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Foreign Language Learning and Teaching in Pandemic and Non-Pandemic Times

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Foreign Language Learning and Teaching in Pandemic and Non-Pandemic Times

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Introduction

The ever-evolving field of foreign language education continues to intrigue scholars, educators, and practitioners alike. As societies transform, so too do the ways in which we engage with language learning and teaching. Never was this more evident than during the global upheaval brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. In an era characterized by unprecedented global challenges and transformative shifts in educational paradigms, the present special volume (47/3) of *Lublin Studies in Modern Languages and Literature* delves into the intricate landscape of foreign language learning and teaching, particularly in the context of pandemic and non-pandemic circumstances.

The articles in this volume primarily address the dynamics, challenges, and experiences of foreign language teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic and non-pandemic times. Their authors underscore the adaptive and evolving nature of language teaching and learning strategies in light of unexpected challenges such as a global pandemic or within the scope of regular educational environments. Whether faced with the immediacy of remote learning or traditional in-person methods, teachers and learners continue to find ways to enhance their experiences and outcomes. Collectively, the authors of the articles elucidate both the confluences and divergences between virtual and traditional (in-person) teaching paradigms. A prevailing agreement emerges that the similarities between these two distinct modes of teaching are more pronounced than their differences.

First of all, whether their instruction is online or face-to-face, most learners require more than mere exposure to a foreign language for effective learning.

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Passive engagement with even a vast amount of target-language content, such as videos and books, often yields minimal returns. To convert input into intake effectively, learners must actively engage with the language. This can be significantly enhanced by communication in a foreign language. Consequently, second language instruction should be suffused with opportunities for interaction, underscoring the principle that language acquisition primarily hinges on interactive exchanges.

Secondly, the goal for language teachers, both in distant and face-to-face teaching, is the transition from a mechanical, straightforward "Q&A" lesson structure towards a more naturalistic mode of communication. Communication necessitates language use, fostering the development of communicative competence. It provides an avenue for constructive feedback and allows learners to immerse themselves in authentic language use. The articles in the present volume show that the efficacy of instruction may be improved when learners are granted some agency over the interaction or when they display a willingness to initiate topics. Importantly, learners should have the opportunity to respond to language input and seek clarification in moments of doubt.

Thirdly, the present volume acknowledges that language learning cannot rely solely on communication. Effective teaching involves guiding learners' focus towards the form of the language, either directly (for example, "Look at this preposition") or indirectly (for instance, "I don't understand, could you repeat that, please?"). In the absence of such focus, there is a risk that learners will constantly rely on a limited set of phrases and communication strategies, consequently stunting their progress.

The above reflections on the role of focus on meaning and focus on form in foreign language teaching are nested within a broader debate about the roles of explicit and implicit learning of a second language. Robust empirical evidence indicates that maximizing opportunities for implicit learning yields the most effective teaching outcomes. Implicit learning, which occurs subconsciously during language use (reading, listening, speaking, writing), represents the innate mechanism of language acquisition. This involuntary form of learning occurs when learners are consistently immersed in the language and actively communicate. At the same time, it is generally acknowledged that novice learners attempting advanced-level communication will struggle significantly. Thus, intentional (explicit) learning becomes vital, not to learn about the language per se, but to highlight language nuances, thereby augmenting the benefits derived from implicit learning. This can be achieved through consistent feedback on learners' utterances, integrating "traditional" teaching methods in response to their requirements, or reformulating incorrect phrases.

Ultimately, effective teaching, whether on- or off-line, aligns with individuals' natural learning processes rather than with strictly adhering to textbook guidelines

or course syllabi. The challenges and opportunities in foreign language learning and teaching are related not only to teaching modalities but also to the various educational contexts, accentuating the dynamic interplay between pedagogical methods, technological tools, and learner and teacher experiences.

The present volume is purposefully divided into two distinct sections, each offering a unique lens through which to examine the multifaceted nature of language education. The first section, "Foreign Language Learning and Teaching in Pandemic Times," deals with the profound disruptions caused by global events, particularly the seismic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on pedagogical landscapes. The subsequent section, "Foreign Language Learning and Teaching in Non-Pandemic Times," highlights innovative practices and explorations in more stable educational climates.

The issue commences with Marzena Wysocka-Narewska's study, "To Study or Not to Study Online? Students' Views on Distance Education during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Diary Study", which probes the landscape of distance education as experienced by university students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through a diary study, the author demonstrates the complex array of attitudes and perceptions held by English Philology students at the University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland. The findings, echoing the oscillating impact of infection rates, intricately portray online education's multifaceted advantages and drawbacks. The study ponders the profound question of the efficacy and desirability of remote learning, hinting at potential avenues for refining distance education within the context of university closures and the reconfiguration of academic identity.

The pedagogical exploration continues with Mustafa Zeki Çıraklı's "Reconsidering Spatial Interaction in the Virtual Literature Classroom after the Pandemic Lockdown", which describes the transformative journey of adapting a literature classroom to virtual confines. Through the lens of auto-ethnographic inquiry, the researcher crafts an immersive narrative chronicling his endeavor to infuse spatial interaction and creativity into the virtual realm. Employing the "theory of postromantic education", the study illuminates the utilization of virtual tools, such as whiteboards and chatboxes, in mitigating the challenges of social and spatial interaction. By fostering cognitive growth and imaginative prowess, the study underscores the capacity of innovative strategies to transcend the limitations of virtual learning environments.

Gabriel Sánchez-Sánchez and Eduardo Encabo's research, described in "Academic Achievement of Foreign Language Undergraduate Students during Pandemic Times", endeavors to unravel the intricate tapestry of academic accomplishment amid the tumultuous pandemic landscape. With a focus on foreign language students at the University of Murcia, Spain, the study traces the trajectory of academic performance across varying instructional modes – normal course, lockdown, blended learning, and the return to routine. The analysis

intriguingly suggested heightened performance during the lockdown and blended learning phases, beckoning us to ponder the nuanced interplay between pandemic circumstances and educational outcomes.

Transitioning into the realm of instructional methodologies, Eda Duruk and İrem Nur Yılmaz's exploration, "Self-Regulated Learning and Listening Achievement of Turkish EFL Learners", navigates the realm of self-regulated learning within a flipped classroom context. With a cohort of B1-level Turkish students, the study dissects the impact of a flipped classroom model on listening skills and self-regulated learning. The study discerns significant differences in listening skills achievement scores through meticulous analysis, offering a fresh perspective on the dynamics between pedagogical methodologies and student outcomes.

Transitioning to the second part of this volume, we embark on a voyage into the intricacies of foreign language learning and teaching in non-pandemic times. Here, a collection of scholarly contributions delves into themes encompassing learner agency, transfer of learning, teacher beliefs, creative writing's pedagogical potential, and innovative practicum experiences. The exploration commences with Halina Chodkiewicz's "Advanced EFL Students' Practices in Formal and Informal Language Learning Settings: An Exploratory Study of Learner Agency". This study investigates the realm of learner agency among advanced Polish learners of English as a foreign language. Through self-reflective learning journals, the study unveils a rich mosaic of language-based practices that empower learners to transcend traditional formal settings, nurturing academic and self-directed learning pursuits. This exploration heralds the profound role of intention, motivation, and self-awareness in shaping language learners' trajectories.

The next article, "Learning Transfer through Corpus-Aided Instruction" by Eunjeong Park, analyzes learning transfer within the context of corpus-aided instruction. With a focus on second-language college students, the study examines the potential of corpus-based approaches in fostering multilingual learners' skills in the writing class. The findings resonate with the potential use of corpus-aided instruction to enhance learners' writing proficiency and offer pedagogical insights for both researchers and teachers whose interests fall within the domains of corpus linguistics and English for Academic Purposes (EAP).

The subsequent article by Dima Mahmoud Daoud and Ruba Fahmi Bataineh, "Language as a Medium of Grammar Instruction: Jordanian EFL Secondary-Stage Teachers' Beliefs and Practices", navigates the intricate interplay between EFL teachers' beliefs and practices, and the alignment or divergence between the two. The study provides a fascinating window into the teaching landscape, where contextual factors, student preferences, and language proficiency influence pedagogical decisions. This investigation resonates with the complex dynamic of belief-practice congruence and its implications for the EFL classroom.

In "Breathing Enlightenment and Necessary Change into English Language Programs with Creative Writing", Patrick T. Randolph eloquently advocates the potential of creative writing as a transformative vehicle for English language learners. Drawing from neuroscience and years of teaching experience, the study positions creative writing as a conduit for nurturing individual writing styles, bolstering confidence, and amplifying linguistic expression. With empirical evidence of heightened writing skills among participants, the study celebrates the potency of creative writing in fostering linguistic fluency and cognitive growth.

Tomáš Gráf's "In-Faculty Practicum for TEFL Undergraduates at a Specially Created, On-The-Premises Language School: A Study in Innovation" chronicles an innovative approach to a teacher-trainee practicum. The study illuminates the transformative impact of extended practicum durations on teacher trainees' development through a unique language school within a faculty. The narrative captures the metamorphosis of trainees as they navigate the intricacies of classroom management, material utilization, and students' diverse needs, thus highlighting the potential of innovative practicum paradigms.

With a nuanced focus on diverse perspectives and pedagogical practices, this collection of articles offers insightful examinations of pedagogical dynamics, technological integration, learner agency, and innovative instructional approaches. Amidst shifting global landscapes, both pandemic-infused and beyond, the scholars within these pages deftly dissect the complexities, emerging insights, challenges, and possibilities that shape the educational trajectory. The volume resonates as an invaluable compendium for educators, researchers, and practitioners invested in the multifaceted tapestry of modern language pedagogy. The insights herein offer guidance as we navigate the dynamic contours of foreign language education, nurturing proficient linguists and fostering innovative instructional practices that align with the ever-evolving educational horizon.

Środa Wielkopolska, Burdur, Piła, September 2023

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To Study or Not to Study Online? Students' Views on Distance Education During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Diary Study

ABSTRACT
Distance learning is a type of instruction between a teacher and students separated by a physical distance where communication takes place through mediated information encompassing one or more technological media. In other words, the instruction participants stay in different places, yet take part in the same learning activities sequenced, paced and controlled by the teacher using new technologies to facilitate both the student-teacher and student-student rapport. The aim of the paper is to gain insight into this kind of learning from the perspective of university students. The sample constituted 128 students of the English Philology at the University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland. The findings of a diary study exploring the subjects' reports on their attitudes towards online studying at the time of the COVID-19 period shows how students' view change with an increasing infection rate, and, in fact, present the advantages and disadvantages of education during the pandemic, be it a face-to-face or remote mode. In conclusion, the question of whether to study or not to study online seems to be difficult to answer unequivocally. Though, some suggestions are given on how to improve distance education at times of university closure and lack of full participation in the process of building the academic community and identity that have been ascribed to the university construed as an indestructible social system for ages (Sowa, 2009).

KEYWORDS
distance education, university students, the COVID-19 pandemic, advantages, disadvantages

1. Distance learning

The term distance learning is almost immediately associated with an opening of access to education and training, freeing learners from the constraints of time and place, as well as flexible learning opportunities for individual and group learners. Based on Roblyer et al. (2000, p. 192), distance learning means "the acquisition of knowledge and skills through mediated information and instruction, encompassing all technologies and other forms of learning at a distance". The instructional delivery includes an instructor who is physically located in a different place from the learner, as well as possibly providing the instruction at disparate times. More

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specifically, the instructor controls the instructional sequencing and pacing and all learners participate in the same learning activities.

1.1. Types of distance learning

The most available and popular types of online instruction are termed synchronous and asynchronous. Synchronous learning is a mode of delivery where all participants are present at the same time in accordance with a given timetable. The tools used in this process involve online chats, videoconferences, live webcasting, application sharing, whiteboard, polling and virtual classrooms, as they enable learners and instructors to ask and answer questions in real time. An asynchronous type of learning, on the other hand, is time-independent (Young, 2011, p.12). Participants access course materials according to their own schedule which is more flexible. The teacher/student interaction is executed in different forms: virtual office hours, e-mails or "check-in" online conversations once a week or once a month. There is a whole range of tools used in asynchronous online learning: reading materials in PDF files, pre-recorded lectures, presentations, Google Drive for coordinated group projects, educational games, audio tapes and video (Taplin et al., 2013, p.63). A huge advantage is that students can always come back to those materials in case of uncertainty or any problematic issues.

2. General advantages and disadvantages of distance learning

Following Harper et al. (2004, p. 590), distance education increases access to learning and training opportunities, and provides increased opportunities for updating, retraining and personal enrichment. Another advantage of distance learning is its convenience as many of the technologies are easily accessible from home. Many forms of distance learning allows students to participate in the school activity whenever they wish, and on an individual basis, because of the flexibility ascribed to it. As Isik et al. (2010, p. 218) emphasize, this kind of education is also quite affordable very often involving little or no cost as there is a wide variety of materials granted for free which, additionally, are multi-sensory and likely to meet everyone's learning preferences. Based on that, distance learning can offer increased interactions with students, particularly when it comes to introverted students who are too shy to ask questions in class. The idea of giving such a group of students an opportunity to contribute to the classes via e-mail or other individualized means is expected to lower their inhibitions (Franklin et al., 1996, p. 126). This "opening up" can also be extended to balancing inequalities between age groups, geographical expansion of education access, delivering education for large audiences, offering the combination of education with work or family life, etc.

There is no denying that distance learning, due to the numerous benefits mentioned above, is perceived in a positive way by many, yet, as Christensen et al. (2001, p. 264) claim, "it may come with hidden costs". First of all, compared

to a traditional course and method of delivery, distance learning imposes a disproportionate amount of effort on the part of instructors. Namely, teaching distance courses include not only the time required for the actual class, but also a great deal of time dedicated to student support and preparation, not to mention discipline and Internet connection problems. Using technology, that is, online tools and infrastructure seems to be another important obstacle. It is proved that among both parties (i.e. students and teachers) there is a high percentage of those lacking enough skill and experience in managing or following online courses, including the extreme cases of digital exclusion most frequently identified with systemic differences in the access to and use of new technologies. Last but not least, the greatest disadvantage of distance education is social isolation observed as a result of missing the socio-physical interaction that comes with attending a traditional classroom. The longer the period of online classes, the stronger the feeling of not belonging to any social group. However, recent studies (cf. Jelińska & Paradowski, 2021) have reported that this sense of isolation is expected to decrease slightly with the use of communication technologies in the form of video conferencing provided it is a short-term phenomenon.

3. Organization of distance education in Poland

The COVID-19 pandemic required educators and learners to shift to emergency remote instruction with little prior notice. Based on the Ordinance of the Ministry of Education and Science of 11 March 2020 regulating the functioning of the higher education sector under conditions of preventing, counteracting and combating COVID-19, the organization of distance learning was declared. Its main postulates provided a framework for the implementation of distance education, including the forms of teaching, tools used, the schedule, and office hours, as well as the availability and ways of contacting the academic staff regulated individually by rectors of universities in Poland. According to Ordinance no 28 of the Rector of the University of Silesia in Katowice on 12 March 2020 on countering the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, the mode of distance learning introduced therein operated on the following conditions:

1. All lectures and classes for students, doctoral students and post-graduate students were cancelled.
2. Where possible, office hours and individual consultations were conducted remotely. Direct meetings were allowed to take place only in exceptional cases. In case it was necessary to organize a meeting, all appropriate precautions were to be taken.
3. Exams, defence of diploma theses, and meetings of committees (including doctoral and habilitation committees) were to take place in accordance with the rules established by the Dean and in line with the appropriate safety measures.

More specifically,

1) Remote classes were conducted according to the schedule effective for a particular group.
2) Remote classes were conducted synchronously – ensuring direct audio-video or audio interaction between participants of classes in real-time and asynchronously – through materials available on a distance learning platform, with the reservation that part of the classes was conducted synchronously with the teacher available for students online during classes – in line with the schedule.
3) Remote classes were conducted using Microsoft Office 365 (including Teams, Skype for Companies) and Moodle platform.
4) Classes were supervised by the Dean in consultation with the relevant degree programme directors.
5) The organisation of both on-site and remote classes were subject to monitoring.

The period of online education covered the time span from March 2020 to September 2021. It gave rise to a great deal of research done on the advantages and disadvantages of the COVID-19 distance learning. The studies conducted so far have proven what a huge impact the pandemic has had on the process of education at all levels. Following Jelińska and Paradowski (2021, p. 318), the teachers who were most engaged and coped best with the transition to online teaching reflected those having prior experience with remote instruction, had worked in high schools or higher education and had used real-time synchronous teaching. Also, this group of teachers underwent a smoother and faster adaptation to the changing conditions of schools re-opening and closing that was experienced a few times within a period of eighteen months, saving themselves confusion and stress that have been identified by UNESCO in 2020 as one of the consequences of school closures.

4. Online education during the pandemic in Poland

The negative emotions mentioned above have been thoroughly researched by Papaja (2020). Her study on Polish English teachers during the time of COVID-19 shows major concerns among instructors caused by the lack of support from the government and their colleagues, and also with the uncertainty about the future. The most general areas of teachers' success and failure while teaching online, on the other hand, can be found in Wysocka-Narewska (2021), where the problems with the so-called classroom management, including student behaviour, application use, syllabus coverage, and evaluation are emphasized. Among non-problematic issues highlighted by the teachers are the opportunities to cover the lesson material on most occasions, and time devoted to the written practice allowing the learners to perform much better than in real-time classes.

The school environment and the sense of belonging to the school community recently studied by Godawa (2020) brought to light diverse descriptions of chaos in schools and various social inequalities being observed among the learners, the phenomenon of digital exclusion among others, and leaving a lot of problems unsolved.

5. Methodology of the research

As the data provided on the Polish context of distance learning does not give much insight into the learner during the Coronavirus lockdown, not to mention the post-secondary school students, the present paper aims at collecting the university students' views on education in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The major focus of interest is the current situation of an offline mode of teaching introduced into universities on October 1st, 2021, in line with an increasing number of infections in Poland, and a widely understood quality of studying.

5.1. The aim

One of the main objectives of the study was to collect the students' views on education, making a comparison between an online and offline one, and trying to decide which is more beneficial for them and why, which would hopefully provide the answer to the research question, namely: *To study or not to study online?*

Additionally, the time factor was taken into account, and the assumption was made that the sample could change their opinions with critical fluctuations in the COVID-19 infections.

5.2. The participants

The sample size was 128 students of the English Philology department at the University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland, that is, 45, 28, 30 and 25 representatives of the 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th-year students respectively who entered real-time classes at the beginning of the academic year in October 2021. The choice of the sample was made on purpose to cover only the population with prior distance learning experience at the university. In order to reduce and, at the same time, standardize the sample, all the study participants were enrolled on the teaching training programme. The basic demographic data concerning the respondents in question has been tabularized in the following way:

Table 1. Description of the sample

CATEGORY	2nd year	No. of 2nd YSs	3rd year	**No. of 3rd YSs**	**4th year**	**No. of 4th YSs**	**5th year**	**No. of 5th YSs**
AGE	20	44	21	27	22	27	23	21
	21	1	22	1	23	3	24	4

SEX	M	9	M	2	M	6	M	5
	F	36	F	26	F	24	F	20
COMMUTING	YES	44	YES	28	YES	28	YES	20
	NO	1	NO	0	NO	2	NO	5

5.3. The tool

The data was gathered through diaries that the students were asked to keep from October 2021 to January 2022. All the participants of the study were informed that it was anonymous and that the data collected would be used for research purposes only. In order to make the students write regularly, diary entries constituted a part of course completion, i.e. academic writing in the case of 2nd and 4th year students, and seminar class in the case of 3rd and 5th years. The exact task of the sample was to express their opinions on the education available to them at a given time period, divided into four separate months, and justify their answers. While writing diary entries, the students were advised to simply think of a situation in which they took part in regular classes (as they do) and the online mode of teaching with a view to having one, and why. Even though the participants of the study were given a choice as far as language was concerned, the majority of answers were provided in English. Those students who wrote their diaries using Polish (19.5 %) might be justified by the fact that it is easier to express one's thoughts and emotions in L1 (Pavlenko, 2008), or insufficient L2 advancement, as using L1 was observed exclusively among the second year. Out of 128 diaries collected, 126 were written in an electronic version with the use of MSWord and delivered via email whereas the remaining two copies took the form of a handwritten notebook and were handed to me personally at the end of January. Eventually, the students initiated a discussion on distance learning off-site in February 2022, which was completely spontaneous and exclusive of the study, to share their opinions and expectations.

5.4. The research results

5.4.1. The quantitative data

The quantitative data presented in the table below shows the ratio of students opting for a given type of class changed with time and the COVID-19 pandemic country profile. In fact, the yes/no categories reflect the participants' (dis)approval of distance education per se as all the diary entries revolving around the question of reintroducing online classes into the university were put forward by the group examined.

Table 2. No. of students for and against online education

Month	No. of 2nd year students		**No of 3rd year students**		**No of 4th year students**		**No of 5th year students**	
	YES	**NO**	**YES**	**NO**	**YES**	**NO**	**YES**	**NO**

October	1	44	3	25	1	29	0	25
November	21	24	12	16	15	15	13	12
December	30	15	27	1	25	5	19	6
January	40	5	28	0	30	0	24	1

To begin with, the majority of the subjects showed satisfaction with face-to-face classes offered in October, which translated into the percentages of 98, 89, 97 and 100 in accordance with the age of the sample taking part in offline education. Compared to the new cases of COVID-19 infections, the respondents' strong views on the preferred mode of studying overlapped with a relatively stable situation including the first fortnight of the month, reaching nine thousand at the end of the second. In November, the student`s preferences concerning the form of instruction were no longer that obvious. As shown in the table, those in favour of traditional education (53% of second-year students and 57% of third years) only slightly outnumbered the students against online education, it being 50% of fourth-years and less than 50% of fifth years respectively). The subjects' enthusiasm and positive attitude towards the university as a community seemed to be dampened and replaced with a note of doubt influenced by a sudden increase in new confirmed cases of COVID-19, and the alarming nature of the week-over-week growth. December, although with imposed restrictions, deepened the mood of pessimism among the sample. Most of the students, irrespective of the group, were of the opinion of the necessity to reinstitute distance learning. The opponents of this type of instruction mirrored 67% in the second year exclusively and represented a minority of 4%, 17% and 4% respectively in the remaining groups. The observed change in the respondents' tendency to study from home was definitely the result of a COVID-19 wave and an expected peak of coronavirus cases. What January brought was worsening moods among all the groups examined. Based on the numbers, all third and fourth-year students voted for online studies. Only one person from the fifth-year group and five participants from the second-year group were against it. When compared with the infection rate, the whole month was marked by an average growth, oscillating between eight and 15000 new cases daily. As the Omicron *COVID*-19 *variant* started to dominate in January, the very situation of a more contagious virus strain might have been possible justification for students' reluctance to take part in regular classes. During this month, COVID-19 infections doubled over a two-week period and reached over 30000 cases daily as compared to December.

Based on the statistics, the new cases of infections within the four-month period being the study timespan, differed as follows (www.google.com):

The dates of diary completion were selected beforehand. The assumption was that the same random days arranged for everyone would facilitate the whole process of writing and data collection, guaranteeing the sample the same pandemic background at the moment of task completion optimizing the validity of the records produced.

Table 3. The no. of COVID-19 cases

OCTOBER		NOVEMBER		DECEMBER		JANUARY	
DAY	CASE	DAY	CASE	DAY	CASE	DAY	CASE
1.10.21	1361	1.1121	4904	1.12.21	29076	3.01.22	6423
7.10.21	2007	7.11.21	12507	8.12.21	28549	10.01.22	11402
15.10.21	2640	15.11.21	9508	15.12.21	24264	15.01.22	16893
21.10.21	5591	24.11.21	18924	23.12.21	17150	20.01.22	32835
28.10.21	8382	30.11.21	19100	30.12.21	14326	24.01.22	29097

5.4.2. The qualitative data

As the numbers indicate, the student`s views on the mode of studying differed as to the period of time, this being a kind of information carrier providing data on the current epidemiological situation.

In October, almost all the students questioned were in favour of traditional education interconnected with mobility and a sense of community. The arguments for face-to-face classes prioritized the social aspects that the subjects needed irrespective of their background, worded as follows: “I like to talk to my classmates before classes”; “Every day I walk to the university and I like and need this routine”.

Apart from social interactions, including student-student and teacher-student relationships in a real classroom, the students enumerated better organization, motivation and discipline as the qualities the “full-time (as opposed to lockdown university”) imposed on them: “I’m more motivated to participate in a lesson, I learn way more. I prefer the activities that we do inside the classroom”; “It is better to organize myself when I have to go to the university”.

The third issue mentioned by the sample concerned the infrastructure and Internet connection problems. The subjects complained about the equipment and Internet transfer they had to struggle with personally or suffered from inconveniencies for some other reasons at the time of closure: “My computer is not suitable for online classes. It works slow and sometimes I have problems with it during the online classes”; “Technology often prevents me from being active during online classes”; “I experience big problems with the Internet connection. For example, one of our teachers has really bad connection which causes their flow of speech to pause constantly and it is a torture to listen/focus on it”.

In November, when the rate of daily new cases increased significantly, the students' opinions on their preferred way of studying changed considerably and mirrored an almost equal number of those arguing for and against distance learning. A slight predominance of opponents of online learning was observed among the representatives of the second and third year, and a small majority of its followers was seen in the group of fifth-year students.

More specifically, those who did not opt for online classes in November gave arguments that overlapped with those presented in October, namely, with the need to maintain both student-student and student-teacher relationships, underlining the need to contact their seminar supervisors (especially in the case of the third year): "I don't want to study online. I will have a big problem with writing my B. A. diploma. My supervisor will not explain and give some advice as she does at the university".

The opposite point of view, however, mirrored a two-fold justification of students' lack of willingness to take part in real-time classes. First of all, the subjects mentioned a fear of being infected: "Studying online is safer than studying at the university. I don't have to worry about my family"; "I would feel safer if I didn't have to spend time in crowded places as university"; "During online classes I don't meet sick people. It is an important fact for me because I have a 10-month daughter".

Consequently, the second most popular argument against traditional education involved commuting, that is, time and money spent on driving to the university: "I would like to have online classes because I wouldn't have to commute and could save some money and time. Due to the time saved on commuting, I could do more things at home and wouldn't have to be in a hurry".

The data gathered in December showed a considerable increase in students' positive opinions about online education. The arguments presented this time ranged from fear of getting infected before the Christmas period, and far-reaching consequences to the very unstable situation that was observed at the university, that is, plenty of regular classes being cancelled or moved to the online mode due to quarantine: "I don't feel like going to the university. I'm afraid I could infect my family members, especially those with health issues"; "I don't like the idea of mixed classes, and uncertainty because they change regular meetings into online all of a sudden".

Those in the minority, who still supported the idea of face-to-face study, pointed to the fact of self-discipline and motivation that such a form of education offers: "I try to keep discipline. It's easier to be absent with online classes. Many of us keep making up excuses"; "Going to school has a good influence on me. I'm more self-disciplined and on time."

After the Christmas break, the new wave of coronavirus infections appeared and intensified students' fears of going back to the university. As a result, over 95%

of all the subjects manifested disapproval of regular classes being continued. The students' reaction, irrespective of the group, underestimated all of the previously mentioned arguments for traditional studying. This month, the subjects' views were definitely based on facts and figures and overlapped with the opinions presented by different groups of authorities advising everyone to stay at home. Admittedly, the sample was scared at the thought of travelling to and through the campus: "It's better to be safe than sorry if I remember correct. I'm afraid of being sick. At home I feel safer. Besides, I don't have to wear a mask, which is also unhealthy"; "It's the end of the term so we can study from home".

A few people who still opted for traditional education emphasized their need to take tests and exams in the classroom. For them, there is no use in being examined in front of the screen as "many students cheat, using online tools, and this is really unfair. Eventually, their grades are much better."

6. Conclusions and instruction implications

When analysing the students' responses gathered over the timespan of the study, it can be noticed that the arguments voiced either for or against online education were not only condensed but most of all wide in scope.

All the opinions presented can be encapsulated into several issues of considerable importance to the sample including: social affairs, transportation, infrastructure, health concerns and management.

Secondly, the arguments chosen by the subjects prove that they are fully aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and go even further, notably, thinking of a given studying mode in accordance with their personal deficits and possible benefits.

Thirdly, it seems that in the face of a difficult situation concerning the ongoing pandemic and a major crisis, respondents choose the lesser evil when it comes to the type of learning.

When trying to answer the question of whether to study or not to study online, there will always be two types of parties claiming their rights, that is, propagating and opposing the idea of distance education at the same time. And, as we read in Papaja (2021, p. 5), "the ongoing Covid-19 crisis has been and will continue to be both a massive challenge and a learning experience for the global education community", it is highly recommended to pay more attention to online education which may simply be a must periodically (i.e., from one wave of infections to another). To encourage the best quality of instruction, the following principles addressed by the emergency remote teaching instructors are believed to be a good short-term solution:

- Encourage student participation and cooperation,
- Encourage active learning,
- Give prompt feedback,
- Emphasize time on task,

- Communicate high expectations,
- Respect diversity,
- Address individual differences,
- Avoid information overload,
- Encourage student reflection.

These "golden means" sound like well-packed recipes for a huge crisis in education, such as that influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic. Though, following Sowa (2009, p. 21), it is advisable to return to traditional teaching in due time not to lose the spirit of the academic community and identity that have been ascribed to the university construed as an indestructible social system for ages.

7. Further research suggestions

As the findings of the study indicate, studying under Coronavirus restrictions is not an easy task to do, often put to a great test because of changing pandemic conditions, it seems legitimate to say that a comparison of student`s opinion on education with that of teachers' views would be of major interest to future studies.

Another idea as a follow-up to this research is to investigate more groups of university students representing other fields of study, and juxtapose the data with the obtained results, in the hope of gaining a deeper insight into the very problem, and have a more interesting profile of students, their needs and expectations.

8. Study limitations

The limitation was the diary tool itself. As it is difficult to involve students in regular diary-keeping, the research was limited to the scope of one semester only, for fear of them being discouraged and/or unreliable in completing the task. Continuing the research after February 2022, when the COVID-19 restrictions were relaxed, would probably offer a better insight into the situation, but it was not undertaken for the reasons as above.

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Reconsidering Spatial Interaction in the Virtual Literature Classroom after the Pandemic Lockdown

ABSTRACT
This paper analyses the qualitative notes of a self-reflective researcher and examines his literature classroom experience. The researcher develops an auto-ethnographical research design to understand how spatial interaction can be experienced after the critical shift from actual settings to virtual settings. The paper elucidates the results in efficiency regarding involvement and creativity. The researcher's recorded auto-ethnographical entries cover four weeks while teaching at a state-run department in Trabzon. He tries to transform the virtual setting into a spatial learning medium to achieve responsive interaction and creativity to enhance the participants' critical thinking and imagination. S/he referred to the theory of postromantic education to examine the results. S/he decided to keep a diary about the classroom experience. The reflective account revealed that the use of whiteboards and particularly the integration of chatbox into virtual classrooms helped overcome social and spatial interaction drawbacks. The study concluded that the internally motivated participants oscillate between imagination and cognition thanks to the experiential apparatus of spatial interaction created by the postromantic framework.

KEYWORDS
autoethnography, pandemic era, virtual literature classroom, spatial interaction, postures of human learners

1. Introduction

Traditional notions of teaching literature are shattered, and close-ended steps to achieve "success" in the conventional poetry classroom proved vain after the pandemic (Werner & Küplüce, 2021). A real classroom setting offers considerable interaction with the 'place' and 'bodies' belonging to the learning setting, which transforms into a 'learning space' through experience. On the other hand, an online virtual setting lacks such 'spatial interaction' and arouses relatively more anxiety, which is always an adverse factor in educational mediums. As Russell and Murphy-Judy suggested, the teachers act as a guide, yet the teachers should also consider the learners' individual and private learning spaces (Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2020). Penetrating these spaces with responsive interaction requires theoretical insights, experiential reflection and utilisation of virtual tools.

