providing metalinguistic explanations, and direct correction. Regarding the third factor, the self-directed learning experience refers to students' abilities to control their learning, identify their goals and needs, utilize appropriate learning strategies, and monitor their own progress (Barrot, 2021). After receiving AWCF, students must engage with it. It means that they respond to the given WCF. Engagement can be cognitively, which focuses on attention and noticing, behavioral, which is related to the uptake and repair, and affectively, which deals with negative or positive feelings (Renalli, 2021). Engagement can be influenced by individual and contextual factors like students' background and proficiency level, attitudes and beliefs, self-confidence, motivation, and time limitations (Ferris et al., 2013, as cited in Ranalli, 2021).

Besides the opportunities that AWCF provides, it has some drawbacks. First of all, AWE cannot cover all the aspects of learners' writing. For instance, it is not able to evaluate the creativity, sophisticated stylistic aspects, and quality of the written ideas. Hence, it can reinforce students to use a specific norm of writing (Stevenson & Phakiti, 2019). AWCF can also support a limited

range of genres, mostly narrative and argumentative essays. It still does not have the ability to deal with multimodal and non-digital genres (Stevenson & Phakiti, 2019). AWCF is not always accurate or clear, especially for non-native writers. It overcorrects errors, lacks teacher's pedagogical touch, and fails to take individual differences into account (Ranalli, 2018). As a result, AWCF is not suitable for lower proficiency levels, since they are not ready to receive complex WCF and the language of the AWCF is extremely difficult for them (Aluthman, 2016, as cited in Stevenson & Phakiti, 2019). Also, the large number of corrected errors can make them cognitively overloaded; leading them to neglect content-related issues (Stevenson & Phakiti, 2019). Moreover, students who know that they are allowed to use AWCF for revising their texts show less interest in revising their drafts independently. As a result, AWE can demotivate learners for independent revision (Warden, 2000, as cited in Stevenson & Phakiti, 2019). Furthermore, learners cannot trust AWCF because it lacks intentionality. That is, it does not take moral attributes such as benevolence and integrity into account (Calhoun et al., 2019, as cited in Ranalli, 2021). Hence, the type of AWCF designed for classroom use can only be a kind of supplementary material during the teaching procedure rather than being replaced by the teacher's feedback (Sanosi, 2022). As long as teachers utilize AWCF, they must spend some time and energy to compensate for the shortcomings of the AWCF by reminding students that all the AWCF is not correct. Also, they must provide a guideline for the students to understand the given AWCF (Stevenson & Phakiti, 2019).

After knowing the advantages and disadvantages of AWE, it is important to get familiar with some AWE tools and their features in order to choose the best system based on the students' needs and proficiency level. There are various AWE programs, but the most famous ones are Grammarly, Correct English, Criterion, Turnitin, Pigai, The Writing Pal, Write Lab, Cywrite, Writing Assistant, My Access, Write to Learn, and E-rater. A large number of these AWE tools, such as

Criterion, MY Access, Write to Learn, and Revision Assistant are able to provide both numeric scores and WCF to learners in order to assist students to use the given feedback for improving the quality of their writing and getting a higher score after revision (Stevenson & Phakiti, 2019). Most of these tools provide holistic scoring, but some of them like My Access and Write to Learn, also provide analytic scores for some aspects of writing such as language use, organization, and mechanics (Stevenson & Phakiti, 2019).

In order to deal with the students' errors automatically, Grammarly is a popular AI-powered writing assistant which was founded in 2009 (Sanosi, 2022). It is a web-based service that is available on various devices like iOS, Android, and Mac. It is also accessible in different browsers like Firefox, Safari, and Chrome (Barrot, 2021). The purpose of Grammarly is to develop online writing and communication (Sanosi, 2022). To accomplish this purpose, it provides real-time WCF to enable users to correct the text instantly. It identifies and classifies errors related to grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics by underlying them with different colors and providing metalinguistic explanations. Grammarly also provides an analysis of the performance related to style, clarity, engagement, delivery, word count, readability, and norm-referenced scores (Sanosi, 2022; Barrot, 2021). In this program, users are able to choose among varieties of English (i.e. Canadian, British, American, and Australian), and define a goal based on various factors, such as intent, audience, emotion, domain, and style. Finally, it provides a score ranging from 0 to 100 (Barrot, 2021). Concerning students' engagement, they have different levels of engagement when they are exposed to AWCF provided via Grammarly during the revision stage. Considering three dimensions of behavioral, affective, and cognitive, students' behaviors remain at the surface level. Cognitively, students can notice the correction. However, more proficient learners have more cognitive engagement in comparison to low-proficient students. Regarding affective engagement, students have a positive attitude toward it, but students with limited linguistic knowledge show

