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Editor's Introduction

Hello readers! Welcome to Volume 4 Issue 1 of the *IAFOR Journal of Language Learning*. The number of second language learners throughout the world continues to grow, reminding educators and researchers engaged in teaching and investigating the multifaceted processes of second language acquisition and language learning that their work is significant and enduring. Language learners embark on the lengthy journey of acquiring an additional language for manifold reasons, including school requirements and a straightforward desire to add a language to his or her existing linguistic repertoire. Others have fled their home nations in search of safe havens and must learn the language or languages of the new home nation as an important part of acculturation and establishing a new life. Whatever the motives for learning an additional language may be, the nature of language learning is complex and requires consideration of multiple factors. The mechanics of language and individual languages as well as affective issues such as cultural identity, marginalization, acculturation, assimilation, language shock, language loss, language status, self-esteem when communicating in the new language, and the contexts of exit and reception for the newcomer must be explored if language learning is to be successful. In addition, identifying what constitutes successful practice among those who teach language learners requires educators to look forward for new ideas while simultaneously glancing back for strategies and techniques that are research proven. Finally, it is important to explore the types of teacher development that translate to effectual teaching. Several of these topics are addressed in the variety of articles provided by the diverse authors who contribute their scholarship to this issue of the *IAFOR Journal of Language Learning*.

In the first article, “They Forget That I’m There: Migrant Students Traversing Language Barriers at School”, Joanne Cassar and Michelle Attard Tonna, consider the challenges of acculturation and the process of learning additional languages experienced by young migrants in Malta. The authors present the findings of a qualitative research project conducted in selected Maltese secondary schools for girls and investigate how teachers and migrant students deal with language issues. For the study, the authors employed Foucault’s works on power relations to evaluate the degree to which the learning experiences of migrant girls in Malta are situated in language.

Hameda Suwaed explores how to promote opportunities for meaningful use of the English language while providing service to the community in “The Path Less Taken: Incorporating Service-learning in the English Language Curricula”. She reports what was learned when she investigated the use of service learning in college level English courses to build proficiency, self-confidence, and fluency in English.

Marine Milad, author of “Incorporating Brain Colour into the Multiple Intelligences to Create a Blended Learning Context: Homogeneous and Heterogeneous Groups”, takes a look at best practices as they pertain to successful group work when operating in a blended learning context and a community of practice comprised of language learners and an educator. The research study aimed to identify the learners’ preferences in learning and assessment in a university language class. The researcher utilized two inventories, the Multiple Intelligence Inventory and the Coloured Brain Communication Inventory to gather data that would assist in using optimum group types that would lead to a higher quality in completed assignments in a shorter amount of time.

In the fourth article, Christina Nicole Giannikas, author of “Using Multiple Intelligence Activities and Film to Stimulate the Communicative EFL Learner”, discusses a study she

implemented to investigate the value of utilizing non-coursebook strategies and materials to enhance linguistic competence and conversational fluency in an EFL class for adult learners.

Peter D. Wiens, Elena Andrei, Annie Chou, April Smith, and Billa Anassour conducted a research project to examine the possible connection between the instructional strategies employed by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Niger and the type of educator preparation, or lack thereof, they may have experienced prior to teaching. Their article, “Teacher Training and Teaching Practice: The Case of Niger’s English as a Foreign Language Teachers”, discusses the results of the study that was implemented with teachers in their first five years of teaching.

Finally, the sixth article, “Can the EFL Classroom Be Considered a Community of Practice?”, written by Akiko Nagao, revisits the concept of the classroom as a community of practice. The author considers whether a number of students and their instructor can function as a community of practice, and more importantly, is that a beneficial outcome of students and teacher working together in a university level EFL classroom.

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Notes on Contributors

Article 1: They Forget That I'm There: Migrant Students Traversing Language Barriers at School

Dr Joanne Cassar is senior lecturer at the Department of Youth and Community Studies at the University of Malta. Her research interests comprise youth studies, in particular adolescent sexuality, gender and sexuality education. Her academic publications focus on the construction of sexual identities in multiple contexts. A number of publications also examine the notion of belonging and voice in relation to refugees. Dr Cassar has carried out various research projects about young people on a local level as well as in collaboration with other international research partners. She is also an author of children's books.

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Article 3: Incorporating Brain Colour into the Multiple Intelligences to Create a Blended Learning Context: Homogeneous and Heterogeneous Groups

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**They Forget That I'm There:
Migrant Students Traversing Language Barriers at School**

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Abstract

The positioning of migrant students within schools of the host country is considerably determined by issues related to the language of instruction adopted in these schools. This article presents a qualitative study conducted in two Maltese girls' secondary schools and examines how teachers and migrant students dealt with language issues. Data were collected through focus groups to find out power dynamics that emerged as a result of the negotiations surrounding issues related to language. The authors draw on Foucault's works on power relations to demonstrate that learning experiences of migrant girls are situated in language and shaped by joint construction of meanings, which students and teachers create. The findings indicate that migrant students' use of language functioned as a source of power, which seemed instrumental in developing a sense of belonging at school. Although the study is located within a specific Maltese context, it may be considered relevant to debates about the experiences of English language learners in other geographical and socio-cultural settings involving migrant students.

Keywords: power relations, migrant students, language proficiency, school peer relations, language barriers

The legacy of 150 years of British rule (1814–1964) has sustained numerous British cultural traditions and elements in the lifestyles of many Maltese people, including the English language. English is taught in all schools from the first year of elementary school and along with Maltese, the native language, is also an official language. Bilingualism is one of the basic competencies which must be attained by all students by the end of their schooling (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012). The *National Curriculum Framework* (NCF) regards proficiency in Maltese and English as a gateway for students' social, cultural and economic integration (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012). Migrant students are therefore faced with learning at least two foreign languages (Maltese and English). During the secondary years of schooling, the percentage amount of time assigned for language learning in state schools is 30%, which comes to around 12 lessons per week and is dedicated to learning Maltese, English and another foreign language. Schools may provide students with the opportunity to study two foreign languages (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012). This is stipulated in the NCF, which aims at supporting students to be in possession of adequate language skills in order to be able to cope well at school (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012). The design of specific programmes for students who experience difficulties in the core languages is also encouraged.

The increasing influx of migrants to Malta during the last decade has made the Maltese classroom more diverse in terms of the multiple variety of ethnic backgrounds pertaining to students who arrive in Malta from different parts of the world (Falzon, Pisani, & Cauchi, 2012). Due to multicultural diversity, young people in Malta do not strictly share a homogeneous identity (Cassar, 2016, p. 66). The NCF acknowledges the nation's growing cultural diversity and specifically suggests that learning programmes are to be flexible so as to provide diverse learning experiences for a wide spectrum of learners (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012). The NCF states that individual differences related to gender, age, sexual orientation, personal beliefs, stage of development, geographical location, socio-cultural background and ethnicity are to be taken into consideration when designing learning programmes at school. It holds that learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds should have access to an education, which is embedded within a supportive environment that respects their individual circumstances. Learners of all aptitudes and competencies are encouraged to be successful, and they are entitled to the necessary support to sustain their efforts. Schools and educational processes are to respect diversity in all its forms by promoting an inclusive environment and by ensuring that practices and policies address specific learners' needs (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012). A *Language Education Policy* (Council of Europe, 2015) also acknowledges the diverse nationalities of students in Maltese schools. The *National Literacy Strategy for All* advocates for a framework to ensure that "third country adults and children are empowered further through the acquisition and development of the required literacy skills" (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2014a, p. 21). Consequently in recent years a number of schools have been offering specialised language programmes in Maltese and English to migrant learners in the secondary and primary sector through a *Core Competences Support Programme* (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2014a, p. 50), and through projects like *Language Learning and Parental Support For Integration* coordinated by the Migrants Learners' Unit (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2014b). Despite these efforts the process of integration for migrant students has not been easy. There is empirical evidence of a study conducted in Malta, which found that in school settings, "the preservation of the child's language and culture of origin is seen as an obstacle to successful integration" (Martinelli, 2006, p. 160).

Within this specific socio-cultural scenario, the current study aims to investigate whether the language/s the migrant students spoke at school posed any difficulties in their interactions with their school peers and whether their spoken language/s created power issues amongst them according to their perspectives and those of their teachers. The research questions leading the study are:

- How is language influencing the migrant students' peer interactions at school?
- How are power differentials among students being acted out as a result of the status assigned to Maltese and English?
- In which ways does language highlight ethnic differences among students?
- How is the school learning context being constructed as a result of language use?

The dynamics of power in which the authors are interested relate to how the migrant students negotiated their “migrant self” with students of the host country. The authors' understanding of power is not confined to mean solely domination or control but is understood in a wider, positive sense, which conveys different relational aspects, such as the ability to make friends, acculturate, adapt to school cultures and contribute to the learning experiences of school peers. Foucault's notion of power (1995) is considered as having significance to this study and the findings of this study are presented within this theoretical framework.

Review of the Literature

The Power of Language

Language is one of the main vehicles which teachers use to deliver lessons and which enables students to participate within lessons and communicate within the wider school community. The need to understand what people are saying is very basic. The language skills the students possess make a direct contribution to their school experience (Liebkind, Jasinskaja-Lahti, & Solheim, 2004). Learning the language of the host country enables migrant students to do well at school and fit in (Council of Europe, 2005; Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006; Haas, 2008; Berry & Sabatier, 2010). It is therefore considered beneficial for migrant students to gain skills in the official language/s of the host country. The language/s acquired can support them in the development of their sense of mastery and self-esteem; two factors which can help them adjust well at school (Liebkind et al., 2004). Language is considered one of the central factors that influences acculturation and integration processes (Neto, 2002; Duff, 2002; Liebkind et al., 2004; Karsten, Felix, Ledoux, Meijnen, Roeleveld, & Van Schooten, 2006; Becker, 2009). When students are conversant and articulate, they can explore aspects of their abilities, interests and identities, besides their linguistic and content-area knowledge (Duff, 2002). Migrant students who do not speak the school's language of instruction face significant disadvantages and perform less well at school (Marks, 2005; Falzon, Pisani, & Cauchi, 2012). Lack of proficiency in the new language forces some students to remain silent, marginal, disconnected and disengaged from mainstream discourse, peers, curriculum and classroom activities (Duff, 2002). This can inhibit social interaction within the community and can also affect young people in holding back learning gains (Karsten et al., 2006). Consequently these “silent students” may be victimised because of their ethnicity. They might face social exclusion and be perceived as intellectually inferior and socially inconsequential (Duff, 2002). Incidences of racism and discrimination at school affect the educational trajectories of minority ethnic groups (Crozier, Davies, & Szymanski,

2010). Teachers working in racialized school environments are often part of “invisible” educational structures that work to maintain existing systems of dominance (Solomon, Portelli, Daniel, & Campbell, 2005, p. 150). Educators hold positions of power and authority and construct discourses that “are often academically and emotionally debilitating to the ‘racial other’”. Such construction and related action is informed by a white, race-privileged position” (Solomon et al., 2005, p. 147). Other research indicates that migrant students are generally highly motivated as they perceive education as an essential avenue for achieving purpose and achievement in life (Hatoss & Huijser, 2010).

The conceptual framework of the study is positioned within the authors’ understanding of Foucault’s notion of power, which affirms that the self is produced by power relations (1995). The analysis does not focus directly on how the two schools of the study operated as institutional agents of power, but rather zooms in on a micro level; specifically, on the exchanges which occurred amongst the students themselves. In particular, the analysis is based on how the migrant students perceived the effects of their spoken language/s in relation to the dynamics operating within their interactions with other students at their school. It draws on Foucault’s idea (1981) that people are constituted by language and that power is embedded in language and generated through it. Students’ developing competencies in language proficiency could be considered a form of power, which facilitate or hinder their learning and communication with each other. This power is determined by social processes that bring together aspects related to ethnicity, class, gender, culture, time and space. Shifts in the ways that language is used to enable power and bring about social differences (Foucault, 1981).

Methodology

The research has been conducted in two girls’ state secondary schools situated in the north of Malta. These are referred to as School A and School B. Both schools hosted a small number of migrant students ranging from a variety of countries. It is significant to note that the migrants who participated in the study were immigrants who were not stricken by war or other serious calamities that would make them eligible for refugee status. The students contributing to the data arrived from Serbia, China and the Philippines. For some of the migrant students who participated in the study the acquisition of English as a foreign language could have started prior to their settlement in Malta. In both schools there were students who had lived in England, Australia, Canada, Ukraine, Russia, Bulgaria, Italy, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Belgium, Albania and Mongolia prior to their arrival. Their parents migrated to Malta mainly for economic and employment reasons. Not all the migrant students’ families planned to stay in Malta permanently. A number of them had temporary visas and were trying to relocate themselves in other European countries. These students might not have been wholly interested in learning Maltese as they could not see its relevance to their lives. A few had relatives living in Malta. The authors’ observations, based on their interactions with students, led them to assume that the majority of Maltese and migrant students of their study belonged to a lower socio-economic class. As has been mentioned, the authors report that the migrant students of this study did not form a homogenous group (Galea, Tonna, & Cassar, 2011) and neither did the Maltese students.

At the time of the data collection there were no co-educational state schools in Malta. Two all-girls’ secondary schools were selected for the study, since the authors were particularly interested in how female students navigate their peer relations in school settings. It was challenging to gain access to schools, because heads of school were reluctant to grant

permission, due to highly politicised issues surrounding migration in Malta (Pisani, 2016; Mainwaring, 2012; Cassar, 2012). A number of schools refused the invitation to participate in the study. This might have been due to their reluctance to get involved in a research area that is linked with how the politics of migration operates in Malta. Migration is considered a sensitive issue that often provokes polarised, intense debates which have on many occasions proven to be highly divisive, controversial and even disturbing in Maltese society. A relationship of trust with the heads of school and school administrators of the two schools needed to be established, and once this was secured, other necessary permissions were obtained. The University of Malta Research Ethics Committee approved the study's proposal. The heads of school distributed an information letter to parents and those who gave permission to their child to participate signed a letter of parental consent. Teachers and students who wished to participate also signed consent forms. The data collection was carried out between February and May of 2010.¹ It consisted of one-to-one, semi-structured interviews with 4 teachers (two from each school) and 6 students (three from each school). A qualitative approach was chosen because of its potential to provide rich, insightful and illuminating data. Qualitative interviewing has been employed to encourage participants to engage in meaningful conversations. Although their thoughts and perceptions could be abstract and invisible, qualitative interviewing could be useful for researchers attempting to make them accessible. The process of providing a deeper understanding of phenomena could be described as a social encounter (Schostak, 2006) in terms of:

... individuals directing their attention towards each other with the purpose of opening up the possibility of gaining an insight into the experiences, concerns, interests, beliefs, values, knowledge and ways of seeing, thinking and acting of the other. (Schostak, 2006, p.10)

The students' age ranged from thirteen to fifteen years. Three of the teachers are female and the other from School B is male. They did not teach the same subject, but held different areas of expertise. All the teachers were Maltese and their age ranged from late twenties to late fifties. The duration of the students' interviews lasted thirty minutes on average, while that of the teachers lasted around forty-five minutes. All the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. The interviews with migrant students were conducted in English, while all the teachers preferred to speak in Maltese during their interview. Direct quotations from the interview scripts have been translated into English. Pseudonyms have been used throughout to safeguard anonymity.

In both schools all the lessons were conducted in Maltese, except, to a certain degree, for the foreign languages' lessons. For some of the subjects taught (Maltese Language, Social Studies, History, and Religious Knowledge) the textbooks were also in Maltese, while for the remaining subjects, textbooks and other curricular material were set in English. The migrant students of this study had the option of not following lessons of those subjects whose textbooks were in Maltese. For three of these subjects (Social Studies, History, and Religious

¹ The data for this paper was collected by Dr Michelle Attard Tonna and the author and formed part of the research project *Young migrant women in secondary education: Promoting understanding and mutual understanding through dialogue and exchange*. This Project was coordinated by the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (Cyprus). The Euro-Mediterranean Centre of Educational Research (Malta) was a partner organisation in this research project, together with other partner organisations from Spain, United Kingdom and Greece. The Project was funded by the European Fund for the Integration of Third Country Nationals of the European Commission. Professor Simone Galea (University of Malta) coordinated the research carried out in Malta. <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/intpract/young-migrant-women-in-secondary-education-promoting-integration-and-mutual-understanding-through-dialogue-and-exchange>

Knowledge) students could choose to take the examination anyway, in English. Teachers reported that, generally, 2 to 4 migrant students in each class missed lessons. There was no official strategy across state schools on how to occupy the students who opted out of these lessons, which could amount to six hours or even more every week, but in the schools where the research was conducted, most of the migrant students remained in the classroom with the rest of their peers, engaged in some other activity (not set by the teacher/school). At the time of the data collection there was a “lack of specific policies regarding access to education for migrant students” (Galea et al., 2011, p. 107).

The questions asked to the informants formed part of a wider research project aimed at finding out the needs and experiences of young migrant women in secondary schools (see Footnote 1). During the interview, the migrant students were asked in which language they communicated at school with their teachers and their friends, whether they faced any challenges to communicate in Maltese and English, and how their peers reacted to them. They were also asked about their socialising experiences at school. The questions to the teachers were about how students interacted within the multiethnic environment of the school and how students coped with the challenges regarding language. The one-to-one interviews were conducted in School A and School B in a private setting. The data analysis focuses on power issues and dynamics involved in what the informants recounted. Thematic analysis was used to organise and interpret the data, by drawing out connections and inconsistencies from the corpus of data (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). Such an analytical method is useful for “identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 6). This approach “considered a method in its own right” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 4) is based on thematic coding that was undertaken after the initial patterns were noted. The authors identified three themes which emerged from both teachers’ and students’ responses; namely (i) deficiency in terms of language skills and proficiency (i) students’ interactions based on language (iii) students’ and teachers’ attempts at bridging language barriers. Aspects of the dynamics of power as they play out among students underlie the discussion of these three themes. Although each theme is outlined in a separate section in the Findings, a number of sub-themes are relevant to more than one of these three main themes. For each theme the findings from the students’ interviews are reported first, followed by the reporting of data emanating from the teachers’ interviews. Findings common to both sets of participants are also presented.

The study is confronted by a number of limitations. The knowledge it generates is incomplete and cannot be generalised to large populations of migrant students. There is the possibility that the study presents partial views of the informants’ perspectives and their experiences at school, due to the complex nature of personal experiences shaped by subjectivities that are constantly changing. Since the voices of the Maltese students are not represented in this study, the inquiry is based solely on perspectives viewed from the lens of migrant students and Maltese teachers. Nevertheless, the study elucidates how the research process itself can contribute to understanding the making of power relations among students.

Findings

A “Deficiency” Label

Most of the experiences concerning language were described as challenging by the migrant students and their teachers from both schools. Those students who could converse well in English stated that they were in a better position and that their proficiency in English initially helped them to integrate in the school community, until they eventually also learnt some

basic words in Maltese. For some migrant girls, learning English had been easier than for others because of the support they found from home and friends, and also because they were exposed to the language before travelling to Malta. Yet, for some others, their level of English proficiency was in most cases not adequate enough to help them communicate and follow lessons. The majority of migrant students who were interviewed stated that they were not conversant in English and Maltese before they travelled to Malta. A considerable number of them revealed that they had difficulties, of varying degrees, in learning both languages. They felt that they had no option other than learning them, if they wanted to cope with their new way of life at school. Language difficulties were most profoundly felt during their initial school experience in Malta, especially if they were not supported by the school and the few words they would have learnt were not sufficient to help them communicate.

Another barrier concerned examinations. The aspirations of some of the migrant girls were mingled with fear of not doing well. They stated that the language issue added more pressure during examinations, as they felt they could not perform to the maximum, due to problems in understanding the lesson notes and communicating their answers. This resulted in a certain degree of parental pressure:

Researcher: Ok... And why do you hate exams?

Betty: Because I have to study, and if I don't pass my mother will say something.

Researcher: She will be angry maybe if you don't pass.

Betty: Yes.

Students of School A referred to the hierarchical position held by the English and Maltese languages. Learning Maltese was not considered by a number of migrant students as enhancing the prospects of career opportunities, especially if they knew that they were not going to remain in Malta. This may be due to the fact that English is widely-spoken globally and can enable young people to travel and look for further opportunities abroad, while Maltese is limited to Malta and the Maltese community. Maltese students also have better career prospects in Malta if they do well in English. For migrant students learning Maltese only served their temporary need to integrate within the student community.

A number of migrant girls from both schools found it easier to learn Maltese than English, as this was spoken more frequently at school. They said that they learnt Maltese because their friends only spoke this language, so they felt it was necessary to learn it. Language was therefore considered instrumental in the formation of friendships. Existing similarities between Maltese and Arabic, both Semitic languages, made it easier for some students from Morocco to speak fluent Maltese. A number of migrant girls said that they were determined to learn Maltese. Rather than feeling discouraged by a foreign language, these girls took up the challenge of trying to converse in Maltese. Yet, within their school context, a double difficulty resulted because, although lessons were delivered in Maltese, the textbooks, assignments and examinations of some subjects like Mathematics and Science were set in English.

The migrant students in general were described by the teachers as being in need of more attention in class than the Maltese students. These teachers pertaining to both schools acknowledged that the language difficulties of these migrant girls did not inherently stem from themselves, but from their situation as a result of moving into a new country where the spoken language was foreign to them. The teachers framed some of the migrant students as

“weak” and a “deficiency label” was attached to them, because of their language difficulties. In School B a specialised class had also been set up so that migrant students could learn basic skills in numeracy and literacy in English and Maltese, so they could catch up with the rest of their peers. This provision confirms that the migrant girls were also finding difficulties in other areas of study because of their difficulty in understanding the language used to teach these subjects. The teachers of both schools said that those students, who did not follow lessons and remained in class were more likely to get bored and disrupt their peers. The need to regulate these behaviours was accentuated by the teachers. The students’ limited participation might have compelled them to assume forms of passive resistance. This could have involved challenging the expectations of their peers and teachers and opting for alternative experiences through their “disruptive behaviour”. Migrant students who were proficient in English were not reported by teachers as being part of the disruptive group.