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An efficient poetry class is also a desirable language classroom. So far, several articles have been on how to incorporate literature into language teaching curricula (Carter, 2007; pp. 3–12). Open-ended frames and the figurative power of literary texts have been remarkably considered in language-teaching settings (Bobkina & Domingues, 2014; Hall, 2015). However, such an instrumentalisation of literature (or literature courses) has a significant potential to undermine the authenticity of social, intercultural and spatial interaction as the essential features of a literature classroom. For instance, a poetry classroom may significantly contribute to the improvement of imaginative skills, thereby improving language skills, and the participants' experiences in a poetry course need further examination. While affluence of ideas has been raised about teaching poetry thus far, research to date hardly debunks the mystery of an efficient poetry class regarding the setting. Poetry classroom, however, should go beyond, and this article shares my exploration on the way to a spirited poetry class (and, therefore, language class) in actual and virtual settings.

2. Autoethnography in literature classroom

An autoethnography has less to do with science than art or storytelling and unearths the tellable in what innately has narrativity, doomed to the confinement of the untold. Autoethnography uses "storytelling" (Delamont & Jones, 2012; p. 523) as a critical lens that aims to explain the personal experience to understand cultural experience (ethnographic) better. Similarly, Bochner and Ellis (1996) draw attention to the performativity of the act of "writing" and "storytelling." An autoethnography sheds light on "learning experience, struggles, solutions, failures and successes" (Arıkan, 2018, p. 24) to represent how they "feel, learn, discover, co-create" (Ricci, 2003, p. 594). Therefore, autoethnography is an artistic activity with construction, deconstruction and reconstruction strategies. It helps understand particular individual subjectivities and social phenomena. Ethnographers record cultural experience patterns and provide insights into life experiences. They continuously stay in a state of reflection, asking questions and gathering information about their experience. This reflective observer, a storyteller from within and without, carefully conceives the phenomenal individual or social characteristics, avoiding prejudices or hypotheses.

3. The role of spatial interaction in the motivation type

3.1. Chatbox and whiteboard as spatial realms

Regarding the spatial experience of the participants, pandemic-era virtual classes are prone to failure, hardly offering such a shared physical spatial environment. After the pandemic turn, space is reduced to screen Werner and Küplüce (2021). Hence, I employed chatbox, polling and whiteboard as make-up tools. The content of the virtual classroom is devoid of space and can hardly be stored in memory,

processed only in the working memory (short memory). The content creates another media/medium; thus, the whiteboard and chatbox became crucial features of the Adobe Connect meeting room.

I designed my Adobe Connect virtual classroom regarding internally motivated participants. A minority of these participants have relatively higher cognitive skills, and some other minorities in the classroom resist virtual online sessions, keeping extremely reserved. Some others are accustomed to traditional classroom strategies and assessment techniques, prioritising transfer, repetition, habit formation and memorisation. I integrated the notions of reflection *(wise passiveness),* spontaneity and voluntary involvement into the learning space so that I could make the participants more involved in the sessions. This approach requires contemplation over spatiality vs. temporality and experientiality vs. imitation (Çıraklı, 2018). This approach, developed in the pre-pandemic era, emphasises "human learner" and their hidden potential and assumes an inherent link between response/creativity and learning" (p. 134). With the critical distinction between skill reinforcement and learning, this approach stresses individual learners' bodily, psychological and intellectual responses. The individual learner is encouraged to act, reflect or respond to all the other participants and objects in a conventional classroom setting. The lecturer changes the whole classroom into a coherent stage, and every item, person or object becomes a gadget in the performance. It is mainly based on the idea that the more the setting is experienced, the better it is transformed into a learning space. It is closely related to spatiality, working memory and cognition.

3.2. Creative Drama Replaced by Creative Writing

We can stress three main categories regarding the human learner's motivational status against the learning experience. First, externally motivated students in the 'traditional' settings. These students are primarily concerned about assessment. They are accustomed to methodologies using habitual skill formation or automatisation by repetition or memorisation. Second, internally motivated students can be more involved in humanised spatial contexts. Lastly, the students use their cognitive capabilities better than the other students. I associate their attitude with Kantian *categorical imperative*, which requires an individual "self-conscious learner" (Çıraklı, 2022, p. 189), whose involvement, interaction and learning are unconditional. Hence, presumably, my ethnographic experience of the settings showed that Kant's *categorical imperative* could be used to explain the motivational and involvement stages of the participants:

The principles of "interaction, spontaneity, and involvement" played a significant role in my virtual classroom (with a genuine experience of acting and producing). The participants were supposed to be 'attentive'. Considering the above taxonomy, I replaced creative drama with creative writing and involved the chatbox efficiently.

Table.1. Çıraklı's Postures of Human Learners (Çıraklı, 2022; p. 189)

Phases	*Postures*	*Interaction Type*	*Distinctive Features*
-Task-Based -Planned Action -Receiver (Aristotle)	Externally Motivated	-Limited Interaction -Temporality -Collectivity -Transfer	-Repetition -Imitation -Memorisation
-Spontaneity -Involvement -Actor / Poetic (Wordsworth)	Internally Motivated	-Social and Spatial Interaction -Reflection -Creativity -Response	- Experience -Imagination -Memory (Long Term Episodic)
-Categorical Imperative -Producer (Kant)	Internally Motivated	Virtual Interaction	-Cognition -Knowledge

It provided a somewhat spatial realm, and the distorted texts the students sent were visible and readable by any participant at a time. As previously suggested: "[Quit standard ppt presentations and avoid boring, bothering mode of preaching! We should] envisage the individual learners, in Wordsworth's terms, with the quality of "wise passiveness," inherently associated with imagination, inspiration and creativity" (Çıraklı, 2018; p. 134). Rather, I tried to adopt a strategy of distortion, re-writing and interaction. I always keep the whiteboard activated.

4. Research context

I kept an ethnographic journal, social media posts, notebook entries, notes, and autoethnographic narrative as a poetry coach and a reflective participant. As Custer (2014) states that "Autoethnography by its very nature is engagement" (p. 4). Custer argues that "emotion", "spiritual bond", "embodiment" and "self-consciousness" (pp. 3–4) are essential elements in the autoethnographic account.

Pre-pandemic and pandemic strategies are incorporated, and Adobe Connect is integrated into my literature classes. It was a dramatic switch to virtual educational space due to the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown and questioning our conventional classroom setting.

4.1. Participants

My observation covers the Fall term, 2021–2022 academic year when I hosted online sessions for 14 weeks during the pandemic. The participants speak English as a foreign language. Most of them speak Turkish as their native tongue. During

the pandemic, I collaborated with 44 students (70 officially registered ones with 26 non-attendants). More than 35 students were regular participants, mainly following the sessions online. Others are connected to the classes by watching the recorded sessions. I hosted online sessions for 14 weeks, and the participants attended these sessions from different locations scattered around the country.

4.2. Data collection and procedure

My reflective journal allows me to think critically about my educational experience in the virtual literature classroom. As the ethnographer should keep a research diary, which "is a comprehensive record of the research process and contains a reflection on that process" (Fox et al., 2007; p. 148). So, I kept my observational notes and reflections on my classroom experience in a research diary. I took notes of emotional responses, critical responses, expectations, amazements, and feelings about the session experience. I paid utmost attention to the authenticity of my notes and narratives as reliability, in qualitative research, refers to the essential consistency of a narrator. Thus, I provided factual evidence from the context. It is organised around the following questions: 1) SITUATION: What actually happened? What did we do? What did you create or experience? 2) AFFECT: What was its impact/effect on you personally? What are your emotions/feelings? Why did you feel as you did? 3) INTERPRETATION: What did you learn from the experience? Explain in what ways the new learning either confirms or contradicts your prior knowledge or understanding.

Following Bochner's (2002) suggestion, I thoroughly considered "what actually happened to me?" (p. 86). I also considered "what responses are given by the participants" and tried to interpret their habitual, emotional and cognitive changes. The researcher feels as if he were in the shoes of a learner, which is not an explicit or implicit analogy between the instructor and the student; instead, it is a sort of identification regarding the role and status of human learners. What makes the difference between these participants is, therefore, the degree of experience. The distinctive feature of the reflective teacher is that he is more experienced than others. I tried to represent this kind of emphatic stance and experiential attitude towards the topic under consideration. The fact that my account provides the readers with generalisable outputs and projections about the future experiences of the readers makes the researcher's diary promising.

5. Findings and discussion: experiential, observational account

5.1. Meeting 1

The situational remarks and description of my pandemic experience are as follows:

> I started with a warming activity on Sonnet 17 and raised some questions. I asked them about the types/kinds of poetry from Turkish culture. It was a strategy I had used previously, and I easily

> transferred it to my virtual class. I have given the example of "Rubai", which is named according to the number of lines in the poem. A Rubai (meaning four-lined in Arabic) contains four lines. I also give another example from Twitter. As a social media platform, Twitter seems to refer to the sonnet tradition as the tweets are restricted to "140 characters", which equals to 14 times10. That is an indirect reference to the form of a sonnet, including 14 lines, a conventionalised number of lines in a sonnet. This implies that "a tweet is a postmodern sonnet." After giving these examples, I invited the students to talk about "love stories" and "love story patterns" since sonnets are mostly rotating around the "theme of love." Then I asked them to "re-write/translate" the poem into Turkish by integrating/adding/incorporating certain cultural elements and Turkish idioms. Some of the students generated good idioms such as "gaza gelmek" [to grow stimulated], "yaşını başını almak",[to grow older enough] "teneşir",[figurative altar, to screw up], "kostaklanmak" [unbound arrogance].

After warming up, the teacher's explanations about Sonnet Tradition, Shakespearean Sonnets, and the Renaissance sounded more interesting. The researcher particularly stressed the significance of three pillars of the age: Humanism (Ethics), Secular Love (Motive), and Greek Ideals and Forms (the Arts). Then I related the topic to the Sonnets: a) A sonnet is a love poem praising human qualities as such; b) A sonnet explores secular love rather than divine love; c) a sonnet is a reproduction of a resonant Greek form.

After the theoretical background, we returned to the original text: We found figures of speech, revised some pronunciation mistakes, and the role of the rhymes and metaphors. We highlighted the poem's sound quality, meter and sound repetitions, making the verse rhythm produce musicality. Then, the researcher moved to another experimental activity:

> The idea is that if something has a good rhythm, regular repetition of particular stresses and a specific arrangement of rising and falling intonation, it gives musical pleasure to the audience. A volunteer student is invited to the stage. The chorus rehearsed/read aloud the poem according to the rhythm, paying utmost attention to the meter, stress and intonation to make the volunteer student on the stage, who has already turned his back to the performers, turn to them and start listening to the music/rhythm/poem leaning against the desk. We all observed his facial gestures growing better and having pleasure in the exposition. All the members were involved in the activity. Then, we changed the mode of rehearsal/performance and read the poem in a fashion of "kaka-phony" [ill composition, noise] so that the volunteer would stop us. Thus, the function of "beat" and "rhythm" in a sonnet and the role of sound in the production of aesthetic pleasure have become observable. I saw that these strategies are efficiently transferred to the virtual setting, and interested students responded considerably.

Then the reflective teacher returned to the poem and investigated the possessive pronouns: "my". They saw that the poet starts with "my verse" (referring to the very poem and it is a reference to his art) and finishes the poem with "my rhyme", which also refers to the poem itself and a perusal of the art of the poet. This raises the question of whether it is a love poem or a poem about the art and craftsmanship of the poet. Whether the question praises the "object of love" (the lady) or "his powerful art".

We discussed the issue and inspected imagery and images in the texts. Our examination revealed that there appear few images illustrating virtue and beauty. The participants were told they had a genuine performative touch and a genuine bond with the historical poet. The participants are amazed and baffled by how they are/were addressed by the real (historical) poet and how they grew to be accurate historical readers. The participants learned that they have a solid, actual bond of reading with the real historical author through a virtual classroom.

5.2. Meeting 2

The following meeting starts with a warming-up activity again. The researcher wrote/projected the themes on the whiteboard: a) Imaginary Object of Love and Imagined Object of Love; b) Turkish Yeşilçam stereotype KEZBAN (the poor ugly country girl transforms into a beautiful lady); c) Aşık Veysel. (The students wondered how these keywords would relate to the main topic). Then, the researcher invited two volunteer students (one boy and one girl) to open their cameras:

> I used the direct text message and asked the students to sketch up/draw up the pictures of the beloveds in Sonnets 18 and 130. I allowed them to use a dictionary and an internet connection. After that, I turned to the volunteer students, switching to Turkish (in the pre-covid era, I had let them get behind the separator, using the portable whiteboard as a separator and told them to wait for me before). In the virtual classroom, they joined the activity in their privacy. I explained the situation to and asked the girl to "make up" the boy's picture so that it reflects/represents the object described in Sonnet 130. We used everyday stuff to "paint" the face to stir creativity. So two tandem workshops were held separately, and I created a medium of suspense. After ten-15 minutes, I initiate the students to find images in Sonnet 130n and stock metaphors and clichés in Sonnet 18. I also asked them to number each image in the poem and its representation in their product to see if they could achieve a one-to-one correspondence between the poem and the picture. They also underlined the stock metaphors. After that textual study, I increased the tension to open up the separator: They were all curious to see what would happen. Upon seeing the boy made up/acting out the "ugly" woman in Sonnet 130, they all burst into tears. Then I asked them to rehearse/read aloud the poem and asked the model to act according to the lines performed. All the students were having fun, were involved in the activity, and were cheered up. Then we read Sonnet 18 aloud altogether. I asked one of the students (a girl) to choose a girl to represent/dramatise the beautiful lady in Sonnet 18. Then appear on stage two persons, one referring to 130, the other to 18. And then, I united them back to back, as if one person had two sights, and let the class listen to Aşık Veysel's "Güzelliğin on par'etmez, Bu bendeki aşk olmasa" [It is only my love that makes you beautiful]. The students were all lost within the tunes of Veysel and moved. I asked about the implication: Some students, raising their hands, said, "These ladies are, maybe, the same person, and beauty is not in the physical appearance but in the mind and perception of the lover. [wording is mine]." I underlined the motto: "It depends how the perceiver perceives the object of love.

5.3. Meeting 3

I wrote/projected to the whiteboard the following themes:

1) Shakespeare's playfulness.
2) Politeness and Turkish Indirectness.
3) Reading through Creative Re-Writing.

Chatbox, as suggested above, provided us with a carnivalesque and non-hierarchical creative space in which the learners can produce and exert their critical thinking and reading comprehension skills. Of course, it does not devoid of their distorting pleasure, which is only possible if you have realised the distinctive features of the genres, conventions and themes. The following sonnet (see 5.4), a genuinely creative piece of the re-writing of a sonnet by Shakespeare, is addressed to the participant's mobile phone.

5.4. Sample production in the virtual classroom

My mistress' screen is nothing like the skies (Sonnet to my precious handy)
I would not believe it if it was said,
You will be seen and heard by your mate,
On the screen of a little machine in every climate,
Only the investors live like a prophet.
Human being has been addicted to it in a short time,
Forgotten to communicate with each other with rhyme,
If it is asked their mobile phones to hide,
They would immediately turn into Mr. Hyde.
For some people, it is hard to give up on it,
For others, even a room is impossible to fit.
Today's obsessed belonging get on well with,
And without it the world is a deepless pit.

Even if I am a bookworm and nature lover,
Sorry to be tied with my beloved cell forever.

6. Discussion: Reflective Account

6.1. Affect

As for the impact/effect on the participants and the researcher? What about emotions/feelings? learners' productions? It is observed that the students, even the ones in the imaginary back seats, were all involved in the lesson throughout the topic. Integrating cultural elements, spontaneity, responsiveness/creativity and invention made the students active, interactive and responsive. They still keep the videos/cameras off, but I hardly followed the messages in the chatbox. They sent many responses. They produced rewritings and parodies of the sonnet tradition.

I was impressed that my friends got the gist of the idea, and I was so happy to see that they were involved and would remember the spatial experience through the chatbox. Chatbox proved to serve as an imaginary yet powerful learning space.

As part of my emotional response to what I have experienced, I can quote the following statements from my journal, which indicate the gist of my emotional response.

> I liked it and thought the group was among the best ones. It is also interesting that those sitting at the back or some boys having a relatively uninterested image raised their hands to share their products. To my surprise, I have observed that boys are more active than expected.

6.2. Interpretation

Regarding what the reflective teacher learned from the experience and how the new learning confirmed or contradicted their prior knowledge or understanding, it can be said that the students are very interested in activities. The "duration" matters because their "critical attention time interval" is too short. It is observed that they did not like keeping a notebook:

> […] and even though I encouraged them to keep a mobile notebook devoted to the lesson, many students could not understand the instructions. Sometimes, it can be challenging to make the point even when I switched to Turkish. (During the pre-pandemic period, some students were so interested, always approaching the lecturer's desk to continue the discussions before he left the classroom). In the virtual classroom, critical-minded and brilliant students contacted the researcher about the course content.

The lecturer realised that there are quite a few reflective audiences and followers of these discussions. The participants reported that they learned much from these discussions. Hence, the chatbox allowed the lecturer to initiate discussions with the students. There were authentic discussions, but sometimes, the long answers occurred as a *copy-paste* response. Nevertheless, it was a form of interaction, particularly when the lecturer asked the participants to give an example in a few words; they were very responsive. In the discussion, some participants felt more confident and active in English.

Regarding spatial interaction, I questioned the virtual/distant Adobe Connect platform as a reflective and self-conscious author of the presented experiential account. Hence, my teaching-learning experience evaluates the previously set theory of postromantic framework (Çıraklı, 2018) and related strategies (Çıraklı, 2022). Qualitative examination and experiential account of how we can adapt our previous experience to the virtual setting would provide precious findings and suggestions regarding the techniques and the participants' attitudes and motivational types.

My experience with the virtual classroom exhibited the possibility of transforming virtual settings into actual and spatial learning mediums. I knew that if they could "accumulate long-term memory, which would be a launching pad for further learning processes" (Çıraklı, 2022, p. 189). As spatial and social

interactions were no longer possible in the virtual environments and the individual learners were isolated in their privacy even when they were connected with an online session, I needed to develop new strategies according to the postures of human learners (Çıraklı, 2022). It was a genuine challenge to activate them to write in the chatbox, draw their attention, and keep them involved since they were exposed to many distractors. Their interaction with their friends was limited and changed, and the notion of spatiality would be almost lost. Moreover, these classes would lack 'space', vitally essential to long-term memory.

7. Conclusions and future implications

A poetry classroom is a creative medium with a variety of discoveries and inventions. Teaching poetry requires an active moderation open to spontaneous responses, improvisations and creative ideas. Teaching poetry through creative drama or creative writing with cultural elements requires considerable *spatial interaction* (Çıraklı, 2018, 2022) – however, particular challenges posed by the online virtual classroom during the pandemic call for reconsidering the case.

Therefore, the *postromantic framework* transforms itself into a more ethical and cognitive categorical imperative upon the spatial shift in the learning environments. Spontaneity, involvement and creativity should be integrated with categorical imperative and the activation of cognitive processes. Both Wordsworthian and Kantian categories should collaborate, but the reflective teacher should remember that in the virtual context, spatial interaction, therefore, imagination and long-term memory, is remarkably – and relatively – limited. The students should be instigated in a way that they assume themselves in a spatial medium of learning through experientiality to induce episodic memory. Any degree of spatial interaction makes them internally motivated, oscillating between imagination and cognition. When these strategies remain limited, students' cognitive skills come to the fore, in which case the wise passive learners facilitate their cognition.

8. Limitations of the study

The study is limited to a particular period and the narrative account of the ethnographer. Other research initiatives regarding reliability and generalisability should test the reflective teacher's observations, experiences and reflections. Nevertheless, it contains significant theoretical and practical insight into learning mediums.

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Academic Achievement of Foreign Language Undergraduate Students during Pandemic Times

ABSTRACT
This research article aims to show the academic achievement in the form of marks of students of the third year's subject 'Teaching and Learning English' located in the Degree in Primary Education (Faculty of Education, University of Murcia, Spain). Our corpus of participants has five different groups (including the bilingual group) with a total number of n=1496 students with an average per academic year of n=374 students whose marks have been analysed comparing four different academic years. Taking into account the subject programme, the performance of the students during the normal year, during the lockdown, in the blended learning year (face-to-face and online) and in the return-to-normal year have been analysed. The results show that in both the lockdown and the blended learning year the performance is higher than in the other academic years, which leads us to question whether the pandemic really influenced the assessment and teaching conditions of the subject.

KEYWORDS
foreign languages; education; pandemic; academic achievement; communicative competence

1. Introduction

The 2030 agenda set by the UN presents seventeen Sustainable Development Goals that aim to make our lives better and, above all, to make our societies and, therefore, our cultures more sustainable. Language education is not explicitly included in these goals, but it is addressed by several of them. From our point of view, the transversality of language is a key factor in the progress of humanity and in people's daily lives. This abstract concept applies to languages and these, whether they are mother tongues, second or foreign languages, enable communication and, above all, shape our perception of reality.

The goals by which we consider that the acquisition and development of a foreign language is most clearly addressed are number four *Quality education*,

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since, logically, an integral approach to education seeks to provide individuals with essential knowledge and skills to interact with other societies and cultures. Objective ten, which refers to the reduction of inequalities, also contemplates the learning of languages, because this linguistic knowledge helps human beings to progress and improve their status within the social fabric. Moreover, this allows clear access to individual as well as collective well-being. Another objective would be linked to Goals sixteen and seventeen, *Peace, justice and strong institution*s and *Partnerships for the goals*.

These two goals refer to intercultural education and the coexistence of different cultures, respectively. To this end, knowledge of languages and their cultures is essential to understand certain beliefs, customs, ideas and stories related to countries and geographical areas. Given the significance attributed to (any) language learning, in these pages we focus on the academic achievement of trainee teachers in one of the specific subjects they have in their curriculum: the third year subject which focuses on the teaching and learning of the English language. We have analysed how the marks from different groups of participants have changed over the last four years (including the period of the pandemic). We must stress once again that they will become educators in the future and the success of the language teaching process to the new generation will depend on their language awareness in foreign language acquisitions and on their linguistic skills.

2. Difficulties in accessing English as a foreign language

Foreign language learning may be related to certain situations, but, from our point of view, the main reason must be the opening of the mind; through the knowledge of another language one gains access to other linguistic signs, to other codes, in short, to another structuring of the mind (Craig, 2018; Durán, 2008). The awareness of the existence of a vision of reality from a different, but at the same time convergent, prism must be the fundamental approach to the aforementioned learning (Barili & Byram, 2021; Byram, 1997). In the context of the Spanish education system, the background in which our study has been carried out, there has been an attempt over the last few decades to make approaches to English teaching and learning and bilingualism converge. This responds to an effort to get students to work both with their mother tongue and the English language. Nevertheless, there is still a tendency to consider English merely as a foreign language not a vehicular one in education.

One of the factors that hinder the successful acquisition of English as a foreign language in the Spanish context is the lack of motivation for learning English among the learners. Some of the contributing elements is the major dubbing industry that makes a significant contribution to the economy of this country. This is compounded by the fact that the grammatical approach that has been perpetuated

in the classroom prevents more time from being devoted to oral expression or to the understanding of culture which is a key fact that conditions the language (Afshar & Yousefi, 2019; Baleghizadeh & Saneie, 2013). Moreover, the reminiscence of people's experiences outside the country and the lack of interaction with native speakers mean that the language is learned in such a way that there is no clear reference and self-regulation of the evolution of the linguistic skills of individuals approaching the new language.

As we know, mastering a language requires a balanced level of speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. Conversation is added as a skill highly related to the first two. And it is highly relevant to take into account the cultural factors that surround these skills. As we know from Sapir-Whorf's contributions, linguistic relativity is one of the factors that governs the relationships established between language use and thinking. One of the most frequent errors that we see through contrastive grammar is the direct correspondence that learners of the foreign language make of the elements of the language, believing that there are mimetic parallels between the languages. The lack of a clear awareness of this makes access to the new language very difficult. In addition, in the absence of any awareness of the importance of the concept of communicative competence among educators and learners, the language is not transmitted in a complete way. Therefore, as we shall see below, the consolidation of such competence in curricula and syllabuses must be an aspiration that significantly improves learning issues.

3. Towards the consolidation of communicative competence as a goal of methodological designs in the English foreign language classroom

In the third decade of the 21st century, foreign language classroom dynamics should be articulated around the development of a communicative competence, mainly because of the presence of linguistic skills worked on at the same time and the relevance of the contextual updating it allows. Emerging technologies put abundant resources at the learners' disposal to develop their competence. Thus, access to series or films in original and subtitled versions, to documents in the foreign language found on the web, to applications that help to learn more about grammar or how to pronounce certain words become allies in the learning of that language and can complement the formal education already provided through the subjects in the curricula or syllabuses.

The trainee teacher who, in this case, is an essential element of our research, has to be immersed in the foreign language in order to internalise it and thus be able to enhance learners' pleasure in foreign language learning. This requires the mastering of the language. The third year subject *Teaching and learning English*, for example, cannot be understood as just another subject where the contents are assimilated and shown in a final test, since the assessment is based not only on

the evaluation of theoretical aspects, but also on the information related to all the linguistic skills. It is therefore urgent for teachers to be aware of the conditions necessary for a fruitful foreign language teaching and learning process (Le Roux, 2002; Leung, 2005; Papi & Khajavy, 2021; Pérez Cañado & Madrid, 2004; Shanahan & Beck, 2006; Soland & Sandilos, 2021). The surrounding learning conditions, the motivation and the purpose of learning are important dimensions when it comes to assessing academic performance in any related subject. Sometimes, if there is no motivation and the foreign language subject is dealt with as just another subject, there is a significant failure in the results obtained.

In this article we are interested in checking whether academic achievement is an objective fact that can be measured through the exam marks and the number of students who obtained the pass mark during the first exam session of the annual examination schedule. The comparative analysis we propose, taking as a reference four academic years that include the pandemic period, can also shed light on how certain socio-sanitary conditions affect the development of a subject. It may be possible that, in a situation of global alarm, the demands posed by the third year subject in question could not be met by suffering students and teachers. It can also be considered as an influential aspect the fact that assessment during the lockdown required technological means and these provide with opportunities for cheating (although this is not a generalised fact). Therefore, we will now analyse the academic performance of different students taking the aforementioned subject exam and check their evolution over the four academic years mentioned above.

4. Material and Methods

4.1. Aim of the research

The main objective of this study is to analyse the academic performance of third year students of the Degree in Primary Education in the Faculty of Education at the University of Murcia, especially in the subject 'Teaching and Learning English'. These students take this subject as learners of a foreign language. The intention is to compare their performance during four different academic years spanning the periods between pre-pandemic and post-pandemic. From our point of view, the teaching conditions will determine the possible difference between the marks obtained by these students.

4.2. Participants

Four different groups of students are monitores. The total number of participants in the study, including students from the bilingual group, is shown in table 1 below. The total would be 1496 and the average per academic year would be 374 students.

Table 1. Distribution of the student body according to academic years (including the bilingual group)

Normal (2018/2019)	Pandemic (2019/2020)	Blended learning (2020/2021)	Post-pandemic (2021/2022)
(n=337)	(n=353)	(n=392)	(n=414)

Table 2 shows the distribution of students, excluding the bilingual group. Thus, the total would be 1269 and the average per academic year would be 317 students.

Table 2. Distribution of the student body according to academic years (excluding the bilingual group)

Normal (2018/2019)	Pandemic (2019/2020)	Blended learning (2020/2021)	Post-pandemic (2021/2022)
(n=277)	(n=298)	(n=333)	(n=361)

4.3. Sources and data analysis plan

In order to find out the performance of these students by academic year, we accessed the grades obtained in the first exam session of the annual examination schedule, since other later exam sessions would focus on failing students. We try to highlight the percentage of those who pass the subject, as well as the average corresponding to the grades. This was done in a global way as well as separating the bilingual group. It is important to point out that throughout the year, language skills along with didactic issues are worked on in the subject. At the end of the course the evaluation measures these skills through different tests, including multiple choice exams, oral tests and written assignments.

5. Results

In this section we show the students' performance over the four academic years. We will differentiate between overall and per-group data. It is interesting to note that we provide both the percentage of students who pass the subject, as well as the arithmetic mean obtained. This will allow us to verify that those students who pass the subject also do so with a good grade, while the deficiencies are shown in the percentage of students who do not achieve an optimum performance. Only the first exam session is kept under scrutiny because it shows the students' performance after developing their language skills for a year. The rest of the exam sessions of the annual examination schedule are mainly oriented to correct the students' performance deficiencies.

Table 3. Percentage of students who pass the subject and the average marks they obtain

Normal (2018/2019)	Pandemic (2019/2020)	Blended learning (2020/2021)	Post-pandemic (2021/2022)
(n=119/337 35%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.77	(n=169/353 48%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.82	(n=179/392 45%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.53	(n=158/414 38%) $\overline{X}$ = 8.02

The overall results show that, before the pandemic, one third of students passed the subject in the first exam session (June) (see Table 3). Although this is not a high percentage, the average grade obtained is high, standing at 7.77. On the other hand, we can see that during the pandemic the percentage of students who pass the subject averages around 48% – almost half of the students –, which is significantly higher than in the previous academic year. This percentage remains stable in the blended learning academic year – face-to-face and online learning – but drops to 38% in the post-pandemic period. However, the average number of students is higher in the last academic year.

Table 4. Percentage of students who pass the subject and the average marks they obtain (excluding the bilingual group)

Normal (2018/2019)	Pandemic (2019/2020)	Blended learning (2020/2021)	Post-pandemic (2021/2022)
(n=82/277 29%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.83	(n=125/298 42%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.88	(n=127/333 38%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.57	(n=121/361 33%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.97

The overall results, not including the bilingual group, maintain the trend observed in the general performance. That is to say, there are better percentages of academic performance during the pandemic and blended learning academic years. There is a downward oscillation in the percentages, but the average corresponding to the marks is maintained and sometimes higher than that of the overall data.

Table 5. Percentage of students who pass the subject and the average marks they obtain (bilingual group only)

Normal (2018/2019)	Pandemic (2019/2020)	Blended learning (2020/2021)	Post-pandemic (2021/2022)
(n=37/60 62%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.52	(n=44/55 80%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.59	(n=52/59 88%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.38	(n=37/53 69%) $\overline{X}$ = 8.24

The results for the bilingual group show a very high percentage of students passing the subject during the pandemic and the year in which blended learning took place. In the other two years, although the percentage is high, it is not as significant as in the two academic years in question. We should highlight the average obtained by students during the post-pandemic year, with an 8.24 being a high one. It should be noted that the linguistic requirements to be accepted in the bilingual group in the initial year of the degree are close to a B2 level since they receive more than 60% of their teaching in the foreign language. Therefore, this good performance is expected from them.

Table 6. Percentage of students who pass the subject and the average marks they obtain (group two only)

Normal (2018/2019)	Pandemic (2019/2020)	Blended learning (2020/2021)	Post-pandemic (2021/2022)
(n=20/88 23%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.41	(n=36/92 39%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.55	(n=38/101 37%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.49	(n=47/109 43%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.68

If we look at the specific data for group number two, the percentages for the pandemic and blended learning years far exceed those for the 2018/2019 academic year, rising by more than 15%. It is curious how in the 2021/2022 academic year the percentage has improved in comparison to the previous ones. The average mark of students who pass the subject in June remains constant over the four academic years.

Table 7. Percentage of students who pass the subject and the average marks they obtain (group three only)

Normal (2018/2019)	Pandemic (2019/2020)	Blended learning (2020/2021)	Post-pandemic (2021/2022)
(n=23/81 28%) $\overline{X}$ = 8.29	(n=46/92 50%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.69	(n=37/93 39%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.67	(n=40/76 52%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.33

Group three follows a similar pattern to that shown by group two, as in the pandemic year 50% of the students passed the subject. The previous year the percentage was particularly low: 28%. During the blended learning course, the percentage dropped to 39%. In 2021/2022 there was a significant improvement, rising to 52%. The average grades are consistently above 7.5, resulting in the paradox that the academic year with the lowest exam pass rates, has the highest average rate: 8.29.