overreliance on it (Koltovskaia , 2020). Although Grammarly misses many errors, it is reliable and accurate in correcting the errors it finds (John & Woll, 2020, as cited in Ranalli, 2021). Nevertheless, teachers need to use it in conjunction with their own feedback (O'Neill & Russell, 2019). Correct English as the second type of AWE tool improves learners' writing accuracy and autonomy awareness. On the other hand, students have difficulties in processing the unclear AWCF it provides, become exhausted because of extensive web searching, and feel controlled by the given AWCF (Wang et al., 2013). Criterion is another type of AWE tool. It is designed for classroom use and provides AWCF on grammar, organization, and language use (Stevenson & Phakiti, 2019; Liao, 2016). It also improves writing quality through a holistic way of scoring (Ranalli, 2021). Students have mixed perspectives toward it. Their perspective depends on their proficiency level and their teacher's way of implementing the AWE tool (Li et al., 2015). Criterion is the tool that is mainly used in ESL and EFL settings, such as Taiwan, Korea, Japan, and Egypt (Stevenson & Phakiti, 2019). Turnitin is a famous type of online peer review AWE tool. It is a plagiarism checker and AWCF provider in a variety of LMSs, such as Canvas and Blackboard (Stevenson & Phakiti, 2019). Turnitin helps students to correct both global (e.g. content, organization, and citation) and local errors (e.g. vocabulary, grammar, mechanics) in the revision stage (Stevenson & Phakiti, 2019). It facilitates providing AWCF on grammar and spelling by incorporating the E-rater scoring engine into the program (Stevenson & Phakiti, 2019). Studies revealed that students have a positive attitude toward Turnitin, but they believe it is technically difficult. Also, it has some problems related to composition marks and WCF quality (Li & Li, 2017). The Writing Pal and Writing Lab are two AWE tools that have distinctive features in comparison to the aforementioned tools. The Writing Pal provides strategy instruction through videos in which animated characters give some information to younger language learners about the writing process. Then, the strategy is practiced, and finally, the whole essay is practiced in this

program (Roscoe et al., 2014, as cited in Stevenson & Phakiti, 2019). Writing Lab is also different since it scaffolds learners during the writing process. Furthermore, it allows students to upload their text on any topic, and it has an option for students to choose what type of feedback they prefer to receive; direct feedback in the form of prescriptive comments or less direct feedback in the form of open-ended questions (Stevenson & Phakiti, 2019).

Implementation of the mentioned AWE tools in a writing class depends on teachers, but it is essential for EFL students to take advantage of AWE, since L2 writers are rarely exposed to accurate models of English, and committing errors frequently can lead learners toward the fossilization of incorrect constructs. AWCF can provide accurate models to learners to prevent this situation (Stevenson & Phakiti, 2019). In spite of the criticism against AWE that it ignores the social aspect of writing, the actual integration of AWCF can lend itself to the interactions and pedagogical purposes (Stevenson & Phakiti, 2019). Integration of AWE into the classroom refers to the combination of AWCF with a teacher or peer-provided feedback (Stevenson & Phakiti, 2019). One way to integrate AWCF with teacher feedback is to use AWCF as the main type of feedback and teachers insert some comments through the AWE system. In this way, AWCF enhances learners' autonomy and teacher feedback has a coaching role (Grimes & Warschauer, 2010, as cited in Stevenson & Phakiti, 2019). Another option is to take advantage of AWCF only in the initial drafting and revising phase, and during other phases, students can receive teacher-provided WCF (Chen & Cheng, 2008, as cited in Stevenson & Phakiti, 2019). In this way, teachers can only concentrate on the correction of higher-level aspects of writing (e.g. content, organization, critical thinking) (Stevenson & Phakiti, 2019).

Despite the increasing use of AWE tools in education, there is a debate between those who view AWE as a way to reduce teachers' workload, and offer many opportunities for practicing writing and those who view AWE critically as a system that is not helpful (Stevenson & Phakiti, 2019).

Also, the attention has been shifted toward the ability of AWE in fulfilling the specific needs of L2 learners in recent years (Stevenson & Phakiti, 2019). In order to close the mentioned debate scholars conducted some studies related to the effectiveness of AWCF in recent years. For instance, Sanosi (2022) conducted a study on the effect of Grammarly on university students' writing accuracy. Five types of grammatical errors were corrected via Grammarly, namely articles, subject-verb agreement, verb tense, word choice, and singular plural forms. Fourteen weeks of using Grammarly showed some improvement in the learners' writing accuracy. In another study, Barrot (2021) investigated the effect of Grammarly on the writing accuracy of students. He claimed that Grammarly can be used as a facilitative tool for improving L2 writing since it can promote noticing, provide an adaptive metalinguistic explanation, and engage students in self-directed learning. However, Grammarly has some drawbacks like overcorrection, cognitive overload, and limited metalinguistic explanation. Considering CMCF, Mohsen (2022) conducted a quantitative study on the effect of computer-mediated WCF on improving L2 writing fluency and accuracy. He found that CMCF has a significant effect on L2 writing. Among different types of CMCF, both AWE and non-AWE were effective. However, the non-AWE was more helpful than AWE for improving both accuracy and fluency. Furthermore, it was revealed that CMCF improves writing accuracy more than fluency. Considering proficiency level, beginner and intermediate-level students take advantage of CMCF more than advanced learners. Also, Ene and Upton (2014) provided digital WCF mainly on grammar and vocabulary. They found that teachers' electronic feedback consisted of marginal comments like handwritten feedback in order to modify the papers rather than improving the learners' language proficiency. However, digital WCF is extremely useful for the revision of grammar, content, and organization.