Feeling Left Out

Despite efforts by the school to facilitate language acquisition, language difficulties were still interpreted by the migrant students as constituting one of the major hurdles they faced to communicate and make friends. Such difficulties were in turn impacting on the friendship networks developing among these migrant girls. This is because getting to know new people at school tended to follow a common pattern for most of them. They reported that initially, when they were new to the school, a number of Maltese students approached them because they were curious and wanted to find out where they were coming from, and what background they had. This interest in the migrant girls was generated precisely because they were foreign and hence, “different”. However, as the girls claimed, once the novelty wore off, Maltese students quickly lost interest and returned to their previous friendship groups. Consequently, the migrant girls mostly tended to befriend those girls who either ranged from their own country of origin, or who were sympathetic enough to speak in English with them and help them communicate.

A number of migrant students from both schools reported feeling left out of some peer groups. A couple of racialisation episodes occurring in School B were even reported by the migrant students. These were related mostly to overt feelings of resentment from Maltese students towards them, and, in particular a bullying incident involving a migrant girl, who was not proficient in Maltese. Teasing about ways of speaking and one’s accent was also reported. A number of Maltese students regarded the migrant girls as innately incapable of communicating and eventually they were perceived as educationally deficient by them also and not only by teachers. In these situations, stereotypical judgements arose from perceived identities attached to the types of language use. Such incidents demonstrate that the school environment did not always prove to be receptive to the diversity that these girls offered.

Dalisay: Em the first day, em, it’s em, let’s say it’s difficult, em because the others sometimes they forget that I’m there and they used to speak in Maltese, so I need to always say that I’m there ...

Researcher: Because otherwise you don’t understand anything.

Dalisay: Ehe ... So I used to raise my hand and say I don’t understand it...They used to speak in Maltese and then the students used to speak in English ... and then when the students used to speak again in Maltese and I don’t understand them again

Researcher: And now? Has something changed?

Dalisay: Ehe ... Now I understand a little bit in Maltese because I live in Malta.

Teachers' repeated concerns revolved around a "language barrier" identified as one of the obstacles which hindered the integration of migrant students at school. The teachers interviewed claimed that simply following lessons tended to be problematic for some migrant students and that consequently classroom interaction was limited. The teachers reported that a number of Maltese students felt frustrated when their teachers spoke in English to the migrant students, and they complained about it. Some of the Maltese students were not so keen to switch to English during lessons or when speaking to the migrant students. They insisted on not speaking in English:

Because sometimes the Maltese, they are scared or they don't like to speak in English ... not all of them, but you will find a few. They say, do I have to speak in English because of her? She should learn Maltese. (Ms Puli, School A)

Traversing "Language Barriers"

Language barriers were tackled in different ways by students and teachers. A number of Maltese and migrant students stated that they translated to each other during friendly conversations occurring outside the classroom. Collaboration and sharing of ideas also took place during lessons. A migrant girl from Serbia said that Maltese girls were curious to know and learn a few words of her native language. The ways that teachers traversed "language barriers" were fraught with challenges. The teachers of both schools emphasised that they were often required to prepare supplementary material to replace the textbooks, and give additional support to migrant students after the lesson. A number of teachers from both schools reiterated that they were not trained to address linguistic diversities, or how to plan and create resources and deal with "language problems". In order to facilitate communication and learning, teachers stated that they tended to code-switch between both languages. Code-switching emerges from interaction and is "an alternation in the form of communication that signals a context in which the linguistic contribution can be understood" (Nilep, 2006, p. 17). The teachers reported that having to code-switch all the time and repeat what they or the students had said was very time-consuming and tiring. It is difficult to know the exact nature of codes prior to interaction (Nilep, 2006), as codes occur spontaneously and are made relevant by the people who engage with them. Despite these efforts, divisive factors amongst students still operated. Some of the teachers tended to diversify among Maltese and migrant girls. One of the teachers of School A referred to Maltese students as "our students" and as "my students", without making the same reference to the migrant girls. Such remarks could foster a sense of otherness and polarisation.

Despite the minor antagonisms arising from ethnicity and language use, present among students, the teachers of both schools reported that there were numerous instances during classroom interactions when migrants were not perceived as being fundamentally different from Maltese students. The authors observed that there was evidence of students' peer circles made up of both Maltese and migrant students within the same groups (Galea et al., 2011). The importance of such groups was highlighted by both teachers and students interviewed. These exchanges were generally encouraged by teachers:

I encourage the foreign students to try em, use some words from their own language, I would try to learn them myself as well and I would try to repeat the words of the language of their country, their country of origin, to the Maltese. And in this way we would be sharing amongst us. So, for instance, a word which means a particular something, ok, we Maltese would tell the foreign students how we say it in Maltese, and then they would tell us how they say it

in their own language and in this way we would be sharing... So I think it is a very nice thing. (Mr Falzon, School B)

This mutual exchange was possible in spite of the divergent linguistic abilities of students, located within the multiethnic classroom. Mr Falzon encouraged initiatives on the part of teachers to bring students together and support them by appreciating diversity and multicultural identities. He made it clear that migrant students in general, were not particularly prone to being marginalised and isolated, because they were capable of making their way through the school's social networks and that gradually, they were capable of mastering skills in the new languages that could help them form relations at school. Some migrant students were described by their teachers as being extremely keen to follow lessons, as being "highly motivated", "competent" and "fast learners", who considered learning English an advantage and an academic achievement which could help them communicate better with their teachers and peers. These students assumed a certain degree of responsibility for their own learning and some got better grades than Maltese students. Their endeavours to do well at school might have been directed towards asserting their own importance and show that they were more than "just" any other student. Despite their initial lack of knowledge about Maltese culture and traditions, a number of migrant students were described by teachers as being capable of helping Maltese students with school work, especially those who were struggling with learning the English language. Migrant students who were more fluent in English than the Maltese students, like the Canadian students for example, were considered an asset to the latter by teachers, in regards to the learning of English. These constituted only a minority of migrant students, but in any case, they were regarded as facilitators in the teaching of English:

For the Maltese students this could be a wonderful opportunity to ... listen to English because English is important. So for these foreign students who communicate well in English ... they are offering this opportunity ... they will increase em the English speaking skills. (Mr Falzon, School B)

Mr Falzon emphasised that for both Maltese and migrant students, learning English and Maltese could offer them ways to assert their individuality, while also interacting with each other in positive ways. He emphasised that learning both languages enables students to form part of the school community and also assert who they are. In this way socialization and individualization support each other.

Discussion

The adaptation of migrant students at school in their host country entailed a multi-layered process marked at times by a sense of discontinuity and by a series of disjunctures. The transition entailed becoming familiar with a new educational system that presented them with the possibility of learning new languages and exploring new avenues for learning in this regard. No particular differences related to the power dynamics operating amongst students were found between the two schools. Migrant students in both schools faced challenges related to communication, and in both schools Maltese students needed to adapt to the presence of migrant students. In general, the necessity to learn and speak Maltese and English forced the migrant students to see themselves through the school community's representations. The indication that more attention and visibility by migrant students were desired, presumably in order to better grasp what was being said in class, could perhaps have stemmed from the need to feel part of the class. In the case of Dalisay, "forgetting that she is

there” might imply that there could have been students dominated by isolation, marginalisation, voicelessness, non-representation and even powerlessness. In other educational institutions in Malta girls feel the need to share their feelings of shyness and loneliness with each other and together reflect on their perceived lack of self-esteem (Cassar, 2013). For Dalisay and some other migrant students, feelings related to being ignored and left out could have possibly operated as a means of control on the part of the dominant culture, since “solitude is the primary condition of total submission” (Foucault, 1995, p. 237). Alternatively, for Dalisay the opposite could have been the case; namely that minimal control was being exerted over her learning. People inside institutions are subjected to surveillance and to the “gaze” (Foucault, 1995) by those who assume a position of power over them. From this perspective the subjects are constructed as objects of power. In the everyday life inside institutions “inspection functions ceaselessly. The gaze is everywhere” (Foucault, 1977, p. 195). In the case of Dalisay, it seemed that the “gaze” was not part of the standards of normality. The “gaze” seemed to be lacking in some instances, and as a result she hinted that she felt insignificant, and the need to assert her presence seemed to have been felt. Students and teachers could have operated their own forms of “gazing” amongst each other, by selecting what they considered as more worthy of attention.

In a number of instances, boundary maintenance amongst students resulted from their differences related to language and from their diverse school experiences. This defined the migrant students as “them” in comparison to “the rest of the school community”. Although both schools were driven by an ethos which boasted of the ability to celebrate different ethnic, cultural, and religious identities, the migrant girls reported incidents which suggest that some of the Maltese students, and some teachers, were not conscious of the benefits migrant girls could bring to school. Migrant students who were excused from following certain lessons could have been disadvantaged when compared to their peers. Although being exempted might have put less strain on the migrant students, it could have promoted segregation and exclusion. Being allowed to miss lessons might have sabotaged migrant students’ entitlement for a full sense of belonging in class by being made invisible. It could have offered them a temporary escape from the school’s rigid routine, or it might have alienated them from learning. This arrangement might not have always worked in their best interest, because it could have created power differences amongst students, based on their linguistic skills or lack of them. Labels that described migrant students as being “academically weak” could also have generated power differences among students based on how they were classified according to their linguistic abilities. Power results from its “overall effect of its strategic positions – an effect that is manifested and sometimes extended by the position of those who are dominated” (Foucault, 1995, p. 27). The study highlights the tensions some of the migrant girls experienced as they sought to challenge the labelling, which constructed them in “deficit” terms because of their lack of proficiency in the host country language/s. Other research conducted within the Maltese education system which explored the degree of integration of “third country” students suggests that communication problems did not merely result from language issues, but were embedded in dynamics involving students’ individual personality and subjectivities (Falzon et al., 2012, p. 38).

A number of migrant girls did not seem to be affected by negative sentiments surrounding them. Rather than victimising themselves, they claimed spaces for themselves within the school community. In general, as they introduced and disclosed aspects of their migrant self to the authors, they did not accentuate feelings of fear, shame, anxiety and embarrassment but were positive and appreciative of the cooperation they found within the school. They reiterated that rather than being indifferent to their needs, Maltese students showed empathy

and strove to communicate in English in order to help them integrate and adjust better, and this eased their transition into the new school. These positive affirmations could have resulted from a number of factors such as their personal perspectives, their resilient personality and from their sense of obligation and gratitude towards the host country. Although in general migrant students were constricted by the limitations of language, they demonstrated that this did not signify some form of incapacity to speak, learn and perform well in class and in the schools' social environment. Some of the migrant and Maltese students' attempts at building peer relationships at school however seemed to have been affected by differences in language proficiency. These seemed strong and feasible in some instances and somewhat "messy" in others.

In general, the desire of migrant and Maltese students to mix together and share commonalities was somewhat evident. Efforts to overcome "language barriers" within peer circles and students' adaptation within them could have involved a search for belonging. From this perspective, the authors feel uneasy to locate the migrant students as "powerless" and the Maltese as "dominant", because both struggled with language issues, and both were subjected to an overwhelming reliance on British textbooks (Sultana, 1997). None of the migrant students said that they exclude Maltese students from their peer groups. Nevertheless, it could have been possible that a number of Maltese students felt inferior to the migrants and therefore positioning the former as "superior" would be misleading. A number of migrant girls who were more proficient speakers of English than their Maltese peers, could have felt silenced and isolated, not because their linguistic skills in Maltese were not effectively developed but rather because of their advanced proficiency in English. Differences in language proficiency therefore could function as means through which collaboration and friendship among students could be fostered, but it could also entail power practices based on rivalry. Betty's concerns about examinations draw attention to another issue that could have instigated competition among students. Examination results could play a role in establishing or undermining power amongst students. Those who performed well in examinations as a result of their reading and writing skills, could have been ascribed a privileged status by their peers and teachers. Their perceived superior position could even jeopardise those who struggled to do well.

The strategy to befriend peers who spoke the same language might initially have been functional, as it could have provided the necessary support needed by the majority of the migrant students. Yet, it might have inhibited the same students from attempting to learn the new language and from integrating within the Maltese student community. This could have eventually contributed to their marginalisation. Maltese girls who possessed limited proficiency in English could have equally felt excluded and at a disadvantage. The objection by a number of Maltese students to speak in English might have resulted from a sense of uneasiness on their part. They might have felt estranged from the English language or they might have resisted it, because of its association with the middle class. The "fear" of Maltese students to speak in English, mentioned by Ms Puli could have been linked to their perceived incompetency to speak a foreign language in which they were not fluent. Being faced with their own incapability of interacting with the migrant students could have positioned the Maltese students as inferior. Their insistence to speak solely in Maltese could also reflect their preference to undermine the English language, even at the cost of distancing themselves from linguistically diverse students.

Improvements in both Maltese and migrant students' proficiency in the foreign languages they learn at school could enable shifts in their quality of peer relationships. Power relations

within educational institutions are dynamic, involving power practices that make and shape reality. Power shifts from one entity to another due to its “fluid” nature (Foucault, 1972). Other changes in the everyday life of the school, brought about by events such as examinations, could also enable shifts in power. Examinations are central to the techniques that render students objects of power and classify their abilities in ways that could contribute to their marginalisation and subversion (Foucault, 1977). A system of assessments, grading and examinations “establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them” (Foucault, 1995, p. 184). Therefore, it is apparent that examinations impose a compulsory visibility by holding subjects in a “mechanism of objectification” (Foucault, 1995, p. 187).

Conclusion

The findings of the study indicate that schools could benefit from the creation of learning communities which accommodate diversity and strive towards cohesion and harmony. This could be accomplished by providing students with the required support and resources, rather than regard the needs of linguistically diverse students as a deficit, or worse still, as a difficulty which can distract the teacher from delivering lessons in an efficient manner. On a wider scale, the authors recommend the setting up of policies about the integration of migrant students by the European Union’s institutional bodies that accentuate diversity in educational processes. The acknowledgement of students’ cultural differences is not enough. Teachers require the possession of strategies and skills to employ students’ socio-cultural knowledge in the classroom (Lee & Quijada Coercer, 2010). School textbooks and other curricular material could serve as a tool to reflect a multicultural society. When representations of migrants are distorted or made to be relatively absent, the chances of learning could be negatively affected. The findings of the study suggest that although some teachers interrogated students’ power relations that were present in their multiethnic classrooms, they had no clear teaching strategies about how to draw on their students’ linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Their perceived competency as teachers was in general marked by a sense of ambivalence and bewilderment with respect to the multiethnic classes. Nevertheless, nearly all of them seemed to make a conscious effort to integrate all the students during lessons and most of them seemed to regard the linguistic abilities of their students as a form of cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005), irrespective of the level these were at.

The recommendations of the study point towards the need for strategies, based on adequate resources and strong parental involvement, which lead to educational opportunities that support pedagogical practices based on multiculturalism. It would also benefit students if the whole school community puts into practice its ethos regarding inclusion and demonstrates, in a practical manner, that migrant and native students can integrate within the school by becoming aware of each other’s struggles and achievements as a result of their language difficulties. There is not a single programme that could provide the best learning context for all learners (Hornberger, 1998) and optimal learning contexts can be defined only in terms of their specific circumstances. Enabling power to students in the multiethnic classroom entails respect for the different trajectories in which they would like to partake. Successful social and academic integration of migrant students of linguistic minority require spaces which recognise and develop shared power practices within the school. This implies pedagogical practices which are structurally embedded and tied to understandings about the effects of the dimensions of power. The authors therefore mitigate against school settings which equate educational opportunity with language proficiency, as this could compel migrant students to carry the full burden of adjusting to their learning conditions at school.

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**The Path Less Taken: Incorporating Service-learning
in the English Language Curricula**

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Abstract

Although service-learning, as a language teaching strategy, is considered important for developing the college students' academic and soft skills, or personal attributes that people need in order to work with others, including communication skills, empathy, social skills, listening skills and attitudes, it is still a neglected area in the Libyan educational system. This study aims to investigate the trial of implementing service-learning in an English language course and carried out in the Department of English at Sabratha college of Arts. The findings of this study, based on students' reflection journals, focus groups and an open-ended questionnaire, show that service-learning enhanced the students' English language knowledge and skills. Also, students gained soft skills and confidence in using the English language in its context. Finally, the service-learning experience promoted the students' values and self-worth in terms of feeling important and contributing positively to the society.

Keywords: service-learning, EFL, academic skills, interpersonal skills, soft skills

Libya is currently undergoing dramatic transformation. New political, social, and economic realities are emerging, and educators are asked to revisit their pedagogies and policies. Consequently, issues such as citizenship and community engagement need to be addressed. Different countries have turned to educational reform when experiencing similar pressure. “Service-learning is one of the fastest growing reforms in higher education and is considered to be essential in developing citizenship for the 21st century” (Al Barwani, Al-Mekhlafi, & Nagaranam, 2013, p.110).

Attending solely to teaching the theoretical knowledge inherent in language instruction and learning is no longer considered to be sufficient. Service-learning opportunities allow students to connect with the community, develop values, enhance soft skills such as time management and communication skills which are needed to make a positive difference in students’ learning experience (Sandaran, 2012). College teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) in Libya try to apply different methods in their classes to enhance their students’ English language proficiency. In the Libyan context, the service-learning concept could be an effective tool by bringing out a transformative change through using English language skills to serve community needs.

According to this approach, students are actively engaged in the classroom through pair work and group discussion and thus the interaction, collaboration and cooperation among students develop. Furthermore, service-learning is learning as well as giving. Students feel more engaged in the learning process when they apply their knowledge and skills to contribute to the society through service-learning (Albrwani & Almkekhlaifi, 2014).

The purpose of the study is to heed Seilstad’s (2014) call for more research in using service-learning in the Arab world. Its goal is to investigate the possible gains of incorporating service-learning in English language courses. Since service-learning is a new approach in Libya, and is not well understood by faculty members, a study that investigates the potential role and impact of service-learning was conducted to determine how English language teachers might be encouraged to use such a method. More importantly, as the country struggles to find stability, service-learning has been cited as an important and effective avenue (Seilstad, 2014; Al Barwani, Al-Mekhlaf & Nagaratnam, 2013).

Literature Review

Service-learning is a way for schools and universities to enhance learning and skill development by taking the student out of the classroom and into the community. Through service-learning, teachers can reinforce course principles in a real work setting, and students can gain perspective on their fields with positive community service. “Service-learning is a new educational method that is expanding the involvement of universities in their neighboring communities. It also tends to promote the civic and moral development of students”, (Umpleby & Rakicevik, 2008, p. 2). According to Kaye (2004) “Service-learning is a form of experiential learning where students apply academic knowledge and critical thinking skills to address genuine community needs.”

Furco and Billig (2002, p. 7–8) state that a service experience should be personally meaningful and beneficial to the community. In addition, there should be clearly identified learning objectives, student involvement in selecting or designing the service activity, a theoretical base, integration of the service experience with the academic curriculum and opportunities for student reflection.

The service-learning concept has been introduced in US universities in which students learn and develop their personal and academic skills through active participation in organized service. Consequently, more than a third of all American universities and colleges offers courses in service-learning (Student Horizons, Inc., 2008). In a service-learning project in a New Jersey school, a class was divided into small groups sharing similar interests about a social issue like environment. The groups had lessons on online research. Next, they were asked to search about the causes of environmental issues and develop lesson plans to deal with them (Rosevear, 2009). In this respect, service-learning is a bridge between the classroom and the community. It is also a process, which ensures learning through nonprofit teaching.

In Germany, service-learning is recently introduced as a teaching method. In one of the secondary schools in Bavaria, students were engaged in different subjects in activities to preserve its culture. For example, the music class staged a concert to celebrate the 800th birthday of St. Elizabeth. The language class interviewed the citizens of the historic quarter and put together the interviews to create a book (Baltes & Seifert, 2010).

Eyler, Giles, Stenson, & Gray (2003, p. 15–19) have summarized the research on service-learning in higher education over the past few years. Among their findings are the following:

- Service-learning has a positive effect on student personal development such as a sense of personal efficacy, personal identity, and moral development.
- Service-learning has a positive effect on interpersonal development, the ability to work well with others, and leadership and communication skills.
- Service-learning has a positive effect on sense of social responsibility and citizenship skills.
- Students and faculty report that service-learning has a positive impact on students' academic learning.
- Students and faculty report that service-learning improves students' ability to apply what they have learned in the "real world."
- Service-learning participation has an impact on such academic outcomes as demonstrated complexity of understanding, problem analysis, critical thinking, and cognitive development.
- Faculty using service-learning report satisfaction with the quality of student learning. They report commitment to research and increasingly integrate service-learning into courses.

With regard to Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), service-learning fits well with the communicative approach which stresses the student-centered method. The communicative approach focuses on the importance of using the language in real life situations. A number of studies emphasize the implementation of service-learning in the TESOL classroom, including business English for ESL learners (Crossman & Kite, 2007), foreign language learning in universities and high schools (Gonsalves, 2011; Hellebrandt, 2008), and *international service-learning* (Perren, 2007).

With regard to research findings in EFL contexts, Rahman (2012), in his investigation of integrating service-learning in Bangladesh, mentioned that language learners were influenced positively by their engagement in service-learning. Steinke (2007) asserted that EFL learners who get involved in community service have more opportunities to practice the target

language. Similarly, Falasca's (2017) research findings showed that integrating service-learning connects language students to real life challenges in a significant way.

When used as a method of learning a second or foreign language, service-learning creates motivation for language learners. In addition to fostering students' personal growth, service-learning also enhances their self-confidence and provides meaningful contexts for language learning (Minor, 2006; Hale, 2006). Reyes (2009) also mentions that by adopting service-learning "as an approach to helping ESL students integrate classroom concepts with actual hands-on community experiences students are able to develop cultural competence, critical thinking, and reflectivity in their everyday lives" (p. 1). Furthermore, Hart and King's (2007) research findings showed a significant positive impact of the service-learning approach on students' learning over those educators who used other traditional approaches.