Table 8. Percentage of students who pass the subject and the average marks they obtain (group five only)

Normal (2018/2019)	Pandemic (2019/2020)	Blended learning (2020/2021)	Post-pandemic (2021/2022)
(n=15/62 24%) $\overline{X}$ = 8.54	(n=27/55 49%) $\overline{X}$ = 8.53	(n=23/61 37%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.52	(n=22/77 31%) $\overline{X}$ = 8.28

Since group 4 consists of future French specialists, we move on to the next one. Group five repeats the pattern of the two previous years. The very low percentage in 2018/2019 rises in the year of the pandemic and then falls in 2020/2021 and 2021/2022. In this case, the average marks of the students who pass the exam are excellent, more than 8.2 in three out of the four academic years under scrutiny.

Table 9. Percentage of students who pass the subject and the average marks they obtain (group six only)

Normal (2018/2019)	Pandemic (2019/2020)	Blendedlearning (2020/2021)	Post-pandemic (2021/2022)
(n=24/46 52%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.1	(n=16/59 27%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.75	(n=29/78 37%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.62	(n=12/105 11%) $\overline{X}$ = 8.61

Finally, group six differs from the others. The percentage of students who passed the subject declined from 52% in 2018/2019 to 27% in the pandemic academic year. It slightly increased during the blended learning year before falling again in 2021/2022. However, in the latter year, the average score is 8.61. It is once again clear that the students who pass the subject are very competent in English.

6. Discussion

The data obtained show several very interesting situations, especially with regard to performance during the pandemic. It is clear from the percentages that all students perform better in the case of the academic years when both the lockdown and the mixed methodology (combination of face-to-face and online learning) were implemented. This fact may be due to several circumstances; first, the uncertainty resulting from the pandemic and the alteration in classroom dynamics (Hidalgo et al., 2021; Huei et al. 2021; Sutarni et al., 2021) it brought, replacing the face-to-face model with an online one, and with the assessment tests being similarly affected. In the case of blended learning, the reduction of face-to-face lessons together with the use of an online communication tool also distracted teachers and students to some extent, leading to special didactic circumstances.

It has been verified through performance that, once the usual teaching mode is re-established, the percentages are equal to the pre-pandemic ones. There is a stability of performance according to the evaluation parameters set in the teaching guide of the subject, focusing on the evaluation of all linguistic skills and considering the subject as a continuum. As we have seen, the bilingual group has been included among the statistics to be considered. This group follows the same pattern, although, as expected, due to the characteristics of the group, the results are much more positive in terms of obtaining the pass mark.

There are many factors to reflect on in this analysis. One of them is the pass marks in the first exam session include a fairly high average of impressive scores. This means that students who follow the subject regularly and acquire language awareness have no problem in showing their proficiency in the different language skills (Ardasheva et al., 2011; Bai & Wang, 2020; Rahardjo & Petiwi, 2020; Sercu, 2006), while the rest - who generally perceive the subject as one more based on learning by rote - tend to fail. This could also be influenced by the fact that the teachers are not the same in the different groups, but in this case, we should point out that all the students take the same test, so there are no differences in this

respect. There are, however, factors that cannot be influenced, as the configuration of the groups is established by the Secretariat and the students' linguistic skills is not a pertinent criterion. Therefore, randomly, there may be a group where bright students converge and vice versa; but, according to the statistics, the performance between groups is quite similar. Therefore, on the basis of this discussion, we proceed to the conclusions of the study in the following section.

7. Conclusions, future implications and limitations of the study

We conclude this study by stressing the importance of being aware of what it means to teach a foreign language. First of all, it cannot be considered as just another subject, since a language is not learnt at a specific moment but as part of the lifelong learning process. Therefore, the concept of communicative competence should guide the methodological designs applied in classrooms where English is taught. As far as teachers and students are concerned, they must be motivated, even if there are difficulties related to resources or to the grammatical tradition that has existed over the years (Fullan, 2018; Hargreaves, 1994).

As this study has shown, individual and collective circumstances also have to be born in mind and contexts greatly affect the processes of teaching and learning a foreign language. In our case, we have observed how the lockdown has led to different assessment conditions, raising students' performance in that particular period (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2022). On the other hand, it has been observed that those students who are able to follow the subject throughout the academic year obtain a relevant average grade, corroborating what has been indicated about the understanding of the subject as a continuum and not as a one-time action that is just another part of the curriculum or syllabus.

The main challenge arising from our contribution has to do with ensuring that performance can be uniform in all situations and issues and, above all, with transforming the conception of the foreign language in our reality. People should be made aware that foreign language learning will contribute to their social integration by allowing them to learn about other cultures and realities, as well as offering them the possibility of having a communication tool to be able to interact in other countries and with other people.

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Self-Regulated Learning and Listening Achievement of Turkish EFL Learners

ABSTRACT
Flipped classroom model has been an important pedagogical tool that has been widely incorporated and researched in recent years. Current studies have scrutinized the effect of the model on the achievement of language learners. The purpose of the present study is two-fold: (i) to examine whether the flipped classroom model has an impact on B1 level Turkish students attending English preparatory program at school of Foreign Languages in a state university, and (ii) to investigate if the flipped classroom model yields different results on the self-regulated learning levels of the participants. The participants of the study consist of 60 B1 level prep-class students attending B1 level Listening course, with 2 classes each including 30 students. Firstly, the students in one class were classified as control group (CG) and the ones in the other class as experimental group (EG). During the 8-week B1 module process, the listening lesson was taught with the traditional method in the CG and with the flipped classroom model (FCM) in the EG. The data were gathered through pre and post-tests of listening skills achievement exam and self-regulated learning scale. As for data analysis, mixed ANOVA analysis was used. The findings showed no significant difference on self-regulated learning levels but on listening skills achievement scores. Suggestions were discussed accordingly.
KEYWORDS
flipped classroom model, self-regulated learning, listening skills achievement, EFL, Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEF)

1. Introduction

Language skills are of great importance in foreign language learning. One of the language skills, listening, plays a crucial role in foreign language learning since the input we take while learning our mother tongue begins with listening (Akdemir, 2010). Today, listening is a compulsory course required by the Council of Higher Education for Preparatory Schools to teach English and other languages in Turkey. However, such factors as limited class hour, official language of country, different learning techniques of each individual may limit the opportunities for students to practice listening. In this case it is emphasized that students should

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organize their learning activities individually. Especially during the COVID-19 pandemic period, the transition to online education has allowed students to learn individually. The individual organization of the learning activities that takes place in the classroom or school is defined as self-regulated learning (Pintrich, 2000, p. 451). Self-regulated learning (SRL) allows students to monitor their progress and evaluate their own learning. SRL involves regulating one's feelings, cognitive behavior, and acquiring needful and covetable skills appropriate to the learning experience (Rasheed et al., 2020)

To date, more and more college students are expected to take a responsibility in their own learning by effectively benefiting from information and communication technologies, which makes online learning tools to be strongly recommended for students before coming to the class (Öztürk & Çakıroğlu, 2018). At this point, the importance of using the flipped classroom model (FCM) instead of traditional model has begun to be emphasized. In a traditional model, teachers explain the subjects, students listen to the teacher and take notes. After that, students study on their assignment at home. FCM (also known as inverted classrooms) reverse this language learning process. FCM is a blended learning approach in which students first watch online lectures at home and then complete their homework and practical work in face-to-face classes. Students are responsible for their own learning process. In FCM, teachers act as a facilitator. That is, they assist students throughout the lesson and enable students to help each other. Classroom learning activities include inquiry-based learning, active learning, and peer learning (Danker, 2015, p. 172).

FCM has been studied in many areas and a great amount of research showed that FCM affects students' learning in a positive way (Çakıroğlu & Öztürk, 2017; Liu et al., 2019). According to Fulton (2012), the most important advantage of FCM is that it increases the interaction time in the classroom. Teachers use videos for interaction between teacher and student. In this way, teachers can devote more time to fulfilling the learning and emotional needs of the students (Goodwin & Miller, 2013). In FCM, students can discuss the subjects with their teachers, which is not possible in traditional model (Bergmann & Wadell, 2012). It is expected that this interaction and discussion environment will contribute to students' listening skills. In FCM, teachers use differentiated instruction, problem/project-based learning, inquiry-based study models, that's why flipped learning is student-centered (Bergmann & Sams, 2014). Flipped classroom model has been an important pedagogical tool that has been widely incorporated and researched in recent years. Thus, the contribution of the present study might have been significant in the field in terms of the influence of the model on the development of listening skills and self-regulated learning of the EFL students because using FCM in lessons also requires students' SRL. While watching online lectures at home or completing homework and practical work in a class, students should monitor their own learning process

so that they achieve their learning goals. According to the studies, students who self-regulate their learning process have some characteristics such as having lot of cognitive strategies like repetition, organization, and elaboration, controlling the time to be used on tasks and directing learning processes for the achievement of their goals, all of which point out the importance of SRL in language teaching/learning (Torrano Montalvo, & González Torres, 2004). Considering the benefits of FCM and SRL found in the relevant research, the present study aimed to shed some light upon the existing literature on FCM and SRL by narrowing down its focus on Turkish EFL learners attending to English Preparatory classes at B1 Level and their listening achievement scores on the basis of 6-week intervention program.

2. Literature review

2.1. Theoretical framework

In recent years, the role of SRL in education has elicited much interest as a product of successful learning (e.g., Schraw et al., 2006; Zimmerman, 2000). SRL has been defined as a cyclical and recursive period which activates feedback mechanisms for students to understand, control, and adjust their learning accordingly (e.g., Zimmerman, 2000). To be a self-regulated student means to be responsible for, and capable of, one's own development, using "self-generated thoughts, feelings, and actions which are planned and cyclically adjusted to the achievement of personal goals" (p. 14).

Although there have been different approaches towards self-regulated learning, most researchers agree that self-regulation involves some basic components: "self-regulation involves cognitive, affective, motivational and behavioural components that provide the individual with the capacity to adjust his or her actions and goals to achieve the desired results in light of changing environmental conditions" (Zeidner et al., 2000, p.751).

Cognitive processes include information processing strategies such as rehearsal, elaboration, and organization. In terms of metacognitive processes, self-regulated students are good strategy users. They plan, set goals, choose strategies, organize, monitor, and evaluate at different points during the acquisition process. The motivational processes include students' emotions, willingness to learn, and desire to reach academic self-efficacy. Finally, the learning context refers to learning domains, methods, or environments (Zimmerman, 2000). Students can actively take the responsibility in their learning process by using SRL strategies such as planning learning activities, self-motivation, organizing, repeating, self-monitoring, and evaluating their own learning (Artino & Stephens, 2009).

FCM is a student-centered teaching approach used by teachers to reverse the traditional classroom model into a more active classroom environment (Keengwe et al., 2014, p. xviii). The idea of the FCM is that it includes both inside and

outside classroom activities (Alsowat, 2016). Students watch online videos at home. In this process, students are expected to scan different sources and do research about the subject. Then, they complete their homework and hands-on activity in an interactive face-to-face class. During the lessons, the subjects are discussed with teacher and other students and students reinforce their knowledge. After the lessons, students are expected to do more comprehensive research on the subject. Figure 1 shows the stages in SRL development process.

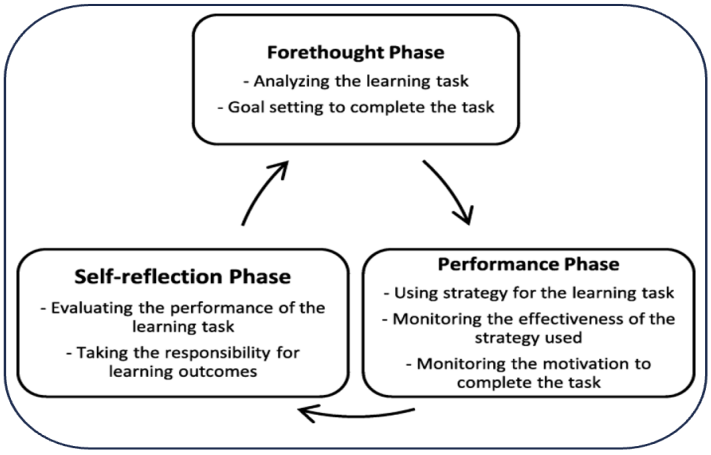

Figure 1: Self-regulated learning phases (adapted from Zumbrunn et al., 2011)

In the forethought phase, students work on the learning task and determine its aim to complete the task. In the performance phase, students use strategies to motivate themselves and to complete the learning tasks. They may need feedback during the process. In the self-reflection phase, students evaluate their performance in the learning tasks and their feelings about the strategies they used.

Building its rationale on the three phases of self-regulated learning discussed above, in the present study Self-Regulated Learning Scale (Erdogan & Senemoglu, 2016) was used to examine whether the intervention yielded impact on the participants' self-regulated learning levels. Table 1 presents the scale used in the study.

The Self-Regulated Learning Scale (Erdogan & Senemoglu, 2016) consists of 67 items and it has two subscales, self-regulated learning skills/strategies (45 items) and motivational factors (22 items). The first subscale included 3 subheadings: before study, during study and after study. On the other hand, the second subscale which includes motivational dimensions consists of five subheadings: self-efficacy, goal-orientations, task value, attributions for failure, and anxiety. The questionnaire has a 5-point Likert-type response format. The

Table 1. Self-Regulated Learning Scale (Erdogan & Senemoglu, 2016) used in the study

Dimensions	Number of items	Sample items
Before study		
Environmental structuring	4	I usually study where I can focus.
Planning	5	I write my weekly to-do-list in my notebook.
Arrangement of study time	4	I do my homework when I know our teacher will control them.
During study		
Organization and transforming	5	I find the key points in the text and draw connections between them.
Seeking appropriate information	3	I read the sources I find after class.
Seeking peer, teacher or adult assistance	3	When I don't understand, I seek the assistance of peer or an adult.
Seeking easily accessible information	2	I try to find the easiest way of doing my homework.
Self-monitoring	2	While reading a book or reviewing my notes, I sometimes stop and ask myself. "Do I understand the point here?"
Rehearsing and memorizing	4	I teach the topic I study to another person.
After study		
Self-evaluation	6	Generally I don't revise a homework I have finished.
Self-consequences after success	4	I promise to award myself after I get a good grade from an exam or homework.
Self-consequences after failure	3	Failures make me sad, but I don't do anything to change them.
Motivation		
Task value	5	I believe we'll use the things we learn in class in the future.
Self-efficacy	5	I think I'll succeed in the courses.
Anxiety	5	I get so excited in exams that I forget everything.
Attributions for failure	4	Extreme load of homework and exams makes me fail.
Goal orientations	3	The most satisfactory thing for now is getting a high grade

Cronbach's Alpha was computed 0.91 for the whole scale. The factor loadings of the items range from 0.47 to 0.91.

2.2. Previous Studies conducted on FCM and SRL

After the COVID-19 pandemic, the importance of the concepts such as online education, digital materials, use of digital programs, online assessment, etc. has started to be emphasized even more (Pavanelli, 2018; Wiginton, 2013). Specially in these days when the concept of online education comes to the fore, it has been more and more currently discussed in the literature how effective it is to keep the education both in terms of space and time within the classroom hours (Alsowat, 2016; Quint, 2015). Based on this centrality, the term flipped classroom model (FCM) has once again been widely studied and discussed in the relevant literature by relating it to the central topics such as ChatGPT, AI, SRL, and so on.

According to Bergmann and Sams (2012), FCM will help students' self-regulated learning. Bergmann and Sams (2012), in their study, adapted the lecture and explanation of the subjects in the course material into the FCM with activities and interactive tasks to be done in the classroom, and collected positive opinions from the students in terms of the effectiveness of the course. They obtained the opinion from educators who use the FCM that the theoretical topics are conveyed in advance through videos and the lesson time is quite effective in terms of giving more space to the relevant exercises and discussions.

There are other current studies in the field which point out that FCM has positive effect to the listening skills' development (Turan & Akdag-Cimen, 2020). In another study, Martin (2012) pointed out that FCM has many advantages such as encouraging collaborative learning environments, improving language skills (reading, listening, speaking, writing) and providing immediate feedback.

Similarly, according to Wu et al. (2017), students can work collaboratively on the tasks in FCM, through which cooperative environment will contribute to students' listening skills.

A great deal of research has been conducted on the self-regulated learning, especially after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, Altas and Mede (2021) conducted a quasi-experimental study in which they examined the FCM and its impact on writing achievement and SRL levels of students at university level. They found that self-regulated learning showed no significant difference between the groups. In another study, Lastochkina and Smirnova (2017) suggest that developing a self-regulated model for getting ESP listening skills makes the listening process clear and provides scaffolding related to the topic. According to their study, this is the efficient way of improving students' performance. Likewise, Ngo (2019) carried out a study to examine the EFL learners' SRL and their L2 listening skill competence. At the end of the study SRL activities were found to be considerably connected with the L2 listening competence of EFL learners. The results of these studies revealed that SRL processes were positively associated with L2 competence and students' listening skills achievement.

These studies show the effectiveness of FCM on the self-regulated learning of students and they lead teachers to use FCM, especially after the pandemic, because of the limited face-to-face class hours within the scope of measures. There are many studies examining the effect of the FCM on the success of listening skills in foreign language education. However, there is a gap in the existing literature in that there is lack of research examining the effect of the FCM on the development of the self-regulated learning of B1 level Turkish EFL learners. Besides, the present study goes one step beyond by comparing the difference between the success of the students in the class in which the flipped classroom approach and the traditional method are used in the listening lesson by seeking an answer to the question: "Does the use of FCM have a statistical and meaningful contribution to the listening skills achievements of B1 level English preparatory class students?"

3. Method

3.1. Research context and participants

The research has been carried out in the fall semester of the 2022–2023 academic year. The participants of this this exploratory study were B1 level Turkish students attending English preparatory program at school of Foreign Languages in a state university. Listening course is a compulsory course required by the Council of Higher Education for Preparatory Schools to teach English and other languages in Turkey. The course consists of five hours in total per week and lasts 8 weeks in a given module. This course aims at providing students with the basic and necessary listening skills they are expected to develop in B1 level with reference to CEFR.

The participants of the study consist of sixty (N=60) B1 level prep-class students attending B1 level Listening course, with 2 classes each including 30 students. Demographic information about the participants is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Demographic information about the participants

Demographic		Control Group		Experimental Group		Total	
Variables		Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	19	58	14	42	33	100
	Female	11	41	16	59	27	100
Department	Education	6	55	5	45	11	100
	Science and Letters	7	47	8	53	15	100
	Economics and	8	47				
	Administrative Science	9	53	9	53	17	100
	Engineering			8	47	17	100
Age	18	15	47	17	53	32	100
	19	9	53	8	47	17	100
	20	6	53	5	45	11	100

Firstly, the students in one class (n:30) were classified as control group (CG) and the ones in the other class (n:30) as experimental group (EG). During the 8-week B1 module process, the listening lesson was taught with the traditional method in the CG and with the flipped classroom model (FCM) in the EG. At the beginning and in the end of the 8-week module, listening skills achievement scores and self-regulated learning levels of the students from CG and EG were examined to determine if FCM yielded differences between the groups. In this respect, the research was aimed to answer the following research questions:

1) Is there any difference between EG and CG in terms of English listening skills achievement scores (After the implementation of the flipped classroom model)?
2) Is there a difference between the self-regulated learning of CG and EG students?

To answer the aforementioned research questions and to build on evidence of the described earlier studies, the present study will shed some light upon the effect of flipped classroom model on self-regulated learning. Therefore, and extending prior research, the goal of this study was twofold: it was aimed to examine in a quasi-experimental design if providing the flipped classroom model influenced mean values of students' post-test scores in listening and if the FCM had impact on the participants' self-regulated learning levels.

3.2. Data collection and procedure

Grant of application was received from the Board of Ethics before the implementation of the study (by the Grant 68282350/22021/G021, the board of Ethics/Pamukkale University). The data of the study were collected by examining the achievements of B1 level preparatory class students in the Listening course they took in the fall term of the 2022–2023 academic year. The data of this quasi-experimental study comprises of two different types of quantitative data as data collection instruments. Table 3 shows the intervention and the procedure of the study.

Table 3. The intervention and the procedure of the study

		Experimental Group	Control Group
Pre-test	1st week	a listening skills assessment exam self-regulated learning scale	a listening skills assessment exam self-regulated learning scale
intervention	2nd-7th week	Flipped classroom model	Traditional in-class model
Post-test	8th week	a listening skills assessment exam	a listening skills assessment exam
		self-regulated learning scale	self-regulated learning scale

According to the accepted concept of the flipped classroom model, the intervention process of the experimental group consists of three phases: pre, while, and post class. First, the pre-class phase contains two tasks: watching Videos and online quizzes in return. In order to acquire the basic information before class, students watched the brief videos provided for the next lecture each week. On each recording, they had the chance to comment and debate troublesome pieces in the chat-box. Each of the short videos was accompanied by an online questionnaire, intended to document the participation of each student, provide him/her further chances to revisit what he/she has learned, and offer him/her immediate input on whether he/she skipped any important points, in order to maximize the possibility that students will come ready for class. Next, in the while-class phase, the researcher used the time saved as a motivating incentive to involve the participants more fully in the process of learning the milestone concepts of the lesson band. By answering questions, each week the researcher started class time, both to check the comprehension of participants about the content in the given videos. Furthermore, in the online quiz, the teacher analyzed the results of her participants and answered any points of potential uncertainty. After getting students' feedback, the researcher used the time left in the session to have extra listening and speaking activities. Through student-centered active learning activities, she enabled active engagement of the students with the course material, where they created, cooperated, and put into practice what they learned from the videos they watched. Finally, in the

post-class, students at home logged into an online debate group where both the videos they watched, and the active study sessions focused on their experience. The aim of that phase was to get students' reflections by asking them questions such as: "Did you like the flipped class?", "What questions do you still have about the topic or exercise?", and "What suggestions do you have for improving the activity?" In addition, students had the chance to post questions for the researcher to answer.

The first quantitative data of the research were collected with a listening skills assessment exam as the pre-test and post-test in which the same test was administered, and the second data collection instrument was self-regulated learning scale, again as the pre-test and post-test. The listening skills assessment exam was used to determine whether FCM had an impact on the success of the participants, and it included two parts: one with ten multiple choice questions and the other with ten note taking questions. Self-Regulated Learning Scale (Erdogan & Senemoglu, 2016) was used to investigate if the intervention resulted in positive impacts on the participants' self-regulated learning levels. The scale consists of 67 items, and it has two subscales, self-regulated learning skills/strategies (45 items) and motivational factors (22 items). The first subscale included 3 subheadings: before study, during study and after study. On the other hand, the second subscale which includes motivational dimensions consists of five subheadings: self-efficacy, goal-orientations, task value, attributions for failure, and anxiety. The questionnaire has a 5-point Likert-type response format. The participants were asked to evaluate themselves between (1) corresponds exactly and (5) does not correspond at all.

3.3. Data analysis

The post-test control group design was used in the study. Firstly, students in CG and EG took a listening skills assessment exam and the self-regulated learning scale in the first week of the module. The results of the pre-test scores of the listening exam were tested by scrutinizing the listening skills pre-test scores (sum score) of the experimental group and the control group to examine if there was a significant difference in the success rate of both classes. Then, the same listening skills assessment exam and self-regulated learning scale were applied as the post-test in the last week of the module to examine the impact of FCM on the listening achievements of the participants. The participants in the EG followed FCA, reading the articles, studying the PowerPoint presentations, watching the videos, and doing the research when shared by the instructor before attending to the classes each week. Finally, self-regulated learning scale was applied again to both classes in the last week of the module to collect another quantitative data of the study (Erdogan & Senemoglu, 2016). It was aimed to examine whether there was a significant difference between the two classes at the end of the module.

The scale was transferred to Survey Monkey and the link was shared with the participants, and the participants were asked to complete it until the end of the first lesson of that day.

The quantitative data which were collected through Listening Skills Assessment Exam and Self-Regulated Learning Scale were analysed by means of SPSS 23 (Statistics Package for Social Sciences) data analysis program. To investigate the significance level of pre-tests and post-tests, ANOVA was used to analyse if there was statistically significant difference between the two groups. The significance level was accepted as $p<0.05$ in the study and discussions on the findings of the study were carried out based on this significance level. Descriptive statistics were used, and ANOVA was applied to compare pre and post listening skills exam scores and self-regulated learning scores between and within groups. The level of significance for the statistical analyses was accepted as .05.

4. Results

4.1. Preliminary analyses

In order to inspect whether our experimental design was equal at the beginning, we conducted preliminary analyses and tested whether the listening skills pre-test scores (sum score) of the experimental group and the control group differed significantly. Results showed no statistically significant differences, that is, the sum score ($t(58) = 1.10$; $p = .27$). Descriptive statistics for the listening skills pre-test scores are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of the listening skills pre-test scores

	Entire Sample				Experimental Group				Control Group			
	M	SD	α	n	M	SD	α	n	M	SD	α	N
Sum score	42.58	18.76	.95	60	40.63	17.22	.94	30	44.54	20.16	.95	30

The sum scores and p value of the listening pre-test scores revealed that the EG and CG of the experimental design used in the study included participants with similar degree of proficiency level with regard to their listening skills performance (with max 50 points).

4.2. Findings about the listening skills achievement

In order to determine whether the FCM yielded a significant difference between the listening skills achievement scores of the two groups, the between group statistics were given and a comparative analysis was made. As mentioned earlier, the listening skills assessment exam included two parts: one with ten multiple

choice questions (each 2 points and max 20 points) and the other with ten note taking questions (each 3 points and max 30 points). The participants' maximum score on the test is in total 50. Table 5 shows the comparison of listening skills achievement with mixed ANOVA.

Table 5. Comparison of listening skills achievement with mixed ANOVA

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Between Groups						
Group (CG / EG)	509.346	1	509.346	4.027	.050*	.075
Error	6705.338	53	121.453			

Note. *p<.05, **p<.01

Table 5 displays that there is statistically significant difference between the groups with respect to the pre and post-tests of the listening skills achievement exam (p=0.05, $\eta_p^2 = .075$). As a result, it can be claimed that FCM yielded a positive impact on the listening achievement of the experimental group. The findings also show that both groups made progress in the post-test (CG: M=45.74, SD=13.84 / EG: M=46.13, SD=12.75) compared to the pre-test (CG: M=44.54, SD=20.16 / EG: M=40.63, SD=17.22).

4.3. Findings about the effect of FCM on self-regulated learning

The self-regulated learning scale (Erdogan & Senemoglu, 2016) was used as pre-test in the first week of the module, and post-test in the last week of the module to examine the effect of FCM on the self-regulated learning levels of the experimental group, to find out whether there will be statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the control and experimental group after the intervention. In order to determine whether the FCM yielded a significant difference between the self-regulated learning levels of the two groups, the between group statistics were given in Table 6, and a comparative analysis was made.

Table 6. Comparison of overall self-regulated learning scores with mixed ANOVA

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Between Groups						
Group (CG / EG)	.245	1	.146	1.302	.314	.032
Error	9.354	48	.185			

Note. *p<.05, **p<.01

Table 6 displays that there was not statistically significant difference between the groups with respect to their pre and post-tests of self-regulated learning levels ($p=0.314>0.5$, $\eta_p^2=.032$). Hence, it can be concluded that FCM did not yield any difference between the experimental and control groups' self-regulated learning pre-test (CG: M=3.33, SD=0.38 / EG: M=3.29, SD=0.39) and post-test (CG: M=3.33, SD=0.38 / EG: M=3.43, SD=0.42) scores.

5. Discussions and conclusion

The first research question of the study sought to answer if there was any difference between EG and CG in terms of English listening skills achievement (after the implementation of the flipped classroom model). The findings of the study revealed that FCM yielded a positive impact on the listening achievement of the experimental group.

These findings are in line with the study of Turan and Akdag-Cimen (2020), in which they also discussed the positive effect of FCM on the listening skills' development of the students. Similarly, in his study, Martin (2012) also emphasized the advantages of FCM such as improving language skills. Additionally, Wu et al. (2017) also revealed that students can work collaboratively on the tasks in FCM, through which cooperative environment will contribute to students' listening skills. The significant difference between the groups and the impact of FCM found in the present study might be due to the nature of FCM which increases the input flood of the participants and also makes it more individualized for them to study on their own.

The second research question aimed to investigate if there was a difference between the self-regulated learning of CG and EG students. The findings showed that FCM did not create any difference between the experimental and control groups' self-regulated learning pre-test and post-test scores. These findings support the study of Altas and Mede (2021), in which they also concluded that self-regulated learning showed no significant difference between the control and the experimental group after the implementation of the FCM. In a quasi-experimental study, Elakovich (2018) also compared students in a lecture remedial math course by utilising the Motivated Strategies Learning Questionnaire to explore control of learning, self-efficacy and self-regulation. The findings showed no significant difference between the classes, which was discussed by the fact that the requirements of the flipped classroom did not encourage learners to become more independent learners than the learners in the control group. Similar to those studies, the characteristics of the participants might be the reason for the insignificant differences. As also indicated by the studies of Altas and Mede (2021) and Alsancak-Sirakaya (2015), there could have been different self-regulated learning levels if participants from average or below average had participated in the study.

As a final remark, it can be concluded that flipped classroom model is an important pedagogical tool that should been widely incorporated and researched in language education. Thus, the contribution of this reviewed study might have been significant in the field in terms of the influence of the model on the development of listening skills because it was found that increased input flood and creating more individualized environment yields positive effect on language learners.

6. Limitations and suggestions

Although the findings of the study contribute significantly to the existing research, it also suffered from some limitations. First, this study is limited to B1 level prep-class students. More research on FCM at graduate and postgraduate level could be useful. It is also noteworthy to indicate that FCM comprises different components and factors and it can be difficult to control confounding factors such as materials, tasks, teachers' abilities, and so on.

The findings of the study revealed that FCM increased participants' listening skills achievement. Considering these advantageous impacts of FCM, English practitioners are supposed to spend more time in "flipped teaching" of listening. Although teaching listening might seem to be difficult and rather burdensome to any practitioner, it is a "pass-way" for the ones who favour classrooms without borders. To examine this and expand the research, more studies are needed to make a comparative survey with students from different L1 backgrounds.

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Advanced EFL Students' Practices in Formal and Informal Language Learning Settings: An Exploratory Study of Learner Agency

ABSTRACT
This paper addresses the issue of agency that could be traced in the performance of advanced Polish learners of EFL, students of English philology. The study presented in the paper set to investigate the students' self-reports on learning goals, behaviours and strategies typical of their language-based practices. The students were instructed to describe and reflect on all the learning activities they were involved in in both formal and informal settings by writing their reflective learning journals throughout a week's time. The examination of the data has provided a picture of the students' engagement in an interplay of academic and self-directed practices, which helped them meet different goals and ultimately contributed to the improvement of their language proficiency. The students demonstrated an awareness of language learning processes and an ability to reflect on aspects of their agency, referring, among others, to their intentions and motivations in pursuing their objectives.

KEYWORDS
EFL learners, agency, learning strategies, learner goals, formal vs. informal settings, awareness of language learning

1. Introduction

Over the recent years, language specialists have shown an increased interest in theorizing on the construct of agency as well as learners' enactments of agency in L2 learning and teaching contexts (cf. Larsen-Freeman, 2019). An assumption that has got support nowadays is that L2 learning "can enhance learners' overall agentive capacity and is a potentially critical, transformative social practice" (Mick, 2015, p. 105). It is also of importance that learners' educational behaviours are looked at in terms of their efforts and choices driven by their beliefs, thoughts and feelings (Mercer, 2012). However, as participants of social practices, language learners have to comply with the requirements of the school system or a status of a foreign language learner who develops the command of a new language in a society deficient in the use of that language. That is why what needs clarification

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is how social practices situate individual learners and how learners act and invest in contexts they find themselves in (Vitanova et al., 2015).

In order to better explain agency of the L2 learner its connection to general human experience has to be drawn. Hewson (2010, p. 12) differentiates between two fundamental forms of agency, that is "acting, doing things, making things happen, exerting power, being a subject of events, or controlling things" vs. the case when one is "to be acted upon, to be the object of events, to have things happen to oneself or in oneself, to be constrained or controlled". This makes it clear that though representing an individual's activity, agency requires due consideration of other people's influence on the individual. Of significance are also properties of agency such as its purposeful nature and goal-directedness, as well as people's intentionality and varying amounts of power in the use of different resources and capabilities (Hewson, 2010).