Based on the conducted studies, some gaps are identified. First, there are not many studies investigating the effect of different types of digital feedback on writing tasks (Altamimi & Masood,

2021, as cited in Klimova & Pikhart, 2022). Also, more studies are needed to investigate the harmful effects of digital WCF, such as lack of social interaction or AI addiction (Klimova & Pikhart, 2022). Concerning AWE, the comparison between the effect of AWE on first and L2 writing has been overlooked in the literature (Stevenson & Phakiti, 2019). Also, investigating the way AWCF can be integrated into L2 writing classes in different contexts is beneficial (Stevenson & Phakiti, 2019). Furthermore, only a few studies have compared the effect of AWCF with the type of feedback provided by a teacher or a peer (Stevenson & Phakiti, 2019). Moreover, the transfer effect of AWE and the cognitive and affective engagement of learners has not been investigated extensively. That is, whether utilizing AWE causes better writing and independent revision of the texts or not (Stevenson & Phakiti, 2019). The effect of AWCF on revision strategies is another topic that needs some focus (Stevenson & Phakiti, 2019). Teachers' perspective toward AWE is another topic that needs further attention. Additionally, investigating the effect of different types of AWE tools can assist teachers. For example, focusing on the effect of focused versus unfocused WCF, treatable versus untreatable errors, and global versus local errors in Grammarly, or measuring the long-term effect of Grammarly on specific error categories such as mechanics can be useful (Sanosi, 2022).

CONCLUSION

CMCF is an emerging technology for providing WCF to assist teachers and reduce their workload, especially in Iran where the classes are really crowded. Among different types of CMCF, the automated mode is the most popular one in recent years. There are different types of AWE tools, each with specific features that teachers can choose the best one based on their goals and learners' proficiency level. These tools will become more sophisticated in the future, and we can see the widespread use of them in language learning classes. But what is essential for teachers to bear in mind is that these technological advances can only assist human teachers but not to be replaced

them. Hence, teachers should be trained enough to provide AWE in a way to maintain learners' motivation.

Considering these points, this paper mentioned some essential points related to error correction and WCF. Then, CMCF was explained in detail, and AWCF was introduced as a new type of CMCF. Finally, some AWE tools were introduced and the gaps were mentioned.

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Accomplishments and Challenges amid COVID-19 Pandemic

ISC 01220-41756 RICeST

February 9, 2023 Bahman 20, 1401 Tehran, Iran

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

Mohsen Zare *(Corresponding author), Hamed Barjesteh

Imam Hossein (AS) University of Officers and Guards Training

Department of English and Literature, Ayatollah Amoli Branch, Islamic Azad University, Amol, Iran

Zare.mohsen61@gmail.com

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 administrated 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 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

1. INTRODUCTION

Within the theoretical framework, the conceptualization of learning as a socially- and culturally-depended phenomena, namely Socio-Cultural Theory (SCT), is among the promising learning theories (Ellis, 2019). This conceptualization is attributed to Vygotsky (1978) who believed that individuals' cognition and learning is considered as a social and cultural phenomena rather than an individual one. Learning, according to Vygotsky, is thus "successful tailoring of the interaction to the developmental level of individual learners" (cited in Ellis, 2008, p. 528). Based on this perspective, Ellis (ibid) stated, learners employ physical, cultural and psychological means to regulate their mental activities in order to improve in their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) to which Vygotsky (1978) refers as "the distance between the actual and potential developmental level.Dynamic Assessment (DA) is, thus, the means which "is designed to bring out the learning potential and improve learning effectiveness by providing learners with a greater number of opportunities to interact with more competent peers and adults, such as teachers" (Wang, 2010, p. 1158). According to Tsesmeli and Stoumpou (2021), DA can both be used as a method of providing a picture of an individual's abilities and as a method of developing those abilities through some kind of mediation. Mediation is indeed one of the outstanding concepts of the SCT.

who provides the mediation is often referred to as the mediator. The mediator provides hints and prompts in a systematic way to help a learner perform a task (Poehner & Lantolf, 2013). These hints and prompts are called mediational strategies or moves. In other words, mediation helps learners to move during their ZPD and reveal their level of improvement and progress. This progress is called Learning Potential Score (LPS). Kozulin and Garb (2002) asserted that a simple actual score (i.e., non- mediated score) does not give a full picture of how a learner's scores change while s/he receives mediation. As a result, LPS is calculated to check individuals' development due to the mediation. This study is thus conceptualized within Vygotsky's SCT of mind and aims

to shed light on the dynamic nature of learning in the second language classroom and its dependency on the interaction of the person and his surrounding environment. It focuses on the use of dynamic assessment practices as a way to both measure one's reading achievement and to improve it through critical thinking loaded mediation (Mozafari & Barjesteh, 2016; El Soufi & See, 2019).