Service-learning is considered as a useful pedagogy to enhance language learners' skills and to provide opportunities for students to explore the connection between their learning of English language skills and society issues such as poverty and health care. As it is difficult to teach language skills in isolation from meaningful contexts. "Whenever possible, students should be placed in context-rich situations" (Latulippe, 1999, p. 4), and meaningful activities provide an "ideal learning opportunity for second language students to learn more information in a shorter time with less effort" (Christison, 1999, p. 4). According to Mathews (2017), the planning regarding the application of service-learning would first involve identifying the main challenges and concerns in the society. Then these challenges would have to be sorted out and rank ordered, first to last to solve them by priority.

However, incorporating service-learning in the teaching/learning process in the Arab world and mainly in Libya, the context of this study seems scarce and limited (Seilstad, 2014). Therefore, this study aims to accomplish two goals – provide insight into the implementation of a service-learning program at the college level in Libya where the English language is taught as a foreign language and to augment the developing literature regarding such programs in Arab nations. Two research questions guided the study.

Research Questions

To investigate the gains of integrating service-learning concept in English language courses, this study aims to explore the following research questions:

- a) Could service-learning be used as an effective tool to enhance English language learning?
- b) What are the possible gains for EFL learners when incorporating service-learning in the English language curricula?

Methodology

Participants

Upon obtaining permission from the head of the English language department in Sabratha College of Arts, the researcher met with all third-year English language students within the Department of English to inform them about the intention of the research. A total of 33 students agreed to participate. There were 28 females and 5 males among the participants. Their ages ranged from 20–23 years of age, and they were selected on voluntary basis.

Next, students were introduced to the “Yes we can” task, a common concept in service-learning and a motto of the researcher’s university-based EFL classroom. The students are regularly encouraged to work harder in their own language learning process and to believe that they can help others, be responsible, be creative and work as a team. The university students were divided into three groups. Each group consisted of 11 students. The task was the same for the three groups: deliver English sessions for free to people in the community who were willing to learn the English language, but could not afford it.

The objective of these lessons was to motivate the university students and provide them with opportunities to use the English language in meaningful situations. The lessons had to meet the language needs of the learners. The English language lessons were planned, prepared and delivered by the three groups of students from the university. Each group discussed the task, selected the suitable material, designed activities and divided the roles and responsibilities. Students realized that the English language was to play a major role in this regard. They deliberated critically about what to teach and proceeded to consider how to develop the lesson plan, contemplating which examples and types of practice might work best within the community of learners they would be teaching.

Selection of Community-Based Learners

In order to generate interest in the free courses in EFL to be offered to members of the community, the three groups of university students made posters about the event and placed them throughout the college. They also posted information on their social media outlets such as Facebook. Interested persons registered and attended the free EFL sessions. During the day, the participants mostly included students from other departments within the university such as the Arabic Language Department, the French Department, and the Department of Tourism. In these departments, English is a compulsory course. Therefore, the free sessions offered a good opportunity for students to improve their English. In the evening sessions participants were mostly primary students from the neighboring area.

Research Design

A qualitative approach was selected to investigate the trial of incorporating service-learning in the English language curricula. Johnson & Christensen (2004) state that “qualitative research is often exploratory and is used when little is known about a certain topic” (p. 30). Data were gathered from a questionnaire, students’ reflection journals, observation notes, and notes collected from focus group conversations.

When each lesson was presented, the community students were assigned to three groups with 10–15 learners in each group, and each group to a particular lesson. Each lesson was delivered and facilitated by a group of 11 university students who had prepared the lesson and divided the roles and responsibilities. The lessons lasted approximately two hours.

After delivering the sessions opportunities for contemplation and growth commenced. According to Reed & Marienau (2008) involving students in active reflection about their views might help them in thinking critically about what they did and their rationale for doing so.

Data Collection Process

Upon completion of the community EFL teaching task, a questionnaire was administered. It was written in a simple and clear way. Before the students participated in the questionnaire, they were well informed about the process. To ensure anonymity, the participants were instructed not to write their names anywhere on the form. After explaining the aim of the questionnaire, the researcher left the class, and the students were given 45 minutes to finish the questionnaire and submit it to the assigned teacher assistant in the English department.

The open-ended questionnaire, created by the researcher, was used to collect data in this study because it would give more detailed data concerning the students' observations and interpretations of the project (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). The 3 questions in the questionnaire were designed to get feedback from the students about their teaching and learning experiences. The first question was about the benefits (if any) of participating in the teaching experience. The second question pertained to the challenges that they faced in their teaching. The final question gave students the opportunity to offer their suggestions for improving the project. The questionnaire was validated by piloting it to a small group of students to check its clarity and reliability.

All of the university students were asked to regularly submit reflection journals in which they explained their choice of learners, materials and strategies and how their choices would serve to accomplish the objectives of the curriculum that was used to teach within the community. In order to write the journals, students had to think analytically about how their selections and actions were advancing the goals of the community based EFL course. The students were also asked to consider their participation in "Yes we can" and to include those reflections in their journals. According to Sandaran (2012, p. 383) journals are an important tool in integrating all areas of service-learning, describing them as "the hyphen in service-learning and viewed as the link that ties student experience in the community to academic learning".

The above-mentioned activities are considered valid and integral parts of English language learning and teaching. The three groups attempted to improve the quality of the free lectures and sought help from their friends and teachers. This activity involved them in creating a learning and teaching community outside of the usual classroom, providing numerous opportunities to work within the English language in authentic, meaningful ways.

Finally, an informal focus group (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2008, p. 231) discussion was held to discuss the benefits and the challenges of the experience and what might be done to improve it. Specifically, the focus group dialog was in the form of open-ended questions that were broadly based on three themes: the benefits that both the university students and the community-based students gained, the challenges that both groups faced and their suggestions for improving the task.

Data Analysis

All data sources were reviewed, coded, and analyzed using the constant comparative method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), resulting in emergent themes about the gains of the service-learning experience, the challenges that students faced and the implications that may be apparent from the study. In order to triangulate the data (Merriam, 2002), the researcher kept observation notes about students in different stages of the task along with analyzing students' reflection journals to cross check and verify the emerging themes.

Findings

Benefits to Students

Could service-learning be used as an effective tool to enhance English language learning? Integrating service-learning was beneficial to the students who participated in this study and to the English language Department alike. Interestingly, it has been noted through the questionnaire and observations of students' work that the university students benefitted by having the opportunity to use their language skills in real-life situations through providing their service in teaching English in the community while at the same time facilitating a positive change in the community. Primarily, they learned they could realize their potential through gaining self-confidence in using the English language. In addition, students demonstrated increased motivation to attend lectures. This finding is in consonance with the findings of Wolff & Tinney (2006) which showed that students who were involved in service-learning experiences exhibited more academic participation and additional interaction with faculty members.

This task was a good opportunity for the university students to interact with students from other departments. Most importantly, this service-learning experience afforded them a practical opportunity to apply the theories of language learning and teaching in preparing and delivering the lessons.

What did the EFL learners gain from integrating service-learning in the English language curricula? Students who participated in this study commented that they considered the service-learning teaching experience to be valuable and offered a range of reasons explaining the nature of the benefits. The following excerpts are used as written in students' reflection journals and in response to questions on the questionnaire. To protect the university students' identity, the students' names have been hidden and numbers are used instead. Selected comments follow.

Academic Outcomes

According to the students' answers to the first question about what was good about their participation in the experience of teaching the English language to other non-specialized students, the preparation stage was beneficial. They specifically mentioned readings that had been provided in class which assisted them in choosing appropriate examples, texts, and activities to be used. More than 80% of the students mentioned that practicing the lessons and activities before the service-learning sessions improved their language skills and their self-confidence. S14 noted, "preparing the lesson and practicing how to teach it before the actual teaching took place was very useful. I was more confident in delivering my part and the content was familiar to me".

Also, one of the cited advantages was that this experience encouraged students to engage more with the material covered in the university course. They were encouraged to think about the course content in an active way rather than being receptive. For example, S12 wrote, "this task helped me not just to understand the information but to be critical about the material".

The involvement in the community also required the university students to draw upon their own experiences as EFL students. Additionally, writing the lesson plans and reflecting in written journals helped them to improve their academic writing skills. Besides planning and designing the lessons, the students were required to write advertisements about their lessons

and to write reports about the task, the steps that they followed, the goals of the lesson and the material used.

This finding is in consonance with the findings of Albrwani & Al-Mekhlafi (2014) in which it was mentioned that when investigating the impact of service-learning on Omani students, service-learning provided EFL students “with more opportunities to improve their language in writing and grammatical structure as well as reading comprehension”. (p. 105)

Overall, the actual teaching sessions emphasized to the students how crucial the planning and preparation stages were to success. S23 wrote “It was a smooth process. We knew what to do, when to do it and how”.

Personal Outcomes

More than 60% of the students emphasized specific skills that were improved as a result of their participation in the service-learning experience. The students developed useful soft skills from working in groups such as learning to express their ideas and how to analyze a learning episode in a critical manner. In the end, the university students serving as teachers had to agree unanimously on a topic to teach and, therefore, had to engage in a discussion regarding how to deal with all the issues related to their lesson. Students also showed improved abilities for group work and cooperation in the classroom. They mainly reported that their participation enhanced their communication skills such as how to ask the right question.

In addition, more than 70% of the students revealed that the service-learning experience improved their sense of self-efficacy. After the experience of teaching real learners in the community rather than explaining to their classmates, they felt more confident in their competence in the English language. S22 said, “I can teach different groups of learners. I feel that I can”. According to Hale (2006), service-learning as a teaching method enhances students’ self-confidence and motivation to learn.

The teaching experience helped the students to overcome their apprehension about learning English and making mistakes. When they participated in the lesson, the researcher observed that they became less conscious about using English as they were immersed in the lessons and activities and having fun. The teaching experience seemed to have benefited not only the learners, but also the EFL university students who had learned much on their own from designing and facilitating the language lessons. Their own excitement about the task and enthusiasm in working with the learners was contagious. Two of the groups delivered the lesson even in the evening to primary school pupils in their neighborhood. The comments from the learners were positive, and they asked for more free lessons. According to Simonet (2008) service-learning improves students’ attitudes and motivation because it creates a meaningful learning environment. Similarly, Minor (2006) stated that service-learning enhances the students’ skills such as problem solving, interacting with others and achieving goals.

One student identified “encouragement” as being particularly important for the learners who were engaging in activities that were new to them. A student wrote, “it was good to notice that even the shy students completed some of the activities with encouragement”.

Students' Values and Self-Worth

More than 50% of the university students who participated in this study stated that an important aspect of what they learned from service-learning was how to be more responsible and caring toward others. The task of teaching without the expectation of monetary compensation required students to take responsibility for their learning. Student 1 said: “I think the task increased the accountability of the university students. It also enhanced their ability to face challenges. We learned how to make brave choices”. Additionally, S5 noted that, “taking part in this task did not only improve my writing ability. It also showed me how to be helpful and caring about others”.

More than 42% of the students reported a realization of self-worth. They felt that they could contribute to the society by using their knowledge and skills. S19 stated, “I am grateful for this experience because it made me feel important”. S6 added, “They always blame our generation and describe us as careless and spoilt. This experience helped us to say that we are responsible, and we can be good citizens and help others. We need just a chance”.

Furthermore, the students also were happy and proud as their work was recognized and celebrated on the project presentation day which was well attended from the university administration, faculty members, civil society and local media. S 32 commented, “It was really an amazing experience because we interacted with other students, and they liked our way of explaining”.

In addition to reading and preparing lesson plans of the learners' needs, the service-learning experience provided the students with a personal experience that afforded them a valuable opportunity to know themselves better. The participants of this study mentioned that the teaching experience helped them to have a sense of ownership of their learning. This helped the students to be more aware of how they learn and what they learn.

Some students indicated in their reflection journal that this experience changed their idea about the teaching profession. S5 said *“teaching is not just delivering information. You have to prepare, select appropriate material, prepare lesson plans, and check the pronunciation. I did not know that it is really hard job”*. S3 added *“after this experience, I felt that I love to be a teacher. There is nothing like the moment when the learners smile and got it”*.

From the students' views in their reflection journals and the discussion in the focus group, they asserted that service-learning has a tremendously positive impact on their learning, compared with the traditional classroom teaching. Students asked for more opportunities to engage in service-learning rather than just having lectures, tests and a focus on grades. Underlying such a call for service-learning is a significant shift from a traditional and teacher-centered teaching method to one that is student-centered and autonomous (Morrison, 2016). This robust service-learning experience could address students' need for an education that prepares them for their careers and for dealing with the challenges that the Libyan community faces.

The Challenges of Incorporating Service-Learning

In response to the question about the challenges that they faced in their service-learning experience, most students who participated in this study complained about the limited time which was assigned for the task. Students had other subjects to study, assignments to submit, and their schedules were busy. This is a common challenge that is mentioned frequently in the literature. “They are too busy to fit community-based learning into their crowded

schedules” (Holland & Robinson, 2008, p. 20). In addition, some students expressed their interest to work more on the task, but they thought the time expenditure might affect their grades in other subjects.

In a follow up question about what should be done to deal with the limited time issue, the students asked for time management training. Also, they wanted the department to fund and support their work and integrate service-learning in the course assignments and evaluation.

Another challenge that students mentioned was the lack of confidence at the beginning of the task. Most students mentioned that at the beginning they found the idea of having to teach a very frightening prospect. They did not have previous experience, and many were unsure about what to say. However, most of them developed their own way of conducting the lessons successfully.

In addition, the process of preparing the project, communicating with the college administration and preparing the logistics, guiding the three groups and giving them feedback about their lesson plans and selection of materials was time consuming for the university faculty who participated. Also, integrating service-learning with the academic goals of the writing course was not easy due to students’ English proficiency levels and lack of experience in such tasks. From the students’ writing, it was clear that some students needed more scaffolding for the type of writing required in reflective journals. Their writing was too brief and simple. A few did not connect the service-learning task with their own learning. Therefore, showing them samples of writing that integrates academic writing goals with service-learning was helpful.

Benefits to the Department of English

According to Simonet (2008) providing service-learning experiences that involve students, faculty members and staff helps to build an impressive network of student support. Encouraging the participation of undergraduate English as a foreign language learners in service-learning practice as observed in the current study may have facilitated several benefits. By involving the students, the Department of English Language had the opportunity to expand its mission to include service to society. Such experiences might increase the public’s support for the department while encouraging its collaboration with civic and social organizations. Providing service-learning opportunities in the department can inspire the students to enhance their life skills and share their ideas for future projects in ways that assist community members.

Discussion

This study investigated the initial attempt of integrating service-learning in the Libyan EFL context. The data analysis pointed to three themes. First, service-learning enhanced the participants’ English language knowledge and skills. Second, students gained soft skills and confidence in using the language in its context. Third, the service-learning experience promoted the students’ values and self-worth in terms of feeling important and contributing positively to the society. These three themes support the literature related to incorporating service-learning in the educational courses.

Students’ views about their experience were resoundingly positive. As the literature suggests, service-learning improved students’ understanding of classroom materials. Students had a much clearer perspective on the lesson plan and delivering the material. Their

ideas about teaching and assessment were challenged and changed. In addition, students' self-confidence was also greatly enhanced, as also suggested by the literature. According to Eyler, Giles, Stenson, & Gray, (2003, p. 15–19) service-learning has a positive influence on students' interpersonal development such as the ability to work with others as well as personal development, including a sense of personal efficacy and personal identity.

Consequently, this service-learning opportunity taught students to be good citizens. Students felt empowered by their involvement and voiced their interest in participating in similar experiences in the future. In addition, the students were able to transfer their language knowledge to real life situations. Bechet, Refaei, & Skutar, (2012, p. 77) stated that “service-learning experiences are an additional source of data that deepens the understanding of academic courses”.

In addition, for many students the service-learning experience influenced their career choice. According to Rahman (2012) service-learning projects should be incorporated in language courses in a way that it guarantees a benefit to the community while simultaneously benefitting the university EFL students through improving their language skills and enhancing their self-confidence.

Limitations

This study investigated incorporating service-learning in the English language curricula in Sabratha College of Arts. As this study was based on a small number, the research findings cannot be generalized to all EFL students in Libya. Also, the students represented only one group of EFL learners in Libya. There are several other groups, such as high school students, private college students and students attending an education college, and the findings of the study might have been different if the researcher had worked with those other groups.

Conclusion, Implications and Recommendations

The current situation in many Arab countries, including Libya, calls for an urgent involvement where youth are trained to use their knowledge and positive energies to serve their societies. The study points to the probability that service-learning is a necessary and effective method of learning, and that it could be a viable solution for the development of Libyan youth's skills and attitudes for citizenship and engagement in Libyan society. The findings of this study showed that students can develop their academic skills and soft skills of time management and communication by practicing them in real-life situations.

According to Billig (2004), service-learning is a beneficial approach to teaching and learning a language. It helps to develop citizenship and responsibility among learners. Therefore, incorporating service-learning in the curricula provided opportunities for students, teachers and administrators to use their skills in serving the society. Some believe this must diffuse every aspect of work in higher education (Boyte and Hollander, 1999).

However, there are several challenges faced while implementing service-learning. As a pilot project, there are some aspects that need fine-tuning and rethinking. For example, since this was a one-week event of English language free lessons, time was a constraining factor as students have prepared and delivered the lessons in a very limited time because they have other lectures to attend and assignments to submit. Also, in the college writing courses, the one-week time frame limited the extent of the discussion and preparation because the focus

was on making connections between practical service-learning tasks and the educational goals of an academic writing course.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations can be made:

- This pilot study could be a model for other colleges in Libya and the Arab world due to the high need for support of educational reform at all levels. Beyond this specific context, English programs worldwide and even in other subject areas may find the task practical and effective for their purposes. Not only English language teachers but also educators across different disciplines should strive to use service-learning as a teaching tool to practice and promote learning.
- The participants in this study asked for additional opportunities for meaningful service-learning experiences. To create such opportunities, changes in the educational curricula and the teaching methods are needed.
- The service-learning concept should be incorporated within English language courses in a sense that it ensures a benefit to the community and university EFL students profit from the opportunities to develop their language proficiency and gain more self-confidence.
- To employ service-learning successfully, English language teachers need to have good understanding of its underpinning philosophy. Thus, in-service training courses should be provided for teachers mainly in the Libyan context where service-learning is still a new method of teaching and not yet familiar for most university teachers.
- To encourage college students to participate in service-learning activities, it is necessary for the college administration to provide support in the form of help with logistics, planning and communication with local partners such as the civic society.

Future Research

Reflecting on this pilot study, it is apparent that more research is needed regarding how students recognize, experience, and value their involvement in service-learning. For instance, the results of this study raise a number of questions that demand attention such as how service-learning significantly affects students' English language proficiency and how that growth may be assessed. Another consideration is to what extent incorporating service-learning might be influenced by particular specializations and contexts.

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Incorporating Brain Colour into the Multiple Intelligences to Create a Blended Learning Context: Homogeneous and Heterogeneous Groups

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Abstract

This paper introduces a blended learning context that creates a community of practice. This community of practice presents a combination of face-to-face facilitated learning, e-learning, and self-study. A set of in-class and online linguistic activities was used in the implementation of this experiment to investigate the efficacy of performing these linguistic activities in homogeneous and heterogeneous groups. The incorporation of target learners' brain color into their multiple intelligences was based on using two inventories which identified learners' brain color and multiple intelligences. The two inventories were Carmazzi's (2009) Coloured Brain Communication Inventory (CBCI) and Sahakian's (2001) Multiple Intelligences Inventory (MII). They were administered to a group of Arab Open University (AOU) students during their Grammar in English Language Contexts course tutorial sessions. This incorporation helped the researcher ascertain the learners' preferred means of learning and assessment. In addition students were divided into heterogeneous and homogeneous groups to detect the efficacy of performing selected linguistic activities whether in-class or online in groups. The results of these two inventories (CBCI and MII) were statistically analyzed and a correlation was observed. The statistical analysis of the learners' performance in analyzing and solving the given linguistic activities revealed distinct advantages of working in heterogeneous groups with individuals who possessed a variety of brain colors and multiple intelligences.

Keywords: blended learning, brain colour, multiple intelligence

The human brain is an amazing organ in the body. Researchers have been trying to study and analyse its parts and functions for decades and centuries. Some of them have presented a great deal of data about the human brain and the biology of learning, and new discoveries are continually adding to that knowledge every day. Many authors, including Gardner (1983), Caine and Caine (1994), Goleman (1995), Sylwester (1995), McGeehan (1999), Jensen (2000), and Wolfe (2001), were concerned about brain-based learning. These authors have applied some of the latest scientific medical findings related to the brain on learning. Jensen (2008) defined brain-based education as a multidisciplinary approach in which learning happens in accordance with the way the brain is naturally designed to learn. Numerous people, especially educators and parents, are interested in finding out more about this organ and how its unique functioning impacts the learning process. Educators and researchers continue to explore the biology of learning and its applications to discover which teaching practices can maximize learning through the use of new theories and approaches that eliminate the more traditional ways of learning and improve the quality of instruction. Constructivism, multiple intelligences theory, active learning, inquiry-based learning, problem-based learning, and project-based learning are some of the relatively new approaches (Thomas & Swamy, 2014).

One of these applications is the theory of multiple intelligences (MI) by Howard Gardner (1985). The view of an individual's intelligence or how one may be described as intelligent has changed. The idea that there is a single general intelligence that is measured by a person's intelligence quotient (IQ) is questionable even though IQ has been the most common way of measuring intelligence. In measuring IQ, intelligent people are those who can score high grades in paper-and-pencil tests that usually rely heavily on verbal-linguistic and logical-mathematical capacities. Gardner (1998, p. 20) says, "Rather than having just an intelligence defined by IQ, humans are better thought of as having eight, maybe nine, kinds of intelligences, including musical, spatial and kinaesthetic." He defines intelligence as "a psychobiological potential to solve problems or to fashion products that are valued in at least one cultural context" (p. 19). Another application is the identification of students' brain colour and the way they receive and process information. "Knowing the kinds of learning experiences that students most value may help instructors develop alternative course structures that provide a better fit between their instructional goals and the learning style preferences of their students" (Canfield, 1992, p. 1).