From the perspective of educational settings it is worth considering a distinction between being a subject vs. an object of agency, which points to an interdependence between learners' cognition and their experience gained in the context in which their agency is situated (Vitanova et al., 2015). Recent views of language education, influenced by sociocultural approaches, have offered an interpretation of how individuals' cognition is interrelated with their socially generated and maintained relationships. In addition to this, a critical perspective on agency has underscored the social determinants of learner motivation and communicative competence as and both the impact of ideologies of language-learning contexts on the development of learner identities (Bouchard & Glasgow, 2018).

2. Understanding L2 learners' performance – conceptualizing agency and some other related concepts in SLA

In an attempt to better understand the concept of agency, it worth noticing that recent advances in SLA studies have confirmed that in order to adequately account for the acquisition of an additional language in instructed and natural learning contexts both formal, functional and psycholinguistic approaches as well as sociocultural ones have to be followed (Gass et al., 2013). Taking a similar standpoint, Ushioda and Dörnyei (2009) advocate that in order to strengthen the potential of cognitively oriented views of language acquisition a greater synergy between mainstream SLA, sociolinguistics and L2 motivation theory is needed. By linking the assumptions of sociocultural learning theories and a learner-centered approach in L2/FL teaching, a range of concepts have been pointed out as related to learner agency in the sense of being involved in the language acquisition and use processes. While Gkonou (2015), for example, defines learner agency as individual's capacity to act, associated with one's will to act influenced by their cognition and motivation, Vitanova et al., (2015) associate it with learner identity, L2 self, self-regulation and learner autonomy.

Norton (2000, 2010, 2014) is another researcher who explains learners' agency with reference to their sociocultural settings. She proposes that the relationship between the language learner and the language learning context be interpreted in terms of close interconnections among three key constructs, that is motivation, learner identity and investment. Learner **identity,** that is the learner's relationship to the real and future world and **motivation** change over time and space affected by power relations. The learner's desire to learn and practice a second or foreign language changes due to their **investment** into the language learning process, which means their participation in classroom interaction. The sociological concept of investment and a psychological concept of motivation show "meaningful connections between a learner's desire and commitment to learn a language and their changing identities" (Norton & Toohey, 2011, p. 420). Hence L2 learners' progress is determined to a large extent by their investment in classroom practices and other community language-based events that are available to them (Norton & Toohey, 2011). However, learner agency and their social interaction can be limited when highly motivated learners do not experience fully effective language practices in the classroom or within the community. It may even happen so that L2 learners may resist some of those practices (Norton, 2014).

Likewise, Ushioda in her later publications (2011, 2014) argues for the recognition of context in defining learner agency and a motivational dimension as part of it. In her opinion, learners should be looked at in terms of their individual thinking processes, emotional systems, identities, personalities, unique histories but also intentions and goals to reach. By promoting the so-called '**person in-context relational view' of motivation**, she puts forward a claim that both educationists and researchers have to take into account a range of micro and macro contexts that constitute a complex changing network of social relationships learners interact within. This means that what needs proper concern, apart from teachers' control over language learners' motivations and behaviours by means of selected classroom techniques, is the role of the individuality of learners, their intentionality and reflexivity (Ushioda, 2011). Ushioda (2014, p. 9) expounds a view that one's motivation is internalized and self-regulated in a particular environmental context when three psychological needs of the self, that is person's **sense of competence**, **autonomy** and **relatedness** are met.

When addressing **personal agency,** Ushioda (2014) equals it with learners' achievements in educational environments, which give learners a sense of competence and autonomy. What is more, when learners take up some actions not feeling competent, they develop neither intrinsic motivation nor interest in the learning activity. Personal agency is claimed to be preceded by **cognitive agency**, which means that learners can control their motivation and learning processes on the basis of their thoughts, beliefs and expectations. The process of regulation

of motivation at the highest level is connected with activating the learners' metacognitive self. Hence teachers scaffolding learners with adequate classroom activities can foster learners' metacognition and self-regulation and help them think strategically (Ushioda, 2014).

It is illuminating to look at the way how a relationship between the concepts of learner agency and autonomy has been explained. Ushioda (2014) claims that although the two concepts are not synonymous they can be found to be in close relationship in the conceptualization of L2 strategic behaviour. Gao and Zhang (2011), on the other hand, argue that personal agency impacts the development of L2 learner autonomy. They advocate that agency be treated as a fundamental factor which gives impetus to the development of learners' autonomous behaviour, characterized by the adoption of a range of cognitive and metacognitive strategies. The researchers believe that learners "optimize their cognitive and metacognitive processes" so as "to utilize any resources within the immediate settings and broad sociocultural contexts" (p. 39). Agency can thus be associated with the process of fostering strategic and autonomous learners' behaviours.

Gao (2013, p. 227) reiterates that agency is an attribute of agents who "can think, desire and act" and that it is related to the concept of power which directs the agent in implementing their will and intentions in particular environmental conditions, ultimately taking responsibility for their language learning. The best conditions for learners' agency are created then when learners have an opportunity to make their own decisions, negotiate, share their ideas and experiences. That is the reason why classrooms can play a substantial role in the development of learners' autonomy only when learners are able to express their values and identities.

As far as examining learners' agency is concerned, Gao (2013) recommends using learners' reflective thinking in order to help depict their concerns and desires in taking up their actions autonomously in particular contextual conditions with responsibility for their language learning process and outcomes. Since second language learners tend to control their learning process to a large extent, accounts of reports of their reflection on the role of agency in language skills improvement have led to some enlightening insights into aspects of self-regulated learning, including autonomous learning tasks initiated by L2 learners (Gao, 2013).

3. The study

This paper reports a small-scale exploratory study which aimed at a qualitative analysis of the data compiled by a group of advanced EFL learners, English philology students, in their reflective learning journals. Its primary goal was to investigate how the study participants approached their English language learning experience with a view to their self-development when immersed in a variety of language-based practices. To that end, the students' agency was treated as a crucial concept in

interpreting their decisions to perform particular types of activities as part of their academic courses vs. those initiated informally beyond academic settings.

The analysis of the data obtained from the study participants' journals was carried out in order to answer two research questions:

1) What kinds of language learning activities did the students perform in formal settings and how did they express their agency in reflecting on them?
2) What kinds of language learning activities did the students perform in informal settings and how did they express their agency in reflecting on them?

3.1. Setting and participants

A group of 10 second year graduate Polish students of the Department of English, Maria Curie-Sklodowska University, Lublin, specializing in linguistics participated in the study. They were an intact group following the same curriculum and time-table. As philology students, they had accomplished literature, linguistics, culture and methodology courses. Their language proficiency was at the CPE level and they had already developed some initial skills of teaching English as a foreign language.

3.2. Research method and data collection

As already mentioned, in order to explore a variety of instances of descriptions and reflections on learning tasks undertaken by the study participants, the ways in which they described aspects of their agency were sought. For the purpose of the study, the construct of agency was operationalized as an individual's realization of their own goals, motives and intentions in the course of their own actions, giving them a sense of competence and autonomy (Ushioda, 2009). With the view to the participants' reflections on formal vs. informal language learning activities it was also worth considering two forms of the enactments of agency, namely, making things happen, being the subject of events in contrast to being controlled as the object of events (Hewson, 2010).

Writing a reflective journal by the students was thought to be a suitable tool for keeping a record of their learning activities in a regular and condensed way. Its benefits have been conceptualized as: fostering self-awareness, constructing and expanding personal understanding and developing reflection and reasoning skills (Abednia et al., 2013). Reflective thinking has also been found to be helpful to learners in focusing on their agency as they can look at their "concerns, desires, and visions in the light of contextual and structural conditions" (Gao, 2013, p. 226).

3.3. Procedure and data collection

The study participants agreed to write personalized descriptions of all the

educational events they took part in for the period of seven consecutive days as a contribution to a range of assignments they performed as EFL teacher trainees. The task was voluntary for the students with no grades assigned. Before starting the journal proper, the students were given some general guidance concerning the content and structure of the journal. Having completed their EFL didactics course and teacher training practice the students were familiarized with the concepts of goals, strategies, procedures as well as were able to deliberate on their learning and teaching oriented practices.

The students followed some basic layout in order to keep a record of the types of activities performed each day. They mentioned the time spent on them and provided any observations, reflections and comments they found relevant. As all the journals were accomplished during the same week, from Monday to Sunday, in the final part of the winter term, they included numerous reflections on the same compulsory classes the students attended apart from those on a diversity of English-based activities they embarked on autonomously beyond formal academic instruction. Having completed their learning journals, the students promptly submitted them to the researcher in a printed form.

3.4. Data analysis and discussion

Engaged in a diverse number of language learning tasks during the week's period, the English philology students, participants of the study, spent varied amounts of time on the task. The total amount of time devoted to their language practice ranged from 22.5 to as many as 44.5 hours, not to mention differences between the lengths of their journal entries. Due to the limited scope of this paper, the current author has focused on such samples of the students' journals which gave evidence of their agency and helped answer the two research questions concerning the kinds of activities the students performed in formal and informal settings and the ways in which they expressed their agency in their reflections and comments.

3.4.1. Students' language learning activities implemented in formal settings

The activities offered in formal settings comprised: a lecture, a seminar and meetings with an MA thesis supervisor and classes in linguistics, EFL didactics and practical English. The students were expected not only to participate in them but also respond with varying kinds of feedback. They associated their performance most often with self-study or self-development, including such tasks as: preparation for classes (homework), intensifying language practice in a particular area in order to pass an exam or writing an MA thesis.

Some quotations from the students' journals below demonstrate how they reflected on their active listening to a lecture on SLA following the course objectives:

> […] Familiarised me with aspects of SLA […], exposed to specific vocabulary […] While taking down notes I unconsciously acquired the knowledge on the topic and I was exposed to spoken English. (S1)

> […] I was trying to be focused, though it was early in the morning. The topic was engaging, the lecture helped me to systematise my knowledge and also contained a lot of valuable information which may become of some help in the near future. The strategies I used helped me learn much more than just inattentive copying from the slides. Strategies: making notes, highlighting the most important issues, listening to additional information and comments. (S9)

> Advanced level of proficiency, specialist language, […] sometimes it requires effort to understand everything properly […] I find all of these factors interesting due to the fact that they point to various phenomena which concern me as a teacher-to-be. (S 10)

These short extracts show that the students not only perceived an essential role of an academic lecture as that of organizing the subject/specialist knowledge for future application, but also approved of its contribution to vocabulary expansion and exposure to spoken language. Apart from this, they articulated clear views on the usefulness of different academic listening strategies. They found listening to a lecture to be an effortful activity when they were not sufficiently alert or when strenuous cognitive processing of the material was indispensable.

Attending an MA seminar and individual meetings with the supervisor were described by the students as a self-study activity with the aim of writing a thesis. The following ideas have appeared in the students' journals:

> […] Searching for materials, scanning reading chosen materials, trying to find the useful ones. […] Thoroughly paraphrasing them, highlighting the most important words, taking notes, rewriting the product – 3 pages. (S3)

> I learnt how to recognize the most useful materials and select them from a huge library collection; learnt a lot of new vocabulary and concepts;[…] practiced reading and writing. (S6)

> I prepared a draft to enquire about the Professor's opinion on my ideas and to ask for any comments on his part. I searched for more sophisticated vocabulary concerning cognitive linguistics. (S1)

Preparing a draft of an MA thesis was found to be a particularly demanding long-term task that needed the adoption of proper strategies in acquiring new knowledge from academic literature and an ability to produce a required genre of the text in English to be verified by the supervisor. The interactive role of the supervisor was defined as that of providing a critical evaluation of students' drafts and feedback about their progress.

The students also spent a large amount of their individual study time preparing for the practical English exam at the CPE level. One of the students (S3) provided a detailed report on improving her reading comprehension strategies through peer

cooperation. Here are three journal extracts illustrating some points made in the student's reflections"

> I revised reading comprehension tasks with a friend to get a higher score […], read aloud parts of texts confirming the answers, managed to remember many collocations; […] beneficial cooperation. (S3)

> I highlighted crucial info in a text, analyzed distracters in multiple choice to reject them; relied on context, read each text twice. (S 3)

> could check and enhance my careful reading abilities which concern the skills of interpreting and inferencing. I believe I did well. (S 3)

Another sample of the student's journal (S1) depicted a strategic approach taken by her to prepare a speech on a topic of procrastination, selected out of her interest. It took her three hours to develop relevant background knowledge by reading some articles, watching TED Talks and doing some dictionary work. Below are three interesting and informative extracts from her journal:

> I got particularly interested in the subject. Reading various articles was a kind of pleasurable experience to me.[…] A different type of reading than linguistics – broadening our horizons. (S1)

> I prepared a final draft of my presentation, wrote down key words to elaborate my discussion. I tried to rehearse, checked the timing. (S1)

> In the past I tried to write down everything, I ended up with an essay which I learnt by heart. It was quite difficult to eradicate this bad habit. It is far more motivating and effective to prepare only some crucial words or slogans I want to expand on. (S1)

The student's remarks show that she was aware of the fact that due to a high level of language proficiency she could approach the course task as an intellectually inspiring activity. Moreover, she was motivated to work hard to get a high mark at the exam. She also evidently felt more competent being able to give a speech on the basis of targeted key words or slogans discarding her previous unproductive procedure of writing down an essay and learning it by heart.

3.4.2. Students' language learning activities implemented in informal settings

As for the informal learning activities, also called leisure activities by some students, they comprised: listening to the radio, music, songs, reading, watching films/video clips, playing computer games and surfing the net. The sections to come will be supported with selected examples of the students' views on a combination of relaxing, entertaining and educational properties of their English learning practices.

It is interesting to note, for instance, that one of the students (S1) who described listening to BBC News as a way of obtaining political and cultural information as well as a relaxing experience would still write down "some intriguing words on a scrap of paper" to check in a dictionary. She clarified what were her motivations for language oriented work in the following way: "Sometimes I deliberately look for new expressions and words that will be helpful during my speaking and writing […] I frequently pick up strangely sounding words and I try to decipher their meaning". (S1)

Another student (S6) mentioned that listening to BBC4 helped her practise listening skills as well as "was a great way to keep contact with English, especially in the day off from classes" Then she added that it also "exposed [her] to native speaker English and people speaking with different accents" (S 6).

The students' reflections revealed that even though they often performed self-selected pleasurable language-based activities, all the time they behaved as language learners focused on acquiring new elements of the English language. Moreover, they often felt frustrated when they did not understand some words or phrases.

Similarly, while listening to songs informally, for pleasure, the students persisted in their learner roles. S2, for instance, who mentioned listening to songs by Adema and Haste the Day for pleasure stated: "[…] yet often lyrics are worth checking for new vocabulary or figuring out the deeper sense of it. […] I was dwelling on one word from lyrics[…] could not work out its metaphorical meaning". (S2)

Another student (S3), showing preference for songs by Coldplay, mentioned the importance of working out their meaning by checking the song lyrics and their translation into Polish on the internet. Some other students underscored both linguistic and psychological benefits of listening to songs in English, such as learning new vocabulary when memorizing the lyrics (S6) and fostering their self-confidence (S8).

Reading in English was regarded by the students as an element of their lifestyle with texts being read to broaden their knowledge, satisfy curiosity, out of interest and for enjoyment. Student 1 stated that she read an article before a film premiere both to get some more information on its contents and simultaneously delve in "sophisticated journalist style". Another student (S9) claimed to choose articles to read on her Facebook out of curiosity.

The students also provided reflections connected with watching TV, video and film clips on You Tube, which they treated mainly as an entertaining pastime, yet ultimately approached as an extension of their English language learning experience. They tackled such vital issues as: the use of subtitles, the strategies of guessing word meanings from context and checking them in a dictionary as well as the difficulty of understanding authentic speech (S3, S6). As shown below, some students underlined a high value of this kind of language learning experience:

> Watching TV series House MD, shameless, utterly best due to advanced vocabulary, fast speech, foreign accents; […] rewinding a couple of seconds, pausing, checking the term in a dictionary. […] Acquiring language in the most entertaining and pleasurable way. (S10)

> Watching British breakfast TV – Good Morning Britain to listen to the marvelous accent. […] I feel that English is my life-long hobby and passion. (S 4)

One of the students (S2) described playing computer games primarily for pleasure and out of curiosity, yet with some language benefits, such as talking with other gamers in English. Here is one of his comments on watching a game:

> Watching AGDQ stream Awesome Games Done Quick – an event during which players try to beat the game and explain how they are doing it; […] it raised funds for cancer prevention and early detection – for pleasure.[…] watching with curiosity, some words worth checking, interesting (technical – gaming). (S 2)

In summary, the analysis of the advanced students' reflective journals conducted in the current study has revealed different aspects of their agency in learning and using English as a foreign language. The students were able to account for their actions and explain the motives of their behavior in an array of language practices they embarked on. In planning for and taking control of formal and informal learning activities they displayed a high level of strategicness in pursuing their goals. They efficiently undertook a number of self-study tasks to complement institutionally organized educational activities. Their desire to improve their English language proficiency with their personal goals in mind, not only to satisfy their university teachers, was apparent.

As for learning English in formal settings, the students accepted the need for intensive practice and independent work to be done beyond their regular classes. They approached their self-development as a change in the strategy use and a determinant of achieving the desired success in future. Learning tasks were found intellectually satisfying when focus on language learning and knowledge acquisition could be linked.

The choice of particular radio programs, videos, films to watch by the students seemed to be driven mainly by their curiosity, interest or search for the ways of spending time in a pleasurable way. However, the students always remained in the position of language learners and wanted to understand the subtitles in the English language. Exposure to native speakers was treated as an important asset of learning English as a foreign language.

3.5. Concluding remarks

The tentative analysis of the advanced EFL students' journals carried out for this exploratory study has provided some valuable insights into the students' agency, that is their conscious, goal-oriented efforts to employ a range of language learning activities in both formal and informal contexts (Gao, 2013). The participants of this study proved to be strategic and autonomous language learners ready to invest a considerable amount of time and effort in the development of their English language competence (cf. Ushioda, 2009; Norton & Toohey, 2011; Gao, 2013). They were highly motivated to work on English intensively and the native-speaker level of proficiency seemed to be a model for them. Even in the case of formally organized academic events they showed an ability to become the subject of numerous learning practices. With the awareness of their learning processes they were able to create many opportunities conducive for language learning for themselves, independently of university requirements. A crucial factor was their interest in different areas of knowledge and forms of literacy.

It has to be mentioned that the study is not without its limitations. As an exploratory and qualitative study it has taken only a fragmentary look at the reflections of a small group of advanced EFL learners and concentrated only on how they described and reflected on language activities performed in formal vs. informal learning contexts for a relatively short period of time. As the study has not made any comparisons across students or worked out student profiles, this seems to be an interesting future direction of study. Some illuminating insights might also come from a longitudinal investigation of students' perceptions of their metacognition and personal self-development.

3.6. Implications of the study

Despite the limitations of this study, some pedagogical implications can be drawn. EFL learners' reflections on the ways which they willingly and efficiently adopt in their language learning process can provide teachers with some guidelines for raising the quality of their formal language instruction. Also, as pointed out by some students, creating conducive grounds for learning English at a high proficiency level requires integrating language goals with some content-area knowledge so that students can be exposed to language materials that are cognitively satisfying to them. Hence they should be given an opportunity to identify points of interest, approach the information critically and consolidate it with the knowledge already acquired.

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Learning Transfer through Corpus-Aided Instruction

ABSTRACT
The purpose of this study is to examine learning transfer in corpus-aided instruction. Fifty second language college students in writing classes participated in this study. Corpus research and qualitative research were employed to navigate the students' learning transfer. Findings show that corpus-aided instruction has some potential to increase multilingual learners' writing skills. This study will be of interest and value to scholars and teachers working in areas such as corpus linguistics, English for Academic Purposes (EAP), and second language writing, providing pedagogical implications for language educators and teachers. This study would also help ESL/EFL educators and teachers improve awareness of lexicogrammar along with the knowledge and information of corpus linguistics. It is hoped that language teachers and educators can build corpus literacy (i.e., the ability to use the technology of corpus linguistics for language development) to support their multilingual learners to develop 21st-century skills. Based on the preliminary findings, suggestions and implications are discussed.

KEYWORDS
corpus-aided instruction, learning transfer, EFL, academic writing, second language learning

1. Introduction

Writing is essential for learning in higher education. As a basic step for learning second language (L2) academic writing, they should acquire word and phrase combinations of disciplinary writing conventions in academic settings (Cortes, 2004). Due to multilingual learners' needs, Phraseology, the study of fixed expressions and multi-word lexical units, has been paid attention to for effective L2 instruction. The exploration of phraseology is grounded on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Halliday, 2004), which sees language as a social semiotic system. In SFL, lexicogrammar as a system of wording represents linguistic resources for construing meanings through words and structures, encompassing a much broader set of phenomena in phraseology (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

Applied linguists and researchers have investigated lexicogrammar with diverse components of a language. One of the features within lexicogrammar is a lexical bundle (Biber et al., 1999). Lexical bundles are the most frequently occur-ring sequences of multiple words and phrases in a written register indicating

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formulaicity of lexicogrammar in a language (Biber et al., 1999). Producing lexical bundles in written registers is challenging for international L2 students with different levels of writing proficiency and expertise (Cortes, 2004). Becoming adapted to the rhetorical styles and writing expectations of different disciplines is important in gaining membership in the academic community. Therefore, teaching lexical bundles would help multilingual learners improve their academic writing proficiency and boost their confidence in L2 writing.

Corpus linguistics is an essential field in examining a variety of linguistic features in lexicogrammar. Corpus linguistics, which arose in the 1990s, compiles lists of various common word combinations (e.g., lexical bundles and collocations). Johns' (1994) early work used "data-driven learning" (p. 296) to make language learning innovative in technological and methodological respects with the utilization of machine-readable text in corpus. In light of beliefs and findings of second language acquisition and learning, overall, this study has the potential for redefining second language learning as the development of flexible meaning-making language capacities across contexts and broadening the scope of L2 writing. The following research questions then guide this study:

1) Did learning transfer occur from the corpus-aided instruction to L2 learners' academic writing?
2) What were challenges of multilingual learners' learning transfer?

2. Literature review

2.1. Corpus linguistics

Corpus linguistics provides a variety of potential research investigations with regard to linguistic features, such as vocabulary, grammatical structures. And semantic domains. Through the corpus-based investigations, language re-searchers (Biber et al., 1999; Cortes, 2013) rigorously investigated the co-occurrence of seemingly similar structures and patterns, serving different functions in different contexts. Corpus data is recognized as valuable in gaining knowledge of language patterns and perspectives on the language system (Sinclair, 2004). A great deal of corpus research has made an impact on the attention to lexical association patterns, including systematic co-occurrence with other words. Corpus research with a frequency-based approach suggests new visions of existing language regularities and reveals previously unobserved language phenomena (Biber et al., 1999). Furthermore, corpus research represents a "natural" approach as regular patterns are detected in the data that are meaningful to multilingual learners based on their adaptive behaviours.

2.2. Learning transfer

Learning transfer has been spotlighted by L2 writing scholars and specialists (James, 2010; Johns, 1994; Leki & Carson, 1997) due to its significance in the

field of L2 writing over the past decades. Leki and Carson (1997) claim that the aims of learning ESL writing courses are ‘‘transcendent’’ (p. 39). This means that students should be able to apply learned knowledge in the ESL writing instruction to a new situation. Other L2 writing scholars (James 2010; Johns, 1994) also maintain that developing transfer of learning is critical in ESL/EFL reading and writing classes. Several studies (DePalma & Ringer, 2014; Nelms & Dively, 2007) have paid attention to pedagogical values of learning transfer. Nelms and Dively's (2007) study explores variables that may affect transfer of knowledge between general composition and discipline-specific writing intensive courses. The study suggests a crucial aspect that successful transfer of composition knowledge should involve changes in writing instruction. Perkins and Salomon (1992) explain that learning transfer takes place when learning in one context improves or weakens relevant outcome in a different context, providing specific types of transfer: near transfer (to closely associated contexts and performances) and far transfer (to fairly different contexts and performances). Near learning transfer occurs between similar contexts, such as instruction to the outcome in the same instructional context, while far learning transfer may occur be-tween contexts that seem remote to one another. Learning transfer is a transitional process between learning activity systems; therefore, it is necessary to identify if instructions are actually transferred to the target students' lexicogrammatical writing gains after the corpus-aided instructions take place.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The target population was international L2 students studying at the U.S. Midwestern university. The students assigned to learn academic writing in ESL composition classes were sampled for this study. The target international L2 students were selected according to the availability and the research criteria as purposive sampling. Fifty L2 college students taking ESL composition classes participated in this study, and their participation was voluntary. Thus, the students who did not agree on the consent were not included in the study. There were 22 male students (44%) and 28 female students (56%). 44 students (88 %) were from China, while six (12%) of them were from Malaysia. The range of the age was 18 to 24 years old (M=19.38, SD=1.40). The aver-age of the self-reported GPA was 3.3 with the range from 2.7 to 3.9 on the 4.0 scale. Fifteen students among them participated in in-depth interviews, writing conferences, and member-checking.

3.2. Research design

This study is part of a large project, and a qualitative portion of the study is reported. Qualitative research and corpus research were applied. Qualitative data are helpful in exploring learning transfer from corpus-aided instruction to the

learners' acquisition of lexical bundles in their actual writing. Hence, this study achieves collaborative inquiry and contributes to the interdisciplinary fields of second language acquisition (SLA), L2 writing, and corpus linguistics.

3.3. Data collection and analysis

Data from semi-structured interviews, writing conferences, and the students' written assignments were incorporated for in-depth understandings of the use of lexical bundles and learning transfer in the corpus-aided L2 writing instruction. Semi-structured interviews were employed in a summative way after the corpus-aided instructions. Interviews were conducted once or twice with the individual students depending on their availability. Each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. A semi-structured writing conference protocol (selectively adapted from Liu and Jiang, 2009) was used in a formative way. "Think-back" questions were asked to the participants to reflect on their learning experiences in the writing conference. Think-back questions are useful in obtaining specific information about past experiences because the participants can concentrate on what they have done as opposed to what can be done in the future. In this study, writing conferences strengthened the identification of learning transfer and the participants' use of lexical bundles in corpus-aided instruction.

Corpus concordance analysis was the major tool for the investigation of learning transfer in students' written products grounded on move analysis (Cortes, 2013; Kanoksilapatham, 2005; Swales, 1990). Then, all the qualitative data were analysed to identify recurring patterns or themes through the constant comparative analysis in Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Grounded Theory comprises a set of rigorous research procedures leading to the emergence of conceptual categories and a theoretical explanation of the actions that continually resolve the main concern of the participants. The current study covered contextual conditions, highly pertinent to the natural phenomenon of the research site for the qualitative research part. Semi-structured interviews, writing conferences, and member checking were performed after the instructions to identify potential variables of learning transfer, such as the participants' improved language features and skills from the corpus-aided instruction.

4. Findings

4.1. EFL students' learning transfer

Qualitative research examined learning transfer and development of the participants' academic writing from the word-level to the textual-level in a language. The genre of their papers was a research-based paper. The main focus was to see learning transfer from corpus-aided instruction to academic writing regarding the connection between the lexical bundles and functions in writing. Selective examples of lexical bundles with rhetorical patterns are presented as below:

Making topic generalizations

> Public colleges are more likely to suffer from budget slash and induce that more and more students own less resources for studying, such as professors. (Participant#3)

> Because the differences between the culture and the laws in two countries, people in America are more likely to announce bankruptcy than people in China. (Participant#4)

Making generalizations or interpretations of the results

> When it comes to adolescent homosexual people, coming out or not to parents could be a tough decision. (Participant#2)

Announcing present research descriptively and/or purposefully

> In this paper, I will write in details about three main problems with American education. (Participant#7)

Corpus Multimodal learning transfer is another area in which far transfer might be expected to occur. In the interdisciplinary era, research posters should be taken into account as a type of academic writing. In this study, therefore, research posters were examined for the evidence of multimodal learning transfer. Prezi is web-based presentation software similar to Microsoft PowerPoint slides. Hence, Prezi can be regarded as one of the multimodal texts. Several students' re-search posters and the Prezi presentation materials were collected. Research posters are valued as a way to present not only completed research results but also ongoing research and preliminary findings to the audience at a professional conference (D'Angelo, 2012). Research posters may broaden the multimodal nature in terms of the academic writing genre (D'Angelo, 2012).

In the process of the interviews, several students mentioned that they used the lexical bundles from the instruction and shared their research posters and the Prezi presentation. Two research posters from business and English literature classes were gathered from the students in Figure 1. The Prezi presentation was collected from the one majoring in English literature as in Figure 2. Three lexical bundles were observed: "be one of the", "is one of the", and "on the basis of". The two items, "be one of the" and "is one of the", were referential bundles indicating claiming relevance of field.

4.2. Challenges of the students' learning transfer

The main purpose of implementing qualitative research is to enhance interpretability and meaningfulness of the findings. A grounded theory methodology offered a systematic approach, focusing on the insight of learning challenges from the participants. The challenges of learning transfer emerged the degree of understanding. Participants acknowledged a need to use lexical bundles in their

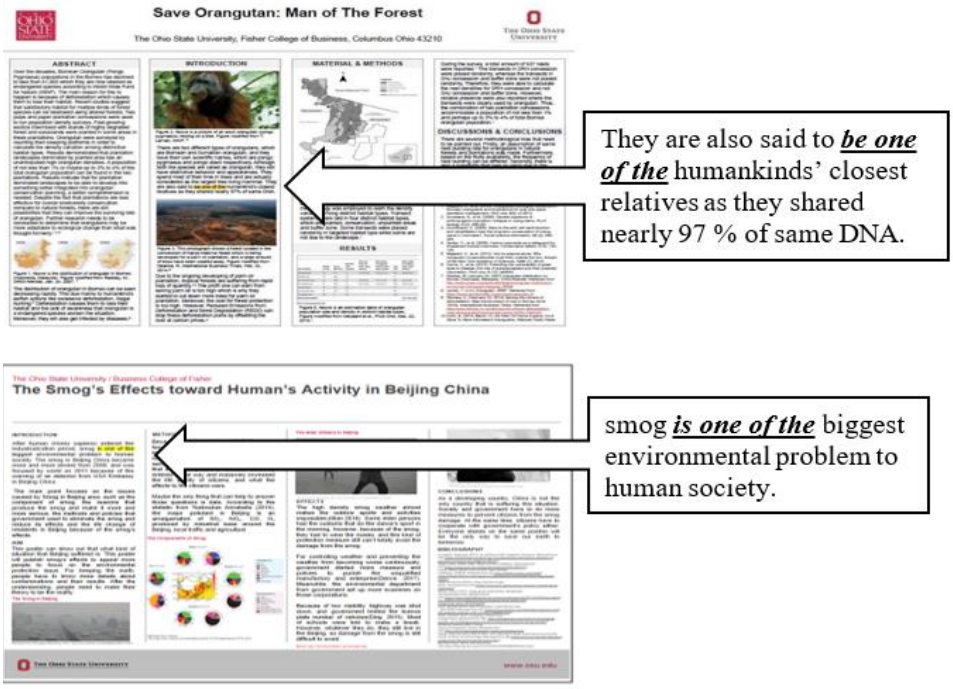

Figure 1: Lexical bundle used in the student' research posters

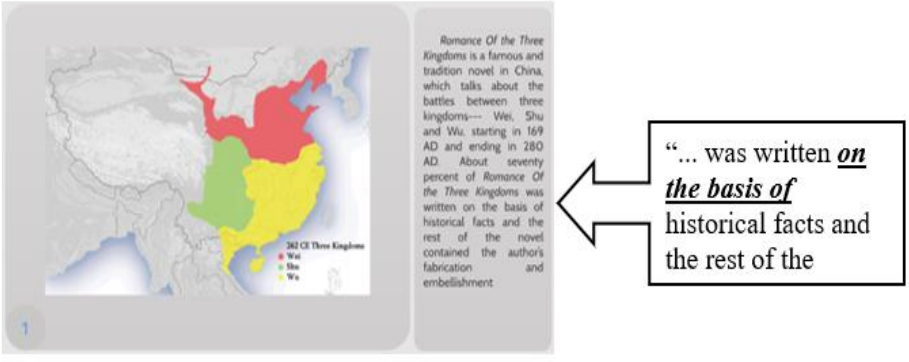

Figure 2: Lexical bundle used in the student' Prezi presentation

actual writing, such as producing a logical and coherent academic paper with appropriate lexical bundles aligned with the genre being written. However, some students were confused about the meaning of lexical bundles, which led them to avoid using them due to a lack of the applicability of lexical bundles:

> I don't usually use lexical bundles because I don't know how to explain my idea with them (lexical bundles). So, I usually use simpler words instead of the chunk of words. (Participant9, writing conference)

Other participants also expressed the personal needs of using lexical bundles in their writing. They desired to use a variety of lexical bundles, produce a congruent and logical paper, and articulate ideas fluently with lexical bundles. In particular, findings revealed more challenges of learning transfer: 1) overuse of known lexical bundles, 2) misuse or mistakes of lexical bundles. The participants had concerns about the correct use of lexical bundles regarding the meaning and function. For example, one student said:

> Public I used 'what's more' a lot in my paper because I can't remember the multiword phrases. They don't automatically come to my mind…I am not really sure how to use another multiword phrase [that] can be added in my paper. (Participant#3, interview)

Regarding the overuse of known and familiar lexical bundles, Granger (1998) reported that "students 'cling on' to certain fixed phrases and expressions which they feel confident in using" (p. 156). Cortes (2004) also found the pattern of the repetitiveness of fixed expressions in nonnative speakers' written essays. The challenges that the participants encountered resembles the findings of the previous research.