Studies (Lantolf & Poehenr, 2004, 2013; Hidri & Roud, 2020) on DA have been proliferated since the late 1980's by the pioneering work of Campione and Brown (1987); nevertheless, its pedagogical applications in applied linguistics have only recently been examined by a number of researchers (Ableeva,2010; Anton, 2009; Kozulin & Grab, 2002; Lantolf & Poehner, 2004; Poehner, 2005; Hashamdar & Samadi, 2018; Fani & Rastchi, 2015; Mardani, 2013; Khoshsima & Izadi, 2014; El Soufi & See,2019; Caceres, Nussbaum, & Ortiz, 2020). Previous studies in the realm of second languages have focused on such skills as listening (Ableeva, 2010), speaking (Hill & Sabet, 2009; Poehner, 2005) and reading (Cioffi & Carney, 1983; Guterman, 2002). While all previous studies rely on interactionist approach to DA, none, to our knowledge, puts explicit emphasis on the learner's critical thinking state, which is the focus of the current investigative attempt. Therefore, the study will follow the objectives formulating the following research questions:

1) Does critical thinking-oriented dynamic assessment (CT-DA) have any significant effect on Iranian male EFL learners' reading comprehension?

2) What are different forms of mediation applied by teacher during critical thinking-oriented dynamic assessment (CT-DA) intervention?

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Participants

The target population in this study included Iranian male EFL learners. The participants of the study were selected form 115 male undergraduate EFL learners from Islamic Azad University, Shiraz Branch. Because the students were the participants that the researcher had access to, convenience sampling method was applied to select the sample of the study. Then, a general English placement test, namely Oxford Placement Test (OPT), and the reading section of First Certificate English (FCE) were performed in order to make sure that the participants were homogenous with regard to their language proficiency and reading comprehension skill. Furthermore, critical thinking questionnaire was distributed to select the subjects who had similar critical thinking abilities. Finally, 51 male learners who were at the intermediate level of language proficiency and reading comprehension skill were chosen. The learners were between 19 to 22 years old. Learners' mother tongue was Persian and they learnt English as a foreign language. All the learners had been exposed to or used English language at school (for3 years) or at the university (for 1 year) and they have never been in a foreign country.

2.2. Materials

To carry out the intended research, the following materials were used.

2.2.1. The Textbook: ACTIVE Skills for Reading

The textbook, which was used as the main instructional material, is ACTIVE Skills for Reading 1 (3rd Edition) written by reading specialist Neil J. Anderson (2013). ACTIVE Skills for Reading uses thematically organized non-fiction reading passages to teach reading comprehension and vocabulary skills. The reason why we selected this book is that it helps to motivate learners to critically think and contemplate about the texts.

2.2.2. Mediation

During the eight-session treatment of experimental group, participants of the CT-DA group were given mediation. The mediation was based on interactionist DA, on one hand, and critical thinking, on the other hand. Moreover, it was presented by the mediator to the learners whenever learners faced difficulties . The mediation was not pre- fabricated, rather created in the course of teacher-learner interaction. In other words, the mediator did not approach the interactions with a predetermined set of prompts or hints. As a result, the following typologies (Poehner, 2005; Davies & Barnett, 2015) helped the mediator to be consistent in providing hints to the learners.

The first typology was developed by Poehner (2005) . These mediational strategies offered to the learners while working within their ZPDs. This typology helped the mediator to provide hints according to interactions approach to DA.

Table1. Mediation Typology (Poehner, 2005, p. 160)

1.Helping Move Narration Along
2.Accepting Response
3.Request for Repetition
4. Request for Verification
5.Reminder of Directions Request for
6. Renarration Identifying Specific
7. Site of error Specifying Error
8.Metalinguistic Clues
9.Translation

10.Providing Example or Illustration
11.Offering a Choice
12.Providing Correct Response
13.Providing Explanation Asking for
14.Explanation

Davies and Barnett's (2015) framework of critical thinking teaching was another typology which helped the researcher in providing hints to the learners. Davies and Barnett's (2015) framework is a comprehensive model of critical thinking for the intention of boosting learners' capability of critical thinking . Since one purpose of the study was to present critical thinking-oriented dynamic assessment, this framework aided the mediator to have critical thinking-based hints and nurtured the development of L2 reading comprehension of learners .