Review of Literature

This age of technological advances necessitates employing outstanding approaches of teaching and learning based on current brain research and technological applications. This does not mean that everything teachers have done in the past is wrong, but rather it means they should make best use of the available technology and information of this age. Caine and Caine (1994, p.82) have developed twelve principles of brain-based learning. They declared "We do not simply learn. What we learn is influenced and organized by emotions and mind sets based on expectancy, personal biases and prejudices, degree of self-esteem, and the need for social interaction. ... Emotions operate on many levels, somewhat like the weather. They are ongoing, and the emotional impact of any lesson or life experience may continue to reverberate long after the specific event."

Caine and Caine (1994) also believed that educators must consider the way in which students learn and the type of environment that promotes learning when designing a curriculum. They stated that each person's brain is able to detect patterns, memorize, self-correct, learn from

experience and create. Hence, teachers should take advantage of these natural processes by designing lifelike, enriching and appropriate experiences for learners. They should ensure that the learners process these experiences in order to increase the efficiency of their learning. Consequently, having consistent brain-compatible instruction based on the actual biology of the brain's learning can improve the learning/teaching process.

Carmazzi (2009), founder of Directive Communication Methodology, states that people are distinguished from each other by their own specific way of processing the world around them, processing information, learning and problem-solving, communicating, and relating to others. To harness the power of understanding how these communication processes affect our personal and organizational effectiveness, he formed a model of four brain colours; red, blue, green and purple and then statistically tested it across 60 different corporate and 6 cultural environments with over 8,000 people. The result was the *Coloured Brain Communication Inventory (CBCI)* – a tool to improve personal and work relationships and promote better decisions.

This tool has four criterion measures. First, the inventory measures *natural mental processing strength*; the natural genetic strengths that determine how an individual's brain processes information, and how he/she will take action in a given situation. Second, it measures *learned mental processing strength* which is the learned ability to get results in an area unrelated to the individual's natural brain processing. Third, it measures *mental flexibility* of an individual represented in his/her ability to productively work and communicate with others who operate with different mental processors. Finally, it identifies *communication improvement areas* by determining what brain processing types are difficult for an individual to mix with, which can prevent potential problems in learning, management and teamwork.

Carmazzi (2009) mentions some benefits of identifying one's brain colour such as understanding one's coloured brain processing, how one is affected by other different coloured brains, one's strengths and how to develop them, one's weaknesses and how to overcome them in addition to cultivating one's productivity, influence, and mental ability. He depicts the analogy of coloured brain as two computers, a Macintosh and a PC. Both can run "Microsoft Excel" and both can run "Adobe Photoshop" (graphics software), yet one cannot run software written for one type of computer on the other. And, even the same programs have a slightly different look and feel to them. Additionally, Excel runs very fast on a PC and a bit slower on a Mac, but Photoshop runs far faster on the Mac than on the PC.

The brain works in the same way. If humans are genetically built to process information in a certain way and are "forced" to swallow systems or procedures or management styles that are "designed" for a different brain processor, there is a tendency to be less efficient and less fulfilled. However, if there exists a greater understanding of the processor running in the brain, it becomes easier to design the right "software" to do the job better and more effectively. The first part of CBCI profile helps individuals do just that; whereas, the second part determines the areas necessary to gain more "Communication Flexibility" in order to work well with other types of brain processors.

Carmazzi (2009) presented an observation summary for each brain colour. He states that the person who has a blue brain is an intuitive person who can achieve clarity through reflection and intuitive referencing of past experiences. This person is rather emotional and quick in taking actions by gathering information and getting a form of sensitivity feedback from the effects of previous personal experience. This is due to an amazing efficiency in connecting to

people, a great flexibility in unknown environments, a consistent assimilation of the surroundings, a multi-tasking in thinking process and persistent resilience in tough situations. This person overcomes ambiguity by being highly empathetic and sensitive to the environment and people (Coloured Brain TM, 2017).

In contrast, a person with a purple brain takes more time to collect and assimilate information compared to others. Carmazzi (2009) clarifies that this person is relational to the degree that necessitates having abundant information to make a connection and get clarity. Hence, this person reacts to a situation based on the extraction of substantial details related to the issue under investigation. People who possess characteristics of a purple brain are systematic in reaching reasoning and generating ideas by referencing current and stored information and making comparisons. Thus, reasoning and idea generating are internally categorized and connected to other related categories. People who possess characteristics of a purple brain are less resilient in situations that are negative without enough details or options. While these people have a more individual identity, when in groups, they usually want to make sure that everyone is aware of the details and is more comfortable with consistent feedback (Coloured Brain TM, 2017).

Similarly, a person with a red brain needs structure to achieve clarity, and the time needed to take an action is dependent on the available structure and the speed at which clarity is achieved. Such a person is a linear one since s/he identifies and organizes facts and resources before acting. This person usually connects tangible elements with logic, organizes information into chunks, and identifies discrepancies and cross-references to reach understanding. People who possess characteristics of a red brain are less comfortable with unstructured processes or instructions and tend to be objective in communication, which is often misunderstood as uncaring. Red brains are less resilient in situations that are negative or do not show a logical reason for flexibility or change because they seek an understanding of new environment before experiencing them. They make less mistakes than others do, but they take longer to recover from mistakes (Coloured Brain TM, 2017).

People who possess characteristics of a green brain generally need to see the whole picture of a topic or objective in order to comprehend what is expected. They must take some kind of action to get clarity. Time needed to act is almost immediate (sometimes impulsive), and clarity is directly related to the revelations from their actions. They shape and reshape ideas and solutions in the process of acting on issues, getting others involved, asking for feedback and processing their surroundings as a summary of the overall situation. For people who possess characteristics of a green brain, a little information quickly forms a comprehensive but vague perspective of what the situation is, can be, or how it could affect another situation. Individuals with green brain characteristics simply know that they are on the right track without being able to justify it. They are disorganized but effective, connect as they act, perform poorly with too much structure. As a result, reasoning and idea generating is in non-linear random chunks based on testing elements in the action process to connect to the big picture. Though these people tend to work on multiple projects, they often can fully concentrate on one situation at a time. People who possess characteristics of a green brain are flexible in unknown environments and resilient, getting beyond negative issues in shorter periods of time compared to others (Coloured Brain TM, 2017).

Interestingly, the Multiple Intelligences (MI) theory set by Howard Gardner (1983) can contribute in understanding the Directive Communication Methodology set by Carmazzi (2009). Gardner (1983) identified seven Multiple Intelligences namely; *Verbal-Linguistic*,

which includes the ability to manipulate language, to express oneself rhetorically and use language as a means to remember information, *Logical-Mathematical*, which includes the ability to detect patterns, to think logically and reason deductively, *Musical-Rhythmic*, which includes the ability to recognize and compose musical pitches, tones, and rhythms, *Visual-Spatial*, which includes the ability to create mental images, *Bodily-Kinaesthetic*, which includes the ability to coordinate one's mental abilities with one's own bodily movements, *Interpersonal*, which includes the ability to understand and discern the feelings and intentions of others, and *Intrapersonal*, which includes the ability to understand one's own feelings and motivations. In 1995, he added the eighth intelligence; the *Naturalist Intelligence*, which includes the ability to enjoy nature and have a strong connection to the outside world. He also considered the possibility of a ninth intelligence; the *Existential Intelligence*, which includes the ability to enjoy thinking and questioning the way things are; showing a philosophical awareness and interest.

In relation to MI theory, Sahakian (2001) first thought of an inventory that would illustrate the profile of learners and teachers. Prior to this, Christison (1998) had applied MI theory in pre-service and in-service TEFL education programs and has written A Multiple Intelligences Inventory for ESL Teachers. In her inventory, she collected ten related statements under each of the eight intelligences, totalling 80 items. The respondents rank each statement by writing 0, 1 or 2 in the blank next to the statement, and then compare the scores in different intelligences to see their highest or lowest scores. Christison's (1998) inventory, similar to others, was too long. It only addressed ESL teachers, and the statements were neatly collected under every intelligence topic, which made things obvious for the respondents. This did not serve Sahakian's purpose, as she preferred not to have the respondents guess, but react to the items naturally. Hence, she devised an MI inventory namely, Know Me/You More, and its profile, MI Profile, that could be used by teachers, students, or others. She added two more intelligences after validating them namely Taste and Smell intelligences. Taste Intelligence in which knowing occurs through the sense of taste and ability to differentiate among such things as different tastes of food and spices, and Smell Intelligence in which the knowing occurs through the sense of scent and ability to differentiate among smells associated with different perfumes and food which are included in her inventory.

Sahakian (2001), with her additional two intelligences, Taste and Smell intelligences, included sectors such as students majoring in Home Economics. Their sensitivity to sensing the slightest extra amount or lack of spices surpassed that of some teachers who boast for their cooking. Similar to tasting, she thought of those who had a strong sense for smelling. Sahakian's (2001) Know Me/You More tool can be used for different purposes; 1) primarily as an identifier or indicator; to know one's intelligence strengths and weaknesses, 2) as a starter; to introduce the MI theory, 3) as a grabber; to capture the audience's/participants' attention in a short time, 4) as an identifier of others; to administer on others to determine their intelligences' profiles and see how similar and/or different they are, 5) as an identifier of teachers and learners; to administer it to anyone including teachers and learners, 6) as an identifier of other nations and cultures; to administer to those of a variety of cultures as cultural aspects are accommodated when validated and 7) as an amusement relief; to play a game, to introduce the concept in a light way and/or add enjoyment to the context.

The MI inventory Know Me/You More is also intended to help pre- and in-service teachers think of ways to broaden the range of intelligences their students use in English language classes, within the constraints of the textbooks and culture. The tool offers help for teachers who want to create classes in which students enthusiastically participate in constructive

activities. The inventory consists of an introductory section followed by 30 items including 10 domains/intelligences, namely; Verbal-Linguistic (VL), Logical-Mathematical (LM), Visual-Spatial (VS), Bodily-Kinaesthetic (BK), Musical (M), Interpersonal (Inter), Intrapersonal (Intra), Taste (T) and Smell (S) intelligences. Each type of intelligence is represented by an item in the order above with intelligences being repeated in different statements, but in every 10th order. For example, VL items are: 1, 11, 21; LM items are: 2, 12, 22 and so on.

These above mentioned two inventories were used in the implementation of this study to help Arab Open University (AOU) students identify their brain colour and multiple intelligences that would give them a clear insight into their preferred means of learning. What will follow is the methodology, implications and results of the experiment undertaken at AOU.

Methodology

The conceptual framework of this implementation includes its research question, objectives procedures, duration, participants, design, instruments, assessment and results.

Research Questions

The overarching question for the study was to what extent identifying the brain colour and multiple intelligences of AOU students registered in a Grammar in Context course could help in grouping them into homogeneous and heterogeneous groups to perform linguistic activities in-class and online more accurately and in less time.

This main question led to the following sub-questions:

1. What is the brain colour of each AOU student registered in the selected Grammar in Context course?
2. What is the multiple intelligence profile of each AOU student registered in the Grammar in Context course?
3. Do homogenous or heterogeneous groups perform the given linguistic activities more accurately?
4. Do homogenous or heterogeneous groups perform the given linguistic activities faster?

Research Objectives

The underlying research objectives were clear. It was anticipated that by the end of the implementation, the students would be able to:

- Distinguish between different brain communication processes.
- Identify one's own brain colour.
- Identify one's dominant multiple intelligences.
- Analyse a variety of linguistic activities in both homogeneous and heterogeneous groups, and
- Learn from each other.

Research Significance

The significance of the research stemmed from several possible outcomes and opportunities:

- To present to tutors and curriculum designers in the humanities and language learning an alternative way of planning, designing, and implementing a blended context in which different brain colours and multiple intelligences are accommodated;
- To help tutors and educators incorporate different brain colours and multiple intelligences effectively in the teaching and learning processes;
- To add to the literature's quantitative and qualitative findings on the effectiveness of performing linguistic activities in blended contexts with homogenous and heterogeneous groups; and
- To pave the way for other studies in different domains to further develop and improve the understanding of different brain colours and the multiple intelligences model.

Research Hypotheses

The study tests the following hypotheses:

1. There is a statistically significant difference in the students' mean scores on the accuracy of performing the given linguistic activities in heterogeneous groups of different brain colours and multiple intelligences than in homogenous ones.
2. There is a statistically significant difference in the students' mean scores on the speed of performing the given linguistic activities in heterogeneous groups of different brain colours and multiple intelligences than in homogenous ones.

Participants

The participants were 42 students registered in a level three course “*Grammar in Context*” at Arab Open University (AOU), Kuwait Branch. The group of participants consisted of 11 male students and 31 female students. The age group of the participants ranged from 24 to 53 years of age.

Procedures

The study was conducted with a group of Arab Open University students to identify their brain colour and multiple intelligences. A session was presented by the researcher to familiarize the students with the concept of brain colour and multiple intelligences theory. Then, the two inventories “*Coloured Brain Communication Inventory (CBCI)*” and “*Multiple Intelligences Inventory (MII) Know Me/You More*” were administered to these students. During the semester, the students were divided into groups based on their brain colour and multiple intelligences. There were two types of groups; homogeneous groups with the same brain colour and identified multiple intelligence strengths and heterogeneous groups. The students were given a set of in-class and online linguistic activities to analyse the linguistic features in each activity. The aim was to determine the efficacy of each group type in problem solving and analysing linguistic texts.

This implementation was conducted in 12 weeks during the second semester of the 2015–2016 academic year. A two-hour session was conducted to familiarize the students with the brain colour and multiple intelligences theories. The students were guided through detailed instruction to respond to Carmazzi's and Sahakian's inventories. After that, the students were divided into groups to analyse different types of linguistic activities in class and online.

Design

The implementation adopted the descriptive design to review and survey previous literature and studies related to certain variables as identified in both the Coloured Brain and Multiple Intelligences inventories. A quasi-experimental design was adopted to identify the students' brain colour and dominant intelligences to facilitate dividing them into homogenous and heterogeneous groups as well as to evaluate the quality of the interaction while performing the linguistic activities in both group types. The quasi-experimental design was chosen because the current research is a research that resembles experimental study, but it is not a true experimental research study. Although the independent variable is manipulated, participants are not randomly assigned to conditions or orders of conditions (Cook & Campbell, 1979).

Instruments

The following instruments were used:

- Coloured Brain Communication Inventory (CBCI) to identify one's brain colour
- Multiple Intelligences Inventory (MII) to identify one's multiple intelligences profile.
- Observation checklist to detect the speed and accuracy of performing the linguistic activities in homogenous groups and then compare this with performing in heterogeneous groups.

Assessment

For assessing students' performance in light of the type of their group, they were asked to do the given linguistic activities in class and online in specific groups specified by the researcher. This was assessed by using an observation checklist to detect the speed and accuracy of performing number of activities by each group type. The students were free to choose from alternative methods to present and deliver their own linguistic analysis of the given texts in class and online. These instruments were created for conducting formative assessments of students' learning. Feedback was given at the end of each presentation and students' answers were marked with comments and re-uploaded on the University Educational Platform; Learning Management System (LMS). A comparison between the students' level of accuracy and speed while performing the given linguistic activities in homogenous and heterogeneous groups was found to be in favour of the heterogenous groups.

Findings

The results of the two inventories, CBCI and Know Me/You More, were statistically analysed and correlations were noted as follows:

- Green Brains showed a propensity to three of the intelligence areas – Bodily-Kinaesthetic (68%), Naturalist (17%) and Musical (15%).
- Red Brains tended to be stronger in two intelligence areas as well as Smell and taste to some extent – Visual-spatial (45%), Logical-mathematical (39%), Smell (7%), and Taste (9%),
- Purple Brains usually were Intrapersonal (52%), Logical-mathematical (40%) and musical (8%).

- Blue Brains typically were Interpersonal (41%), Verbal-Linguistic (38%), Musical (12%), and to a small degree, Smell (4%) and Taste (5%).

The observation checklist of students' accuracy and speed level while performing the set of linguistic activities was statistically analysed. The results showed that students' accuracy level while performing the specified linguistic tasks in heterogenous groups was better than their accuracy level while performing in homogeneous groups as shown below in Table 1.

Table 1. Students' Accuracy Level in Responding to Linguistic Activities

No.	Checklist Items	Distinguished Performance	Very Good Performance	Acceptable Performance	Fair Performance	Poor Performance
1	Analysing noun phrases in homogeneous groups	7%	41%	43%	9%	0%
2	Analysing noun phrases in heterogeneous groups	19%	53%	28%	0%	0%
3	Analysing verb phrases in homogeneous groups	8%	42%	41%	9%	0%
4	Analysing verb phrases in heterogeneous groups	21%	53%	26%	0%	0%
5	Analysing adjective phrases in homogeneous groups	9%	39%	41%	11%	0%
6	Analysing adjective phrase in heterogeneous groups	24%	56%	20%	0%	0%
7	Analysing adverb phrases in homogeneous groups	6%	37%	43%	14%	0%
8	Analysing adverb phrases in heterogeneous groups	30%	52%	18%	0%	0%
9	Analysing Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL) in spoken texts in homogeneous groups	4%	16%	41%	29%	10%
10	Analysing Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL) in spoken texts in heterogeneous groups	11%	39%	30%	16%	4%
11	Analysing Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL) in written texts in homogeneous groups	7%	33%	43%	9%	8%
12	Analysing Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL) in written texts in heterogeneous groups	10%	37%	30%	19%	4%



Figure 1. Students' Accuracy Level while Responding to Linguistic Activities

Students' speed level while performing the provided linguistic tasks in heterogeneous groups is faster than their speed level in homogenous groups. Conversely, the time spent in performing the linguistic activities in heterogeneous groups is less than the time spent in homogeneous ones.

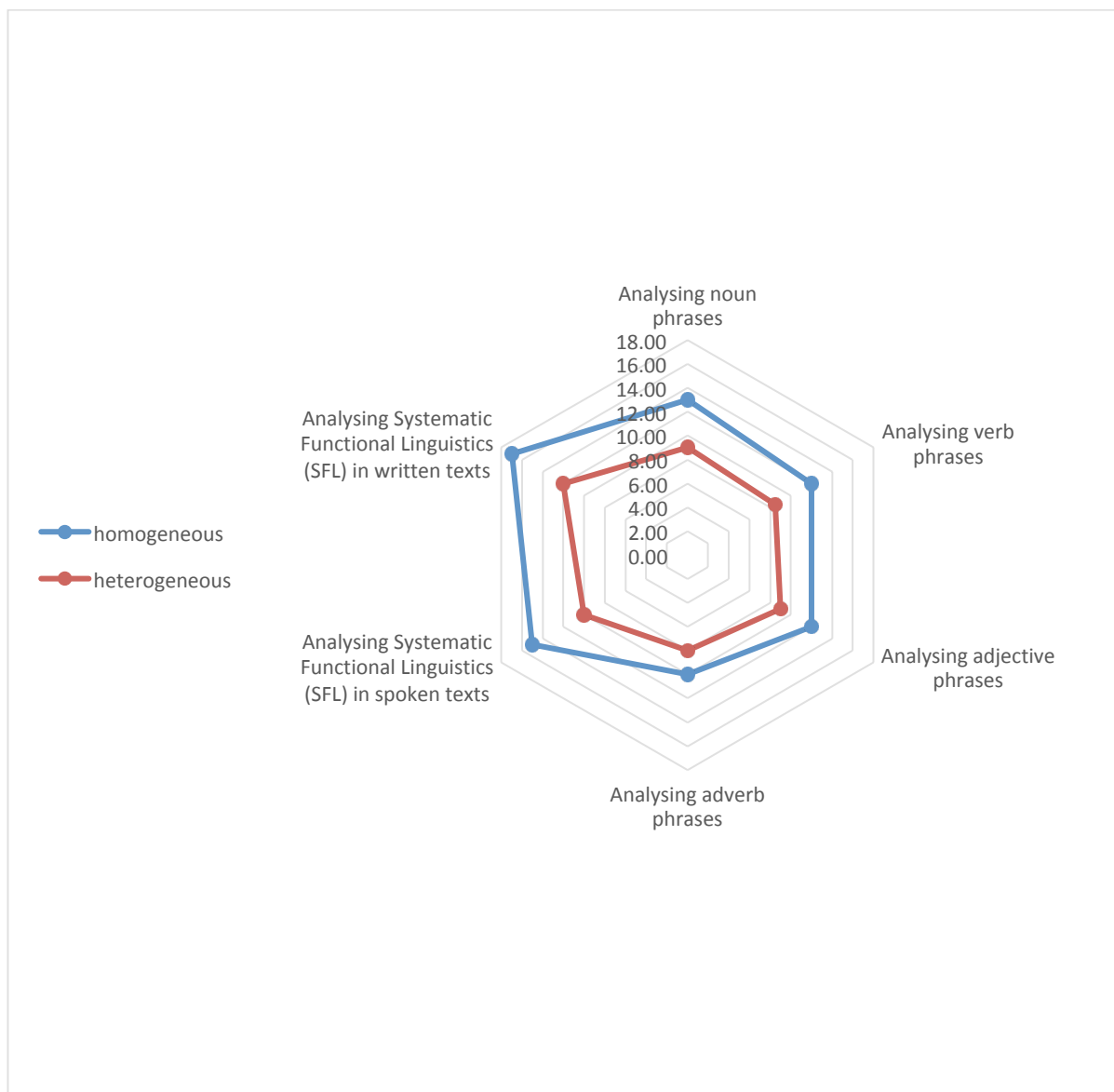


Figure 2. Students' Speed Level in Minutes while Responding to Linguistic Activities

Discussion of Findings

The interpretation of the results of the two inventories is as follows:

- Students who exhibited characteristics consistent with the research on green brains, mostly had strengths in the Bodily-Kinaesthetic intelligence and were found to be *Tactile/Kinesthetic* learners who learn best from hands-on activities and movement.
- Students who displayed characteristics consistent with the research on red brains, commonly had Visual and Logical intelligences and were found to be *visual* learners who learn best by seeing material.
- Students possessing attributes consistent with the research on purple brains primarily had strengths in the Intrapersonal and Logical intelligences and were observed to be *analytical* learners who learn best logically and individually.