Secondly, the misuse (or mistakes) of lexical bundles was the issue of the participants. Some mistakes of lexical bundles (e.g., in the other hand, one of the company) were discovered in the writing conferences. This tendency may indicate that the instruction did not fully make the students internalize lexical bundles. This misuse pattern was found to be similar to the results from Huang (2015) and Pan et al.'s (2016) studies. Huang (2015) explained all instances of lexical bundle misuse with "ungrammaticality" and "inappropriacy" (p. 20). Pan et al.'s (2016) study compared L1 and L2 writers' lexical bundle use and found that L2 writers often misused discourse-organizing bundles neither grammatically nor functionally. Pan et al.'s (2016) study provided the potential pedagogical implication that second language writing teachers should focus on structural patterns of academic writing. Therefore, participants had some challenges of using lexical bundles in their papers with a vague understanding of functional lexical bundle use and showed the tendency of avoiding, overusing, and misusing lexical bundles.

5. Discussion

5.1. Benefits of using lexical bundles in L2 writing instruction

The Many researchers (Byrd & Coxhead, 2010; Coxhead & Byrd, 2007; Hyland, 2012; Simpson-Vlach & Ellis, 2010) advocate direct instruction on lexical bundles in writing courses for L2 students. Cortes (2004) insists that "as lexical bundles are very frequent in published academic prose, it is necessary to encourage students to use these expressions" (p. 420). Hence, novice L2 writers must learn the discourse conventions (i.e., lexical bundles) of academic writing with the adequate use of lexical bundles (Biber et al., 2013; Cortes, 2004; Pan et al., 2016).

Lexical bundles are beneficial in L2 writing instruction with the principles of frequency, range, teachability/ learnability, and the usefulness in academic writing (Byrd & Coxhead, 2010; Nation, 2001). Coxhead and Byrd (2007) note several beneficial effects of using lexical bundles in academic writing: 1) providing ready-made sets of words for crafting academic prose, 2) facilitating fluent language use, 3) recognizing L2 writers as a "member" of a discourse community, and 4) representing register-specific ways of expressing particular meanings. The findings in this study showed that the corpus-aided instruction is effective in increasing multilingual learners' writing skills.

Therefore, explicit corpus-aided instruction would be effective in L2 college students' writing proficiency. The findings can be aligned with prior literature about the effectiveness of intentional language learning (Schmitt, 2008). Schmitt (2008) affirms that intentional vocabulary learning leads to "a better chance of retention and of reaching productive levels of mastery" (p. 341). Explicit deliberate learning (i.e., intentional learning) is best for learning salient elements of word knowledge along with the rate and efficiency of learning, while incidental learning comes from a sufficiency of time and exposure (Nation, 2001). Therefore, it would be critical to consider how to maximize the learning conditions of different corpus-aided instructional practice.

Using lexical bundles in writing instruction is helpful in developing language learning autonomy. Johns (1994) supports learner autonomy by data-driven learning, and corpus linguists (Gavioli, 2009) also stress learner autonomy through corpus linguistics. Applying lexical bundles to different assignments is closely related to language learning autonomy in that multilingual learners independently explore the use of lexical bundles without the instructor's guidance and understand them in cognition. Corpus-aided instruction allows self-access of the relevant materials with learner autonomy and helps L2 students become active researchers for the application of the lesson to the actual use in their academic writing.

5.2. Actualization of learning transfer in L2 students' academic writing

Learning transfer is the major issue throughout this study. "Transfer remains a vital construct in L2 writing pedagogy" (Hirvela et al., 2016, p. 52). Hirvela et al. (2016) strongly contend that teaching writing should be closely connected to

students' transfer and application to their own written products. Task similarity/difference is closely connected to learning transfer for ESL writing students (Leki & Carson, 1997). This study examined learning transfer from word-level lexical bundles to textual-level moves/steps in L2 students' academic writing (Nelms & Dively, 2007; Perkins & Salomon, 1988). Participants in this study showed various connections of lexical bundles to rhetorical moves/steps in both text and different semiotic systems. Cortes (2004) suggests having students "notice" the lexical bundles frequently used in academic writing. To maximize students' learning transfer, it is necessary to utilize corpus-based pedagogy in L2 writing instruction.

6. Conclusion

This study is of significance due to the pedagogical value, the usefulness of the most frequent words in language teaching (Nation, 2001), regarding the research of L2 composition and corpus linguistics in SLA and academic writing. A phraseological approach associated with corpus linguistics enables us to redefine and broaden aspects of linguistic theories. Furthermore, the utility of corpora can work as a basis for material designs and curriculum development and create a great impact on revealing the representativeness of the English language used by international college students (Byrd & Coxhead, 2010; Simpson-Vlach and Ellis, 2010). Lexical bundles in corpus linguistics have the potential to explore phraseological differences between registers and disciplines (Römer, 2009). Well-designed writing instruction can result in transfer in ESL contexts. Accordingly, corpus-aided instruction maximizes learning transfer with a focus on lexicogrammar.

This study also stimulates active awareness and perceptions of the prevalent usage of lexical phrases in practice. The idea of the overall research design in this study was generated from the implications of prior research (Hyland, 2012; Simpson-Vlach & Ellis, 2010) that the future research should link the constituent of applied linguistics (i.e., the analysis of lexical bundles) and the pedagogical use (i.e., the application of the use of lexical bundles) in the boundaries of composition studies and applied linguistics (Silva & Leki, 2004). Novice L2 writers must learn the discourse conventions (i.e., lexical bundles) of academic writing with the adequate use of lexical bundles (Biber et al., 2013; Cortes, 2004). Therefore, this study contributes to the development and advancement of L2 writing instruction and curriculum in the long term by providing effective language learning methods with the use of lexical bundles in learner corpora.

Learner-generated corpora can be helpful in guiding corpus-based writing pedagogy. Learner corpora involve "pedagogic mediation to contextualize the data for the students' own writing environment" (Flowerdew, 2009, p. 393) and play an important role in selecting and structuring teaching contents (Granger, 2002).

Swales (2019) also indicates that corpus-based research should have pedagogical value. Therefore, learner corpora enable L2 writing teachers to identify potential learner needs based on their use of a target language and evaluate the level of lexical and grammatical complexity of learner language.

To systematize corpus-aided pedagogy for L2 students and corpus literacy for L2 teachers, several suggestions are encouraged for the future research. Authentic materials from the students' writing are recommended. Students' written products include valuable information about linguistic features and structural rhetoric that can be used in the future writing class. Since this study revealed that corpus instruction would be effective to L2 learners, more research of corpus-aided instruction should be implemented to develop corpus-aided pedagogy. Lastly, many researchers (e.g., McCarthy, 2008; O'Keeffe & Farr, 2003) have integrated corpus linguistic techniques into teacher education, setting up guidelines for teacher education in corpus literacy. Although this study touched upon corpus literacy to some extent, future research should further extend standards and guidelines of corpus use for curriculum and instruction in teacher education.

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Language as a Medium of Grammar Instruction: Jordanian EFL Secondary-Stage Teachers' Beliefs and Practices

ABSTRACT
This study examines EFL teachers' beliefs, practices, and the (mis)match between them in regard to the language used as a medium of grammar instruction. The participants are nine experienced female EFL secondary-stage Jordanian teachers. Data were collected through a mixed quantitative-qualitative descriptive-analytical approach. Teachers' beliefs were investigated by a questionnaire, their practices via a classroom observation checklist, and the (mis)match between them was discussed during a focus group of teachers. The results showed that all teachers' beliefs were matching their practices, a consistency that was attributed to contextual factors, students' preferences, students' language proficiency and teachers' experiences as learners.

KEYWORDS
grammar teaching, mother tongue, language as a medium of instruction, teachers' beliefs, classroom practices

1. Introduction

The value and the role of using the mother tongue (L1) in English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom is a controversial issue among teachers and researchers (Kharma & Hajjaj, 1989; Levine, 2003; Littlewood & Yu, 2011; Voicu, 2012). To gain beneficial insights, language research (e.g., Ashton, 2014; Nishimuro & Borg, 2013; Pajares, 1992; Richards, 1996) suggested studying teachers' beliefs and practices which this paper investigates. Should grammar be taught using the first language (Arabic), the target language (English), or both?

In most EFL teaching contexts, teachers share L1 with their learners and the classroom is the only place where they are both exposed to L2 (Richards, 2017). The association of using L1 with the discredited Grammar-Translation Method made teachers shy away from using it (Cook G., 2010; Kelly & Bruen, 2015) despite empirically-evidenced reports (Butzkamm, 1998; Butzkamm & Caldwell,

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2009; Cook V, 2001; Cummins, 2007; Hall & Cook, 2012; Widdowson, 2003) showing that L1 is a viable pedagogical resource.

However, in Jordan, there has been little local research into teachers' beliefs and the amount and value of using L1 in EFL classrooms (e.g., Maqableh & Smadi, 2001), the purposes of using L1 (e.g., Hussein, 2013), and even less research on language transfer (e.g., Al-Zoubi & Abu-Eid, 2014). Similarly, there has been little qualitative research into teachers` grammar-related beliefs and practices. Since Jordanian EFL students' weakness in grammar has been established in a body of previous research (e.g., Alhababha et al., 2016; Malkawi & Smadi, 2018; Mustafa, 2001), there was an urgent need to carry out more research to understand the Jordanian grammar teaching context in an attempt to reinforce the grammatical competence of Jordanian EFL learners. This study seeks to answer the following questions:

1) What are Jordanian EFL teachers' beliefs regarding the language used as a medium of grammar instruction?
2) What are Jordanian EFL teachers' actual practices related to the language used as a medium of grammar instruction?
3) How consistent are teachers' beliefs and actual classroom practices concerning language as the medium of grammar instruction?

2. Review of related literature

Following the abandonment of the Grammar-Translation Method, using L1 was restricted in favour of the exclusive use of L2 in EFL classrooms (Cummins, 2007; Levine, 2003, Voicu, 2012) despite empirically-evidenced reports that L1 is a viable pedagogical resource (Butzkamm, 1998; Butzkamm and Caldwell, 2009; Cook V., 2001; Cummins, 2007; Hall & Cook, 2012; Widdowson, 2003). Translation during instruction was rejected by most structure and meaning-oriented language teaching methodologies (Voicu, 2012). The Direct and Audio-lingual methods abandoned using L1 to make students practice thinking in L2. The Silent Way, Suggestopedia, and Total Physical Response allowed using L1 exclusively for classroom management purposes. Communicative Language Teaching and Krashen's comprehensible input hypothesis banned L1 use to maximize L2 input. Conversely, Community Language Learning permitted using L1 to make students feel more secure during conversations (Richards & Rodgers, 1982). Lozano's Suggestopedia theorized for learning in a comfortable environment in which L1 supposedly helps (Adamson, 2004). Some research findings supported using L1 to facilitate learning, reduce cognitive processing loads, lessen pressure on working memory, enhance verbal thinking and mental translation, and support vocabulary retention (e.g., Alley, 2005; Belz, 2002; Blyth, 1995; Kramsch, 1998; Levine, 2003, 2009, 2011).

Villamil and de Guerrero (1996) recommended using L1 in making meaning of a text, retrieving language from memory, exploring and expanding content, guiding through language tasks, and maintaining a dialogue. Nation (2003) advised teachers to maximize L2 use because their job is to develop the linguistic abilities of their students who rarely encounter English outside language classes. Levine (2003) recommended shaping an approach that is based on pedagogical training, language research results, and successful classroom experiences.

Cummins (2007, p. 1) listed three theoretical principles that contradict the monolingual assumptions. First, according to cognitive psychology, learning builds on prior knowledge whether it is encoded in L1 or L2. Second, across languages, literacy-related skills and knowledge, the lingual transfer is a normal process. The third principle is Cook's 'multi-competence' proposing that second language learners have special mental structures that are different from the monolinguals (p. 1).

In theoretical research, Butzkamm and Caldwell (2009) called for a paradigm shift in foreign language teaching in terms of meaning, communication, understanding, grammar, and translation by benefitting from the use of L1 which is the "magic key that unlocks the door to foreign language grammars" (p. 385). Littlewood and Yu (2011) suggested a three-stage plan to use L1 inside EFL classrooms. At the presentation stage, teachers can use L1 to introduce structures to support language awareness (Butzkamm, 2003; Dodson, 1972). At the practice stage, it can be used in drilling to help learners produce similar structures (Butzkamm & Caldwell, 2009; Munro, 1999). At the production level, teachers can benefit Duff (1989), Auerbach (1993), and Deller and Rinvolucri (2002) by the use of L1 in activities.

Voicu (2012, p. 214) suggested that using L1 should be invested with beginner learners for understanding grammatical rules through translation exercises and comparing the two languages` vocabulary and grammar. Richards (2017) questions whether foreign language teachers, predominantly non-native speakers worldwide, really need to have native-like language ability since the criteria for being a good teacher are having content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge. and discourse skills.

In empirical research, Copland and Neokleous (2011) investigated using L1 in two after-school Cypriot private language institutions. The observation of language classes showed that three out of the four teachers used L1 frequently during lessons. However, the post interviews revealed that all four teachers believe that using L1 should be very limited. Discussing the discrepancy between teachers' beliefs and practices revealed a sense of guilt toward what they considered a negative class routine. Scheffler (2012) investigated secondary school students' views of using translation during grammar lessons. Comparing grammar translation and communicative lessons, students reported that grammar translation lessons are not only more interesting and informative but also make them feel secure and confident.

Ahmad, Radzuan and Hussain (2018) investigated EFL teachers' and students' beliefs regarding using Arabic during grammar lessons at Saudi universities. The study first revealed that both female and male Arab and non-Arab teachers believed that Arabic can be used to guarantee understanding, maintain discipline, and take feedback. The reasons for using L1 were students' low English language proficiency, the teachers' attempt to build good relationships with students, and saving class time. Second, the non-Arab teachers believed that since the EFL classroom is the only place for exposure to L2, the use of Arabic should be planned.

In the Jordanian context, Maqableh and Smadi (2001) investigated the amount, value, and teaching aspects of using Arabic during English lessons. The results showed that teachers used the Arabic language most of the lesson time and this positively improved students' achievement. The questionnaire revealed that teachers and students support the use of L1. Hussein (2013) investigated the purposes of using Arabic during teaching English in private and governmental universities. The study revealed that Arabic is used mainly to help students understand new and difficult words, to explain complex syntactic rules, and to save time. Al-Zoubi and Abu Eid (2014) explored the influence of Arabic on learning English. 266 randomly chosen, first-year university students took a translation test that comprised 24 Arabic sentences that they had to translate into English. It was revealed that the percentage of correct answers was 47% and that errors committed had mainly to do with the verbs "to be" and the use of the passive voice where transfer errors were the highest.

3. Method and procedures

3.1. Research context and participants

The participants of the study were nine experienced Jordanian female EFL eleventh and twelfth-grade teachers working in public schools of the Ramtha Directorate of Education in Jordan. The participants were chosen randomly from the fourteen secondary-stage EFL teachers in the city. Table 1 below summarizes the sample demographics:

Table 1. Participants of the study

No.	Qualification	Experience (in Years)	Grade Taught
1	MA	20	12
2	BA	21	11
3	MA	16	11
4	BA	22	12
5	BA	16	11
6	BA	2	12
7	BA	22	12

8	BA	15	12
9	BA	17	12

3.2. Data collection and procedure

This study used a mixed quantitative and qualitative descriptive-analytical approach. To answer the research questions, data were collected through the use of a questionnaire and a classroom observation checklist. The questionnaire was an adapted version of the questionnaire designed by Mohamed (2006). The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section collected demographic information pertaining to the teachers' qualifications, years of experience, and the grade(s) they teach (Table 1). The second one addressed the teacher-reported beliefs. The respondents are asked to rate each item on a five-point scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

The second data collection tool in this study was a classroom observation checklist that was also adapted from Mohamed's (2006) questionnaire to identify the teachers' actual pedagogical practices in on-site grammar lessons. Nonetheless, in the current research, the items were incorporated into an observation checklist. The aim of the classroom observations, which lasted for one week, was to provide direct evidence of the participating teachers' grammar practices in terms of the medium of instruction. Due to the time restrictions and ensuing lockdown imposed by the COVID-19 epidemic (and later pandemic), each teacher was observed teaching one grammar lesson.

To establish their validity, the instruments of this study were reviewed by an expert jury of university professors of linguistics, curriculum and instruction, and measurement and evaluation who judged the appropriateness of the instruments for the purpose of the study. Since both instruments were adapted, the researcher did not pilot the instruments but rather deemed it sufficient that their reliability was established by the original author (see Mohamed, 2006, pp. 64–67). To maximize the credibility of the teachers' responses, teachers were assured that their contributions would only be used anonymously for the purposes of the current research.

Furthermore, the interrater reliability of the observation was established by having a colleague, who had taught English for 21 years, attend five lessons with the researcher who was the only observer of the other four lessons. Both observers did not interact with the teachers observed or the students, and the observed teachers were informed that the data collected were to be used solely for research purposes and that the observer(s) were not assessing them. The fellow teacher independently filled in the observation checklist. The correlation between the researchers' and the second rater's observations amounted to 0.97, which is appropriate for the purpose of this study. To maximize the credibility of the teachers' responses and to create a conducive research environment in which the

participating teachers felt safe to engage in conversations amongst themselves and with the researcher, they were assured that their contributions would only be used anonymously for the purposes of the current research.

3.3. Data analysis

The results of the first research question, which asks about the teachers' grammar-related beliefs about their own language use, are summarized in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Teachers' grammar-related beliefs as gleaned from the questionnaire

No.	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	%
1	I use Arabic during grammar lessons	4.11	0.928	82.2
2	I translate English grammar rules into Arabic	4.22	0.972	84.4

The study revealed that 82.2% of the respondents believed that they could use Arabic during grammar lessons, and 84.4% believed that they can translate rules to Arabic whenever needed.

The second research question addressed the teachers' grammar-related classroom practices. The data were collected through the researcher's notations on the classroom observation checklist filled out during classroom visits. The results are given in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Teachers' grammar-related practices as revealed by the observation

No.	Item	n	%
1	Using Arabic during a grammar lesson	8	88.9
2	Translating English grammar rules to Arabic whenever needed	8	88.9

The classroom observations revealed that during the grammar lesson, eight out of nine teachers (88.9%) used Arabic and translated English grammar rules to Arabic. Only one teacher (11.1%) did not use Arabic words and did not translate English grammar rules into Arabic.

Regarding the consistency between the teachers' beliefs and actual practices, all nine teachers' beliefs were consistent with their classroom practices. After finishing data collection and analysis, the researcher initiated a focus group by inviting the nine participating teachers to meet at a secondary school in Ramtha city in Jordan on September 2020. The focus group aimed at discussing the match between teachers' beliefs and practices and the potential factors dominating them.

4. Results

The questionnaire in this study showed that only one out of nine teachers believed that she should not use Arabic during grammar lessons nor translate rules to Arabic, a belief that she practised during her grammar lesson. During the focus-group

discussions, she commented on her belief saying, "why should I use Arabic when I can speak English fluently". She added that at the beginning of each school year, her students feel shocked because she does not say any Arabic words, but over time they become used to her style. She believed that if all teachers decided to speak exclusively English, students will work hard to master the English language at least to be able to understand what their teachers say. Her belief was supported by another teacher who said "using Arabic really deprives excellent students from listening to and speaking English, but it is a blessing to mediocre and weak students".

In contrast, one participating teacher said that if she uses English as the only medium of grammar instruction throughout the lesson, she will surely find at the end that few students could understand her. A second teacher believed that there is no need to speak English all the time even if it is an English language class. A third teacher commented that she can explain the whole lesson in English but would feel uncomfortable because she knows that weak students will completely lose her. She added that even in the Scientific stream of the eleventh grade whose students are usually better than students of other branches, only three or four students can understand an English-only grammar lesson. Teachers also mentioned that they feel comfortable when they teach English grammar using Arabic because this is the way they were taught as students.

5. Discussion

The discussions showed first that using Arabic was relevant to direct contextual factors such as busy schedules, crowded classrooms, heavy teaching loads, long syllabi and time constraints, a result consistent with many studies (e.g., Assalahi, 2013; Basoz, 2014; Borg, 2003; Breen et. al., 2001; Farrell & Bennis, 2013; Farrell & Lim, 2005; Freeman, 2002; Mohammed, 1991, 1996; Nishimuro & Borg, 2013; Phipps & Borg, 2009; Thabet, 2002; Yusof et al., 2019). Second, secondary-stage teachers take into consideration that their students are motivated by passing the General Secondary Education Certificate Examination and that nearly all of them are privately tutored. Third, students' low language proficiency force teachers to use L1 to guarantee students' understanding. Finally, teachers teach in the same way they were taught grammar as students, a conclusion mentioned by many studies (e.g., Farrell & Lim, 2005; Phipps & Borg, 2009; Yusof et al., 2019).

6. Conclusions and future implications

To summarize, this study investigated teachers' grammar-related beliefs and practices in an attempt to understand the context responsible for Jordanian students' weak grammatical competence. Based on the findings of the current study, it is recommended that EFL teachers maximize L2 input and that the Jordanian Ministry of Education enhances current teaching quality by training teachers to practice reflection to evaluate their practices and improve them.

7. Limitations of the study

The generalizability of the findings of this study can be limited by the following factors:

1. The study was limited to female secondary public schools in the Ramtha Directorate of Education, which is a part of the Irbid Third Directorate of Education during the Academic year 2019-2020; the findings can be generalized only to similar educational contexts in Jordan.
2. The study was restricted to the students of the eleventh- and twelfth-grades in female public secondary schools in the Ramtha Directorate of Education. So, results could be generalized to the students studying in similar conditions or contexts.
3. Because of the Covid-19 epidemic lockdown, the study lasted for only two weeks. A longer duration may have different results.
4. The participants of the study were just observed while the researcher, and often a colleague, were filling in a checklist. Grammar lessons were not audio-taped, nor video-recorded, which limits the retrievability and corroboration of the classroom observation data.
5. The targeted research item was the medium used for grammar instruction The inclusion of other grammar-related aspects (e.g., the nature of grammar practice activities) may have widened the scope of the results.

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Breathing Enlightenment and Necessary Change into English Language Programs with Creative Writing

ABSTRACT
Employing a number of crucial discoveries in neuroscience and drawing from years of valuable teaching experience, I show that creative writing is the most effective and natural kind of writing to help English language learners (ELLs) develop their writing skills. Based on over 25 years of language teaching experience, I argue that creative writing helps students find their unique writing style and voice, nurtures confidence in the craft, creates a genuine relationship with the skill, and successfully articulates their feelings and thoughts to a desired audience. Core writing problems for ELLs are addressed and creative writing is suggested as a powerful solution to many of these issues. A very successful creative writing workshop developed at an American Intensive English Program is offered to illustrate how essential the various genres of creative writing are for ELLs. This creative writing program developed the ELLs' writing skills significantly more than any of the traditional kinds of academic writing activities or assignments. In most cases, the ELLs improved 30% to 45% on their writing exit exams after completing the creative writing program. The exit exam results for the academic writing course were considerably lower when compared to the creative writing program results. The article concludes by showing how discoveries in neuroscience and cognitive psychology support the use of creative writing over other forms of writing used in Academic English Programs and Intensive English Programs.

KEYWORDS
creative writing, holistic, observation-focused, ownership, creative thinking, inner personhood, educe

"I am the poet of the body,
And I am the poet of the soul."
Walt Whitman,
Leaves of Grass

1. Introduction

In this article, I will first discuss the general need for creative writing. Next, I will touch on the frequent problems English language learners (ELLs) encounter in Academic English Programs (AEPs) and Intensive English Programs (IEPs) and the obstacles that both native users of English and ELLs face in academic writing.

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I will, then, offer creative writing as the logical solution. I will reinforce this claim with support from higher education and the results from a successful creative writing program I established at an American university. I will conclude by offering discoveries from the neuroscience and cognitive psychology communities that also favor creative writing as the most useful, natural, and powerful tool for helping students become successful writers. This is based on decades of research regarding how our brains learn, employ information, and perform skills in the most effective ways possible (Immordino-Yang, 2016; Sousa, 2011).

2. An Overview: The Need for Creative Writing

The general opinion held by most U.S.-based AEPs and IEPs is that ELLs need to focus on academic writing (e.g., academic essays and research papers) because that is what will be required of them in their undergraduate or graduate programs. These same AEPs and IEPs, however, fail to realize that in order to learn how to write and write well, students (either native or non-native users of English) need to practice writing *a number of different genres*. Interestingly enough, it is creative writing which can best meet this need of employing *multiple kinds of genres* and *tools* (e.g., poetry and prose; similes and metaphors) to help develop the ELLs' writing skills and foster a natural development and marked progress in the craft. This is why so many forward-thinking language programs around the world (e.g., the Czech Republic, Germany, Russia, and Spain) use creative writing activities, methods, and techniques as fundamental language learning tools for their respective writing programs (Randolph, 2020). Moreover, Zinsser (2001) correctly points out that "[y]ou learn to write by writing. It's a truism, but what makes it a truism is that it's true" (p. 49). I would also argue, based on the number of successful and effective creative writing workshops and programs I have set up, that it is creative writing which helps students write better. These workshops and programs are deemed "successful and effective" because a number of the IEP directors supported my method, as it helped the ELLs improve their writing test scores more than the traditional academic writing classes. This is, I believe, primarily because the ELLs connect immediately with creative writing topics and techniques. It is a more natural way of expressing oneself than that of the traditional grammar-based and template-driven writing styles (for more on this, see Nash, 2004 and Fanselow, 2014).

Creative writing styles are developed *internally* from "within" the students' own personhood whereas academic writing styles are *external* in nature; that is, they are often a forced style of writing based on an assigned textbook or an English as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL) program agenda. Furthermore, as we will discuss below, creative writing helps because it has a number of genres and techniques that enhance the ELLs' writing styles. In essence, creative writing develops multiple kinds of writing, not only creative

writing. Students learn natural methods of argument and persuasion through writing dialogues; they learn reflection and description through writing character monologues; and they develop summary and analysis by creating genuine plots in their short stories and narrative poems. In short, it is creative writing that nurtures a sense of comfort, control, and confidence in enhancing the students' writing development, ownership, style, and voice (Randolph, 2012; 2014; Randolph & Ruppert 2020; Urbanski, 2006).

If I use a sports analogy to support my argument, it becomes very clear. Let us take volleyball as an example. Volleyball players do not practice one skill to perform just one function on the court or make just one kind of play. Each player (save the libero) works on passing, setting, blocking, spiking, and serving. In terms of physical conditioning, they do yoga, run, stretch, and lift weights. Doing only one training activity or practicing one kind of drill would simply not work. The same is true for writing, especially for those learning *how* to write. A learner's brain needs to be flexible, and it develops by using multiple tools and methods (Eagleman, 2015; Sousa, 2011; Willis, 2006).

It should be noted, as I mentioned above, that I have set up many successful and long-running creative writing programs in the States and abroad. Unfortunately, neither time nor space will allow me to detail each one here. I have selected the specific program below as a model because it had the most significant impact on the ELLs who were preparing to directly enter that American university as full-time students in both undergraduate and graduate programs. Other creative writing workshops and courses that I created surely helped the students' writing, but those particular students were not necessarily preparing to enter an American college or university. They merely wanted to improve their creative and critical writing and thinking skills before returning to their home countries, and the creative writing workshops met this need.

3. The Basic Issues ELLs Face with Academic Writing

According to Anderson (2022), the four major challenges that ELLs encounter in academic writing are: 1) a limited proficiency in the language (e.g., they lack the needed vocabulary to paraphrase and write high level papers); 2) a lack of understanding and use of the various conventions and rules of academic writing (e.g., when and how to properly use sources); 3) a limited ability to do the needed research and use what is learned (e.g., not being aware of appropriate sources); and 4) a limited capability to write at a university level due to their personal history (e.g., not being trained in their home culture about the basic structure of academic paragraphs) (Anderson, 2022, paras. 3–14).

Throughout the years, my ELLs have shared their own issues about academic writing. Below is a list of challenging problems that I gathered in 2016 from two advanced writing classes. The ELLs felt strongly that they were a) not able

to produce developed arguments in research papers; b) not comfortable with the topics because of a lack of cultural knowledge; c) not able to relate to the abstract nature of the topics; d) not able to express adequate knowledge of lexical items to paraphrase and to persuade the reader; and e) not able to write from multiple perspectives (Randolph, 2016).

It appears, then, that my ELLs have observed, in addition to the actual skill of writing, that the writing topics also present a problem because there is often no, or very little, relation or connection with the students' interests or personhood, and the topics are abstract in nature. Moreover, as mentioned above (Anderson, 2022), the various kinds of writing (i.e., analyses and research-based writing) present issues because many ELLs are not trained to write these kinds of papers prior to coming to study in AEPs or IEPs. Even those international students who complete their senior year at an American high school often struggle. The fundamental stumbling blocks point to these two issues: We are not only asking ELLs to think and write in a non-native language about topics of little interest or understanding, but we are also asking them to use certain styles and techniques which are equally challenging (Randolph, 2012). Instead of simply writing and learning how to write, they are met with a myriad of other issues, which are often unhelpful, unmotivating, and frustrating (Urbanski, 2006).

4. Support for Creative Writing in Higher Education

Despite the current reality that substantial research in higher education (Antoniou & Moriarty, 2008; Fanselow, 2014; Harper, 2015; Hecq, 2015) and the neuroscience community (Erhard et al., 2014; Gonzalez et al., 2006; Immordino-Yang, 2016) support creative writing and argue that the techniques and tools used therein are helpful for all writers, AEPs and IEPs continue to emphasize academic writing in their courses because they believe it to be the most important kind of writing. In addition, they contend that it will be most helpful for their students' undergraduate and graduate careers (Randolph, 2012). For decades now, I believe that directors at AEPs and IEPs have misunderstood the essence and value of creative writing.

It is ironic, however, that many other departments on university campuses share a different opinion; they sincerely honor and greatly value creative writing. What I find particularly significant are the results of a survey I conducted regarding higher education faculty members from 14 distinct departments and their views on creative writing (*N=25*). The departments ranged from accounting and pre-medical programs to engineering and religious studies. I asked the professors to choose "strongly agree," "agree," "neutral," "disagree," "strongly disagree," or "other" concerning the following statements:

- I think that creative writing ought to be taught in ESL programs.
- Creative writing enhances students' minds and helps them with critical thinking.

- I use creative writing in my classes.
- I think if students had creative writing, they would write better papers and more critical pieces in my class.

The support for using creative writing to foster ELLs' writing skills was robust. 88% either "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that creative writing ought to be taught in ESL programs. 96% either "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that creative writing enhances the students' minds. 57% used creative writing in their classes; these included the professors from the engineering and philosophy departments. Those who did not use it, reflected on revising their own pedagogy and were willing to incorporate some creative writing activities in their classes. And lastly, 80% either "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that creative writing would help the students' writing performance in the professors' respective courses (Randolph, 2012, p. 72).