Table 2. Framework of Critical Thinking Teaching (Davies & Barnett, 2015, p. 147)

1. Clarification	a) Questioning: doubting and searching the fundamentals related to the problem. b) Outline: making a bright sketch of cognitive structure. c) Authentic evidence: gathering the related and supportive evidence as well as counter evidence.
2. Judgment	a) Selecting the best and greatly related as well as most supportive evidence. b) In-depth analysis of the supportive and counter evidence. c) Considering values, standards, and urgencies as well as noteworthy and vital points.

	c) Exhaustive analysis of the arguments and counter arguments.
3. Strategies	a) Have a clear definition of the matter at hand.
	b) Distinguishing the very purpose of the issue.
	c) Make adaptations between the purpose and evidence as well as values.
	d)Make value-laden inferences on the basis of previous findings.
	e) Not to claim a definite inference: Have an evolving and iterative rethinking over the issue in order not to propose a fixed deduction.

Davies and Barnett's (2015) framework searches for evaluating the way learners apply logical reasoning, assessing the reasons and ideas, suggesting good points, and exploring possibilities and debate. Based on the framework, critical thinkers need to apply logical arguments, get the gist, and propose good reasons and assumptions.

2.3. Instruments

To carry out the intended research, the following instruments were used.

2.3.1. Oxford Quick Placement Test (OPT)

Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT, Version 1) (Appendix A) was used to determine the exact proficiency level of the learners before recruiting the participants. The test which was developed by Oxford University Press and Cambridge ESOL has gone through Cambridge quality control procedures (Beeston, 2000). The test has two parts: Part one (1-40) includes grammar and vocabulary items and part two (40-60) contains multiple choice items and cloze tests. The test has been validated in 20 countries by more than 6000 students. The internal consistency of the test was reported as 0.9.

2.3.2. Certificate in English

Cambridge English: First also known as the First Certificate in English (FCE) (Appendix B) is an English language test provided by Cambridge Assessment English (previously known as Cambridge English Language Assessment and University of Cambridge ESOL examinations). The test shows that learners have the language skills needed to communicate confidently in an English-speaking environment. The Reading section which is extracted for this study has three parts in which learners read a range of texts and complete tasks that test their reading ability.

2.3.3. Critical Thinking Questionnaire

To study learners' critical thinking beliefs and to be assured they were at the same level, a Critical Thinking questionnaire adopted from Naieni (2005) (Appendix C) was employed. The scale was originally developed by Honey (2000). The present questionnaire was improved and suited for Iranian EFL learners (Naieni, 2005) in order to better fit the needs of Iranian population in context of Iran. The content and construct validity of the questionnaire was studied by Naieni (2005). According to their analysis, the questionnaire enjoys a well-defined content and construct validity. Moreover, the reliability of the scale was reported a high consistency 0.86 (Naieni, 2005). The questionnaire consists of 30 items using a 5-point Likert scale. Students were asked to read items and select an option ranging from never to always in terms of their critical thinking beliefs.

2.3.4. Reading Comprehension Test

To assess the learners' reading comprehension ability prior and after the experiment, the study adopted the reading comprehension test provided by ACTIVE Skills for Reading series. As for the reliability, the tests were piloted with a group of 32 EFL learners who had the same characteristics of the sample of this study. The Cronbach α were reported as .95 and .91 for each test, respectively.

2.4. Research Design

This 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. According to Dornyei (2019), quantitative data are collected to examine learners' performance before and after the intervention, and the qualitative data help to provide a deep view of variables of the study. As Rosiek (2003) and Brown and Ferrara (1985) noted, learners' test performance could be enhanced by incorporating a psychological factor with an assessment task. This study thus involved three EFL classes: two serving as the experimental groups who received either critical thinking-oriented DA (i.e., CT-DA) or dynamic assessment (DA); and the second group that 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. This method allows a "flexible interaction between the mediator and the learner as the two cooperatively perform the assessment task" (Poehner, 2005, p. 155). Moreover, the interactionist approach to DA provides greater opportunities to support microgenesis since mediation can be more accurately adjusted to an individual's needs. Thus, the mediator and learners cooperatively worked on reading items and the mediator provided them with hints, prompts and questions whenever he felt it necessary or upon learners' request.

Pre- and post-tests were employed to collect quantitative data on learners' reading comprehension. Regarding the qualitative data, all sessions were voice recorded in order to transcribe the interaction between the teacher and learners. Following that, qualitative data were collected to indicate the mediational strategies applied by the teacher.

2.5. Research Procedure

First, the test of Oxford Quick Placement Test, First Certificate in English, and critical thinking questionnaire were administered to find a homogenous group in terms of language proficiency, reading comprehension ability, and critical thinking ability prior to the experiment. After checking homogeneity of the learners, they were randomly divided into three groups, i.e. the group that received intervention based on dynamic assessment and critical thinking (CT-DA), the group that received intervention in form of dynamic assessment (DA) and the group that received no intervention (control). Then students went through eight-week treatment. The treatment included two sessions per week (two hours for each session) and one lesson was covered per session (totally 16 lessons). While the control group received no treatment, participants in critical thinking oriented dynamic assessment (CT-DA) and dynamic assessment (DA) received mediation. The main difference between CT-DA and DA was that although the two groups receive treatment, the treatment in CT-DA group was based on dynamic assessment and critical thinking while the treatment in DA group was solely based on dynamic assessment.