- Those students who revealed traits consistent with the research on blue brains, mostly had Verbal-Linguistic and Interpersonal intelligences were inclined to be *global* learners who learn best spontaneously and cooperatively.

The interpretation of the results of the checklist is as follows:

- Students' accuracy level in performing the linguistic activities in heterogenous groups was better than that of their performance in homogeneous groups. However, this variance was reduced towards the end of the experiment when the group members became familiar with each other. The students spent an entire semester interacting in groups, and thus, they became very familiar with each other's preferred way of learning and approaching a linguistic activity.
- Students' speed level in performing the given linguistic activities in heterogenous groups was faster than their performance in homogeneous groups. Yet, as in the case of the students working in homogeneous groups, by the end of the experiment, students' speed in performing the activities increased due to the familiarity among group members. This is due to the fact that during that time, they grew to know each other's preferred way of learning and approaching a linguistic activity.

Conclusion

Learning and language learning can occur through several means in different environments. Educators should respect and consider the learners' individual differences and how to divide them for optimum group work. They should be familiar with the implications of the different brain colours and multiple intelligences and try to apply them on varied types of activities in order to guarantee each learner's involvement in the learning process. Educators should encourage their verbal-linguistic learners to employ several leaning activities such as listening to verbal lectures, reading texts, taking notes while listening to lectures, and recorded books. As for logical-mathematical learners, teachers can present information in sequential steps, analyse structure and goals, specifically spell out requirements, and utilize puzzles of logic. For visual- spatial learners to be successful, educators are compelled to have the learners look at pictures to gain clues to meaning, and to draw diagrams, graphics, charts, maps and pictures that will facilitate comprehension. Those students with the bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence can be encouraged to perform experiments, play games, complete creative projects and models, follow instructions to make something, participate in role playing or other cooperative learning activities. Regarding musical learners, teachers may have students sing songs and chants, drill, listen to recorded books, and read and recite poetry. Interpersonal learners will benefit from discussing ideas in groups, participating in choral reading, collaborative learning, and peer teaching. Intrapersonal learners will profit by keeping diaries and journals, and writing short essays and stories. Similarly, naturalist learners can learn through field trips and realia. Learners who use their smell and taste intelligences can learn through discriminating different odours, flavours and spices. All the previous activities may be useful in improving learning and language acquisition in heterogenous groups through establishing a blended learning context that incorporates brain colours and multiple intelligences during face-to-face and online tutorials. Taking the time to identify the students' brain colour and multiple intelligences profiles at the beginning of the

learning process would facilitate establishing a proper educational context that suits a variety of learners in one classroom.

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**Using Multiple Intelligence Activities and Film to Stimulate the
Communicative EFL Learner**

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Abstract

The present Action Research (AR) study investigates the impact Multiple Intelligence (MI) activities and film can have on EFL students' conversational skills. The participants were adult language learners who had moved to the UK for academic and/or professional purposes. The majority of the students were accustomed to a teacher-centred learning environment where most of their L2 input derived from their coursebook. The combination of MI and film in the learners' language lessons aimed to stimulate their linguistic competence and conversational interaction in a student-centred environment. The multimedia used in the study was chosen with educational objectives in mind and the activities were to fulfil pedagogical language learning issues.

Keywords: multiple Intelligence, films for language learning purposes, L2 conversational skills, multilingual language learning contexts

The use of film in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom has been known to be an effective language teaching tool. This form of media can be considered contextually rich (Kaiser, 2009), engaging (Malingier & Rossy, 2003; Yu, 2009), able to provide genuine input, to serve as a motivational language learning source (Mishan, 2004), and to decrease anxiety when using the foreign language (Lee, 2009). The advantages are especially evident in multilingual contexts, where the learners do not share the same L1, or first language, and need to communicate with their peers using a less formal linguistic system. More specifically, through the integration of films in language learning programs, students can see how people communicate in real life in different conversational contexts since films “help bring the outside world into the classroom” (Tomalin, 1986, p.9). This was the inspiration of the present action research (AR) study, which aimed to introduce film in the language classroom and accompany it with Multiple Intelligence (MI) activities (Dryden & Vos, 2005) to stimulate and increase L2 communication in the classroom.

The AR study took place in a multilingual context where the participating students had moved to the UK for academic and/or professional purposes. In their previous learning settings, they were exposed to teacher-centred learning environments where their main source of language input was their coursebook. The students had expressed difficulty communicating with native English speakers outside the classroom, but found it difficult to release the formal communication style they had acquired in their home countries. Their lack of confidence in communicating in an informal manner made them reluctant to interact with their peers in the classroom unless they shared the same L1. Students' own hesitation deprived them of constructive L2, (second language), input and development. The integration of films was prompted to assist students in becoming more comfortable in communicating in an everyday informal communication style and, incidentally, develop their linguistic and cultural competence. More specifically, the study focused on the following research questions:

1. How can the stimulation of film and MI activities change the classroom and communicative dynamic in a multilingual context?
2. To what extent can films allow learners to comprehend and observe the context of discourse and language, and how can they affect learners' L2 interactions?

Literature Review

The Use of Film in the Language Classroom

It is broadly understood among EFL practitioners that when teaching oral skills, coursebooks mainly focus on formal language, rather than informal elements, such as small talk or daily conversational interaction. Educational settings that are coursebook-driven lack authentic everyday speech, which can arouse feelings and opinions, and create an opportunity for discussion in the L2 classroom (Katchen, 2003). The coursebook focus sets obstacles when the practitioner aims to create an environment where the language learner is encouraged to deliver a conversation similar to that they would have in their L1. King (2002) has argued that films are a refreshing learning experience for learners who need to take a break from rote learning of continuous English vocabulary and drill practices. Films are also considered a good opportunity to replace teacher-centred learning with something realistic and relatable, a dimension that is often missing in coursebook-oriented teaching. A number of studies have revealed that films can become an integral part of the curriculum due to their significant effect on the development of basic language skills (Baratta & Jones, 2008; Yaseen & Shakir,

2015). It has also been argued that films are insightful means of teaching due to the fact that they reflect people's way of life in terms of variety, authenticity and contemporaneity (Sufen, 2006). Films can strengthen audio and visual perceptions simultaneously and can present paralinguistic features found in the L2 (Arthur, 1999). Films can capture the learners' attention (Tognozzi, 2010); increase motivation to language learning (Ruusunen, 2011); provide promising material to teach conversations (Martín & Jaén, 2009); and improve the students' awareness of the L2 target culture (Zhang, 2013; Arthur, 1999). Despite the pedagogical advantages, there are pitfalls to using films if their execution is not done with the educational perspective in mind and if the selection of the film tends to be for entertainment purposes rather than learning. Keene (2006, p.223) cautions the use of films, as they are mainly used in the learners' home for entertainment, escapism and relaxation, all of which encourage a passive form of viewing. This requires the teacher to facilitate interactive viewing (Kabooaha, 2016). King (2002) also stresses the importance of choosing appropriate films that are not too complex for the level of understanding of the students, and not offensive in content.

Combining Film and the MI Approach

Utilizing MI activities is a way to suggest an alternative to a traditional classroom setting. The MI approach has been embraced by practitioners as it gives them the opportunity to address an array of ways in which people learn (Shore, 2004). One can observe the effect MI has on language learners in Chen and Gardner's (2005, p.79) work, where the authors have elaborated on the types of intelligence:

1. Linguistic intelligence, describes the ability to perceive and generate spoken and written language,
2. Logical-mathematical intelligence, involves the ability to appreciate and utilize numerical, abstract, and logical reasoning to solve problems,
3. Musical intelligence, which entails the ability to create, communicate and understand meanings made out of sound,
4. Spatial intelligence, which refers to the ability to perceive, modify, transform, and create visual and/or spatial images,
5. Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, deals with the ability to use all or part of one's body to solve problems or fashion products,
6. Naturalistic intelligence, concerns the ability to distinguish among critical features of the natural environment,
7. Interpersonal intelligence, describes the ability to recognize, appreciate and contend with the feelings, beliefs, and intentions of other people,
8. Intrapersonal intelligence, involves the ability to understand oneself including emotions, desires, strengths, and vulnerabilities and to use such information effectively in regulating one's own life.

The theory of MI offers eight kinds of learning and teaching approaches. Teachers can stimulate and ensure an assortment of activities so that students can embrace their full potential in the language learning process (Bas, 2008). The primary importance of the implementation of the MI theory is that it is possible to give language learners a chance to use their predominant strengths and capabilities in order to foster learning (Spirovska, 2013). Currie (2003) suggests that if practitioners are familiar with the intelligence profiles of students in a language classroom, they can develop a range of activities addressing students' needs. According to Arnold & Fonseca (2004), when MI methods are applied in the language

classroom, teachers are better able to explore the areas of personal meaningfulness and recognize the differences inherent in their students.

Offering language learners diverse learning experiences provides them with robust education and opportunities to spherically learn in a world that sees constant change and diversity (Kagan & Kagan, 1998). According to Hamurlu's (2007) findings, MI-based instruction can increase students' achievement in English language learning and create a positive effect on students' attitudes towards the language. Hall Haley's (2001) research showed teachers were profoundly affected by MI approaches and felt a shift in their teaching experience, in paradigm, to a more learner-centred environment. The same study also indicated that language learners displayed a keen interest in MI concepts and showed positive responses to the increased variety of instructional strategies. By taking MI a step further and combining it with the use of films, one may argue that with inexpensive equipment and easily acquired skills, practitioners and language learners can employ a multiplicity of motivating methodologies. According to Yeh (2014), the Multiple Intelligence Teaching Model (MIFT) can best enhance language learners' motivation. The initial purposes of the MIFT model was to 1) enhance L2 learners' linguistic and cultural competence and 2) enhance L2 learners' motivation and encouragement. In the case of the present study, the researcher has humbly attempted to add a third purpose, that of increasing conversational everyday language and self-confidence. Furthermore, there is a gap in the literature, as Yeh's study is the only recent research that focuses on MI and films.

Methodology

The Participants

The AR study took place at a private English language school in London, UK. There were 19 adult language learners in the class, ages 21–36, 12 male and 7 female, from Germany, Italy, Saudi Arabia, Japan and South Korea. The students had moved to the UK for professional and/or academic purposes and wished to improve their English, which would help them settle in the country. All students were accustomed to a coursebook led approach to language learning and teaching and felt self-conscious about their speaking skills. The English language classes lasted for two hours daily. The classroom setting supported a “flexible” U-shape layout where students could sit comfortably and face the television screen. Students were of different educational backgrounds and in the hope of gradually integrating film in the lesson, there were two build-up sessions leading to it. The students had not used films in their language learning in the past; therefore, the practitioner deemed it necessary to prepare the learners in order to avoid any misunderstandings regarding the purpose behind the viewing. The previous sessions focused on the theme of formal education.

Data Collection Methods

The data collection commenced before the film sessions took place in order to record whether there was an increase in students' L2 use and the nature of their language development. The present study included a triangulation of data collection tools, (Fielding & Fielding, 1986; Flick, 1992), which were selected to investigate the integration of films in an MI activity-based setting, and the effect they would have on students' speaking skills. The data collection tools were:

Observations were conducted by the researcher and author during students' group work and film viewing with a checklist sheet, which were used in order to discover the recurring patterns of behavior and language. These patterns

were identified to be appropriate for the context and served to discover students' interactions in the classroom setting.

A reflective journal was an important introspective tool in the research and was selected to provide insights and raise awareness regarding the reality of the multilingual classroom. Field notes were used to document the language produced and attitudes observed whilst monitoring students' discussions.

The field notes were included in the AR design as they were anticipated to serve as a foundation for conceptual reasoning. They were also used to produce meaning and understanding of the students' linguistic situation.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process was based on principles of grounded theory (Strauss, 1987; Glaser, 1992; Charmaz, 2006) and involved a number of readings of the data entries and progressive refining of emerging categories. The procedure was carried out as follows (inspired by Giannikas, 2013):

- The data from observation checklists were analysed on the Excel Data Analysis tool, which gave a list of descriptives to explain the data (Mizumoto & Plonsky, 2016). The process allowed themes to emerge, based on the repetition of actions and keywords indicated on the analysis of the checklists.
- The journal and field note texts were re-read and thoughts were annotated in the margin. The texts were examined closely to facilitate a micro-analysis of data.

The following sections will elaborate on the findings and present the reality of the multilingual language classroom in the scope of presenting students with a student-centred, stimulating L2 environment.

Language Teaching Strategies

For the film sessions the researcher/teacher took Chen and Gardner's (2005) types of intelligence to create the figure below, which was used as guidance for the creation of the lesson plan and MI activities upon which the lesson will be based. The activities derived from the film "*School of Rock*", which was selected as appropriate for the learning outcomes and classroom environment the researcher/teacher wanted to create in the classroom. The activities aimed to tease out the Multiple Intelligences as shown in Figure 1:

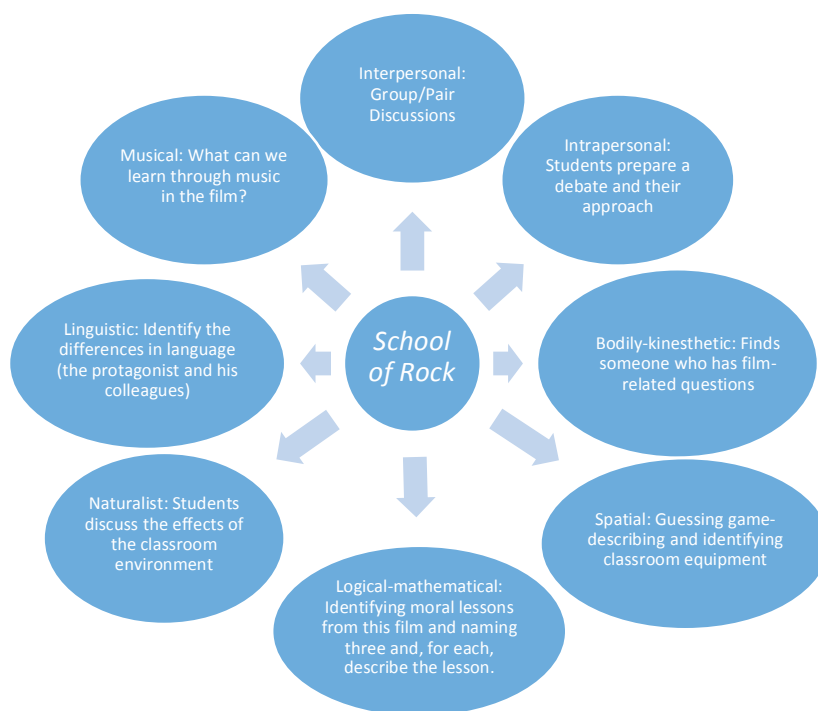


Figure 1. The MI Overview of a Lesson Plan

The MI viewed in Figure 1. were applied in two sessions so as to allow students to enjoy and benefit from the different features of the activities. The goal of the lesson was to provide students with a rich contextual setting that would trigger them to adopt spontaneous ways of using the L2 in a less formal manner. In order for the students to adjust to life in the United Kingdom, it was important that they learn to widen their scope of knowledge outside the coursebook content. The combination of the MI activities and the film was expected to arouse students' interests as something new, exciting and appropriate to their situation.

The AR study focused on a learning-through-doing process with the integration of film, anticipating that the students would be more actively involved. The film sessions supported pause-play activities, where the students saw segments of the film and then worked on various MI activities. The particular approach was chosen in order to ensure students' attention and emphasize the activities as learning tasks, rather than entertainment time. The film was separated into six segments and students were expected to view carefully and then work on their activities. The students were expected to discuss scenes, describe settings and plots, role play, ask each other questions and identify themselves with the characters in the film.

Findings

In agreement with what Stevick (1980, p. 4) observed, "success depends less on materials, techniques and linguistic analyses, and more on what goes on inside and between the people in the classroom". It was vital that the dynamics of the classroom were investigated. Dörnyei and Malderez (1999) have argued that group processes are a fundamental factor and can make all the difference when it comes to successful learning experiences and outcomes. More specifically, classroom dynamics can affect the quantity and quality of classroom discussions among students (Levine & Moreland, 1990), and the extent of co-operation between them (Johnson & Johnson, 1995).

In the case of the current context, the students had been observed to have a friendly relationship with each other; however, there was not a strong dynamic in the classroom. The students preferred to be seated next to the same people, usually next to those who shared the same L1. The following figure gives a visual of the classroom setting:

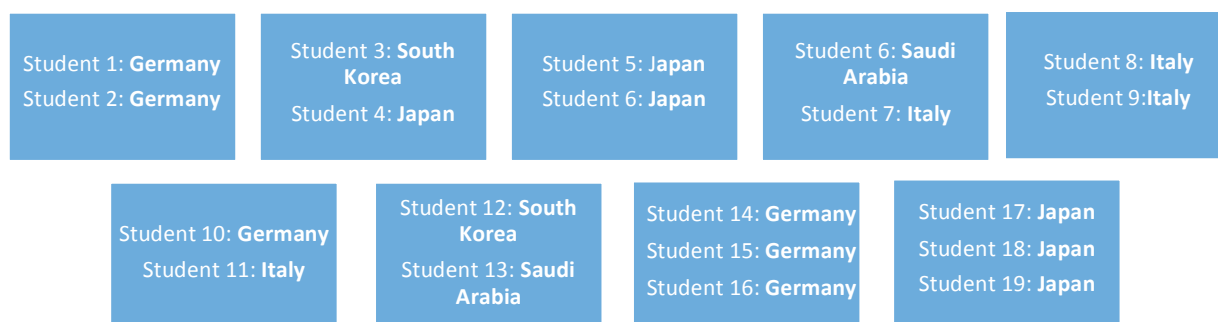


Figure 2. The students' preferred seating arrangement

In order to explore changes in the dynamic of the classroom, before the film began students were requested to be seated differently and work with others. There was an effort to pair students who did not share the same L1 in order to prompt an increase in the use of L2. The seating arrangement was as follows:

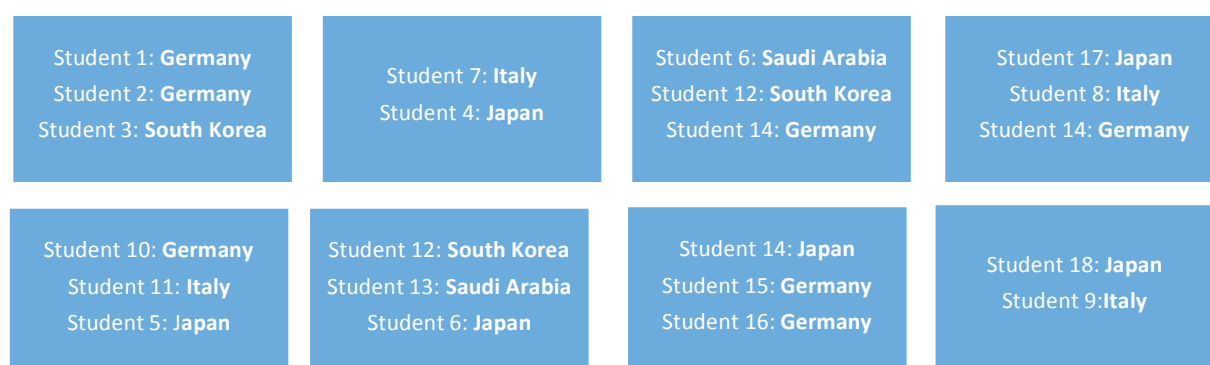


Figure 3. Seating arrangement to increase the L2

Before students were introduced to the MI activities and the film, they were asked to engage in a discussion about their school days. The students focused on what they liked about their time at school and what they would change. The observation data showed that the warm-up served as a good ice-breaker. Students were reluctant when asked to change seats and work with new partners. However, they found the topic intriguing and enjoyed discussing their school “traditions” and learning about different education settings. The activity brought about the participation and interaction of most students and only two (Student 5 and Student 17) were hesitant to be as verbal as their peers. This was an anticipated finding, as Schmuck and Schmuck (2001, p. 49) have argued, “classroom groups begin at different stages, depending on the students” past experiences in school. Students who have previously experienced primarily authoritarian teachers will be at different skill levels from students who have had ample experiences in communicating with one another and in collaboratively working on improving their group work. Nonetheless, it was recorded that even the cooperative skills and attitudes of the quietest students were enhanced and set a positive atmosphere for the film viewing and MI activities that followed.

Before the film began the students were given the activities they would be completing. They were guided through them in order to be aware of the note-taking they would need to execute as they viewed the film. Once the film began the students were observed to be interested and absorbed in the plot. According to the data, when students were asked to work on the first segment, one of the most eye-catching changes was that the students very willingly turned to strike a conversation with their peers and, for the needs of the task, repeated vocabulary they had heard in the film. This approach helped bring the students closer and created a stronger classroom dynamic. There was only one pair that asked for clarification in the first task, the rest of the students made sense of the new vocabulary from the context of the film.

After the warm-up discussion it was explained to the students that they would be watching the film and working on a variety of activities to exercise their conversational skills. Students were assigned roles according to Cohen's (1994) list, which included: 1) making the assignment of the roles such that everybody knew who was in charge of particular elements, 2) accompanying the roles with specific "job descriptions", and 3) assuring that all students were clear about their roles. Students accepted the new class-media and activities with enthusiasm. When the film started the students were observed to not have made notes of the majority of the words, but used them from memory. The sequence of the activities revealed that the language learners gradually increased the length of their discussion and made an effort to use more informal language. Compared to previous sessions, where the discussions were solely related to the coursebook, the film discussions were longer and were carried out autonomously. The discussions during the film sessions needed to be interrupted by the teacher in order to move on to the next task. The teacher gave minimum guidance and left the students to work through the tasks and develop the conversations on their own. It was also observed that students used the language creatively amongst themselves, compared to past performance. Nonetheless, three of the students were observed to lower their voices when they noticed they were being monitored by the teacher.