What stood out as most intriguing were the professors from the Master of Business Administration (MBA) programs and the philosophy and religious studies departments, as they were the strongest supporters of creative writing. In my follow-up questions, they responded that creative writing, more than any other kind of writing, gets students (both domestic and international) to write with more confidence, develop their own style and voice, and consider topics from various perspectives (Randolph, 2012, p. 73). The professors from the MBA programs claimed that creative writing is essential because it encourages students to think outside the box and develop both critical and creative ways of approaching various challenges in the field. In addition, they felt the tools that creative writing nurtures are pivotal in order to prepare the minds of their students for the changing dynamics in both domestic and global business ventures.

I would like to note that it is not my intention to belittle academic writing. If we carefully examine creative and academic writing, we can see that they share a number of common attributes (Nash, 2004; Randolph, 2019). For instance, both require a logical and coherent development of ideas, both depend on sound grammar and syntax, both clarify and communicate concepts, both require paraphrasing ideas and using citations (albeit in different formats), and both, in one way or another, tell a story to the reader or researcher. In fact, what I am suggesting is to use more creative writing techniques in all levels of AEP and IEP writing courses so that our students become better academic writers. Each kind of writing is important, and each can help ELLs become stronger thinkers and writers. That said, creative writing ought to be used more as it is simply the better tool of the two in terms of skill development.

There are, however, significant differences between the two kinds of writing. The most striking one is that creative writing employs a wide array of genres such as poetry, fables, flash fiction, short stories, novels, drama, and creative non-fiction. In addition, creative writing uses a number of effective tools such as alliteration, dialogue, foreshadowing, metaphors, similes, and symbolism. Creative writing

also strongly involves the emotions, the senses, and personal experiences, all of which are deeply supported as crucial learning elements by the neuroscience community (Immordino-Yang, 2016; Lieberman Doctor, 2015; Ratey, 2002). We must always keep in mind that ELLs are not only learning how to write, but, in many cases, they are still *learning the language*. So, we must ask, is a formulaic, rigid style of writing more suitable for them, or one that nurtures their acquisition of the language, promotes a discovery of their immediate and intimate self, and helps enhance their writing as creative writing does? Is a relatively shallow and uncreative template-driven style of writing helpful or one that pushes the ELLs deeper into understanding who they are as individuals and encourages them to follow the path of education, which is to "educe" or "pull out" their own inner wisdom and knowledge? Are we training them to become masters of writing, or are we forcing them to become slaves of a formulaic and limited style of writing?

At this point, I would like to offer my working definition of creative writing. I believe it will shed light on just how useful and powerful it is. I define creative writing as the following spiritual activity that promotes continual personal enrichment:

> Creative writing is a way of embracing, observing, experiencing, thinking, and writing about the past, present, and future through tapping into one's soul, spirit, mind, body, brain, consciousness, and art of mindfulness. Creative writing is a holistic activity that includes using emotions, senses, memories, ideas, experiences, and insights in order to learn from these as well as learn from one's immediate and surrounding environment. That is, creative writing is a state of mind and a way of life. It is highly observation-focused which allows for constant growth. (Randolph, 2020, slides 13–15)

Academic writing, on the other hand, is usually strictly structured, highly formulaic, and often deals with topics that are either too abstract or far removed from the ELLs' personal life or cultural understanding. It does not promote ownership, nor does it really inspire development of a style or voice. In fact, Nash (2004), a professor at the University of Vermont in the School of Education and Social Services, claims that academic writing can be very limiting in that "it's mostly just a matter of understanding how to fit some new pieces of the knowledge puzzle into the old research templates; a matter if you will, of knowing how to pour new research wine into the same old format bottles" (pp. 54–55).

For ELLs to understand that writing is not merely a skill but a state of mind, a way to view life, a journey of self-expression, and a way to learn, there must be meaning and ownership in what they write. Allen (2000) discusses critical issues he faced with an academic writing course that he taught to domestic Canadian undergraduates, and he touches on the same issues that many ELLs face in AEPs and IEPs. Allen's students wrote adequately enough to pass the course, but they did not appear to be learning much. They were really not learning how to write or

develop a style to foster their own voice. According to Allen (2000), "[t]heir work lacked authenticity. They had no idea how to engage meaning around the kinds of topics they found in the *Norton Reader*... Their writing was make-believe... They focused on 'not making mistakes'" (p. 250). In addition to not improving their writing skills, Allen was concerned because his students were not developing any sense of style that expressed their personalities or experiences.

Allen pinpoints an underlying problem by exposing that most kinds of academic writing do not allow students (both native and non-native users of English) to find meaning in their work, nor are they really able to internalize or personalize their writing. Allen (2000) suggests

> [t]he "writing problem" in our universities is really a humanism problem. We teach humanism and dodge its practice. We ask our students to study and understand meaning at the same time that we offer little opportunity for them to make original meaning. (p. 287)

After a few semesters of realizing the academic writing-based classes were not working in terms of developing his students' skills, Allen substantially restructured his course's content and had his students do creative writing. It was then he noticed a dramatic transformation. His students found meaning in their work, developed their own style, and also—perhaps most important—significantly improved their craft. Allen's students even reported his writing class was helping them write better in their other university courses (Allen, 2000).

If the above cases of Nash and Allen show us the problems that academic writing can often pose for native users of English, then how do we rationally expect our ELLs to fare any better? Again, I do not wish to suggest we completely eliminate academic writing in AEPs or IEPs. However, it does not appear to be the most effective kind of writing for our ELLs.

5. The Natural Solution: Creative Writing

As mentioned above, I have created and implemented creative writing activities (both in EFL and ESL contexts), and I have designed and taught intermediate and advanced level creative writing programs, workshops, and capstone courses for AEPs and IEPs in the States and abroad. The inspiration for the activities and courses was the result of observing the frustration that my students felt because of their lack of a command in writing papers on abstract topics that were either program or textbook driven. They were also dealing with some basic language issues. I quickly noticed that my students were struggling just like Allen's undergraduate students had struggled due to similar reasons.

However, once I introduced the creative writing activities or started the creative writing classes, I observed an immediate change in both the students' attitude *toward* writing and the *actual* writing being produced. I will now discuss

one specific program that truly transformed the students and the way writing was taught and understood at an American IEP.

One of the best recorded success stories regarding my advocacy for and implementation of creative writing took place at the Center for English as a Second Language at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, Illinois. In 2010, I was asked to teach writing to an advanced section of ELLs (level five) but was surprised that they could not adequately write a solid paragraph. I consequently inquired what the students focused on at the high intermediate level (level four). I was told they wrote paragraphs and three to four academic essays on U.S.-related topics; for example, the U.S.-Mexico border issue and same-sex marriages. I was immediately astonished by two points: First, the content of the writing topics seemed unrelated to that group of ELLs; and second, these students were still struggling with the basic idea of a paragraph.

After observing the same issues with my advanced students for two eight-week sessions, I asked the director of the IEP if I could restructure our high intermediate section (level four) and turn it into a creative writing workshop. This, I felt, would better prepare the students by developing control, comfort, and confidence in their writing, and I knew-based on other programs I had created—it would help them with the academic writing in their higher-level courses.

The tools used in creative writing are numerous. For instance, the students learn how to effectively use a myriad of new lexical items and various kinds of sentences that help in pacing, tone, and effect. They also begin to play with the language which allows them to take risks and develop more quickly as writers and users of the language (Maley & Duff, 1989, p. 9).

I was granted permission to implement the creative writing class in the spring of 2011. During the eight-week session, my ELLs worked on short forms of poetry, flash fiction, persuasive personal letters, children's stories, dialogue-focused stories, and short autobiographical narratives. We also worked on developing well-structured and coherent paragraphs. These paragraphs were important because we used them as our *evaluation tools* to critique and reflect on each other's work. That is, in addition to peer reviewing the poetry, prose, and letters, the students wrote paragraph-length critiques, focusing on one strong point and one point that needed work regarding their creative writing pieces. In short, the ELLs used both creative and critical writing in this workshop.

As we moved along through the eight-week session, my ELLs' sense of clarity, detail, comfort, cohesion, and unique style became noticeably developed. What also stood out was the *joy* they exhibited in the writing process and in sharing their work with the class. The reason was simple: They were writing about experiences, memories, and concepts they knew about, and this gave them confidence to write and write better.

We also did a great deal of modeling in the program. That is, my teaching assistants and I modeled the creative writing activities and concepts for and with

the students. Such a practice is crucial in order for the students to embrace writing, play with the tools and techniques, and see that writing is a complex process of discussing ideas, brainstorming, writing, rewriting, peer reviewing, editing, and proofreading (Urbanski, 2006, pp. 26–30).

Because of its success, the creative writing seminar was permanently adopted and implemented into the IEP curriculum. The decision was based on "three significant factors" (Randolph, 2012, p. 73). First, the students in the program were required to take exit essay exams in order to move from one level to the next. On average, before implementing the creative writing seminar, 50% to 60% of the ELLs passed from level four to level five; however, they still struggled with paragraph structure and continuity in essays. In contrast, after implementing the creative writing seminar, 80% to 95% of the ELLs passed the exams. The writing instructors in the program who graded the exit exams noticed an overwhelming difference in the quality of sentence and paragraph structure. They also noticed more attempts at risk-taking and experimentation with the language (e.g., a creative use of metaphors and effective alliteration). Second, the instructors teaching the other skills in the program, like reading and grammar, noticed a marked improvement in their ELLs' coherence and depth in writing. Their grammar use was reported as much improved as well. And third, the students reported to the director and on class evaluations that they became more engaged in the writing process. They no longer saw writing as just a skill, but they discovered it to be "a way of thinking" and "a new way of observing life". Moreover, they felt their creativity was accepted and this motivated them to blend their creativity with their critical thinking. This experience was paramount in the developmental process, as its effect on the learners was both inspirational and motivational. The synthesis of critical and creative thinking, in general, is a great benefit for all learners because it promotes confidence and control in acquired skills and activities (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013).

According to the students, "creative writing helped them learn 'to play with the language,' 'appreciate the language,' and 'view it as a living thing that grows'" (Randolph, 2012, p. 73). With the new student enthusiasm, the faculty and director's support, and the added energy from the graduate assistants teaching the additional sections of level four, creative writing found its way into the IEP and helped the ELLs with the academic-based writing that awaited them in level five. These students all went on to succeed in their pre-medical, nursing, engineering, and education programs; and, they received high praise from their advisors on their ability to write well, focus on topics, and pursue the various arguments from both sides of the issues covered in these classes. This, I believe, was solely due to their training in creative writing because the decades of academic writing at this IEP did not yield the same results.

6. Support from Neuroscience and Cognitive Psychology

If there is one field that the English language teaching and learning community ought to work more closely with, it is neuroscience. Discoveries and deeper insights are being made daily about the brain and how we learn best. I would thus like to make four arguments for using creative writing in AEPs and IEPs based on recent research done in neuroscience and cognitive psychology (Immordino-Yang, 2016; Randolph, 2019; Randolph & Ruppert, 2020; Ratey, 2002).

6.1. Emotions

Perhaps one of the strongest reasons to use creative writing in AEPs and IEPs is the fact that it promotes the use of the emotions in learning far more than academic writing. Immordino-Yang (2016), in her book, *Emotions, Learning, and the Brain*, goes into great detail about the impact that emotions have on learning. She shows that "[i]t is literally neurobiologically impossible to build memories, engage complex thoughts, or make meaningful decisions without emotion" (p.18). If we reflect for a moment, we see the need for emotion in learning is built into our evolutionary DNA, for emotions have ensured that we encode, store, and retrieve information that has helped us to survive throughout human history.

The topics we use in creative writing are guided by an effective balance of reason and emotion Randolph & Ruppert, 2020, p. xi). Reason is used to make the poem or story coherent, ordered, and genuine. Emotion is used to make the reader feel the situation and help the author communicate his or her thoughts on a very genuine and humanistic level. In short, reason and emotion work hand in hand to make the writing clear and tangible, understandable, and intriguing.

6.2. Flexibility and Variation

In her cutting-edge book, *Research-Based Strategies to Ignite Student Learning*, Willis (2006) explains the importance of flexible learning or approaching learning from various techniques and methods, and she asserts that

> [t]he more ways something is learned, the more memory pathways are built. This brain research discovery is part of the reason for the current notion that stimulating the growth of more dendrites and synaptic connections is one of the best things teachers can learn to do for the brains of their students. (p. 3)

As above, academic writing tends to be formulaic and template driven which is fine for advanced writers; however, our ELLs are in a dynamic and fragile process of learning English and how to write. Creative writing, on the other hand, gives students a myriad of ways to write and communicate their feelings, insights, and thoughts through poetry, prose, drama, and creative nonfiction. That is, writing in

various ways ultimately enhances our ELLs' writing and thinking skills and helps them become versatile in the craft.

6.3. Personalization

Willis's (2006) work suggests that the more teachers allow their students to personalize the content or skill, the more their students learn and find meaning in the process. Eagleman (2015) compares human brains to snowflakes in that each is intricately unique; as a consequence, the way we perceive reality is unique. "You don't perceive objects as they are. You perceive them as you are" (p. 33).

Highly academic topics or abstract concepts have their place in English language learning, to be sure. However, while our students are trying to learn the language and develop a very demanding skill like writing, we need to allow them to write based on who and what they are. This includes their inner personhood and their unique memories and experiences. If we allow them to use their own self as the subject of their work, they not only foster a challenging craft in an intimate way, but they also undergo a unique self-discovery. And ultimately, in personalizing the content of the writing, they make it their own, they give it meaning, and this becomes the natural segue into developing their own style and way to play with and manipulate the language and the craft. Thus, creative writing, through personalizing the content and the skill, allows ELLs to become the masters versus the slaves of the writing process.

6.4. Enjoyment

The fourth argument is perhaps the most essential: We need to do creative writing because it is simply a great deal of fun. The ELLs enjoy it, and it gives them a chance to actually create and contribute to their own language development. Furthermore, given how I have observed the students engaging, experimenting, and taking risks with the creative process, it truly appears that creative writing produces more positive neurotransmitters that create happy students. Immordino-Yang (2016) has shown that happiness is chemically produced by eliciting dopamine, endorphins, oxytocin, and serotonin. Each of those is responsible for creating a happy mental state, and each is elicited during the creative process and sharing the work in a classroom community. Of these four, dopamine (the motivation neurotransmitter) and oxytocin (the comfort, safety, and trust neurotransmitter) are perhaps the ones most responsible for the fun and happiness produced while doing creative writing and sharing the poems and stories in the class. Again, if our ELLs are emotionally engaged in the content and the craft, reacting positively to the flexible nature of the genres, internalizing the topics, and using their personhood, then great joy and enthusiasm will naturally motivate them. It is this joy, this valuable creative instinct that makes both writing and learning inspiring endeavors.

7. Conclusion

Writing is no easy skill to master, and it becomes even more burdensome for learners who are working in another language, addressing topics that are abstract in nature, and writing in a style that is equally unfamiliar. Creative writing, however, can help our ELLs build a strong sense of comfort, control, confidence, and ultimately joy in writing because they are inspired to use what they are familiar with in order to communicate their feelings, ideas, and thoughts. The topics come from their personhood, and they learn to develop a unique style based on who they are. I thus encourage AEPs and IEPs to consider using more creative writing as a tool to help their ELLs learn to write. This will motivate them to genuinely enjoy the writing process, and it will develop their writing skills for their university level classes as well as their life beyond the classroom. Through this enlightening experience, our ELLs will feel the rich and vibrant energy of Walt Whitman; they too will understand the meaning and importance of his insight, "I am the poet of the body, And I am the poet of the soul" (1855/1986, p. 44). By following the path of creative writing, our ELLs will embody its definition and truly connect with the reality that it nurtures a unique way of embracing life and allowing the spirit and the mind to grow with the simple yet profound offerings of each passing moment.

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In-Faculty Practicum for TEFL Undergraduates at a Specially Created, On-The-Premises Language School: A Study in Innovation

ABSTRACT
Teacher trainees often consider the practicum to be the most critical aspect of their pre-service training. However, its duration is frequently insufficient, necessitating teacher-trainers to explore methods of increasing the trainees' direct teaching experience. The present study focuses on one such attempt – the establishment of a language school within a faculty – and its six-year existence. The study examines how participating teacher trainees received the project, with 30 of them taking part in a survey, which forms the basis of qualitative analysis and an overall project evaluation. Responses from the participating trainees reveal that they perceive the program as a unique and the most beneficial part of their teacher-training period. The trainees report having made significant progress, particularly in areas such as workload management, lesson-planning, utilization of materials, addressing students' needs, and general teaching fluency. The project's Director of Studies conducted observations to evaluate these areas, and the results align with the trainees' self-evaluations. The project is an innovative practicum type that encourages reflective practice and has led to changes in the ELT training carried out by the faculty.

KEYWORDS
practicum, teacher training, self-regulated learning, reflective teaching, peer observations, pre-service teaching

1. Introduction

The practicum has long been recognized as a key component in pre-service teacher-training programs and is judged by the trainees themselves as the most valuable part of their vocational preparation (e.g. Grudnoff, 2011; Mattsson et al., 2011; Pospíšil, 2017). It provides an immersion-type environment (Erben, 2005, p. 283) facilitating natural, experiential learning in authentic classrooms, and is undoubtedly the most direct way of connecting teacher-training theory with hands-on practice, thus surpassing in authenticity the microteaching sessions often carried out in teacher-training classes (Johnson & Arshavskaya, 2011). During practicum trainees encounter situations that are typical of the target teaching environment and are encouraged to discuss and analyze these with

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their mentors. This contributes to the development of teacher confidence and self-reflection skills, the latter of which is generally seen (see e.g. Farrell, 2018; Ghaye, 2011; McGregor & Cartwright, 2011; Richards & Farrell, 2011; Richards & Lockhart, 1994; Rushton & Suter, 2012) as essential for the development of teaching professionals. Furthermore, the practicum tends to promote the growth of teaching fluency (Erben, 2005, p. 284).

During practicum trainees become familiar with out-of-classroom routines involving not only lesson planning and preparation but also the administrative aspects of being a teacher. Trainees may be encouraged to familiarize themselves with curricular documents and observe their implementation in day-to-day school life. They learn how to manage class-switching in the shortest of breaktimes; observe staffroom communication between colleagues, staff meetings and other school activities. All this eases the transition from teacher education programs to actual teaching career and raises trainees' awareness of theoretical and practical components of the profession and their interconnectedness. Moreover, well-executed practicums increase the likelihood of novice teachers' persevering in their profession within the early years of employment (Twomey, 2007).

Whilst most successful education systems are those that effectively combine the theoretical preparation of teachers with a strong teaching-practice component (Braun, 2008), no definition of the most efficient practicum model has been universally agreed upon. Various models exist (see e.g. Mattsson et al., 2011), and with varying results (Gray et al., 2017). Among the main variables in the models are the number of practicums during the whole course of teacher training; their duration; the degree of independence; the timing within the overall course; and the assessment tools. Gray et al. (2017) suggest that trainees prefer extended practicums to shorter ones. Much depends also on the thoroughness of the mentor (Pospíšil, 2017). However, mentors do not always receive training in providing feedback and may not always be fully aware of the importance of their role. Moreover, as Ure et al. (2009) observe, their work may not be sufficiently monitored by the teacher educators.

Johnson and Arshavskaya (2011) recommend that teacher-training programs ought to ensure that the all-essential theory-to-practice link is exploited not only at the end of a program but during the course of it, so that trainees have regular opportunities to hone practical skills along with theory. This is in line with Korthagen (2001), who advocates a practice-to-theory model in which practice comes first and facilitates the gradual acquisition of theory and experience.

While the practicum is an official requirement in the Czech Republic, the way in which it is carried out varies from faculty to faculty. Teacher-training courses are organized primarily by faculties of education but sometimes also by other faculties (of science, the arts etc.). On the whole, faculties of education include more direct classroom experience than do the latter-mentioned institutions, which

tend to prioritize the development of technical skills required within the given field. At the faculties of arts, the main focus is on the development of sound theoretical foundations in the respective fields of expertise and the space for practicum is often restricted. Consequently, the practicum sometimes fails to meet the students' needs and expectations (Pospíšil, 2017) in terms of both its duration and the quality of feedback.

As an English-teacher trainer at a faculty of arts, I was aware of the lack of teaching opportunities in its study programs and started to seek different ways of extending them. In keeping with Mattsson et al.'s (2011) I embrace the notion of there being three strands of knowledge that play a part in the education of pre-service teachers, namely: "declarative knowledge (knowing that), procedural knowledge (knowing how) and conditional knowledge (knowing when and why to apply certain procedures)" (p. 5). Whilst not adhering to the purely technicist view of teaching as a set of discrete behaviours that can be practised and eventually adopted by the trainees, I find that in the work of a foreign-language teacher the fluent command of certain specific classroom procedures both saves time and helps create an environment conducive to learning. That these techniques and procedures need to be understood in the light of theory goes without saying. But surely these techniques also have to be presented to trainees – and tried out by them – 'for real', so that they may evaluate them and decide whether or not they will include them in their repertoire, respecting principles of self-regulated learning. The question was where to find the space in what was already a very tight study program.

Following the usual path of bringing the sense of 'real' classrooms into the TEFL courses in the form of classroom videos, micro-teaching slots and voluntary observations seemed to offer only limited opportunities. It became clear that real teaching time would simply have to be sought outside the scope of the study programs. And there seemed to be no solution more ideal than the setting up of the faculty's own language school. The aim of this article is to present a report of how this idea was brought to fruition and what we have learnt during the six years of its existence.

2. The on-the-premises in-faculty language school JazykoFFka

In 2016 the faculty published a list of requisite levels of English for each administrative position and applied for a grant to provide tuition which would help employees reach the standards and keep them. I came up with the idea that a faculty's own language school run by its English teacher-trainees could be established. While it would help the faculty, it would give its teacher-trainees the much-needed teaching practice. The suggestion was approved by the faculty's management and the school, henceforth in this study referred to as *JazykoFFka,* was founded.

The approximately 120 employees who were targeted were divided into 20 groups based on placement tests. Their proficiency ranges from A1 to C1+. The length of classes is set at 90 minutes per week. The courses are free for all faculty employees.

The teaching is carried out by English-language teacher trainees. They are paid an hourly rate comparable to that typically paid at private language schools in Prague. The teachers rotate mostly on an annual basis so that as many of them get a chance to participate. They are obliged to participate in further methodological training and in compulsory peer observations. They are also involved in administrative affairs of the school and help run the placement tests, final test administration, teacher substitutions, timetabling and accounts.

The main coursebook chosen for all classes was the Oxford University Press *Navigate* series, supplementary materials (such as items from the National Geographic *Keynote* series for use in the most advanced classes) being purchased as per teacher suggestions.

To monitor standards, the director of the school carries out regular 45-minute observations and follow-up feedback sessions aimed to both encourage and foster improvement. In addition, each teacher is obliged to actively participate in two peer-observations per term, to complete and return an observation protocol, and to discuss findings with the observed teacher. Throughout the year the teachers are provided with on-going support in regular methodological seminars. These typically have a main topic (e.g., the teaching of pronunciation), in connection with which teachers are expected to come along prepared not only to present appropriate sample materials and classroom techniques but also to ask questions regarding specific problems they might have encountered in relation to that skill.

The progress of the course participants is monitored not only during the year by means of regular unit tests, but also in an end-of-year assessment designed to measure the student progress. These tests record a general upward tendency commensurate with the time spent in the classrooms. However, a long-term analysis of these tests is problematic because of employee fluctuation.

At the end of each term the employees are asked to complete course-evaluation forms. The comments are typically highly positive as regards both teaching standards and the courses in general, and, thus, they provide the teachers with a good deal of encouragement. Since the covid-19 pandemic the courses have been running online. Although this gives the teachers an opportunity to learn new teaching techniques, the employees miss the personal experience of live lessons. In its 6 years of existence the *JazykoFFka* has provided teaching experience for 30 teacher-trainees and catered for over 500 student places (many of the students are actually the same and stay at the school to maintain the level of their English).

At the end of each year teachers are asked to fill in an anonymous questionnaire designed to evaluate the school as a whole and their own learning experience.

This questionnaire consists of ten open questions designed to provide an evaluation of the school and the usefulness of the training tools provided. The current study showcases responses from 30 teachers, which were coded, categorized, and analyzed. The following chapter provides the results. It aims to describe the experience from the perspective of the trainee students and serve as recommendation for anybody who might consider launching a similar project.

3. Results – the school as seen by the teachers

The prevailing feature of the responses was the high frequency of positive adjectives, superlatives and intensifiers with which the respondents evaluated the overall experience of being *JazykoFFka* teachers. This was especially apparent in sections which reflected the teachers' awareness of the progress they had made. Such comments were present in all answers, in which repetitions of the more general "learning an awful lot", "improving" and "gaining experience, teaching fluency and automaticity" are interspersed with mentions of gaining confidence and loss of initial anxiety. The teachers highly valued the amount of freedom they had to experiment and try out a wide variety of techniques and develop their own preferred approaches and teaching styles, reaping the benefits of self-regulated learning combined with regular mentoring. Several mentioned that this was the most important element in their teacher-training and called the experience a "unique program".

The most frequently reported area in which progress was achieved is that of learning to cater for students' needs (e.g. regarding their proficiency, personal preferences and specific professional language needs) and learning to communicate with students about their expectations and requirements. The second most frequently mentioned specific area in which progress was made was felt to be that of effective textbook use and materials adaptation and development. Additionally, the majority of the teachers mentioned that they felt improvement in the areas of lesson planning and time management and learned to better prepare for lessons.

Various mentions of increased efficiency were also common. Teachers reported that lesson planning and preparation initially proved to be a frustratingly time-consuming activity but eventually required less time. The teachers reported a reduction from an initial 60 minutes needed to prepare a 90-minute lesson to c. 30 minutes. This was due to the development of various strategies such as the preparation of reusable materials, the designing of materials for use by more than one group, the maximizing of textbook exploitation and adaptation as a preferable option to designing new materials, the setting of personal time limits for preparation, and the use of good sources of reliable materials on the internet. Other strategies mentioned included making their plans less detailed (shifting from the initial writing out of detailed instructions for everything to eventually just sketching a lesson outline); becoming better acquainted with their textbooks

and thus knowing better how to work with activities; developing their ability to improvise (and occasionally even to teach without planning); learning to rely more on published teachers' books as sources of ideas rather than searching elsewhere; and acquiring a greater sense of what and how much could be achieved in one lesson and thus avoiding overplanning.

What the teachers were happiest with was the fact that extremely positive relations had been established between all course participants. This had greatly contributed to creating a highly enjoyable learning environment in which the initial anxiety from having to communicate in a foreign language was quickly abandoned. Several teachers mentioned a sense of pride in seeing their students' progress and realizing how much can be shared and expressed with even a limited level of language proficiency. In feeling that, they made a very positive move towards adopting the principles of communicative language teaching.

Asked to formulate a message to future teachers in the same project, they unequivocally labelled the experience as invaluable ("If I were to choose which component of my 5 years at university was the most useful for eventual employment it would definitely be teaching here", Teacher 5), and as an opportunity to experiment with teaching in a non-threatening environment where experimentation is not only possible but actually welcome. They appreciate being given the chance to develop their skills – both pedagogical and interpersonal – under professional guidance and with on-going feedback and support, thanks to which they have gained confidence and reliably assessed the extent to which teaching is the right profession for them. They have also found this the ideal environment in which to test in practice and very directly all the practical skills they developed in their TEFL seminars. Teacher 18 summed all this up by saying that "This is the best school for anyone thinking of taking up teaching as a profession".

One of the tools the teachers highlighted as essential was the regular peer observations. As observers, the teachers appreciated not only the new ideas they encountered ("I instantly adopted some of the techniques and used them in my own classes", Teacher 2) but also the fact that they were led to self-reflection and the realization of some of their own weaknesses ("I realized I didn't pay enough attention to teaching and recycling vocabulary", Teacher 16). As observers, the teachers appreciated the feedback from their peers, and the contribution of it to self-reflection ("The observers' views helped me identify the problematic aspects of my teaching, especially when different observers pointed out the same things", Teacher 13) but they also learnt to give and receive feedback and respond to negative points ("I had to think how to express criticism and how to receive it, and without being afraid of either.", Teacher 4). As regards working with criticism, one of the teachers expressed the view that training in this area would be very helpful as not all teachers know how to formulate and deliver constructive criticism and know what to focus on. The answers here revealed a high degree of maturity in

these novice teachers in terms of an ability to critically evaluate the experience of observing lessons and identify respects in which that experience was beneficial. It would appear that in such a project peer observations are a vital tool for learning to teach, and that even novice teachers are capable of providing quality feedback.

Asked to compare the *JazykoFFka* experience with official practicum, most were of the opinion that both experiences are quite different and indispensable. The main advantage offered by the language-school experience would appear to be lesson duration, which is 90 minutes as opposed to the 45 minutes generally timetabled at secondary schools. Teachers felt that preparing lesson plans for these longer lessons is much easier, as there is more space offered for the creation of variety and coherence, as well as to be more relaxed regarding time management and to spontaneously decide to devote more time either to a classroom activity that is proving especially enjoyable and beneficial or to an area of acquisition that is presenting a challenge. This all combines to make the language-school experience a more flexible one. At the same time, however, *JazykoFFka* classes take place only once a week, which, in comparison with secondary-school tuition, leaves the teacher with a diminished feeling of continuity. Trainees also observed that it was much easier for them to form successful relations with adult students than with teenagers.

There were three areas of the *JazykoFFka* project the teachers considered problematic: methodological, affective, and student-related. As regards methodological issues, the most frequently mentioned was the teachers' inexperience in planning and the time it required. Teachers also mentioned that learning to manage lesson time and follow lesson plans proved much more challenging than expected. They also felt pressure as a result of having to prepare interesting lessons every week, of not always knowing how to present new material effectively and of how to activate students, and experienced disappointment with "activities that looked good on paper but didn't quite work in the class" (Teacher 17). Some teachers felt restricted by the syllabus ("I occasionally felt a mismatch between the official needs (testing) and the need of the students just to enjoy the classes and talk", Teacher 22).

As for affective issues, the most commonly mentioned were nervousness, a lack of confidence especially when getting to know new students, and a fear of not being able to answer students' questions. Teachers also initially felt unsettled by the experience of being observed but reported that this feeling gradually faded as observations were a regular component of their work.

The largest number of problems were student-related, including practical issues like absences (and the consequent need to adapt lesson plans), and "people mismatch" in some classes. Some teachers also mentioned uncertainty as to how to deal with learner beliefs (e.g. students' claims not to like a certain textbook or their inability to accept that language learning happens also through communicating and

not only working through grammar exercises). But, as Teacher 28 observed, some of these problems actually supported the learning process: "It was hard, working with a student who often said how ridiculous some of the textbook exercises were. Whilst this was initially frustrating, I gradually learnt to see some sense in it and view activities more critically. And I learnt how to cope with such students".

Teacher 9 observed that one of the toughest challenges consisted in the fact the students were busy working adults: "For me the toughest aspect was finding the balance between wanting to teach them as much as possible and realizing that they are adult learners whom I cannot shower with homework and expect them to do it, or even make them do some learning at home at least once a week".

4. Conclusion

As the school's director I carry out regular observations and manage to see all teachers at the beginning and end of the year. Detailed notes taken at start-of-term observations help greatly with the preparation of repeat observations and with assessing the main areas in which progress was made, which very much correspond with the teachers' own perception of self-improvement. The most visible growth is in the confidence and fluency with which teaching is carried out, as well as in the planning and structuring of lessons.

Progress is also visible in the performance of the course participants themselves, the results they achieve in the final tests demonstrating very clearly that the courses have considerable effect on their language proficiency. Given both the low frequency of lessons (once a week) and the very busy lives of the participants, all adult professionals, this can surely be regarded as an achievement on the part of the trainee teachers and of the project itself.

The lesson learnt from those areas the teachers viewed as problematic (see above) is clear: these young teachers need to be thoroughly trained in matters of lesson planning (using concrete, practical examples of lesson plans and of ways of compiling them), effective coursebook use, classroom management techniques, and in dealing with adult learners and ways of approaching their beliefs and attitudes. Regular meetings and workshops to discuss these matters are highly recommended as they have proved invaluable to the success of the project. Their effect on the professional development of the teachers and the self-regulatory nature of the project appears to be considerable.