The mediation in CT-DA: students first read a reading passage provided to them and answered the questions individually. Then, the teacher/mediator engaged dialogically with learners asking probing questions to reveal their understanding of the text and check their answers to the exercises of the reading passage. When there were errors, breakdowns, and struggles for doing the exercises, the mediator provided hints and prompts. Learners were mediated through interactionist DA in which instructor and learners engaged in an open-ended and one-on-one dialogue (See section 4.7). Mediation, thus, was provided to learners based on the critical thinking concept in which the instructor encouraged task involvement, motivate logical reasoning, problem solving, decision making, and focus on self-questioning, formulating hypotheses, and drawing conclusions. It should be mentioned that this mediation was based on Poehner's (2005) mediation typology and

Davies and Barnett's (2015) framework of critical thinking teaching (see Table 3.1 and 3.2). For example, in the following dialogue happened between the mediator (M) and one of the learners (L4) in the CT-DA group, a thorough understanding of the central ideas appeared to be troublesome for the learner. As a result, the mediator attempted to raise the learner's awareness by encouraging him to provide reason and proof for his response.

1. M: what is interesting about the expression "it took them six months to turn me down"?
2. L6: it means it … lasted … 6 months.
3. M: yes…the meaning is this…but what's interesting about this

expression?

4. L6: I think…he applied again
5. M: yes…but…why?
6. L6: [silence]
7. M: did you get what the council decided?
8. L6: No.
9. M: Ok, read again and pay attention to the keywords.
10. M: Did you get anything?
11. L6: I think grant…and…turn down
12. M: so what did they decide for the grant?
13. L6: to turn it?
14. M: No…turn down is the expression… what the boy do after it?
15. L6: go to college?

16.M: Going to college? [rising intonation]…read

17.L6: …asking for money …from his boss.

18.M: so, he didn't get the money.

19.L6: yes.

20.M: so, what did the council decide for the grant?

21.L6: saying no…

22.M: now…did you understand the meaning of this expressing?

23.L6: hmmm…the expression means…6 months passed and they …

they… said … they didn't give the grant to the boy.

his example demonstrates the reconstruction of a specific part of the text through developing ideas based on the learner's incomplete information.

The importance of acknowledging the learner's partial understanding is visible when she eventually managed to pull the perceived pieces of information together with the mediator's help in order to infer the comprehensive message.

The students in DA groups received the same mediation except the critical thinking part. On the other hand, the control group (CP) read the text passage and answered the follow-up questions without any help or intervention from their teacher. Their teacher encouraged them to ask questions whenever they felt they needed help; but no treatment was provided.

Two tests, one as pre- and the other one as post-test, were administrated before and after the treatment. Learners were asked to read the texts and answered the reading items. After administering the tests, the data were collected for quantitative analysis to answer questions of the study.

Besides, the classes during the treatment were voice recorded by the help of an MP4 player. The recoded materials then were written and transcribed word by word to explore the techniques of teacher in experimental groups.

3. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

3.1. Research Question one

The first research question of this study aimed to investigate whether critical thinking oriented dynamic assessment procedure have any significant effect on Iranian male EFL learners' reading comprehension. To answer this question, the following table demonstrates the descriptive statistics of learners' unmediated and mediated performances. Comparisons of the means reveal that the learners had better performances after the mediation. For example, the mean scores of the learners after mediation (M=22.58, SD=2.98) reveals a marked improvement in learners' reading comprehension as compared with their actual performance before mediation (M=134.17, SD=5.01).

Table3. Descriptive Statistics of Actual and Mediated Scores

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Actual	17	4.00	22.00	14.1765	5.01542
Mediated	17	19.00	29.00	22.5882	2.98033
Valid N (listwise)	17				

To check the significance of this improvement, paired-samples t-test was run. The results of paired-samples t-test also revealed that this difference between actual and mediated performances of learners was significant (t(16)=9.57, p<.01). Moreover, Cohen's effect size value (d=3.62) suggested a high practical significance. This supports the positive effect of

mediation on the development of learners' reading comprehension and is evidence of learners' internalization of mediation .

Table4. Paired Sample T-tests of Actual and Mediated Score

				t	df	Sgi. (2 tailed)
	Mean	**Std. Deviation**	**Std. Error MEan**			
Pair CTDA1 CTDA2	8.41176	3.62386	.87891	9.571	16	.000

This Figure provides evidence in support of this finding. In this figure, there are two bar graphs that show the amount of development that learners had from non-dynamic (i.e., pre-test) to critical thinking-oriented dynamic (post-test) performances. This growth indicates that the mediation the participants received in the format of CT-DA was effective in promoting their reading comprehension skill.