Table 1 displays how classroom dynamics were observed during the discussions:

Table 1. Field notes on classroom dynamics

Warm-up Activity	Students showed interest and were cooperative. They had smoothly following discussions on the topic and shared information with each other. They found this interesting and meaningful.
Students' Collaboration	Students' collaboration strengthened with each activity. The students were enjoying themselves and the conversations they were having with their peers. This had an immediate effect on their conversations as the participants made an effort to contribute to the discussion.
Informal Discussions	As students watched each segment of the film, they made an effort to speak to their peers in more informal language. This was especially observed among the male students.

Attitude towards MI Activities	The students were willing to complete all the activities and enjoyed being challenged. Two students were observed to be more stressed about the outcome of certain activities more than their peers; however, this did not have an effect on their performance.
Students' Confidence	Students' confidence built up gradually but they 20% of the participants were observed to be reluctant when they were to explain or include the teacher into the conversation.

Discussion

The activities and segments of the film allowed time for students to interact. Additionally, students were given the space and opportunity to express their opinions regarding the tasks.

The visual feature of a film worked as an alternative language teaching tool. With the use of picture, students were able to understand and interpret new vocabulary and language structure in a full visual context. In the case of the current study, the film helped the learners' comprehension and motivation to use new registers and vocabulary. It also enabled them to listen to language exchanges and associate the visual supports, such as facial expressions and gestures, simultaneously. These visual clues helped the students comprehend the nature of the language used in the film.

In Table 2, one can see the students' progress and whether they reached the learning objective:

Table 2. Students' progress

Film Discussion: Students discussed 1) the effect of the classroom environment and one's relationship with their peers and, 2) what is the difference in language among the protagonist and his colleagues?	The students were observed to willingly take part in the conversation and justify their answers. Nonetheless, in the group/pairs of Students 18 & 9, Students 14, 15 & 16 there were dominant students who prevailed and were recorded to lead most of the conversation with the rest of the group agreeing to their thoughts and opinions. All students were able to identify linguistic differences among the characters of the film and explain the reason why the characters were expected to express themselves differently in various occasions.
Debate: What education should look like Students were separated into two groups for this activity and were given a scenario. One group was assigned to be secondary school students and the other group was the school teachers. The two groups debated on what education should be and how it can become more effective.	For the needs of the debate all students were expected to participate, however, three students (Students 6, 12 and 13) took to the stand when making their point on behalf of their group. The rest of the students supported their peers by exclaiming "Yeah!", or "I agree" but most were hesitant to take part in the debate.

<p>Musical: What can be learned through music in the film? Students were expected to complete a listening task with a focus on informal language and the use of music in the film.</p>	<p>Students enjoyed the music they heard in the film and they were able to identify the lyrics and understand the meaning behind them. Half of the students were familiar with the popular songs that were heard in the film and this gave them a sense of familiarity. They were given activities to fill in the gaps when listening to certain songs and as a final task they were to create music/songs of their own about learning English in London. The students proved to be creative and even the most reluctant ones stepped out of their safety net and produced interesting and inspiring work. The students made an effort to use language they acquired from the film.</p>
<p>Spatial: Guessing game-describing and identifying classroom equipment Students were to watch segments of the film and identify various equipment in the classroom and make notes. After they identified up to 10 objects they were to describe the objects without giving away the name for their peers to guess what they were describing.</p>	<p>The students were enthusiastically willing to participate in the game and made an effort to be creative for this part as well. They were not given much time to prepare for how they were going to describe the objects and this frightened them slightly. The reason they were not given time to prepare was so that students were prompted to use the language spontaneously and adopt real-life situations. This was an attempt to pull students away from the rehearsed language they were accustomed to using. All students were observed to be nervous the first few seconds but quickly overcame their fear and enjoyed the game. By the end of the game there were smiles of accomplishment across the room.</p>
<p>Bodily-kinesthetic: Find someone who with film-related questions Students were asked to do the known Find Someone Who task by asking questions from the film (i.e. Do you remember what Jack's band was called? Why did Jack ask the principal out for drinks?)</p>	<p>The students did not want to stand up at first but became more willing as they realised the meaning of the activity. However, the teacher/researcher needed to closely monitor the students who shared the same L1 as they were observed to ask and answer the questions in their mother tongue.</p>
<p>Logical-mathematical: Identifying moral lessons from this film, naming three and, for each, describe the moral lesson Students are to identify the moral lessons of the film and discuss them in class.</p>	<p>The students shared ideas and had a give-and-take of information with their peers when identifying the moral lessons of the film. They were recorded to work well and come to an agreement with their peers easily.</p>

Conclusion

A large number of students attend language schools across London every year in order to either improve their English or relocate to the UK. Language schools consist of a number of multilingual classes where students come from different L2 backgrounds; however, the vast majority of the students express the need to improve their conversational skills and acquire language that would be used in everyday discussions. Bringing familiar media into the language classroom can be beneficial, as it can motivate the use of informal conversational skills. Some teachers may doubt the use of films because it is associated with entertainment. Nonetheless, the entertainment feature holds many pedagogical benefits that teachers can use and apply in their classes. When combining viewings with MI activities it, can prompt students to carry out discussions spontaneously. This is an approach many learners have not encountered as their language learning experience mainly derives from coursebook-based classes, where the language used is mostly structured. MI activities and films give a more “authentic” touch to the learning context and prompt not only students but teachers to make the commitment to demonstrate and improve their students' achievement level. Additionally, the nature of MI activities and films encourage student autonomy. By using the present data as a sample, one can see that the teachers' involvement was to guide the students with minimum teacher talk and intrusion. Students were encouraged to take responsibility for their learning via leadership roles, giving students positions and tasks of genuine authority, encouraging peer debates and allowing the group to make real decisions.

Nonetheless, the present study is not free of limitations. It was noticed in the data analysis that the lack of the students' perception of the use of films and MI activities, via interviews or questionnaires, was a significant limitation. Students could have shed more light on the effect films and MI activities had on their conversational skills and the use of informal language. Further research is needed in order to investigate the matter more thoroughly and look at the impact films and MI activities can have on conversational skills in a multilingual context, from the participants' perspective. However, it is important to note that such studies give researchers the incentive to continue to track the nature of L2 speaking skills in multilingual contexts.

The present study focused on “real group” discussions, which are a desirable entity, especially in the case of the participants who wished to relocate and settle in a new culture and educational/professional environment. Students showed signs of releasing anxiety when using and increasing the L2. Students relied less on the teacher and more on their own “stored” knowledge and the new knowledge acquired. The classroom dynamics and linguistic intake had short and long-term learning effects, as they gave students the motivation to use different aspects of the L2 and embrace the cultural background of the target language.

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Teacher Training and Teaching Practice: The Case of Niger's English as a Foreign Language Teachers

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Abstract

There continues to be a debate as to the role and value of educator preparation programs throughout the world. This paper examines self-report data of the instructional language learning methods of Nigerien English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers. This study sought to understand what instructional methods EFL teachers are using in their classrooms and if there is any connection between instructional methods and teacher training. All EFL teachers in Niger were surveyed to answer these questions. Teachers used a variety of instructional methods based on their preservice training; however, these differences were contained to teachers in their first five years of teaching. The findings support that teacher training is associated with the instructional decisions of teachers.

Keywords: teacher training, English as a foreign language, pedagogy, factor analysis, Niger

How best to prepare teachers for the daily responsibilities of classroom teaching is an ongoing debate in the United States and around the world. Empirical research in the United States has shown certain benefits of completing an educator preparation program (EPP) prior to assuming full-time teaching responsibilities. Selected benefits include increased teacher confidence, self-efficacy (Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2002), and prolonged teaching careers (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2003). Boyd and colleagues have shown how certain aspects of training programs can impact a teacher's preparedness for the classroom (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2009). US-based research indicates that preservice teachers with some training are better teachers than those without (Konold et al, 2008). Even with this and similar research, the debate over educator preparation continues with discussion on the practical implications of resource distribution and the theoretical basis of the benefits (or lack thereof) of training teachers. Highly developed countries, like the United States, have the benefits of sufficient resources and a wealth of empirical data to enrich the debate on the necessity of teacher training. However, many countries in the world lack both sufficient resources for education and empirical data to guide the debates over the allocation of these limited resources. One such country is Niger where data for this study were collected to understand if educator preparation is associated with the instructional methods English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers use in their classrooms. Data presented in this paper can inform policy makers, school administrators, and teacher educators as to the potential impact of teacher training on instructional methods.

The authors recognize that schooling is inherently local while being caught between dominant, national norms and priorities (Levinson & Holland, 1996). Schools also play a role in the cultural reproduction (Bourdieu, 1974; Fernandes, 1998) of the dominant group. In the current interconnected world, the "dominant group" could be a foreign power. In the context of Niger, the United States government funds teacher training efforts in EFL (and sponsored the research reported in this paper). There is a lack of data to indicate what forms of instruction are most effective in Nigerien EFL classes and therefore it is important to learn from these rich contexts. However, the authors bring a decidedly non-evaluative lens to the instructional decisions made by Nigerien EFL teachers.

Objectives

Understanding educational equity across diverse countries requires broadening the scope of research to settings that have gone unexplored. As an underdeveloped country located in West Africa, Niger has not experienced a high level of empirical research directed at its educational system in general and at its English as a Foreign Language (EFL) programs in particular. In this paper the case of Nigerien EFL teacher preparation and instructional methods is described as a potential indicator of what may be happening in other similarly situated countries who have also not been exposed to much empirical research. Specifically, the research questions guiding this study included:

1. What instructional methods are EFL teachers in Niger employing in their classrooms?
2. Is the training EFL teachers in Niger received prior to beginning their careers associated with differences in the instructional methods they employ?
3. Do associations between training and instructional methods continue past five years of teaching experience?

The answers to these research questions will provide guidance to policy makers, researchers, and teacher educators in Niger and other countries that find themselves in similar situations.

There has been scant research conducted on education in Niger. There is research focusing on efforts to increase access to education for Nigerien children and particularly girls (Wynd, 1999) or on education as a development program example (Greany, 2008; Honda & Kato, 2013). Bourdon, Frolich, & Michaelowa (2006) examined data on elementary teachers in Niger hired either as traditional professionals or as less paid short-term contractors. The findings suggest there was no difference in the educational outcomes for students between these two groups of teachers (Bourdon et al., 2006). In a worldwide survey conducted by the British Council about teaching English, Niger was not even included (Rixon, 2013).

The purpose of this study was to identify the landscape of EFL teaching in Niger. Specifically, it sought to understand how EFL teachers in a developing country in West Africa chose to instruct their students and if different preparation pathways had lingering implications to their instructional methods. Furthermore, the study sought to understand if any association between teaching practices and training remained after teachers had been in the profession for an extended period of time.

English Language Teaching Instructional Methods – A Review

Most of the literature on instructional methods and approaches for language teaching is conceptualized by Western scholars. Instructional methods for language teaching, specifically English language teaching, need to consider the local educational and cultural contexts and offer a voice to the local teachers and students. English language teaching instructional methods, approaches, or strategies have various definitions in the literature (Herrera & Murry, 2016) and for the purpose of this study are defined as a method as “a body of philosophically grounded and purposively integrated strategies and techniques” (Herrera & Murry, 2016, p.184).

There is no scarcity of (historical) instructional methods, approaches, strategies or principles of teaching English, such as the grammar-translation method, the direct method, community language learning, communicative language learning, or content-based instruction (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). Scholars such as Lightbown and Spada (2013) talk about natural and classroom settings where a language is learned. In terms of classroom settings Lightbown and Spada (2013) distinguish between structured-based classrooms – where the focus is on language form and accuracy and communication, and content-based classrooms – where meaning and communication drive the instruction (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

Research on EFL instruction in countries from Asia suggests there are challenges in implementing EFL methods conceptualized in Western countries such as the communicative teaching methods (Butler, 2011; Thompson & Yanagitab, 2017; Yook & Lee, 2016). The reasons stem from how teaching and learning is locally conceptualized; resources such as, large class sizes, and hours dedicated to English language teaching, teachers' English language proficiency level and confidence, teacher training or evaluation tools; English language exams focused on grammar; and lack of opportunities to use English in authentic settings (Butler, 2011). Additional challenges in the teaching of English in Asia are the policies which require EFL teaching starting in early grades despite the lack of qualified teachers (Hayes, 2017).

There is no one best instructional method or approach for teaching English (Smagorinsky, 2009) and “teachers and teachers in training need to be able to use approaches and methods flexibly and creatively based on their own judgement and experience” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 250). The context of where language learning happens is important: English as a second language (ESL), where English is official language of the society or one of the designated languages of society, or English as a foreign language (EFL) – where English is not used widely to communicate in society. The learners and their languages, identities, and motivations are important considerations (Brown, 2002). Thus, language teaching happens in “localized environments” (Burns, 2008). Research has also looked at qualities of teachers of English and identified teachers’ good language proficiency levels, pedagogical knowledge, and the ability to address and understand students’ needs (Mullock, 2010). However, there might be gaps between what methods teachers say they are using and the methods they are actually implementing (Walsh & Wyatt, 2014).

Looking at the big picture of English language teaching, Kumaravadivelu (2006) noted “Three principal and perceptible shifts: (a) from communicative language teaching to task-based language teaching, (b) from method-based pedagogy to postmethod pedagogy, and (3) from systemic discovery to critical discourse” (p. 60). These constitute a major transition in TESOL methods. In the light of the “post-methods” era (Richards & Rodgers, 2001), “localized environments” (Burns, 2008), and postpedagogy and critical discourse in English language teaching (Kumaravadivelu, 2006) in the 21st century, this study aimed at identifying the specific “localized” instructional methods Nigerian EFL teachers use in their classrooms. For the purpose of the study, a method is “a body of philosophically grounded and purposively integrated strategies and techniques” (Herrera & Murry, 2016, p.184). The list of techniques and strategies included in the survey was created based on information and suggestions from the local teachers and teacher trainers in Niger. The authors were mindful in creating a survey that was informed by the local context rather than imposing their own ideas about what EFL methods they expected to see in the classrooms. Specifically, the strategies and techniques were a combination of what teacher trainers had offered during professional development; what they expected and hoped to see in the classrooms; and what they actually saw teachers using. The list of strategies that were included in the survey (as seen in Table 1) can be grouped as traditional, communicative, and writing-intensive. The labels used are informed by the literature on EFL instructional teaching methods available, and they were used to describe succinctly and clearly the language teaching that was observed to happen in Nigerian EFL classrooms. The labels used to group the strategies are similar to instructional methods described in the literature on teaching English such as grammar-translation method or communicative language teaching method (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). The grouping of strategies was also informed by research methodology in that the statistical analysis allowed for a clear picture of what happens in the classroom when the strategies are grouped.

Table 1. Most Commonly Used EFL Teaching Methods

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Use the blackboard	4.94	0.387
Sentences	4.74	0.587
Writing exercises	4.70	0.581
Explicit grammar instruction	4.60	0.692
Drills	4.60	0.814
Encouragement, praise, reward	4.27	1.214
Copying	4.22	1.317
Student created language	4.04	1.295
Teacher led discussion	4.00	1.116
Genuine student production	3.99	1.313
Speaking activities not including what is done during the warm-up	3.95	1.330
Reading from the book	3.86	0.938
Translation	3.77	1.068
Pair work, group work	3.62	1.034
Peer review	3.53	1.396
Student centered discussion	3.46	1.331
Paragraphs	3.29	1.024
Lecture	3.25	1.476
Tasks (real world activities)	2.98	1.478
Essays	2.71	1.059
Visual aids (photos, realia, etc.)	2.69	1.573
Games, songs	2.57	1.215
Grammar instruction in a language other than English	2.44	1.531
Narratives	2.43	1.135
Listening to authentic recordings	1.51	1.026

Traditional instructional methods refer to strategies and elements from grammar-translation, structured-based instruction, and teacher-centered classrooms which have less emphasis on meaning and communication. Some of the strategies include translation, teacher lecture, grammar instruction about English conducted in students' native language, drills and copying of text. Communicative instructional methods refer to strategies and techniques in line with communicative approaches in which meaning making and communication are paramount to language learning and teaching. Some of the strategies identified as communicative are: student pair work and group work, discussions, both student or teacher led, speaking activities and real-world tasks. Writing intensive instructional methods refer to strategies that focus on producing and practicing writing, such as writing paragraphs, essays or narratives,

but also additional strategies that precede writing tasks such as listening to authentic recordings, reading from a book, or games. This method aligns with some EFL students' expectations of being able to write emails or texts in English for the workplace. The writing intensive methods could possibly be part of a complete language learning program such as content-based instruction in which teachers use process writing.

Connecting Training to Practice

The purpose of this study was to identify the composition of EFL instructional methods and EFL teacher training in Niger. Worldwide, there are not enough qualified English language teachers for primary grades who are well trained in the pedagogy of language teaching and who have adequate English language proficiency levels (Rixon, 2013). In addition, teacher qualifications differ from context to context. For example, a teacher may know English but have no formal teacher training; might hold an English language degree but have no teacher training; or could be a classroom teacher who passed an English language proficiency test only (Rixon, 2013).

The way training is connected to practice is through EPP standards such as Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages/Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (TESOL/CAEP) Standards for P–12 Teacher Education Programs. For EFL settings, such as Niger, there are no uniform standards for teacher education. However, TESOL International Association has developed *The TESOL Guidelines for Developing EFL Professional Teaching Standards* (Kuhlman & Knežević, n.d), and there are countries that have modified the TESOL/CAEP Standards for P–12 Teacher Education Programs to fit their context or created their own standards (Kuhlman & Knežević, n.d).

The literature suggests that EFL/ESL teachers' preservice or in-service training and/or classroom experiences influence and inform their teaching and practices. Yook and Lee (2016) interviewed six secondary EFL teachers from Korea about their EPP and their classroom practices. Findings indicate the teachers' EPP had some impact on their teaching and that in-service training and observing other teachers' classrooms had a bigger impact. The teachers mentioned the local school context of national English tests and their perceived lack of English proficiency and confidence in their English skills were challenges in implementing what they learned (Yook & Lee, 2016). Novice teachers from a TESOL program in Canada considered the practicum and classroom experience to be more valuable than theory, as useful for their readiness to teach adults (Faez & Valeo, 2012). Eight EFL teachers from Slovakia, who attended an in-service teacher training, were surveyed, observed, and interviewed after the training to see if any changes happened in their teaching practices and professional development endeavors. No changes seemed to have happened or were sustained over time (Kubanyiova, 2006).

Teachers' knowledge and skills (developed during preservice and in-service training and through classroom experience) influence the way they teach. Specifically, EFL teachers' knowledge of grammar and familiarity with communicative language teaching impacts what happens in the classroom (Nazari & Allahyar, 2012). Four Iranian EFL teachers were observed and interviewed about their grammar teaching. The teachers themselves seemed to have different knowledge about grammar which influenced how they taught it (Nazari & Allahyar, 2012):

While some teachers tended to avoid teaching grammar and even answering students' grammar questions, some put a great emphasis on grammar. The

former, who applied inductive approaches, confessed that teaching grammar was difficult for them. However, the latter, who applied deductive approaches, seemed more comfortable with and confident about utilizing traditional ways to teach and explain grammar (p. 81).

It was also interesting that while all four thought they were teaching using CLT, they all seemed to have elements of traditional teaching such as teacher centered classrooms (Nazari & Allahyar, 2012).

König and colleagues (2016) assessed 444 EFL preservice teachers from universities in Germany. They assessed teachers' knowledge, more specifically, content knowledge (CK), pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) and general pedagogical knowledge (GPK). Findings suggest CK, PCK and GPK to be interrelated, and teacher knowledge on the three dimensions varied between universities, which suggests that graduates from different programs may not have the same levels of teacher knowledge (König et al., 2016).

There are no uniform expectations on who can teach English in Niger, which can lead to diverse and varied practices in the classroom (Wiens, Andrei, Anassour, & Smith, 2018). Teachers can be taught to teach in specific ways. This has been shown through studies of professional development activities designed for practicing teachers (Borko, 2004). Meanwhile studies have also demonstrated that specific training provided to preservice teachers can have an immediate impact on teacher instructional practices (Chen, 2010). However, it can be difficult for EPPs to overcome established beliefs and practices in preservice teachers (Johnson, 1994). What has not been well-answered in the literature is the extent to which EPPs have a lasting impact on how teachers teach.

In addition to preservice training, other factors may impact teachers' instructional choices. Resources, curricula, testing requirements, and school culture can all impact the manner in which teachers decide to instruct their students (Rao & Lei, 2014). There is clear evidence that teachers improve in their instruction at least for the first few years of teaching (Attebery, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2015; Harris & Sass, 2011; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005). Additionally, there is ample confirmation that teacher professional development can impact teaching practices after teachers leave their EPPs (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002; Thurlings & den Brok, 2017).

EFL Teacher Preparation in Niger

The local context of how Nigerien EFL teachers are trained is significant for this study. To become an EFL teacher in Niger, there were no consistent standards or requirements across the country. Thus, EFL teachers in Niger became teachers in one of the following three ways: 1) graduate with a bachelor's degree from either the Faculte des Lettres et Sciences Humaines (FLSH: School of Arts and Humanities) or the Ecole Normale Supérieure (ENS: Teacher training institute) at Abdou Moumouni University; 2) received EFL training abroad; or 3) attended a summer EFL training program in Niger. Teachers trained in other countries generally came from neighboring countries such as Ghana and Nigeria where English is an official language. Besides these three options, there are EFL teachers in Niger who actually have no training at all in teaching EFL or in teaching in general. It is important to note that a large majority of EFL teachers in Niger (95%) are Nigerien nationals.

In this context of a diversely-trained teacher workforce in Niger and the lack of standardization of local educator preparation programs, the purpose of this study is to look

into any possible connections, if at all, between teachers' language teaching instructional methods and their training. The findings of the study provide insight about Niger, a country whose EFL teaching force and methods are not known outside of its borders.