The project demonstrates the feasibility of creating an environment for teacher training within one's 'home' institution, using local space and resources and founding an innovative type of practicum in which trainees not only receive regular feedback on their own work but also see long-term progress in their own students, a situation that is all too hard to create in shorter-term practica. The experience is evaluated very positively by the trainees, who claim it to be a unique program and one of the most meaningful components in their vocational preparation. The trainees feel

they make considerable progress in many aspects of lesson preparation and delivery, which is proved by both the official observations and the responses contained in feedback forms from peer observations. On an affective level, trainees feel they gain confidence, whilst on a practical level they become more efficient in preparing and conducting lessons. The experience serves to simulate an environment close to that of a 'real' school, as teaching is complemented with other regular duties including reflection, observation of peers, attendance at meetings and workshops, and for close interaction between the teachers. At *JazykoFFka* all of this happens on a much larger time scale than within the usual official practicum, which, in the Czech Republic, is rarely of more than a month's duration, whilst the *JazykoFFka* experience takes place over a whole academic year. The trainees, however, point out that both forms of experience are important as the official practicum provides experience in teaching at real schools.

One of the greatest benefits of *JazykoFFka* to the research and professional development of the current author – also author and supervisor of the project as a whole – is the close, on-location contact with the trainees, the language learners and the teaching itself; this would have been hard to achieve by simply monitoring a group of TEFL students involved in standard practice, which take place at different locations and therefore could not have been as closely and consistently monitored by the teacher trainer, let alone by the trainees' peers. This has also led to the reevaluation of some components in existing TEFL courses taught at the same institution (e.g. lesson planning and management, efficiency techniques, working with coursebooks etc.).

As has been illustrated in literature, the practicum is without doubt a key tool in pre-service teacher training, and interviews with trainees not only after their practicum experience but also later in their careers have shown that this is how trainees themselves also see it. And yet the length of the teaching practicum is still barely sufficient in many countries. Consequently, teacher trainers are obliged to find other ways of creating space for the practicing of teaching, and unfortunately many of the available options (which include microteaching, materials development, the viewing of recorded lessons etc.) are artificial and lacking in authenticity as they happen outside the real classroom and in the artificial conditions of teacher-training workshops and seminars. Whilst commercial language and teacher-training schools may carry out teacher training in the authentic conditions of the real language-school classroom, universities typically do not avail themselves of such options – unless, that is, they create their own on-the-premises language schools. Not only does the *JazykoFFka* project stand as convincing and tangible proof that this can be done, but it has also demonstrated that the results can be highly beneficial to all concerned: from teacher trainee to teacher trainer, from individual language learner to academic institution, from research to practice.

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Introduction

The ever-evolving field of foreign language education continues to intrigue scholars, educators, and practitioners alike. As societies transform, so too do the ways in which we engage with language learning and teaching. Never was this more evident than during the global upheaval brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. In an era characterized by unprecedented global challenges and transformative shifts in educational paradigms, the present special volume (47/3) of *Lublin Studies in Modern Languages and Literature* delves into the intricate landscape of foreign language learning and teaching, particularly in the context of pandemic and non-pandemic circumstances.

The articles in this volume primarily address the dynamics, challenges, and experiences of foreign language teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic and non-pandemic times. Their authors underscore the adaptive and evolving nature of language teaching and learning strategies in light of unexpected challenges such as a global pandemic or within the scope of regular educational environments. Whether faced with the immediacy of remote learning or traditional in-person methods, teachers and learners continue to find ways to enhance their experiences and outcomes. Collectively, the authors of the articles elucidate both the confluences and divergences between virtual and traditional (in-person) teaching paradigms. A prevailing agreement emerges that the similarities between these two distinct modes of teaching are more pronounced than their differences.

First of all, whether their instruction is online or face-to-face, most learners require more than mere exposure to a foreign language for effective learning.

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Passive engagement with even a vast amount of target-language content, such as videos and books, often yields minimal returns. To convert input into intake effectively, learners must actively engage with the language. This can be significantly enhanced by communication in a foreign language. Consequently, second language instruction should be suffused with opportunities for interaction, underscoring the principle that language acquisition primarily hinges on interactive exchanges.

Secondly, the goal for language teachers, both in distant and face-to-face teaching, is the transition from a mechanical, straightforward "Q&A" lesson structure towards a more naturalistic mode of communication. Communication necessitates language use, fostering the development of communicative competence. It provides an avenue for constructive feedback and allows learners to immerse themselves in authentic language use. The articles in the present volume show that the efficacy of instruction may be improved when learners are granted some agency over the interaction or when they display a willingness to initiate topics. Importantly, learners should have the opportunity to respond to language input and seek clarification in moments of doubt.

Thirdly, the present volume acknowledges that language learning cannot rely solely on communication. Effective teaching involves guiding learners' focus towards the form of the language, either directly (for example, "Look at this preposition") or indirectly (for instance, "I don't understand, could you repeat that, please?"). In the absence of such focus, there is a risk that learners will constantly rely on a limited set of phrases and communication strategies, consequently stunting their progress.

The above reflections on the role of focus on meaning and focus on form in foreign language teaching are nested within a broader debate about the roles of explicit and implicit learning of a second language. Robust empirical evidence indicates that maximizing opportunities for implicit learning yields the most effective teaching outcomes. Implicit learning, which occurs subconsciously during language use (reading, listening, speaking, writing), represents the innate mechanism of language acquisition. This involuntary form of learning occurs when learners are consistently immersed in the language and actively communicate. At the same time, it is generally acknowledged that novice learners attempting advanced-level communication will struggle significantly. Thus, intentional (explicit) learning becomes vital, not to learn about the language per se, but to highlight language nuances, thereby augmenting the benefits derived from implicit learning. This can be achieved through consistent feedback on learners' utterances, integrating "traditional" teaching methods in response to their requirements, or reformulating incorrect phrases.

Ultimately, effective teaching, whether on- or off-line, aligns with individuals' natural learning processes rather than with strictly adhering to textbook guidelines

or course syllabi. The challenges and opportunities in foreign language learning and teaching are related not only to teaching modalities but also to the various educational contexts, accentuating the dynamic interplay between pedagogical methods, technological tools, and learner and teacher experiences.

The present volume is purposefully divided into two distinct sections, each offering a unique lens through which to examine the multifaceted nature of language education. The first section, "Foreign Language Learning and Teaching in Pandemic Times," deals with the profound disruptions caused by global events, particularly the seismic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on pedagogical landscapes. The subsequent section, "Foreign Language Learning and Teaching in Non-Pandemic Times," highlights innovative practices and explorations in more stable educational climates.

The issue commences with Marzena Wysocka-Narewska's study, "To Study or Not to Study Online? Students' Views on Distance Education during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Diary Study", which probes the landscape of distance education as experienced by university students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through a diary study, the author demonstrates the complex array of attitudes and perceptions held by English Philology students at the University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland. The findings, echoing the oscillating impact of infection rates, intricately portray online education's multifaceted advantages and drawbacks. The study ponders the profound question of the efficacy and desirability of remote learning, hinting at potential avenues for refining distance education within the context of university closures and the reconfiguration of academic identity.

The pedagogical exploration continues with Mustafa Zeki Çıraklı's "Reconsidering Spatial Interaction in the Virtual Literature Classroom after the Pandemic Lockdown", which describes the transformative journey of adapting a literature classroom to virtual confines. Through the lens of auto-ethnographic inquiry, the researcher crafts an immersive narrative chronicling his endeavor to infuse spatial interaction and creativity into the virtual realm. Employing the "theory of postromantic education", the study illuminates the utilization of virtual tools, such as whiteboards and chatboxes, in mitigating the challenges of social and spatial interaction. By fostering cognitive growth and imaginative prowess, the study underscores the capacity of innovative strategies to transcend the limitations of virtual learning environments.

Gabriel Sánchez-Sánchez and Eduardo Encabo's research, described in "Academic Achievement of Foreign Language Undergraduate Students during Pandemic Times", endeavors to unravel the intricate tapestry of academic accomplishment amid the tumultuous pandemic landscape. With a focus on foreign language students at the University of Murcia, Spain, the study traces the trajectory of academic performance across varying instructional modes – normal course, lockdown, blended learning, and the return to routine. The analysis

intriguingly suggested heightened performance during the lockdown and blended learning phases, beckoning us to ponder the nuanced interplay between pandemic circumstances and educational outcomes.

Transitioning into the realm of instructional methodologies, Eda Duruk and İrem Nur Yılmaz's exploration, "Self-Regulated Learning and Listening Achievement of Turkish EFL Learners", navigates the realm of self-regulated learning within a flipped classroom context. With a cohort of B1-level Turkish students, the study dissects the impact of a flipped classroom model on listening skills and self-regulated learning. The study discerns significant differences in listening skills achievement scores through meticulous analysis, offering a fresh perspective on the dynamics between pedagogical methodologies and student outcomes.

Transitioning to the second part of this volume, we embark on a voyage into the intricacies of foreign language learning and teaching in non-pandemic times. Here, a collection of scholarly contributions delves into themes encompassing learner agency, transfer of learning, teacher beliefs, creative writing's pedagogical potential, and innovative practicum experiences. The exploration commences with Halina Chodkiewicz's "Advanced EFL Students' Practices in Formal and Informal Language Learning Settings: An Exploratory Study of Learner Agency". This study investigates the realm of learner agency among advanced Polish learners of English as a foreign language. Through self-reflective learning journals, the study unveils a rich mosaic of language-based practices that empower learners to transcend traditional formal settings, nurturing academic and self-directed learning pursuits. This exploration heralds the profound role of intention, motivation, and self-awareness in shaping language learners' trajectories.

The next article, "Learning Transfer through Corpus-Aided Instruction" by Eunjeong Park, analyzes learning transfer within the context of corpus-aided instruction. With a focus on second-language college students, the study examines the potential of corpus-based approaches in fostering multilingual learners' skills in the writing class. The findings resonate with the potential use of corpus-aided instruction to enhance learners' writing proficiency and offer pedagogical insights for both researchers and teachers whose interests fall within the domains of corpus linguistics and English for Academic Purposes (EAP).

The subsequent article by Dima Mahmoud Daoud and Ruba Fahmi Bataineh, "Language as a Medium of Grammar Instruction: Jordanian EFL Secondary-Stage Teachers' Beliefs and Practices", navigates the intricate interplay between EFL teachers' beliefs and practices, and the alignment or divergence between the two. The study provides a fascinating window into the teaching landscape, where contextual factors, student preferences, and language proficiency influence pedagogical decisions. This investigation resonates with the complex dynamic of belief-practice congruence and its implications for the EFL classroom.

In "Breathing Enlightenment and Necessary Change into English Language Programs with Creative Writing", Patrick T. Randolph eloquently advocates the potential of creative writing as a transformative vehicle for English language learners. Drawing from neuroscience and years of teaching experience, the study positions creative writing as a conduit for nurturing individual writing styles, bolstering confidence, and amplifying linguistic expression. With empirical evidence of heightened writing skills among participants, the study celebrates the potency of creative writing in fostering linguistic fluency and cognitive growth.

Tomáš Gráf's "In-Faculty Practicum for TEFL Undergraduates at a Specially Created, On-The-Premises Language School: A Study in Innovation" chronicles an innovative approach to a teacher-trainee practicum. The study illuminates the transformative impact of extended practicum durations on teacher trainees' development through a unique language school within a faculty. The narrative captures the metamorphosis of trainees as they navigate the intricacies of classroom management, material utilization, and students' diverse needs, thus highlighting the potential of innovative practicum paradigms.

With a nuanced focus on diverse perspectives and pedagogical practices, this collection of articles offers insightful examinations of pedagogical dynamics, technological integration, learner agency, and innovative instructional approaches. Amidst shifting global landscapes, both pandemic-infused and beyond, the scholars within these pages deftly dissect the complexities, emerging insights, challenges, and possibilities that shape the educational trajectory. The volume resonates as an invaluable compendium for educators, researchers, and practitioners invested in the multifaceted tapestry of modern language pedagogy. The insights herein offer guidance as we navigate the dynamic contours of foreign language education, nurturing proficient linguists and fostering innovative instructional practices that align with the ever-evolving educational horizon.

Środa Wielkopolska, Burdur, Piła, September 2023

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To Study or Not to Study Online? Students' Views on Distance Education During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Diary Study

ABSTRACT
Distance learning is a type of instruction between a teacher and students separated by a physical distance where communication takes place through mediated information encompassing one or more technological media. In other words, the instruction participants stay in different places, yet take part in the same learning activities sequenced, paced and controlled by the teacher using new technologies to facilitate both the student-teacher and student-student rapport. The aim of the paper is to gain insight into this kind of learning from the perspective of university students. The sample constituted 128 students of the English Philology at the University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland. The findings of a diary study exploring the subjects' reports on their attitudes towards online studying at the time of the COVID-19 period shows how students' view change with an increasing infection rate, and, in fact, present the advantages and disadvantages of education during the pandemic, be it a face-to-face or remote mode. In conclusion, the question of whether to study or not to study online seems to be difficult to answer unequivocally. Though, some suggestions are given on how to improve distance education at times of university closure and lack of full participation in the process of building the academic community and identity that have been ascribed to the university construed as an indestructible social system for ages (Sowa, 2009).

KEYWORDS
distance education, university students, the COVID-19 pandemic, advantages, disadvantages

1. Distance learning

The term distance learning is almost immediately associated with an opening of access to education and training, freeing learners from the constraints of time and place, as well as flexible learning opportunities for individual and group learners. Based on Roblyer et al. (2000, p. 192), distance learning means "the acquisition of knowledge and skills through mediated information and instruction, encompassing all technologies and other forms of learning at a distance". The instructional delivery includes an instructor who is physically located in a different place from the learner, as well as possibly providing the instruction at disparate times. More

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specifically, the instructor controls the instructional sequencing and pacing and all learners participate in the same learning activities.

1.1. Types of distance learning

The most available and popular types of online instruction are termed synchronous and asynchronous. Synchronous learning is a mode of delivery where all participants are present at the same time in accordance with a given timetable. The tools used in this process involve online chats, videoconferences, live webcasting, application sharing, whiteboard, polling and virtual classrooms, as they enable learners and instructors to ask and answer questions in real time. An asynchronous type of learning, on the other hand, is time-independent (Young, 2011, p.12). Participants access course materials according to their own schedule which is more flexible. The teacher/student interaction is executed in different forms: virtual office hours, e-mails or "check-in" online conversations once a week or once a month. There is a whole range of tools used in asynchronous online learning: reading materials in PDF files, pre-recorded lectures, presentations, Google Drive for coordinated group projects, educational games, audio tapes and video (Taplin et al., 2013, p.63). A huge advantage is that students can always come back to those materials in case of uncertainty or any problematic issues.

2. General advantages and disadvantages of distance learning

Following Harper et al. (2004, p. 590), distance education increases access to learning and training opportunities, and provides increased opportunities for updating, retraining and personal enrichment. Another advantage of distance learning is its convenience as many of the technologies are easily accessible from home. Many forms of distance learning allows students to participate in the school activity whenever they wish, and on an individual basis, because of the flexibility ascribed to it. As Isik et al. (2010, p. 218) emphasize, this kind of education is also quite affordable very often involving little or no cost as there is a wide variety of materials granted for free which, additionally, are multi-sensory and likely to meet everyone's learning preferences. Based on that, distance learning can offer increased interactions with students, particularly when it comes to introverted students who are too shy to ask questions in class. The idea of giving such a group of students an opportunity to contribute to the classes via e-mail or other individualized means is expected to lower their inhibitions (Franklin et al., 1996, p. 126). This "opening up" can also be extended to balancing inequalities between age groups, geographical expansion of education access, delivering education for large audiences, offering the combination of education with work or family life, etc.

There is no denying that distance learning, due to the numerous benefits mentioned above, is perceived in a positive way by many, yet, as Christensen et al. (2001, p. 264) claim, "it may come with hidden costs". First of all, compared

to a traditional course and method of delivery, distance learning imposes a disproportionate amount of effort on the part of instructors. Namely, teaching distance courses include not only the time required for the actual class, but also a great deal of time dedicated to student support and preparation, not to mention discipline and Internet connection problems. Using technology, that is, online tools and infrastructure seems to be another important obstacle. It is proved that among both parties (i.e. students and teachers) there is a high percentage of those lacking enough skill and experience in managing or following online courses, including the extreme cases of digital exclusion most frequently identified with systemic differences in the access to and use of new technologies. Last but not least, the greatest disadvantage of distance education is social isolation observed as a result of missing the socio-physical interaction that comes with attending a traditional classroom. The longer the period of online classes, the stronger the feeling of not belonging to any social group. However, recent studies (cf. Jelińska & Paradowski, 2021) have reported that this sense of isolation is expected to decrease slightly with the use of communication technologies in the form of video conferencing provided it is a short-term phenomenon.

3. Organization of distance education in Poland

The COVID-19 pandemic required educators and learners to shift to emergency remote instruction with little prior notice. Based on the Ordinance of the Ministry of Education and Science of 11 March 2020 regulating the functioning of the higher education sector under conditions of preventing, counteracting and combating COVID-19, the organization of distance learning was declared. Its main postulates provided a framework for the implementation of distance education, including the forms of teaching, tools used, the schedule, and office hours, as well as the availability and ways of contacting the academic staff regulated individually by rectors of universities in Poland. According to Ordinance no 28 of the Rector of the University of Silesia in Katowice on 12 March 2020 on countering the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, the mode of distance learning introduced therein operated on the following conditions:

1. All lectures and classes for students, doctoral students and post-graduate students were cancelled.
2. Where possible, office hours and individual consultations were conducted remotely. Direct meetings were allowed to take place only in exceptional cases. In case it was necessary to organize a meeting, all appropriate precautions were to be taken.
3. Exams, defence of diploma theses, and meetings of committees (including doctoral and habilitation committees) were to take place in accordance with the rules established by the Dean and in line with the appropriate safety measures.

More specifically,

1) Remote classes were conducted according to the schedule effective for a particular group.
2) Remote classes were conducted synchronously – ensuring direct audio-video or audio interaction between participants of classes in real-time and asynchronously – through materials available on a distance learning platform, with the reservation that part of the classes was conducted synchronously with the teacher available for students online during classes – in line with the schedule.
3) Remote classes were conducted using Microsoft Office 365 (including Teams, Skype for Companies) and Moodle platform.
4) Classes were supervised by the Dean in consultation with the relevant degree programme directors.
5) The organisation of both on-site and remote classes were subject to monitoring.

The period of online education covered the time span from March 2020 to September 2021. It gave rise to a great deal of research done on the advantages and disadvantages of the COVID-19 distance learning. The studies conducted so far have proven what a huge impact the pandemic has had on the process of education at all levels. Following Jelińska and Paradowski (2021, p. 318), the teachers who were most engaged and coped best with the transition to online teaching reflected those having prior experience with remote instruction, had worked in high schools or higher education and had used real-time synchronous teaching. Also, this group of teachers underwent a smoother and faster adaptation to the changing conditions of schools re-opening and closing that was experienced a few times within a period of eighteen months, saving themselves confusion and stress that have been identified by UNESCO in 2020 as one of the consequences of school closures.

4. Online education during the pandemic in Poland

The negative emotions mentioned above have been thoroughly researched by Papaja (2020). Her study on Polish English teachers during the time of COVID-19 shows major concerns among instructors caused by the lack of support from the government and their colleagues, and also with the uncertainty about the future. The most general areas of teachers' success and failure while teaching online, on the other hand, can be found in Wysocka-Narewska (2021), where the problems with the so-called classroom management, including student behaviour, application use, syllabus coverage, and evaluation are emphasized. Among non-problematic issues highlighted by the teachers are the opportunities to cover the lesson material on most occasions, and time devoted to the written practice allowing the learners to perform much better than in real-time classes.

The school environment and the sense of belonging to the school community recently studied by Godawa (2020) brought to light diverse descriptions of chaos in schools and various social inequalities being observed among the learners, the phenomenon of digital exclusion among others, and leaving a lot of problems unsolved.

5. Methodology of the research

As the data provided on the Polish context of distance learning does not give much insight into the learner during the Coronavirus lockdown, not to mention the post-secondary school students, the present paper aims at collecting the university students' views on education in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The major focus of interest is the current situation of an offline mode of teaching introduced into universities on October 1st, 2021, in line with an increasing number of infections in Poland, and a widely understood quality of studying.

5.1. The aim

One of the main objectives of the study was to collect the students' views on education, making a comparison between an online and offline one, and trying to decide which is more beneficial for them and why, which would hopefully provide the answer to the research question, namely: *To study or not to study online?*

Additionally, the time factor was taken into account, and the assumption was made that the sample could change their opinions with critical fluctuations in the COVID-19 infections.

5.2. The participants

The sample size was 128 students of the English Philology department at the University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland, that is, 45, 28, 30 and 25 representatives of the 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th-year students respectively who entered real-time classes at the beginning of the academic year in October 2021. The choice of the sample was made on purpose to cover only the population with prior distance learning experience at the university. In order to reduce and, at the same time, standardize the sample, all the study participants were enrolled on the teaching training programme. The basic demographic data concerning the respondents in question has been tabularized in the following way:

Table 1. Description of the sample

CATEGORY	2nd year	No. of 2nd YSs	3rd year	No. of 3rd YSs	4th year	No. of 4th YSs	5th year	No. of 5th YSs
AGE	20	44	21	27	22	27	23	21
	21	1	22	1	23	3	24	4

SEX	M	9	M	2	M	6	M	5
	F	36	F	26	F	24	F	20
COMMUTING	YES	44	YES	28	YES	28	YES	20
	NO	1	NO	0	NO	2	NO	5

5.3. The tool

The data was gathered through diaries that the students were asked to keep from October 2021 to January 2022. All the participants of the study were informed that it was anonymous and that the data collected would be used for research purposes only. In order to make the students write regularly, diary entries constituted a part of course completion, i.e. academic writing in the case of 2nd and 4th year students, and seminar class in the case of 3rd and 5th years. The exact task of the sample was to express their opinions on the education available to them at a given time period, divided into four separate months, and justify their answers. While writing diary entries, the students were advised to simply think of a situation in which they took part in regular classes (as they do) and the online mode of teaching with a view to having one, and why. Even though the participants of the study were given a choice as far as language was concerned, the majority of answers were provided in English. Those students who wrote their diaries using Polish (19.5 %) might be justified by the fact that it is easier to express one's thoughts and emotions in L1 (Pavlenko, 2008), or insufficient L2 advancement, as using L1 was observed exclusively among the second year. Out of 128 diaries collected, 126 were written in an electronic version with the use of MSWord and delivered via email whereas the remaining two copies took the form of a handwritten notebook and were handed to me personally at the end of January. Eventually, the students initiated a discussion on distance learning off-site in February 2022, which was completely spontaneous and exclusive of the study, to share their opinions and expectations.

5.4. The research results

5.4.1. The quantitative data

The quantitative data presented in the table below shows the ratio of students opting for a given type of class changed with time and the COVID-19 pandemic country profile. In fact, the yes/no categories reflect the participants' (dis)approval of distance education per se as all the diary entries revolving around the question of reintroducing online classes into the university were put forward by the group examined.

Table 2. No. of students for and against online education

Month	No. of 2nd year students		No of 3rd year students		No of 4th year students		No of 5th year students	
	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
October	1	44	3	25	1	29	0	25
November	21	24	12	16	15	15	13	12
December	30	15	27	1	25	5	19	6
January	40	5	28	0	30	0	24	1

To begin with, the majority of the subjects showed satisfaction with face-to-face classes offered in October, which translated into the percentages of 98, 89, 97 and 100 in accordance with the age of the sample taking part in offline education. Compared to the new cases of COVID-19 infections, the respondents' strong views on the preferred mode of studying overlapped with a relatively stable situation including the first fortnight of the month, reaching nine thousand at the end of the second. In November, the student`s preferences concerning the form of instruction were no longer that obvious. As shown in the table, those in favour of traditional education (53% of second-year students and 57% of third years) only slightly outnumbered the students against online education, it being 50% of fourth-years and less than 50% of fifth years respectively). The subjects' enthusiasm and positive attitude towards the university as a community seemed to be dampened and replaced with a note of doubt influenced by a sudden increase in new confirmed cases of COVID-19, and the alarming nature of the week-over-week growth. December, although with imposed restrictions, deepened the mood of pessimism among the sample. Most of the students, irrespective of the group, were of the opinion of the necessity to reinstitute distance learning. The opponents of this type of instruction mirrored 67% in the second year exclusively and represented a minority of 4%, 17% and 4% respectively in the remaining groups. The observed change in the respondents' tendency to study from home was definitely the result of a COVID-19 wave and an expected peak of coronavirus cases. What January brought was worsening moods among all the groups examined. Based on the numbers, all third and fourth-year students voted for online studies. Only one person from the fifth-year group and five participants from the second-year group were against it. When compared with the infection rate, the whole month was marked by an average growth, oscillating between eight and 15000 new cases daily. As the Omicron *COVID*-19 *variant* started to dominate in January, the very situation of a more contagious virus strain might have been possible justification for students' reluctance to take part in regular classes. During this month, COVID-19 infections doubled over a two-week period and reached over 30000 cases daily as compared to December.

Based on the statistics, the new cases of infections within the four-month period being the study timespan, differed as follows (www.google.com):

The dates of diary completion were selected beforehand. The assumption was that the same random days arranged for everyone would facilitate the whole process of writing and data collection, guaranteeing the sample the same pandemic background at the moment of task completion optimizing the validity of the records produced.

Table 3. The no. of COVID-19 cases

OCTOBER		**NOVEMBER**		**DECEMBER**		**JANUARY**	
DAY	CASE	DAY	CASE	DAY	CASE	DAY	CASE
1.10.21	1361	1.1121	4904	1.12.21	29076	3.01.22	6423
7.10.21	2007	7.11.21	12507	8.12.21	28549	10.01.22	11402
15.10.21	2640	15.11.21	9508	15.12.21	24264	15.01.22	16893
21.10.21	5591	24.11.21	18924	23.12.21	17150	20.01.22	32835
28.10.21	8382	30.11.21	19100	30.12.21	14326	24.01.22	29097

5.4.2. The qualitative data

As the numbers indicate, the student`s views on the mode of studying differed as to the period of time, this being a kind of information carrier providing data on the current epidemiological situation.

In October, almost all the students questioned were in favour of traditional education interconnected with mobility and a sense of community. The arguments for face-to-face classes prioritized the social aspects that the subjects needed irrespective of their background, worded as follows: “I like to talk to my classmates before classes”; “Every day I walk to the university and I like and need this routine”.

Apart from social interactions, including student-student and teacher-student relationships in a real classroom, the students enumerated better organization, motivation and discipline as the qualities the “full-time (as opposed to lockdown university”) imposed on them: “I’m more motivated to participate in a lesson, I learn way more. I prefer the activities that we do inside the classroom”; “It is better to organize myself when I have to go to the university”.

The third issue mentioned by the sample concerned the infrastructure and Internet connection problems. The subjects complained about the equipment and Internet transfer they had to struggle with personally or suffered from inconveniencies for some other reasons at the time of closure: “My computer is not suitable for online classes. It works slow and sometimes I have problems with it during the online classes”; “Technology often prevents me from being active during online classes”; “I experience big problems with the Internet connection.

For example, one of our teachers has really bad connection which causes their flow of speech to pause constantly and it is a torture to listen/focus on it".

In November, when the rate of daily new cases increased significantly, the students' opinions on their preferred way of studying changed considerably and mirrored an almost equal number of those arguing for and against distance learning. A slight predominance of opponents of online learning was observed among the representatives of the second and third year, and a small majority of its followers was seen in the group of fifth-year students.

More specifically, those who did not opt for online classes in November gave arguments that overlapped with those presented in October, namely, with the need to maintain both student-student and student-teacher relationships, underlining the need to contact their seminar supervisors (especially in the case of the third year): "I don't want to study online. I will have a big problem with writing my B. A. diploma. My supervisor will not explain and give some advice as she does at the university".

The opposite point of view, however, mirrored a two-fold justification of students' lack of willingness to take part in real-time classes. First of all, the subjects mentioned a fear of being infected: "Studying online is safer than studying at the university. I don't have to worry about my family"; "I would feel safer if I didn't have to spend time in crowded places as university"; "During online classes I don't meet sick people. It is an important fact for me because I have a 10-month daughter".

Consequently, the second most popular argument against traditional education involved commuting, that is, time and money spent on driving to the university: "I would like to have online classes because I wouldn't have to commute and could save some money and time. Due to the time saved on commuting, I could do more things at home and wouldn't have to be in a hurry".

The data gathered in December showed a considerable increase in students' positive opinions about online education. The arguments presented this time ranged from fear of getting infected before the Christmas period, and far-reaching consequences to the very unstable situation that was observed at the university, that is, plenty of regular classes being cancelled or moved to the online mode due to quarantine: "I don't feel like going to the university. I'm afraid I could infect my family members, especially those with health issues"; "I don't like the idea of mixed classes, and uncertainty because they change regular meetings into online all of a sudden".

Those in the minority, who still supported the idea of face-to-face study, pointed to the fact of self-discipline and motivation that such a form of education offers: "I try to keep discipline. It's easier to be absent with online classes. Many of us keep making up excuses"; "Going to school has a good influence on me. I'm more self-disciplined and on time."

After the Christmas break, the new wave of coronavirus infections appeared and intensified students' fears of going back to the university. As a result, over 95% of all the subjects manifested disapproval of regular classes being continued. The students' reaction, irrespective of the group, underestimated all of the previously mentioned arguments for traditional studying. This month, the subjects' views were definitely based on facts and figures and overlapped with the opinions presented by different groups of authorities advising everyone to stay at home. Admittedly, the sample was scared at the thought of travelling to and through the campus: "It's better to be safe than sorry if I remember correct. I'm afraid of being sick. At home I feel safer. Besides, I don't have to wear a mask, which is also unhealthy"; "It's the end of the term so we can study from home".

A few people who still opted for traditional education emphasized their need to take tests and exams in the classroom. For them, there is no use in being examined in front of the screen as "many students cheat, using online tools, and this is really unfair. Eventually, their grades are much better."

6. Conclusions and instruction implications

When analysing the students' responses gathered over the timespan of the study, it can be noticed that the arguments voiced either for or against online education were not only condensed but most of all wide in scope.

All the opinions presented can be encapsulated into several issues of considerable importance to the sample including: social affairs, transportation, infrastructure, health concerns and management.

Secondly, the arguments chosen by the subjects prove that they are fully aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and go even further, notably, thinking of a given studying mode in accordance with their personal deficits and possible benefits.

Thirdly, it seems that in the face of a difficult situation concerning the ongoing pandemic and a major crisis, respondents choose the lesser evil when it comes to the type of learning.

When trying to answer the question of whether to study or not to study online, there will always be two types of parties claiming their rights, that is, propagating and opposing the idea of distance education at the same time. And, as we read in Papaja (2021, p. 5), "the ongoing Covid-19 crisis has been and will continue to be both a massive challenge and a learning experience for the global education community", it is highly recommended to pay more attention to online education which may simply be a must periodically (i.e., from one wave of infections to another). To encourage the best quality of instruction, the following principles addressed by the emergency remote teaching instructors are believed to be a good short-term solution:

- Encourage student participation and cooperation,
- Encourage active learning,

- Give prompt feedback,
- Emphasize time on task,
- Communicate high expectations,
- Respect diversity,
- Address individual differences,
- Avoid information overload,
- Encourage student reflection.

These "golden means" sound like well-packed recipes for a huge crisis in education, such as that influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic. Though, following Sowa (2009, p. 21), it is advisable to return to traditional teaching in due time not to lose the spirit of the academic community and identity that have been ascribed to the university construed as an indestructible social system for ages.

7. Further research suggestions

As the findings of the study indicate, studying under Coronavirus restrictions is not an easy task to do, often put to a great test because of changing pandemic conditions, it seems legitimate to say that a comparison of student`s opinion on education with that of teachers' views would be of major interest to future studies.

Another idea as a follow-up to this research is to investigate more groups of university students representing other fields of study, and juxtapose the data with the obtained results, in the hope of gaining a deeper insight into the very problem, and have a more interesting profile of students, their needs and expectations.