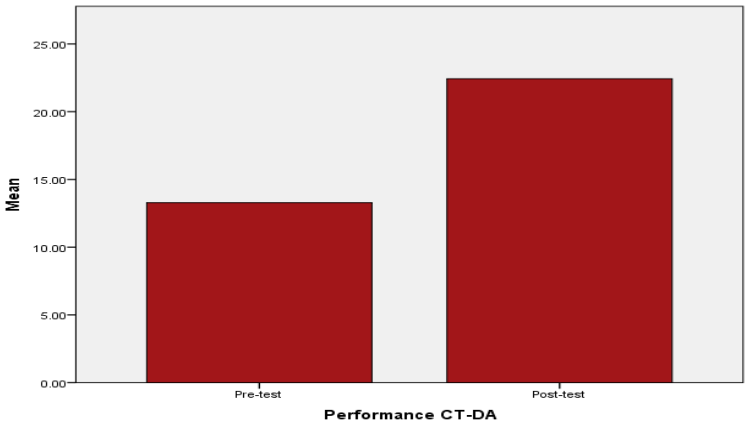

Figure 1. Students' Performance in CT-DA Group

As it was revealed, learners had marked enhancement after mediation. It denotes that critical thinking-oriented dynamic assessment (CT-DA) meaningfully affects Iranian male EFL learners' reading comprehension.

3.2. Research Question Two

The second research question of the study explored the types of mediation emerged in mediator-learner interaction and found the patterns that best nurture the development of L2 reading comprehension of learners. As mentioned in Chapter Three, this study adopted an interactionist approach to DA. Therefore, the mediation offered to learners in CT-DA group was not pre-specified and emerged from mediator's ongoing collaborations with learners (interactionist approach). This type of flexible and fine-tuned mediation is assumed to be more effective in bringing about learning than standardized mediation

(Vygotsky, 1978). Following the objective of the study, an effort was made to find the pattern of teacher mediation in a CT- DA approach to L2 reading comprehension. First, all hints and prompts required by the learners were found, they were tallied and recorded in a spreadsheet to indicate the quality and quantity of the mediation provided throughout the CT-DA intervention. Then, through careful analysis, the most frequent patterns of interaction between the mediator and the learners were extracted. Thus, a mediational pattern was obtained.

Mediation Typology for CT-DA group

1.	Accepting response
2.	Rejecting response
3.	Rereading the question and the relevant part
4.	Motivating the learner to provide evidence and counter-evidence
5.	Asking the words
6.	Providing metalinguistic clues
7.	Asking the learner to deeply analyze the arguments/evidences
8.	Offering a choice
9.	Translation
10.	Encouraging logical conclusion
11.	Providing the correct response and explanation

According to Table, eleven mediational strategies were detected for the CT-DA group. In line with Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994), Poehner (2005), and Ableeva (2010), the strategies are arranged hierarchically from the most implicit to the most explicit. In other words, if a learner's response were not correct, he or she was provided with the most implicit mediating prompt (e.g., accepting response) and was allowed to reattempt the item. Prompts were becoming more explicit (e.g., providing the correct response and explanation) until finally the correct answer was provided and

an explanation for the solution was offered. The mediator applies hints/prompts in order to motivate learners to participate and reconsider their answers and possibly to overcome difficulties.

1. Accepting response

This strategy was used by the mediator to clear the doubts of a learner when s/he was uncertain about the correctness or appropriateness of her response. This mediational strategy accompanied with the encouragement provided to the learners reflects Vygotsky's affective-volitional aspect of learning (Ableeva, 2010) which prescribes offering caring support to instill confidence in the students (Sarani & Izadi, 2018).

2. Rejecting response

This strategy can have three sub-category: 1. pausing; 2. repeating the erroneous guess with a questioning tone; 3. saying no, moving from most implicit to most explicit, which is given depending upon the learners' responsiveness. The mediator's rejecting response move sent a clear message to the students that something was amiss with their performance encouraging them to work through the difficulty.

3. Rereading the question and the relevant part

Upon noticing learners' failure in providing a correct response, the mediator pointed to the text. In this strategy, the mediator may provide more assistance by narrowing the learners' focus to the part, where the learner had some misunderstandings.

4. Motivating the learner to provide evidence and counter- evidence

This strategy typically arose as the second mediating step in situations when a thorough understanding of the central ideas appeared to be troublesome for the learner. As a result, the mediator attempted to raise the learner's awareness by encouraging him to provide reason and proof for his response.

5.Aaking the Word

In this strategy, *asking the words*, the mediator attempted to elicit the meaning of words, phrases, or sentences perceived in the passage by the learner. The excerpt below represent the use of this move in advanced class.