Method

Setting, Population, and Sample

Data for this study were taken from a larger data-gathering effort supported by a grant from the United States Department of State (Wiens, Andrei, et al., 2018). The population for this study consisted of all of the middle school and high school EFL teachers in Niger (N = 1960). A total of 609 surveys were received from teachers for a response rate of 31.1%. The sample had an average of 7.43 years of experience teaching English. Teachers reported that 89% taught in public schools while 68% of teachers indicated that they taught in rural schools. Participants were asked to identify their teacher training as either ENS (13.7%), FLSH (51.1%), trained in other country (11%), summer training (2.7%), no teacher training (20.6%), or other. Participants were able to mark more than one answer; however, for this study only participants that selected one of those options were included (percentages presented above are for the sample used in this study only, n = 519). Participants that selected "other" were also not included.

Procedures

All Nigerien EFL teachers were sent paper surveys through regional teacher supervisors. As Nigerien teachers generally do not have access to computers or the internet, online surveys were not practical. Anecdotal evidence suggested this was the first time many of the participants had ever participated in a research study or been asked to complete a survey of this kind. A phone number was provided for participants to call and ask questions related to the completion of the survey which many participants called with a variety of questions regarding the survey. Teachers were asked to complete their surveys and return them to their regional supervisors within one week. The regional supervisors then returned the surveys *en mass* to the research team. Once the surveys were received, they were given confidential identification numbers and names were removed prior to data entry.

The list of strategies in the survey was created based on information from the teachers and teacher trainers in Niger. Thus, the strategies included in the survey were relevant to the local context and were informed by teacher professional development topics, by what teacher trainers expected to see in the classrooms, and what they actually saw. The instrument itself was a self-report of instructional practices. These inventory of practices were initially created by a member of the research team who was a teacher trainer of EFL teachers. The instructional practices were then reviewed by a local teacher trainer as well as two former EFL teachers to ensure that the items listed were clear and that the Nigerien EFL teachers would understand them as intended. The survey was constructed in English and translated into French as it is the *lingua franca* in the country and is the only language that all the EFL teachers would know. Two professional interpreters who had many years of experience with EFL education in Niger translated the survey into French separately. After translation, the two French versions were compared and differences between the two versions were reconciled by the interpreters. Finally, French-speaking members of the research team who work regularly with Nigerien EFL teachers, proof-read and edited the French for clarity and cultural appropriateness. Due to the assumption that the EFL teachers had differing levels of English language ability, it was determined that it would be better to include both languages. The final version of the survey included both the French and the original English. Participants

were assured their responses would remain confidential, and no participant names were connected or stored with the data. Permission to conduct the research was obtained from the Niger Ministry of Education in accordance with human subjects research guidelines.

Measures

Data for this study were taken from a larger survey on EFL teachers in Niger (Wiens, Andrei, et al., 2018; Wiens, Jang, Liu, Anassour, & Smith, 2018). The participants were asked, “How often do you use the following in your class?” They could select “daily”, “weekly”, “monthly”, “almost never”, or “never”. There were twenty-five different instructional practices listed, including items such as “student centered discussion”, “explicit grammar instruction”, and “translation” among others (see Table 1).

Analysis

To answer the research questions, the descriptive data from the sample of teachers were examined to determine the most frequently used practices among EFL teachers in Niger. To answer the second question, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted (Comrey & Lee, 1998) on the teacher responses to reduce the number of variables being examined in a meaningful theoretical and empirical format. Then, an EFA was used because of the novel context of the research. It was not appropriate to impose a factor structure from literature published outside of West Africa on data from Niger. Therefore, this was the best strategy to allow the data to determine the factor structure. After completing the EFA on the twenty-five teaching methods a multivariate analysis of variance (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996) was employed to determine if there were differences in the instructional practices of the EFL teachers trained in different ways. Post-hoc tests were conducted using Tukey HSD (honestly significant difference) analysis to better understand the relationships between groups (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). To help understand if professional development and experience might explain the difference in the MANOVA results, a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was conducted using the amount of professional development in English the teachers received in the last year and the number of years of teaching experience as covariates.

Finally, to answer the third research question and to understand if early-career teachers and later career teachers showed different associations between training and practice the participants were split in two groups: 1) teachers in the first five years of teaching, 2) teachers with more than five years of teaching experience. Then the MANOVA analysis described above was conducted again with these two populations separately. All analyses were conducted by the first author using SPSS version 24 (IBM, 2016).

Results

What instructional methods are EFL teachers in Niger employing in their classrooms?

The descriptive statistics were examined to understand the most commonly used instructional practices for Nigerien EFL teachers. Descriptive results are shown in Table 1 in order of the most common practices to least commonly used practices. The most commonly used practices are “use of the blackboard” ($M = 4.94$), “sentences” ($M = 4.74$), and “writing exercises” ($M = 4.70$). The least commonly used practices are “grammar instruction in a language other than English” ($M = 2.44$), “narratives” ($M = 2.43$), and “listening to authentic recordings” ($M = 1.51$). For full results, consult Table 1. These descriptive data provided an indication of the predominance of traditional instructional methods used by Nigerien EFL teachers.

Table 2. EFA Structure Matrix: Factor Loadings

	Factor		
	Traditional	Communicative	Writing Intensive
Pair work, group work		.558	
Peer review		.507	
Student centered discussion		.539	
Teacher led discussion		.416	
Encouragement, praise, reward		.531	
Translation	.685		
Student created language		.617	
Speaking activities not including what is done during the warm-up		.548	
Genuine student production		.663	
Lecture	.573		
Listening to authentic recordings			.458
Paragraphs			.528
Essays			.582
Narratives			.631
Games, songs		.507	
Visual aids (photos, realia, etc.)		.606	
Tasks (real world activities)		.565	
Grammar instruction in a language other than English	.688		

Note. Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Is the training EFL teachers in Niger received prior to beginning their careers associated with differences in the instructional methods they employ? An EFA was used to group the twenty-five strategies into more manageable analytical groups. Initial examination of the Scree Plot as well as Eigen Values determined that a three-factor structure best fit the data. It was determined that using principal axis factoring with a Varimax rotation with Kaiser Normalization provided the cleanest factor structure for the data (Comrey & Lee, 1998). Results can be seen in Table 2. Variables were limited to factor loadings of at least .300 and were placed in the factors with the highest factor loading. Six variables did not fit in the factor structure and were dropped, “use of blackboard”, “sentences”, “writing exercises”, “drills”, “copying”, and “reading from the book”. The factors were named based on methods that are mentioned in the literature (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011) for which definitions more closely related to the groups created as follows (with alpha values included):

Factor 1: Traditional ($\alpha = .460$)

Factor 2: Communicative ($\alpha = .793$)

Factor 3: Writing Intensive ($\alpha = .675$)

While the factor loadings and the Cronbach’s alpha values listed above were not optimal, it was decided to proceed with the three-factor analysis due to the necessity of having a reduced

item strategy for analysis. These factors were then used for follow-up analyses of teaching methods in a more concise manner. Descriptive data for these factors included that they had different mean scores: Traditional ($M = 3.18$, $SD = 1.01$); Communicative ($M = 2.53$, $SD = .84$); and Writing Intensive ($M = 3.59$, $SD = .76$). Pair-sampled T-tests (Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs, 2003) indicated that the mean differences between each of these new variables were statistically significant ($p < .001$). This analysis showed empirical support that the teaching strategies can be grouped together according to selected three factors and that Nigerien EFL teachers employ these strategies at different frequencies.

Table 3. Factor Correlations

	Traditional	Communicative	Writing Intensive
Traditional	1	.193*	.153*
Communicative	.193*	1	.396*
Writing Intensive	.153*	.396*	1

* $p < .001$

Next, the training group differences on the combined teaching practices variables were analyzed. Prior to conducting the MANOVA, assumptions were checked (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). First, Mahalanobis distance was calculated to check for outliers (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). Two cases were deemed to be outside of the acceptable distance of 16.27. These two cases were deleted, leaving 517 cases for continued analysis. Visual scatter plots were examined and determined to be acceptable (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). Shapiro-Wilk tests for normality were all significant ($p < .001$) and normality was assumed, which determined later analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). Correlation analysis to test for multicollinearity were within an acceptable range for MANOVA (see Table 3). Box's test of equality of covariance matrices was acceptable ($p = .368$). Levene's test of equality of error variances was also acceptable with all training categories greater than $p = .05$. Descriptive results for the groups on the three EFL teaching strategies are shown in Table 4. Due to uncertainty about normality testing, Wilks' Lambda analysis was examined for the MANOVA results (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). There was a significant difference found in the MANOVA analysis ($F = 4.018$, $p < .001$). Post-hoc Tukey HSD tests found significant pairwise differences in the communicative factor. Teachers trained in other countries used communicative teaching strategies less frequently than their peers trained in the ENS programs, FLSH, and those with no training ($p < .05$). Importantly, there were differences in the use of teaching strategies based on the preservice training that Nigerien EFL teachers received.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics: Teaching Preference by Training

		Mean	SD
Traditional	None	3.288	.991
	ENS	2.902	1.011
	FLSH	3.092	.988
	Other Country	3.361	.950
	Summer Only	2.962	.943
	Total	3.134	.993
Communicative	None	2.332	.835
	ENS	2.454	.711
	FLSH	2.537	.793
	Other Country	2.886	.951
	Summer Only	2.962	.935
	Total	2.530	.828
Writing Intensive	None	3.418	.702
	ENS	3.660	.716
	FLSH	3.631	.687
	Other Country	3.412	.871
	Summer Only	3.751	.824
	Total	3.568	.725

Because the six removed variables from the factor structure were among the most frequently used teaching strategies, a follow-up analysis was conducted on these variables individually to see if there were group differences on these variables. One-way analysis of variance (Hinkle et al., 2003) was conducted and found that of the six strategies, only “copying” showed between group differences $F = 4.993$, $p = .001$. Post-hoc tests indicated that the group with no preservice training used the copying strategy more frequently than did the ENS, FLSH, and those trained in other countries ($p < .05$ for all pairs). Teachers with no training relied on the copying strategy more than did their peers. This finding reinforces the association between training and instructional methods used by EFL teachers.

Do associations between training and instructional methods continue past the first five years of teaching experience? There were two potentially confounding variables in this study that needed to be included in the analysis. There is clear evidence that teachers improve in their instruction at least for the first few years of teaching (Attebery et al., 2015; Harris & Sass, 2011; Rivkin, et al., 2005). Additionally, there is ample evidence that teacher professional development can impact teaching practices after teachers leave their EPPs (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002; Thurlings & den Brok, 2017). Therefore, it was important to control for these variables and determine if there was still a significant group difference. In

the survey there was a question asking participants to indicate how many professional development opportunities they had in English in the last year. Another question asked teachers to write in the number of years, including the current year, of teaching experience they had. Since there was no direct measure of how much professional development teachers had experienced over the course of their career, a new variable was created, multiplying teacher years of experience with the amount of professional development in the last year. This new variable was then used as a covariate in a MANCOVA (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996) to examine the group differences. The new variable had a mean of 11.39 and standard deviation of 12.653. MANCOVA analysis showed that there were still statistical group differences in the combined teaching factors even after controlling for professional development and years of experience, $F = 3.551, p < .001$. To test the relationship between professional development experience and instructional methods, correlations were calculated between the new variable and the teaching practices. The correlations indicate that years of experience in professional development are significantly related to instructional methods. For communicative ($r = .146, p = .001$) and writing intensive strategies ($r = .166, p < .001$), there was a positive correlation; however, in traditional methods there was a negative correlation between experience and use of these instructional methods ($r = -.172, p < .001$).

Table 5. Characteristics of Teaching Experience Groups

Group	First Five Years	More than Five Years
No Training	75	19
ENS	40	24
FLSH	93	146
Other Country	30	21
Summer Only	7	3
Total	245	213

Next, the dataset was split into two groups: teachers in their first five years of teaching and teachers with more than five years of teaching. The new participant numbers, shown in Table 5, left 245 in the first five years group and 213 in the more than five years group. Wilks' Lambda MANOVA test showed that the teachers in their first five years were significantly different on the combined dependent variables based on their preservice training $F = 2.935, p = .001$. Similar to the entire sample, the strongest difference was in the Communicative teaching strategies ($F = 4.506, p = .002$). Posthoc Tukey tests showed that the group with no training used these strategies less than both the other country group and the summer only group. Likewise, the FLSH group also reported using these strategies less than the other country group and the summer only group (all $p < .05$). Wilk's Lambda MANOVA results did not show a significant difference among training groups in the teachers with more than five years of experience, $F = 1.56, p = .099$. This analysis reveals that the association between training and teaching was only found among teachers early in their career and was no longer present in teachers with more than five years of teaching experience.

The analysis conducted in this study provides important links between teacher training and teaching practices. Descriptive statistics and mean group difference testing provide information on teaching practices in Niger and how these are associated with training in Niger. The implications of these findings will be discussed in greater detail in the following section.

Discussion

The debate over the purpose and place of in-service and preservice training as well as EPPs is occurring around the world, and there is an ever-increasing need for empirical research to contribute to debate. This study can contribute to this debate because it presents data from a context that has not experienced much empirical research, but examines universal educational issues. This study provides a description of the instructional methods EFL teachers in Niger use and shows an important association between preservice preparation and training, but also indicates that those differences might not last long into a teachers' career. In addition, the findings provide an overall general picture of language teaching in the "localized environment" (Burns, 2008) of Niger, which is relevant to the literature on EFL teaching currently lacking information on this country.

Instructional Methods used by EFL Teachers in Niger

Aside from "using the blackboard", which nearly all teachers reported using daily, the most popular instructional methods EFL teachers used were writing, grammar exercises, and drills. Herrera and Murry (2016) classify these in the grammatical/grammar-based domain. Nigerien EFL teachers were much less likely to use communicative strategies even while Western literature supports these methods as more effective (Echevarria, Short, & Vogt, 2008). These differences were seen in examining both the individual methods and the composited items where communicative strategies were the least used by teachers by a significant amount. Meanwhile writing strategies were the most frequently used of the composited strategies. However, significantly more research would be required to understand if these strategies are appropriate for teaching in Nigerien schools.

Preservice Training is Connected to Instructional Methods

The data also showed an association between preservice EPP and the use of specific teaching strategies. EFL teachers who were trained in traditional EPPs were more likely to use communicative methods. This finding is not unexpected, nevertheless, it adds to the literature and shows the context of EFL teachers in Niger is similar to that of EFL teachers elsewhere. Among the entire EFL teaching population, the most significant differences were found in the use of Communicative strategies. Teachers trained in other countries from the region were less likely to use these strategies than their peers. It is impossible to know why this is the case because these individuals could have been trained in any number of ways. Meanwhile, EFL teachers with no training were more likely to use the copying strategy. These findings reinforce the potential impact of EPPs to impact teacher instructional practices. Among EFL teachers in Niger different pathways to the profession report the use of different strategies. These differences remained even after controlling, roughly, for experience and professional development.

Training Differences Disappear after Five Years of Teaching

It is important to note that the significant differences in the use of teaching strategies did not remain among teachers with more than five years of teaching experience. In fact, the differences between strategies use and the various pathways to teaching were apparent only among teachers in their first five years of teaching. Teachers have been shown to change their teaching practices over the first three to five years of teaching (Attebery et al., 2015; Harris & Sass, 2011; Rivkin et al., 2005), and perhaps this is what is happening in Niger. However, another potential explanation is that teacher training in Niger has changed in the last five years. The number of teachers trained through a traditional EPP (ENS) in their first five years of teaching was nearly double that of the group of teachers with more than five years of

teaching. This is due, in part, to the fact that the ENS program is relatively new. Also, the younger teacher group has a much larger portion of teachers with no training at all (75 to 19). Therefore, these differences may also be attributable to changes in the teaching workforce.

Limitations and Future Research

The first limitation for the study is the reliance on self-report data on teacher practices. Limited resources made it impossible to directly observe the Nigerien teachers spread throughout the country. It is possible that teachers simply responded as they thought the researchers would want them to, especially since the research was funded by the American Cultural Center who provides professional development to teachers. Still, the teachers reported low levels of professional development and many reported no preservice training. Thus, it is difficult to know if the teachers would know what the “right” answer would be to these questions. Future research would benefit from direct observation of teachers to fully understand the enacted teaching strategies. Interviews with the teachers would also provide helpful information about the relationship of training to their current instructional practices and how they take into consideration the identities and motivations of the students in choosing their methods as Brown (2002) suggested. In addition, it is not certain why teachers used some methods over others, and this would be a good avenue for future research.

Another important issue is that this was a cross-sectional survey. Therefore, some of the teachers had been classroom teachers for many years. Additionally, this analysis examined relationships and did not attempt to prove causality. It is not possible to determine from the data collected for this study the reason for why teachers in certain groups seem to favor different instructional practices more than their peers from other preservice groups. This is certainly an area of future investigation.

Recommendations

The research presented in this study provides clear recommendations for policy makers, teacher educators, and school administrators. The data show that preservice teacher training is associated with teacher instructional choices. Nigerien EFL teachers taught differently depending on their training. All policy makers face difficult decisions over the allotment of resources and what requirements are necessary to ensure effective education. Data presented here supports recommendations to promote preservice teacher training. However, it also indicates that preservice teacher training is not sufficient. Professional development throughout the teaching career is required to promote teacher adoption of beneficial instructional methods.

Conclusion

In an international climate where the value of EPPs is under considerable debate, this study provides guidance about the association of preservice teacher training and instructional decisions in Niger, a developing West African country. This study provides the first information about the instructional choices that Nigerien EFL teachers make. Teachers with different training teach in different ways in Niger; however, more research is needed to understand why these differences occur. As resources are scarce in Niger – and similarly situated countries – policy makers should consider the lasting impacts of teacher training on instructional choices of teachers and how this may impact students.

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Can the EFL Classroom Be Considered a Community of Practice?

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Abstract

The concept of Communities of Practice (CoPs) has attracted interest for over two decades and has been actively re-examined from a variety of perspectives, especially in the field of education. However, limited research has been conducted into the concept of one EFL classroom-based teaching and learning community constituting one CoP. This paper discusses the potential applicability of the concept of CoPs to the EFL classroom and investigates the following question: “Can a certain number of students and their instructor participating in a group population be defined as a CoP?” The results of the study showed that considering an EFL classroom in its entirety as a CoP is possible, and an expansion of the definition of CoPs to include EFL pedagogical communities is necessary.

Keywords: Communities of Practice, higher education in Japan, EFL CoP, teacher education

Introduction

This study aims to ascertain whether a group of students, such as 30 EFL students and their instructor, can form a CoP (Community of Practice), and hypothesizes that “one classroom can be treated as a CoP.” It explores how the application of Lave and Wenger’s (1991) original CoP concept can be extended to language classrooms. First, previous studies that have incorporated the concept of CoPs will be summarized with an analysis of trends in the research. The conceptual construct, function, and role of the CoP, its organization and developmental stages, emerging issues in its definition, and possibilities for its use in language education in higher education institutions will be discussed. Second, the relevance of studying classrooms in the context of learning EFL at Japanese higher education institutions treated as CoPs will be considered in terms of significant implications for foreign language pedagogy.

English classes for first year university students in some universities in Japan are constructed on the basis of learners’ individual levels of previous achievement in English or on their test scores. One unit of a small number of learners will take five or six different English lessons with the same classroom members each week. These learners spend most of their time as part of the same small group and learn English together. It can therefore be beneficial for teachers to try to understand how a single unit of a certain number of learners learn as one classroom community.

Literature Review

CoPs: Structure, Function, and Role

A CoP is a coming together of people with diverse interests and ideas, who have a common understanding of the meaning, goals, and roles of their activities and collaborate to implement a practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991, pp. 94–100). A practice is defined as a customary behavior or activity that is socially organized (Tanabe, 2003, pp. 134–139). Tanabe (2003, p. 128) stated “a practice is something that people do by following an activity to be done in a given setting while compromising with the institution and maintaining a close mutual relationship.” The following three characteristics are attributed to CoPs (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015):

- a) The domain: A CoP extends beyond simply representing a community of friends or a network of connections to include those with a shared domain of interest. Being a participant in the community, therefore, implies having a commitment to such a shared domain, which further requires one to develop corresponding competences;
- b) The community: Participation includes helping each other and sharing information, and allowing relationships to be forged and collaborative learning to take place;
- c) The practice: Members of a CoP develop a common repertoire of resources, including experiences, shared narratives, tools, and approaches to solving problems that are recurrent. This takes time and sustained interaction. (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015, pp. 1–2)

CoP participants continue developing as they improve skills in obtaining the information and technology necessary in the group’s social circle, and effectively utilize such information and technology (Wenger, 1998). In order to establish membership in the CoP and contribute to

the group, new members are required to master appropriate semiotic resources, or tools and rules for meaning-making (Mickan, 2013; Sugiman, 2006), as well as participate in social activities (Halliday 1978; Mickan 2013), which explains the concept of Legitimate Peripheral Participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In the case of the General English Academic Program (GEAP), which provides learners with the opportunity to participate in English lessons with the same classmates several times per week, examples of semiotic resources in the classroom are wide-ranging, including communication patterns, textbooks, and online submission systems, in addition to the participants themselves, such as the students and instructors who belong to the community (Mickan, 2013; Sugiman, 2006).

Origins of the Concept of CoPs

A discussion of the formation and development of the CoP concept to date must draw on its theoretical definitions by Lave and Wenger (1991), Wenger (1998), and Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002). Even though the theory and concept of CoPs has undergone changes and development, there are commonalities, including the explanation of what “learning” really is (Cox, 2005). The differences in the concept of the CoP learning perspective concern community, learning, power relations, change, and diversity (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002).

First, the learning perspective of Lave and Wenger (1991) assumes that instructors recognize the limitations of teaching in the classroom and embraces the idea that learning is a personal activity within the framework of education theory. This concept considers learning to be embedded in the situation rather than representing a planned and mechanical process of cognition and communication. As the first to define the concept of the CoP, Lave and Wenger (1991) stated that the purpose of learning is to clarify the behaviors and ideas of people who participate in activities, such as how they handle issues in the group, accomplish tasks, and solve problems; it is not to look at how groups reproduce existing knowledge and recognize it as learning. However, Cox (2005) observed that potential conflicts related to relations between “existing members” of the community and “legitimate participants” (those with less specialized knowledge and skills who do not play a central role in the community) were not discussed in detail.

Second, members in CoPs mutually participate in appropriate activities (Wenger, 1998). The study by Wenger (1998) was the first to discuss the relationship between a CoP and the identities of the participants. Understanding the level of participation in the community and the conflicts that arise when different community members communicate would lead to a corresponding understanding of the identities of individual participants (Wenger, 1998, p. 85).

The study by Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002) further applied and popularized the concept of the CoP. Their definition was informed by previous studies of people with common ground gathering together to create a CoP. The common ground includes those working on a series of problems, being enthusiastic about a particular topic, and increasing the knowledge and skills in the community they belong to. In addition, CoP members experience on-going tasks together within the community and participate in the community’s events.

Applying the Concept of the CoP to EFL Research

Three issues can be raised with respect to CoPs and research within the context of EFL learning, for which solutions are presented here. First, Haneda (2006, p. 811) pointed out that

Lave and Wenger (1991) did not closely examine the concept of CoPs. According to Lave and Wenger (1991), new members of an informal community emerge in everyday life to become experienced members through repeated interactions. Furthermore, they stated that the community has legitimate peripheral participants, who transition to becoming human resources rich in experience. In the example of a class group at college, members gather together only during a certain period of time, forming one large community. Afterward, students are forced to disband the CoP to which they belong. This suggests that the nature of school classrooms is different from that of informal groups emerging in everyday life, such as those studied by Lave and Wenger (1991). Going forward, it is important to examine how the CoPs of Lave and Wenger (1991) exist in this type of formal community.

Second, studies have been conducted on the activity patterns and structure of CoPs in groups across many fields, particularly in business-related groups, since the 1990s (Kanamitsu, 2009). However, it is considered difficult to visualize the overall picture, the process of creation and development, specific examples of components, and the activity patterns of CoPs, since few studies have examined these aspects (Ribeiro, 2011). For this reason, Ribeiro (2011) stressed the need for case studies on CoPs in specific contexts or from particular backgrounds. Thus, in order to understand how CoPs are embedded in the EFL context of higher education institutions, it is necessary to continuously observe how they evolve and examine the components required to consider the FL classroom as a CoP.

Aims of the Present Research

A limited number of studies have been undertaken on the process and overall picture of CoPs (Ribeiro, 2011). Thus, previous studies that have incorporated the concept of CoPs will be summarized with an analysis of trends in their application of this concept. Then, the pedagogical implications of treating EFL classrooms in Japanese higher education institutions as CoPs will be discussed. In this study, “a class of students and their instructor participating in a group (population)” is defined as a CoP. For example, a group (population) of students in a class unit, such as a group of 25 students and their instructor (named “Classroom A”), will be treated as CoP A. The possibility of treating “a group of groups of students and their instructor in the unit of classroom” as one CoP will also be examined in order to apply the concept to Japanese higher education institutions. However, Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner noted the following in an email to the Author on August 20, 2015: “Classrooms are part of the design created by educational institutions and organizations and not CoPs.” They also asserted that “it can be possible to view a group (population) of multiple students and their instructor as a CoP, depending on what the researcher is trying to discuss about them.”

This statement by Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner can be interpreted to mean that a group (population) of students and their instructor is a CoP even though a classroom is not a CoP, depending on the researcher’s perspective in the study. Therefore, it is possible to treat a group (population) of multiple students and their instructor in the classroom unit as a CoP by analyzing and examining previous studies conducted on the same type of CoP.

Methods

The research approach selected for this study was largely methodological and adapted from, among other sources, the ideas of Fukuta (2015) on potential methodological biases in research on learning. The research questions are as follows: 1) To what extent is the concept

of CoPs applicable in higher education EFL classrooms in Japan? 2) Can a group of students, such as 30 EFL students and their instructor, form a CoP, and is the hypothesis that “one classroom can be treated as a CoP” valid.

First, in Phase 1, papers and books published between 1989 and 2018 that contained the term “communities of practice” were counted. Furthermore, a separate analysis was conducted by journal on papers published between 1970 and 2018. The purpose of this section is to show the big picture of the transformation in the research regarding the notion of CoPs from the early 1970s to the present. Then, in Phase 2, 15 academic journals were selected and examined to see whether the concept of the CoP was used as a core idea, a theoretical framework, or a subordinate idea. A screening process was implemented to search for studies using and extending Lave and Wenger’s (1991) concept of the CoP in the context of language learning classrooms, in which it serves as a core framework for creating a CoP out of one classroom. Major journals on L2 classrooms and L2 acquisition research (e.g. *The Language Learning Journal*, and *Applied Linguistics*) published between 1989 and 2016 were checked as potential sources via Google Scholar and ERIC.

The research articles were chosen on the basis of whether the CoP concept was used as a core research framework, constituted a learning classroom, involved language learners as research participants in a classroom-based context of higher education, or was part of a study methodology employing qualitative and/or quantitative research or teaching practicums. The way in which the CoP concept was applied to classroom communities and discussed in the research was further examined. The subjects of the study were college students, graduate students, ESL students, and instructors.

Results and Discussion

Results of the Analysis of Studies Relating to CoPs

Phase 1: Publications relating to CoPs. Table 1 presents the results of a Google Scholar search using the keyword “communities of practice” (as of January 23, 2019). The results showed that the number of published journal articles and books related to CoPs has been increasing since Lave and Wenger (1991) first proposed their definition. The increasing numbers in Table 1 imply that the concept of the CoP has come to be applied not only to disciplinary areas involving pedagogy and classroom-based research but also to other fields.

Table 1. Numbers of Papers and Books about Communities of Practice

Year	Number (approximately)
1991–1992	118
1993–1994	314
1995–1996	609
1997–1998	3,930
1999–2000	5,180
2001–2002	6,010
2003–2004	10,300
2005–2006	14,400

2007–2008	16,200
2009–2010	16,400
2011–2012	17,000
2013–2014	16,800
2015–2016	18,000
2017–2018	19,000

Table 2. displays the results of a Google Scholar and ERIC search using the keywords “communities of practice” and “language learning” (as of January 23, 2019) to identify different journals covering pedagogy and language learning research.

Table 2. Results by Journal

Journal	Number of papers	Number of papers	Note
Names	(A)	(B)	
<i>Applied Linguistics</i>	52	32	(A) means searched as “communities of practice” only, (B) means “communities of practice” and researched related with “language learning”
<i>Language Learning Journal</i>	4,621	5	(A): “communities of practice” in anywhere (B): “communities of practice” in Keywords and “language learning” in anywhere
<i>Language Learning Journal</i>	–	5	(B): “communities of practice” in Keywords and “classrooms” in anywhere
<i>Teaching in Higher Education</i>	749	13	(A): “communities of practice” in anywhere (B): “communities of practice” in Keywords and “language learning” in anywhere
<i>Teacher Development</i>	518	11	(A): “communities of practice” in anywhere (B): “communities of practice” in Keywords and “language learning” in anywhere
<i>Education Action Research</i>	110	16	(B): “communities of practice” in Keywords and “language learning” in anywhere
<i>Education Action Research</i>	–	16	(B): “communities of practice” in Keywords and “classrooms” in anywhere

Phase 2: Overview of 15 selected papers. This section focused on journals that cover language learning, classroom research, and higher education to examine the trends of studies employing the concept of CoPs, considering how the concept is viewed and approached in terms of analysis method and objective. Fifteen papers on CoPs were selected; the basis for the selection was papers that specifically focused on college students, graduate students, EFL or ESL students, or instructors in the context of language learning. Table 3 shows how the concept of CoPs was dealt with in the 15 papers. It was found that CoP was most commonly treated as a theoretical framework, which means that these studies did not examine one classroom as one CoP ($n = 11$). Five papers defined one classroom as a CoP, while five papers deemed multiple CoPs to exist within one classroom.

Table 3. Overview of 15 Selected Studies: The Concept of the CoP and the Purpose of the Study

			Koga, Furuya, and Miyo (2015)	Kapucu (2012)	Tapp (2013)	Murray (2008)	Norton (2001)	Toohey (1998)	Morita (2004)	Yaegashi and Sato (2011)	Rogers (2000)	Keuk (2015)	Guo and Lin (2016)	Tavakoli (2015)	Zappa-Hollman and Duff (2015)	Correa, Martínez-Arbelaz, and Aberasturi-Aprialz (2015)	Rovai (2002)	Total
Concepts	1	Theoretical Framework	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	11
	2	Core Idea	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	7
	3	Subordinate Idea	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	5
	4	Group in a Classroom	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	5
	5	One Classroom	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
	6	Outside of Classroom	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
	7	Online	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	3
	8	Imagined Community	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Study's focus	1	Transition of students	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	6
	2	Transition of the instructor	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	5
	3	Classroom development	1	0	0	0		0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
	4	Curriculum design improvement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
	5	Traits of the CoP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
	6	Changes in speaking ability	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	7	Improvement in classroom design	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	8	Longitudinal observation in a unique learning environment	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

The research objectives of the 15 selected papers are presented in Table 3. The results showed that the most common research objectives were related to the transformation and transition of students ($n = 6$). These studies highlighted learners' transformation from novice to higher levels in terms of their degree of participation and their reading and writing proficiencies in the target language, and focused on newly acquired abilities and knowledge. The next most common focus was the transition of the instructor in the classroom ($n = 5$). These studies focused on changes in how teachers solved problems in their classrooms, how they interacted with their learners, and their developing pedagogical awareness in terms of teaching methodologies. This was followed by research objectives related to class development, such as studying how a new class transitions from one stage to the next ($n = 3$). Classrooms were explored longitudinally in these studies to understand how they were organized and how they developed from mere places to CoPs.

There is evidence from these articles to suggest that the original concept of CoPs can encompass one class. For instance, 67 per cent of the studies ($n = 10$) used the concept of CoP as a research framework, 33 per cent ($n = 5$) as a subordinate framework, and 33 per cent ($n = 5$) indicated that it is possible to consider one classroom as one CoP.

Discussion of the Concept of CoPs in Higher Education EFL Classrooms in Japan

Koga, Furuya, and Miyo (2015) treated a group consisting of smaller groups of students and their instructor in the unit of the classroom at a higher education institution as a CoP. The study specifically examined a Japanese class for international students at a university and the process of organizing and launching the class unit as a CoP. In building their practice framework, it was considered important “for students to share the awareness toward their issues through discussions and to launch the class as a CoP by proactively engaging in one activity” (Koga, Furuya, & Miyo, 2015, p. 183). In other words, a CoP is characterized by students clarifying awareness of issues, trying to resolve them, and having a common goal. As “[i]t is essential for the entire class to proactively promote the activity” (Koga, Furuya, & Miyo, 2015, p. 183), the autonomy of the students participating in the classroom activity is pivotal.

Eckert, Goldman, and Wenger (1997) stated that it is important for schools to provide students with opportunities to apply the concept of CoPs to the classroom according to the subject of their study. A CoP is not something that is naturally created: it is necessary to create an environment for a CoP to grow and for the instructor to support its development.

In the next section, previous research on the CoP learning perspective will be critically examined in order to determine whether it is valid to regard a group of students and their instructor in the unit of the English classroom in a higher education institution as a CoP. Furthermore, how the CoPs observed by Lave and Wenger (1991) and those occurring in the context of studying English at higher education institutions differ will be considered.

Applying the Existing Definition of a CoP to College EFL Classrooms

Is it possible to consider an expansion of Lave and Wenger's (1991) definition of CoPs? The concept of a CoP is “a community in which individuals share the method and meaning of acts they are engaged in, form repertoires, and implement the practice while utilizing the resources that have been shared” (Tanabe, 2003, p. 134).

The framework and boundary lines established by the norms and institutions in the group (community) are relevant to understanding the characteristics of CoPs. Tanabe (2003) stated

that boundary lines are sometimes drawn around an existing community by an institution. For example, in the case of a university and its committees, classes at school, and local community associations would necessarily determine boundaries of time and place. According to Lave and Wenger's (1991) definition of the original concept of CoPs, originally networks and communities such as groups of midwives, tailors, and nondrinking alcoholics were observed in order to identify their learning as communities' members and to discern how novices become experienced members within the CoPs. These features compose CoPs: regular exchange of information; commonality and diversity; voluntary involvement and participation; spontaneous leadership; reciprocity; open atmosphere; reliance; and informal management of groups and communities (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). On the other hand, the concept of classroom communities in school contexts such as EFL classes at universities are considered to be formal groups. This seems to create a distinction between informal and formal boundaries that conflicts with formal CoPs at a university. These differences can lead to the question of whether new CoPs can be created and if a group of students, such as 30 EFL students and their instructor, form a CoP. Finally, is the hypothesis that one classroom can be treated as a CoP valid?

Boundary lines in informal groups – or groups in which membership is ambiguous since members come and go – such as Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs) and religious groups offer up some points to consider. Tanabe (2003, p. 135) suggested that these groups also “draw boundary lines – both thick or thin – to separate the inside from the outside or to subdivide the inside, when looking at these groups from the perspective of institutions.” It can be argued that if the boundaries are classified on the basis of systematic institutional organization (with hard boundaries established by the institution) as the first criterion, no communities in this world would meet the criteria of a CoP. However, Tanabe (2003, p. 135) argued that the concept of CoPs “attempts to capture the manner in which people's practices are socially organized, developed, and changed through mutual engagement and collaboration by enclosing the institutionally established hard boundaries in parentheses for the time being.” Tanabe did not deem the institutional boundary lines to necessarily match the CoP boundaries proposed by Lave and Wenger (1991) (Tanabe, 2003, p. 135). In addition, Tanabe (2003) illustrated this boundary issue by discussing high school classes, in which students engage in learning and organized play by creating small CoPs with fellow students across and beyond the class, even though classes at high school seem to operate under a single institutional framework. These features are, in fact, very similar to the definition of CoPs advocated by Lave and Wenger (1991). Therefore, recognizing a unit of the high school classroom as a CoP seems generally valid.

Rogoff (1994) considered a classroom as both a learning community and place of learning, and there are many commonalities between the characteristics of the classroom presented by Rogoff (1994) and those of a CoP. For example, she described a classroom community in which participating members have shared goals and resolve common issues. These characteristics are likewise proposed by Lave and Wenger (1991) regarding CoPs. On this basis, it can be presumed that there are common characteristics between the classroom and the CoP.

The second characteristic concerning the problem of recognizing groups of students and their instructor in the unit of the classroom at higher education institutions as a CoP concerns the fact that the class ceases to exist as soon as the lesson is over. For example, students in a typical English classroom at a Japanese university work and study with the same members for a certain period of time (six months or one year), after which they must disband. It is thus

necessary to consider the characteristics of such classrooms in relation to the developmental characteristics of CoPs defined by Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002), who identified five stages in the development of a CoP, whereby the group gradually ceases to exist once it enters the fifth stage. One of the issues pertaining to the theory is that of English classes at higher education institutions being treated as CoPs when they cease to exist as soon as the lesson is over, even in the middle of the developmental stage. On the other hand, even if the class ceases to exist, this does not imply that aspects such as having gained an understanding of the content, interaction with other members, and student identities based on having participated in the class will also cease to exist. The experience and knowledge gained there are highly likely to be used when participating in the next CoP, even if the CoP they currently belong to ceases to exist.

The Learning Perspective and Educational Implications of the CoP

It is appropriate to look at the similarities between EFL classrooms at higher education institutions and CoPs when considering their educational implications. Higher education institutions are communities in which people with diverse interests and ideas come together, have a common understanding of the meaning, goal, and role of activities in that group, and participate in the practice together as a CoP. By participating in CoPs, participants acquire knowledge and skills, and transform their identities through interaction with other members (Sugihara, 2006). The following two reasons for considering college classes as CoPs were suggested: “(1) the formation of knowledge is viewed as something that emerges out of the situation and relations of members’ collaborative activities rather than merely out of the process of transfer and acceptance of knowledge,” and “(2) the formation of knowledge is viewed as the acquisition of knowledge and skills as well as something of general personal characteristic such as the formation of identity” (Sugihara, 2006, p. 167). On these grounds, Sugihara proposed that college classes are useful in analyzing the essence of CoPs (Sugihara, 2006). According to Sugihara, the meaning lies in expanding the concept of CoPs, allowing students “to cooperate with existing CoPs and simulatively participate,” thereby creating a community where knowledge can be generated through students’ participation in the pseudo-CoP. In other words, it seems that one of the challenges is for instructors to provide “a CoP described in terms of creating new knowledge by having multiple, different CoPs ... cooperate” in college lectures (Sugihara, 2006, p. 167).

In reconsidering the CoP proposed by Wenger (1998), it is noted that the first of the three characteristics of his CoP model is the mutual participation of its members. In English classes at higher education institutions, it is necessary for instructors to provide settings with extensive opportunities to learn collaboratively through pair and group work. The next characteristic of a CoP is that the participants negotiate participation in the activity. This assumes that there is interaction among students. In terms of classroom conversation, the teacher should avoid controlling the interaction and refrain from intervening in order to develop spontaneous discussions. The third characteristic of a CoP is that the skills of individual students or groups related to their areas of expertise are shared with other members or the entire class. It is thus necessary to longitudinally observe how shared skills and knowledge are spread among students.

The relevance of the three characteristics of the CoP in Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015) to EFL/ESL classrooms in higher education requires examination. First, the participants are said to be responsible for their participation in the domain of the organization to which they belong (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). In the context of the EFL classroom in institutions of higher education, the community to which the students belong is

the English class. The first-year students in this study mainly belong to the English class of the liberal arts faculty; it is not the case that they belong to a community centered on studying English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The English curriculum for the first-year students who participated in this study incorporates ESP in its second year, and specifically English for management and business. Concerning the feature of the CoP's domain in the classroom setting, the curriculum and lesson syllabus can be designed in a way that incorporates the characteristic of participating in the activity to learn English via an individual, a pair, or a group.

Next, the commonality between the second characteristic of CoPs, the community, and the characteristics of the community learning English at a higher education institution will be considered. For a classroom to be regarded as a CoP, the teacher must provide an environment in which students can learn by helping other members, sharing information, and maintaining mutually receptive relationships with other members. In other words, the concept of the CoP includes the element of collaborative learning. Sakamoto (2008) deemed planning and the division of roles to be a precondition of collaboration. In order to make collaborative learning work, there must be a setting where diverse members with different skills gather in a specific community and meet with other members (Sakamoto, 2008). However, since high school graduates from Japan and other countries come together as participants in college classes – especially first-year classes – within an environment for studying English, their experience of methods, purpose, and motivation for studying English, as well as their personal backgrounds, differ. It is therefore possible for collaborative learning to take place among diverse members with different skills even within the environment of a school classroom. As the second characteristic of collaborative learning, Sakamoto (2008) listed relationships built on mutual trust among those in the community, whereby each student maintains a partnership with other members while simultaneously retaining their own independence.

The third characteristic related to collaborative learning is that of “sharing the learning objective, tasks, values, and results” (Sakamoto, 2008, p. 53). The sharing of clear goals, which is one of the characteristics of collaborative learning, is similar to cooperative learning. In order to maximize their own learning as well as that of each other, students are sometimes divided into groups to undertake activities through collaborative learning, in which students are expected to actively participate in the learning process, rather than passively absorb the information provided (Kapucu, 2012). In other words, as in the learning perspective of Lave and Wenger (1991), collaborative learning can be interpreted as the idea of students learning through participation and interaction. Students are assumed to be capable of actively participating in the community by taking the skills and knowledge they have acquired and applying them at the time of working with others and participating in the community to which they belong (Kapucu, Arslan, Yuldashev, & Demiroz, 2010). It is important to establish a group by connecting individuals or creating a CoP for the purpose of learning, as this leads to participants understanding the learning patterns that work in that community, and hence becoming competent in the use of relevant skills. Learning occurs through interaction between people when activities are conjointly implemented (Kapucu, 2012). It is thus important that lessons incorporate the characteristics of collaborative learning when applying the concept of the CoP to EFL education, given that collaborative learning is central to its definition.

Conclusion

This paper has considered CoPs in the context of EFL classrooms involving collaborative learning within a community, which has come to represent the goal of university education reform in Japan. In particular, the paper examined the validity and significance of treating the EFL classroom as a CoP, as several elements that are inherent to the EFL classroom – broad student participation, collaborative group work, and practice within groups in authentic and meaningful contexts point to the natural development of a CoP as an appropriate EFL construct. The study by Lave and Wenger (1991) on the learning perspective of CoPs includes a variety of fields such as business, research related to local community development, and IT. However, as Lave (1991) stated, it is difficult to clarify the trends and functions of CoP activities. Therefore, few studies have focused on the concept of the CoP itself as one of the issues. The number of studies that have treated a group of students and their instructor in the unit of the classroom as a CoP is even more limited. To examine whether it is valid to do so, the present study conducted an analysis of previous research papers. One of the issues that emerged is that Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of the CoP – particularly, CoPs related to groups that have been formed both formally and informally – has not been rigorously examined. The fact that formal groups such as FL classes are disbanded after a certain period of time presents a problem. Therefore, further studies on classrooms as CoPs are necessary, and the definition of CoPs for classrooms must be developed by considering essential features of an effective EFL classroom. Redefining an EFL classroom as a CoP would necessarily require instructors to comprehend the most important aspects of effective EFL instruction – a sense of community, multiple, frequent opportunities for practice in realistic group settings, and occasions for small and large group exploration of significant language-related topics. In such a setting, the atmosphere of the EFL classroom would be more conducive for enhanced language acquisition for all students.

The study does suffer from a number of limitations. In Phase 2, the selection of 15 journal articles was completed on the basis of their apparent suitability and relevance to the topic under discussion. The degree to which these articles are representative of the entire body of research could be questioned. A future study could expand the range of articles and studies and provide additional reassurance on the reliability and general applicability of the material and its analysis. In addition, the study only examined EFL and ESL students and classes and with a mainly theoretical approach. Future research could broaden the field to include other types of students and classes and apply an empirical as well as theoretical point of view.

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