6. Asking the learner to deeply analyze the arguments/evidences

Given that often supporting ideas were required to validate an answer, the learners were asked to analyze their responses from a labyrinth of perceived information. Apart from the instances in which the learners produced correct systematized responses with few or no mediation, this strategy was used so as to help the learner have reflective thought. It was also employed in occasions when the learner was not able to respond to a specific comprehension question completely, or the response did not include sufficient supporting ideas to provide justification.

7. Providing metalinguistic clues

Providing metalinguistic clues brought the attention of the learners to the structure of language. In the following extract, the learner (L1) did not correctly understand the word *vocational*. First, the mediator (M) invited the learner to re-read the related part so that he reconsidered her selection (turn 1). The mediator did not aim to indicate the nature of the problem but prompted the learner to search for any potential mistakes that needed his attention (turn 3). The mediator gradually increased the level of explicitness by asking a question containing a metalinguistic clue using sub-strategy of *recognize word division* about sentence structure (turn 5). This extract provides evidence that the ability to recognize word boundaries lies in the ZPD of the learner but is not yet fully matured. This was established through the mediated dialogue during which the mediator assists the learner by offering metalinguistic clues.

8. Encouraging logical conclusion

Regarding the second type of mediation mostly presented to the learners, *encouraging logical conclusion*, the mediator attempted to help learners to pick up clues, whether linguistic or extralinguistic, and put them together so as to find a logical conclusion that had not been expressed in words (Buck 2001, Vandergrift, 2004). This strategy nurtures the collaborative sharing of knowledge and abilities of the learners the mediator assumed that the shared experience of a learner in constructing an inference could have a great impact on improving the learner's reading comprehension as well as moving him forward in its ZPD.

9. Offering a choice

Offering a choice contains one correct and one incorrect pattern. The mediator used this strategy to differentiate whether learners have some understanding of the structure in question or not. In other words, it intended to examine whether this mediational strategy could trigger the recognition of the words and grammatical structures that learners had acquired before; however, for some reason, were unable to remember at the appropriate time.

10. Translation

When the mediator recognized that the learner was not able to understand the meaning conveyed, he resorted to *offering translation* strategy. In most cases, this strategy was sufficient to make sure that the learner was able to provide the correct response. For example, in the excerpt 19, when the learner could not understand the meaning of word after using dictionary, the mediator translated the word "recreational" for him (line 15) and learner showed that he understood the point (line 16).

Excerpt 19

1. M: so what is the main role of Physical Education Teachers?
2. L2: teach young students

3. M: Aha… what do they teach?
4. L2: how to exercise, play sport, and … and …
5. M: and?
6. L2: … [long pause]….. recreational?
7. M: do you know the meaning of recreational?
8. L2: No.
9. M: it means relating to or denoting activity done for enjoyment when one is not working??
10. M: So… what does it mean?
11. L2: [Silence]
12. M: tafrihi (he speaks in his L1)
13. L2: khob yani inke in Physical Education Teachers be bacheha komak mikonan fa'aliyathaye tafrihi varzeshi anjam bedan? (he speaks in her L1)
14. M: Exactly.

11. Providing the correct response and explanation

The last mediational techniques were used to enhance the reading comprehension of learners. Upon realizing the inefficiency of the other mediational techniques to elicit a correct responses form the learners, the mediator used this strategy, *providing the correct response and explanation*, to foster learners' reading comprehension.

4. CONCLUSION

The present study added a new dimension to the available empirical literature (Hidri & Roud, 2020; Tsesmeli, & Stoumpou, 2021; Ableeva, 2010; Poehner et al, 2015; Hashamdar & Samadi,

2018; Fani & Rastchi,2015; Mardani, 2013; Heidari & Izadi, 2020; Poehner, 2005) on the applicability of dynamic assessment to second language reading. The first part of the study revealed that the mediation provided during DA and CT- DA sessions benefitted all learner. Most learners showed significant growth as a result of mediation. The instructional value of DA and CT-DA lies in the fact that its results can be used for individualizing learning and developing individual learning plans according to the learners' needs. Moreover, it was found that CT-DA learners outperformed DA learners concerning learning potential scores (i.e., LPS). It could be discussed that critical thinking-oriented dynamic assessment would reveal individual's abilities and support their continued development. CT-DA with its focus on tailoring the difficulty of the test to the learners' abilities and adaptation of prompts to the examinees' needs can be innovative.

This study also investigated the types of mediation best nurture the learners' L2 reading comprehension in CT-DA group. According to the findings, eleven mediational strategies were detected. The strategies helped learners to break down the task into manageable portions, bring into focus the implied meanings embedded in the passages, motivate them to reconsider their response and overcome difficulties. The strategies help to integrate critical thinking within teaching and assessment tasks and to improve learners' performances. The instructional value of CT-DA lies in the fact that its results can be used for individualizing learning and developing individual learning plans regarding learners' needs.

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