8. Study limitations

The limitation was the diary tool itself. As it is difficult to involve students in regular diary-keeping, the research was limited to the scope of one semester only, for fear of them being discouraged and/or unreliable in completing the task. Continuing the research after February 2022, when the COVID-19 restrictions were relaxed, would probably offer a better insight into the situation, but it was not undertaken for the reasons as above.

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Reconsidering Spatial Interaction in the Virtual Literature Classroom after the Pandemic Lockdown

ABSTRACT
This paper analyses the qualitative notes of a self-reflective researcher and examines his literature classroom experience. The researcher develops an auto-ethnographical research design to understand how spatial interaction can be experienced after the critical shift from actual settings to virtual settings. The paper elucidates the results in efficiency regarding involvement and creativity. The researcher's recorded auto-ethnographical entries cover four weeks while teaching at a state-run department in Trabzon. He tries to transform the virtual setting into a spatial learning medium to achieve responsive interaction and creativity to enhance the participants' critical thinking and imagination. S/he referred to the theory of postromantic education to examine the results. S/he decided to keep a diary about the classroom experience. The reflective account revealed that the use of whiteboards and particularly the integration of chatbox into virtual classrooms helped overcome social and spatial interaction drawbacks. The study concluded that the internally motivated participants oscillate between imagination and cognition thanks to the experiential apparatus of spatial interaction created by the postromantic framework.

KEYWORDS
autoethnography, pandemic era, virtual literature classroom, spatial interaction, postures of human learners

1. Introduction

Traditional notions of teaching literature are shattered, and close-ended steps to achieve "success" in the conventional poetry classroom proved vain after the pandemic (Werner & Küplüce, 2021). A real classroom setting offers considerable interaction with the 'place' and 'bodies' belonging to the learning setting, which transforms into a 'learning space' through experience. On the other hand, an online virtual setting lacks such 'spatial interaction' and arouses relatively more anxiety, which is always an adverse factor in educational mediums. As Russell and Murphy-Judy suggested, the teachers act as a guide, yet the teachers should also consider the learners' individual and private learning spaces (Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2020). Penetrating these spaces with responsive interaction requires theoretical insights, experiential reflection and utilisation of virtual tools.

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An efficient poetry class is also a desirable language classroom. So far, several articles have been on how to incorporate literature into language teaching curricula (Carter, 2007; pp. 3–12). Open-ended frames and the figurative power of literary texts have been remarkably considered in language-teaching settings (Bobkina & Domingues, 2014; Hall, 2015). However, such an instrumentalisation of literature (or literature courses) has a significant potential to undermine the authenticity of social, intercultural and spatial interaction as the essential features of a literature classroom. For instance, a poetry classroom may significantly contribute to the improvement of imaginative skills, thereby improving language skills, and the participants' experiences in a poetry course need further examination. While affluence of ideas has been raised about teaching poetry thus far, research to date hardly debunks the mystery of an efficient poetry class regarding the setting. Poetry classroom, however, should go beyond, and this article shares my exploration on the way to a spirited poetry class (and, therefore, language class) in actual and virtual settings.

2. Autoethnography in literature classroom

An autoethnography has less to do with science than art or storytelling and unearths the tellable in what innately has narrativity, doomed to the confinement of the untold. Autoethnography uses "storytelling" (Delamont & Jones, 2012; p. 523) as a critical lens that aims to explain the personal experience to understand cultural experience (ethnographic) better. Similarly, Bochner and Ellis (1996) draw attention to the performativity of the act of "writing" and "storytelling." An autoethnography sheds light on "learning experience, struggles, solutions, failures and successes" (Arıkan, 2018, p. 24) to represent how they "feel, learn, discover, co-create" (Ricci, 2003, p. 594). Therefore, autoethnography is an artistic activity with construction, deconstruction and reconstruction strategies. It helps understand particular individual subjectivities and social phenomena. Ethnographers record cultural experience patterns and provide insights into life experiences. They continuously stay in a state of reflection, asking questions and gathering information about their experience. This reflective observer, a storyteller from within and without, carefully conceives the phenomenal individual or social characteristics, avoiding prejudices or hypotheses.

3. The role of spatial interaction in the motivation type

3.1. Chatbox and whiteboard as spatial realms

Regarding the spatial experience of the participants, pandemic-era virtual classes are prone to failure, hardly offering such a shared physical spatial environment. After the pandemic turn, space is reduced to screen Werner and Küplüce (2021). Hence, I employed chatbox, polling and whiteboard as make-up tools. The content of the virtual classroom is devoid of space and can hardly be stored in memory,

processed only in the working memory (short memory). The content creates another media/medium; thus, the whiteboard and chatbox became crucial features of the Adobe Connect meeting room.

I designed my Adobe Connect virtual classroom regarding internally motivated participants. A minority of these participants have relatively higher cognitive skills, and some other minorities in the classroom resist virtual online sessions, keeping extremely reserved. Some others are accustomed to traditional classroom strategies and assessment techniques, prioritising transfer, repetition, habit formation and memorisation. I integrated the notions of reflection *(wise passiveness),* spontaneity and voluntary involvement into the learning space so that I could make the participants more involved in the sessions. This approach requires contemplation over spatiality vs. temporality and experientiality vs. imitation (Çıraklı, 2018). This approach, developed in the pre-pandemic era, emphasises "human learner" and their hidden potential and assumes an inherent link between response/creativity and learning" (p. 134). With the critical distinction between skill reinforcement and learning, this approach stresses individual learners' bodily, psychological and intellectual responses. The individual learner is encouraged to act, reflect or respond to all the other participants and objects in a conventional classroom setting. The lecturer changes the whole classroom into a coherent stage, and every item, person or object becomes a gadget in the performance. It is mainly based on the idea that the more the setting is experienced, the better it is transformed into a learning space. It is closely related to spatiality, working memory and cognition.

3.2. Creative Drama Replaced by Creative Writing

We can stress three main categories regarding the human learner's motivational status against the learning experience. First, externally motivated students in the 'traditional' settings. These students are primarily concerned about assessment. They are accustomed to methodologies using habitual skill formation or automatisation by repetition or memorisation. Second, internally motivated students can be more involved in humanised spatial contexts. Lastly, the students use their cognitive capabilities better than the other students. I associate their attitude with Kantian *categorical imperative*, which requires an individual "self-conscious learner" (Çıraklı, 2022, p. 189), whose involvement, interaction and learning are unconditional. Hence, presumably, my ethnographic experience of the settings showed that Kant's *categorical imperative* could be used to explain the motivational and involvement stages of the participants:

The principles of "interaction, spontaneity, and involvement" played a significant role in my virtual classroom (with a genuine experience of acting and producing). The participants were supposed to be 'attentive'. Considering the above taxonomy, I replaced creative drama with creative writing and involved the chatbox efficiently.

Table.1. Çıraklı's Postures of Human Learners (Çıraklı, 2022; p. 189)

Phases	*Postures*	*Interaction Type*	*Distinctive Features*
-Task-Based -Planned Action -Receiver (Aristotle)	Externally Motivated	-Limited Interaction -Temporality -Collectivity -Transfer	-Repetition -Imitation -Memorisation
-Spontaneity -Involvement -Actor / Poetic (Wordsworth)	Internally Motivated	-Social and Spatial Interaction -Reflection -Creativity -Response	- Experience -Imagination -Memory (Long Term Episodic)
-Categorical Imperative -Producer (Kant)	Internally Motivated	Virtual Interaction	-Cognition -Knowledge

It provided a somewhat spatial realm, and the distorted texts the students sent were visible and readable by any participant at a time. As previously suggested: "[Quit standard ppt presentations and avoid boring, bothering mode of preaching! We should] envisage the individual learners, in Wordsworth's terms, with the quality of "wise passiveness," inherently associated with imagination, inspiration and creativity" (Çıraklı, 2018; p. 134). Rather, I tried to adopt a strategy of distortion, re-writing and interaction. I always keep the whiteboard activated.

4. Research context

I kept an ethnographic journal, social media posts, notebook entries, notes, and autoethnographic narrative as a poetry coach and a reflective participant. As Custer (2014) states that "Autoethnography by its very nature is engagement" (p. 4). Custer argues that "emotion", "spiritual bond", "embodiment" and "self-consciousness" (pp. 3–4) are essential elements in the autoethnographic account.

Pre-pandemic and pandemic strategies are incorporated, and Adobe Connect is integrated into my literature classes. It was a dramatic switch to virtual educational space due to the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown and questioning our conventional classroom setting.

4.1. Participants

My observation covers the Fall term, 2021–2022 academic year when I hosted online sessions for 14 weeks during the pandemic. The participants speak English as a foreign language. Most of them speak Turkish as their native tongue. During

the pandemic, I collaborated with 44 students (70 officially registered ones with 26 non-attendants). More than 35 students were regular participants, mainly following the sessions online. Others are connected to the classes by watching the recorded sessions. I hosted online sessions for 14 weeks, and the participants attended these sessions from different locations scattered around the country.

4.2. Data collection and procedure

My reflective journal allows me to think critically about my educational experience in the virtual literature classroom. As the ethnographer should keep a research diary, which "is a comprehensive record of the research process and contains a reflection on that process" (Fox et al., 2007; p. 148). So, I kept my observational notes and reflections on my classroom experience in a research diary. I took notes of emotional responses, critical responses, expectations, amazements, and feelings about the session experience. I paid utmost attention to the authenticity of my notes and narratives as reliability, in qualitative research, refers to the essential consistency of a narrator. Thus, I provided factual evidence from the context. It is organised around the following questions: 1) SITUATION: What actually happened? What did we do? What did you create or experience? 2) AFFECT: What was its impact/effect on you personally? What are your emotions/feelings? Why did you feel as you did? 3) INTERPRETATION: What did you learn from the experience? Explain in what ways the new learning either confirms or contradicts your prior knowledge or understanding.

Following Bochner's (2002) suggestion, I thoroughly considered "what actually happened to me?" (p. 86). I also considered "what responses are given by the participants" and tried to interpret their habitual, emotional and cognitive changes. The researcher feels as if he were in the shoes of a learner, which is not an explicit or implicit analogy between the instructor and the student; instead, it is a sort of identification regarding the role and status of human learners. What makes the difference between these participants is, therefore, the degree of experience. The distinctive feature of the reflective teacher is that he is more experienced than others. I tried to represent this kind of emphatic stance and experiential attitude towards the topic under consideration. The fact that my account provides the readers with generalisable outputs and projections about the future experiences of the readers makes the researcher's diary promising.

5. Findings and discussion: experiential, observational account

5.1. Meeting 1

The situational remarks and description of my pandemic experience are as follows:

> I started with a warming activity on Sonnet 17 and raised some questions. I asked them about the types/kinds of poetry from Turkish culture. It was a strategy I had used previously, and I easily

> transferred it to my virtual class. I have given the example of "Rubai", which is named according to the number of lines in the poem. A Rubai (meaning four-lined in Arabic) contains four lines. I also give another example from Twitter. As a social media platform, Twitter seems to refer to the sonnet tradition as the tweets are restricted to "140 characters", which equals to 14 times10. That is an indirect reference to the form of a sonnet, including 14 lines, a conventionalised number of lines in a sonnet. This implies that "a tweet is a postmodern sonnet." After giving these examples, I invited the students to talk about "love stories" and "love story patterns" since sonnets are mostly rotating around the "theme of love." Then I asked them to "re-write/translate" the poem into Turkish by integrating/adding/incorporating certain cultural elements and Turkish idioms. Some of the students generated good idioms such as "gaza gelmek" [to grow stimulated], "yaşını başını almak",[to grow older enough] "teneşir",[figurative altar, to screw up], "kostaklanmak" [unbound arrogance].

After warming up, the teacher's explanations about Sonnet Tradition, Shakespearean Sonnets, and the Renaissance sounded more interesting. The researcher particularly stressed the significance of three pillars of the age: Humanism (Ethics), Secular Love (Motive), and Greek Ideals and Forms (the Arts). Then I related the topic to the Sonnets: a) A sonnet is a love poem praising human qualities as such; b) A sonnet explores secular love rather than divine love; c) a sonnet is a reproduction of a resonant Greek form.

After the theoretical background, we returned to the original text: We found figures of speech, revised some pronunciation mistakes, and the role of the rhymes and metaphors. We highlighted the poem's sound quality, meter and sound repetitions, making the verse rhythm produce musicality. Then, the researcher moved to another experimental activity:

> The idea is that if something has a good rhythm, regular repetition of particular stresses and a specific arrangement of rising and falling intonation, it gives musical pleasure to the audience. A volunteer student is invited to the stage. The chorus rehearsed/read aloud the poem according to the rhythm, paying utmost attention to the meter, stress and intonation to make the volunteer student on the stage, who has already turned his back to the performers, turn to them and start listening to the music/rhythm/poem leaning against the desk. We all observed his facial gestures growing better and having pleasure in the exposition. All the members were involved in the activity. Then, we changed the mode of rehearsal/performance and read the poem in a fashion of "kaka-phony" [ill composition, noise] so that the volunteer would stop us. Thus, the function of "beat" and "rhythm" in a sonnet and the role of sound in the production of aesthetic pleasure have become observable. I saw that these strategies are efficiently transferred to the virtual setting, and interested students responded considerably.

Then the reflective teacher returned to the poem and investigated the possessive pronouns: "my". They saw that the poet starts with "my verse" (referring to the very poem and it is a reference to his art) and finishes the poem with "my rhyme", which also refers to the poem itself and a perusal of the art of the poet. This raises the question of whether it is a love poem or a poem about the art and craftsmanship of the poet. Whether the question praises the "object of love" (the lady) or "his powerful art".

We discussed the issue and inspected imagery and images in the texts. Our examination revealed that there appear few images illustrating virtue and beauty. The participants were told they had a genuine performative touch and a genuine bond with the historical poet. The participants are amazed and baffled by how they are/were addressed by the real (historical) poet and how they grew to be accurate historical readers. The participants learned that they have a solid, actual bond of reading with the real historical author through a virtual classroom.

5.2. Meeting 2

The following meeting starts with a warming-up activity again. The researcher wrote/projected the themes on the whiteboard: a) Imaginary Object of Love and Imagined Object of Love; b) Turkish Yeşilçam stereotype KEZBAN (the poor ugly country girl transforms into a beautiful lady); c) Aşık Veysel. (The students wondered how these keywords would relate to the main topic). Then, the researcher invited two volunteer students (one boy and one girl) to open their cameras:

> I used the direct text message and asked the students to sketch up/draw up the pictures of the beloveds in Sonnets 18 and 130. I allowed them to use a dictionary and an internet connection. After that, I turned to the volunteer students, switching to Turkish (in the pre-covid era, I had let them get behind the separator, using the portable whiteboard as a separator and told them to wait for me before). In the virtual classroom, they joined the activity in their privacy. I explained the situation to and asked the girl to "make up" the boy's picture so that it reflects/represents the object described in Sonnet 130. We used everyday stuff to "paint" the face to stir creativity. So two tandem workshops were held separately, and I created a medium of suspense. After ten-15 minutes, I initiate the students to find images in Sonnet 130n and stock metaphors and clichés in Sonnet 18. I also asked them to number each image in the poem and its representation in their product to see if they could achieve a one-to-one correspondence between the poem and the picture. They also underlined the stock metaphors. After that textual study, I increased the tension to open up the separator: They were all curious to see what would happen. Upon seeing the boy made up/acting out the "ugly" woman in Sonnet 130, they all burst into tears. Then I asked them to rehearse/read aloud the poem and asked the model to act according to the lines performed. All the students were having fun, were involved in the activity, and were cheered up. Then we read Sonnet 18 aloud altogether. I asked one of the students (a girl) to choose a girl to represent/dramatise the beautiful lady in Sonnet 18. Then appear on stage two persons, one referring to 130, the other to 18. And then, I united them back to back, as if one person had two sights, and let the class listen to Aşık Veysel's "Güzelliğin on par'etmez, Bu bendeki aşk olmasa" [It is only my love that makes you beautiful]. The students were all lost within the tunes of Veysel and moved. I asked about the implication: Some students, raising their hands, said, "These ladies are, maybe, the same person, and beauty is not in the physical appearance but in the mind and perception of the lover. [wording is mine]." I underlined the motto: "It depends how the perceiver perceives the object of love.

5.3. Meeting 3

I wrote/projected to the whiteboard the following themes:

1) Shakespeare's playfulness.
2) Politeness and Turkish Indirectness.
3) Reading through Creative Re-Writing.

Chatbox, as suggested above, provided us with a carnivalesque and non-hierarchical creative space in which the learners can produce and exert their critical thinking and reading comprehension skills. Of course, it does not devoid of their distorting pleasure, which is only possible if you have realised the distinctive features of the genres, conventions and themes. The following sonnet (see 5.4), a genuinely creative piece of the re-writing of a sonnet by Shakespeare, is addressed to the participant's mobile phone.

5.4. Sample production in the virtual classroom

My mistress' screen is nothing like the skies (Sonnet to my precious handy)
I would not believe it if it was said,
You will be seen and heard by your mate,
On the screen of a little machine in every climate,
Only the investors live like a prophet.
Human being has been addicted to it in a short time,
Forgotten to communicate with each other with rhyme,
If it is asked their mobile phones to hide,
They would immediately turn into Mr. Hyde.
For some people, it is hard to give up on it,
For others, even a room is impossible to fit.
Today's obsessed belonging get on well with,
And without it the world is a deepless pit.

Even if I am a bookworm and nature lover,
Sorry to be tied with my beloved cell forever.

6. Discussion: Reflective Account

6.1. Affect

As for the impact/effect on the participants and the researcher? What about emotions/feelings? learners' productions? It is observed that the students, even the ones in the imaginary back seats, were all involved in the lesson throughout the topic. Integrating cultural elements, spontaneity, responsiveness/creativity and invention made the students active, interactive and responsive. They still keep the videos/cameras off, but I hardly followed the messages in the chatbox. They sent many responses. They produced rewritings and parodies of the sonnet tradition.

I was impressed that my friends got the gist of the idea, and I was so happy to see that they were involved and would remember the spatial experience through the chatbox. Chatbox proved to serve as an imaginary yet powerful learning space.

As part of my emotional response to what I have experienced, I can quote the following statements from my journal, which indicate the gist of my emotional response.

> I liked it and thought the group was among the best ones. It is also interesting that those sitting at the back or some boys having a relatively uninterested image raised their hands to share their products. To my surprise, I have observed that boys are more active than expected.

6.2. Interpretation

Regarding what the reflective teacher learned from the experience and how the new learning confirmed or contradicted their prior knowledge or understanding, it can be said that the students are very interested in activities. The "duration" matters because their "critical attention time interval" is too short. It is observed that they did not like keeping a notebook:

> […] and even though I encouraged them to keep a mobile notebook devoted to the lesson, many students could not understand the instructions. Sometimes, it can be challenging to make the point even when I switched to Turkish. (During the pre-pandemic period, some students were so interested, always approaching the lecturer's desk to continue the discussions before he left the classroom). In the virtual classroom, critical-minded and brilliant students contacted the researcher about the course content.

The lecturer realised that there are quite a few reflective audiences and followers of these discussions. The participants reported that they learned much from these discussions. Hence, the chatbox allowed the lecturer to initiate discussions with the students. There were authentic discussions, but sometimes, the long answers occurred as a *copy-paste* response. Nevertheless, it was a form of interaction, particularly when the lecturer asked the participants to give an example in a few words; they were very responsive. In the discussion, some participants felt more confident and active in English.

Regarding spatial interaction, I questioned the virtual/distant Adobe Connect platform as a reflective and self-conscious author of the presented experiential account. Hence, my teaching-learning experience evaluates the previously set theory of postromantic framework (Çıraklı, 2018) and related strategies (Çıraklı, 2022). Qualitative examination and experiential account of how we can adapt our previous experience to the virtual setting would provide precious findings and suggestions regarding the techniques and the participants' attitudes and motivational types.

My experience with the virtual classroom exhibited the possibility of transforming virtual settings into actual and spatial learning mediums. I knew that if they could "accumulate long-term memory, which would be a launching pad for further learning processes" (Çıraklı, 2022, p. 189). As spatial and social

interactions were no longer possible in the virtual environments and the individual learners were isolated in their privacy even when they were connected with an online session, I needed to develop new strategies according to the postures of human learners (Çıraklı, 2022). It was a genuine challenge to activate them to write in the chatbox, draw their attention, and keep them involved since they were exposed to many distractors. Their interaction with their friends was limited and changed, and the notion of spatiality would be almost lost. Moreover, these classes would lack 'space', vitally essential to long-term memory.

7. Conclusions and future implications

A poetry classroom is a creative medium with a variety of discoveries and inventions. Teaching poetry requires an active moderation open to spontaneous responses, improvisations and creative ideas. Teaching poetry through creative drama or creative writing with cultural elements requires considerable *spatial interaction* (Çıraklı, 2018, 2022) – however, particular challenges posed by the online virtual classroom during the pandemic call for reconsidering the case.

Therefore, the *postromantic framework* transforms itself into a more ethical and cognitive categorical imperative upon the spatial shift in the learning environments. Spontaneity, involvement and creativity should be integrated with categorical imperative and the activation of cognitive processes. Both Wordsworthian and Kantian categories should collaborate, but the reflective teacher should remember that in the virtual context, spatial interaction, therefore, imagination and long-term memory, is remarkably – and relatively – limited. The students should be instigated in a way that they assume themselves in a spatial medium of learning through experientiality to induce episodic memory. Any degree of spatial interaction makes them internally motivated, oscillating between imagination and cognition. When these strategies remain limited, students' cognitive skills come to the fore, in which case the wise passive learners facilitate their cognition.

8. Limitations of the study

The study is limited to a particular period and the narrative account of the ethnographer. Other research initiatives regarding reliability and generalisability should test the reflective teacher's observations, experiences and reflections. Nevertheless, it contains significant theoretical and practical insight into learning mediums.

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Academic Achievement of Foreign Language Undergraduate Students during Pandemic Times

ABSTRACT
This research article aims to show the academic achievement in the form of marks of students of the third year's subject 'Teaching and Learning English' located in the Degree in Primary Education (Faculty of Education, University of Murcia, Spain). Our corpus of participants has five different groups (including the bilingual group) with a total number of n=1496 students with an average per academic year of n=374 students whose marks have been analysed comparing four different academic years. Taking into account the subject programme, the performance of the students during the normal year, during the lockdown, in the blended learning year (face-to-face and online) and in the return-to-normal year have been analysed. The results show that in both the lockdown and the blended learning year the performance is higher than in the other academic years, which leads us to question whether the pandemic really influenced the assessment and teaching conditions of the subject.

KEYWORDS
foreign languages; education; pandemic; academic achievement; communicative competence

1. Introduction

The 2030 agenda set by the UN presents seventeen Sustainable Development Goals that aim to make our lives better and, above all, to make our societies and, therefore, our cultures more sustainable. Language education is not explicitly included in these goals, but it is addressed by several of them. From our point of view, the transversality of language is a key factor in the progress of humanity and in people's daily lives. This abstract concept applies to languages and these, whether they are mother tongues, second or foreign languages, enable communication and, above all, shape our perception of reality.

The goals by which we consider that the acquisition and development of a foreign language is most clearly addressed are number four *Quality education*,

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since, logically, an integral approach to education seeks to provide individuals with essential knowledge and skills to interact with other societies and cultures. Objective ten, which refers to the reduction of inequalities, also contemplates the learning of languages, because this linguistic knowledge helps human beings to progress and improve their status within the social fabric. Moreover, this allows clear access to individual as well as collective well-being. Another objective would be linked to Goals sixteen and seventeen, *Peace, justice and strong institution*s and *Partnerships for the goals*.

These two goals refer to intercultural education and the coexistence of different cultures, respectively. To this end, knowledge of languages and their cultures is essential to understand certain beliefs, customs, ideas and stories related to countries and geographical areas. Given the significance attributed to (any) language learning, in these pages we focus on the academic achievement of trainee teachers in one of the specific subjects they have in their curriculum: the third year subject which focuses on the teaching and learning of the English language. We have analysed how the marks from different groups of participants have changed over the last four years (including the period of the pandemic). We must stress once again that they will become educators in the future and the success of the language teaching process to the new generation will depend on their language awareness in foreign language acquisitions and on their linguistic skills.

2. Difficulties in accessing English as a foreign language

Foreign language learning may be related to certain situations, but, from our point of view, the main reason must be the opening of the mind; through the knowledge of another language one gains access to other linguistic signs, to other codes, in short, to another structuring of the mind (Craig, 2018; Durán, 2008). The awareness of the existence of a vision of reality from a different, but at the same time convergent, prism must be the fundamental approach to the aforementioned learning (Barili & Byram, 2021; Byram, 1997). In the context of the Spanish education system, the background in which our study has been carried out, there has been an attempt over the last few decades to make approaches to English teaching and learning and bilingualism converge. This responds to an effort to get students to work both with their mother tongue and the English language. Nevertheless, there is still a tendency to consider English merely as a foreign language not a vehicular one in education.

One of the factors that hinder the successful acquisition of English as a foreign language in the Spanish context is the lack of motivation for learning English among the learners. Some of the contributing elements is the major dubbing industry that makes a significant contribution to the economy of this country. This is compounded by the fact that the grammatical approach that has been perpetuated

in the classroom prevents more time from being devoted to oral expression or to the understanding of culture which is a key fact that conditions the language (Afshar & Yousefi, 2019; Baleghizadeh & Saneie, 2013). Moreover, the reminiscence of people's experiences outside the country and the lack of interaction with native speakers mean that the language is learned in such a way that there is no clear reference and self-regulation of the evolution of the linguistic skills of individuals approaching the new language.

As we know, mastering a language requires a balanced level of speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. Conversation is added as a skill highly related to the first two. And it is highly relevant to take into account the cultural factors that surround these skills. As we know from Sapir-Whorf's contributions, linguistic relativity is one of the factors that governs the relationships established between language use and thinking. One of the most frequent errors that we see through contrastive grammar is the direct correspondence that learners of the foreign language make of the elements of the language, believing that there are mimetic parallels between the languages. The lack of a clear awareness of this makes access to the new language very difficult. In addition, in the absence of any awareness of the importance of the concept of communicative competence among educators and learners, the language is not transmitted in a complete way. Therefore, as we shall see below, the consolidation of such competence in curricula and syllabuses must be an aspiration that significantly improves learning issues.

3. Towards the consolidation of communicative competence as a goal of methodological designs in the English foreign language classroom

In the third decade of the 21st century, foreign language classroom dynamics should be articulated around the development of a communicative competence, mainly because of the presence of linguistic skills worked on at the same time and the relevance of the contextual updating it allows. Emerging technologies put abundant resources at the learners' disposal to develop their competence. Thus, access to series or films in original and subtitled versions, to documents in the foreign language found on the web, to applications that help to learn more about grammar or how to pronounce certain words become allies in the learning of that language and can complement the formal education already provided through the subjects in the curricula or syllabuses.

The trainee teacher who, in this case, is an essential element of our research, has to be immersed in the foreign language in order to internalise it and thus be able to enhance learners' pleasure in foreign language learning. This requires the mastering of the language. The third year subject *Teaching and learning English*, for example, cannot be understood as just another subject where the contents are assimilated and shown in a final test, since the assessment is based not only on

the evaluation of theoretical aspects, but also on the information related to all the linguistic skills. It is therefore urgent for teachers to be aware of the conditions necessary for a fruitful foreign language teaching and learning process (Le Roux, 2002; Leung, 2005; Papi & Khajavy, 2021; Pérez Cañado & Madrid, 2004; Shanahan & Beck, 2006; Soland & Sandilos, 2021). The surrounding learning conditions, the motivation and the purpose of learning are important dimensions when it comes to assessing academic performance in any related subject. Sometimes, if there is no motivation and the foreign language subject is dealt with as just another subject, there is a significant failure in the results obtained.

In this article we are interested in checking whether academic achievement is an objective fact that can be measured through the exam marks and the number of students who obtained the pass mark during the first exam session of the annual examination schedule. The comparative analysis we propose, taking as a reference four academic years that include the pandemic period, can also shed light on how certain socio-sanitary conditions affect the development of a subject. It may be possible that, in a situation of global alarm, the demands posed by the third year subject in question could not be met by suffering students and teachers. It can also be considered as an influential aspect the fact that assessment during the lockdown required technological means and these provide with opportunities for cheating (although this is not a generalised fact). Therefore, we will now analyse the academic performance of different students taking the aforementioned subject exam and check their evolution over the four academic years mentioned above.

4. Material and Methods

4.1. Aim of the research

The main objective of this study is to analyse the academic performance of third year students of the Degree in Primary Education in the Faculty of Education at the University of Murcia, especially in the subject 'Teaching and Learning English'. These students take this subject as learners of a foreign language. The intention is to compare their performance during four different academic years spanning the periods between pre-pandemic and post-pandemic. From our point of view, the teaching conditions will determine the possible difference between the marks obtained by these students.

4.2. Participants

Four different groups of students are monitores. The total number of participants in the study, including students from the bilingual group, is shown in table 1 below. The total would be 1496 and the average per academic year would be 374 students.

Table 1. Distribution of the student body according to academic years (including the bilingual group)

Normal (2018/2019)	Pandemic (2019/2020)	Blended learning (2020/2021)	Post-pandemic (2021/2022)
(n=337)	(n=353)	(n=392)	(n=414)

Table 2 shows the distribution of students, excluding the bilingual group. Thus, the total would be 1269 and the average per academic year would be 317 students.

Table 2. Distribution of the student body according to academic years (excluding the bilingual group)

Normal (2018/2019)	Pandemic (2019/2020)	Blended learning (2020/2021)	Post-pandemic (2021/2022)
(n=277)	(n=298)	(n=333)	(n=361)

4.3. Sources and data analysis plan

In order to find out the performance of these students by academic year, we accessed the grades obtained in the first exam session of the annual examination schedule, since other later exam sessions would focus on failing students. We try to highlight the percentage of those who pass the subject, as well as the average corresponding to the grades. This was done in a global way as well as separating the bilingual group. It is important to point out that throughout the year, language skills along with didactic issues are worked on in the subject. At the end of the course the evaluation measures these skills through different tests, including multiple choice exams, oral tests and written assignments.

5. Results

In this section we show the students' performance over the four academic years. We will differentiate between overall and per-group data. It is interesting to note that we provide both the percentage of students who pass the subject, as well as the arithmetic mean obtained. This will allow us to verify that those students who pass the subject also do so with a good grade, while the deficiencies are shown in the percentage of students who do not achieve an optimum performance. Only the first exam session is kept under scrutiny because it shows the students' performance after developing their language skills for a year. The rest of the exam sessions of the annual examination schedule are mainly oriented to correct the students' performance deficiencies.

Table 3. Percentage of students who pass the subject and the average marks they obtain

Normal (2018/2019)	Pandemic (2019/2020)	Blended learning (2020/2021)	Post-pandemic (2021/2022)
(n=119/337 35%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.77	(n=169/353 48%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.82	(n=179/392 45%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.53	(n=158/414 38%) $\overline{X}$ = 8.02

The overall results show that, before the pandemic, one third of students passed the subject in the first exam session (June) (see Table 3). Although this is not a high percentage, the average grade obtained is high, standing at 7.77. On the other hand, we can see that during the pandemic the percentage of students who pass the subject averages around 48% – almost half of the students –, which is significantly higher than in the previous academic year. This percentage remains stable in the blended learning academic year – face-to-face and online learning – but drops to 38% in the post-pandemic period. However, the average number of students is higher in the last academic year.

Table 4. Percentage of students who pass the subject and the average marks they obtain (excluding the bilingual group)

Normal (2018/2019)	Pandemic (2019/2020)	Blended learning (2020/2021)	Post-pandemic (2021/2022)
(n=82/277 29%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.83	(n=125/298 42%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.88	(n=127/333 38%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.57	(n=121/361 33%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.97

The overall results, not including the bilingual group, maintain the trend observed in the general performance. That is to say, there are better percentages of academic performance during the pandemic and blended learning academic years. There is a downward oscillation in the percentages, but the average corresponding to the marks is maintained and sometimes higher than that of the overall data.

Table 5. Percentage of students who pass the subject and the average marks they obtain (bilingual group only)

Normal (2018/2019)	Pandemic (2019/2020)	Blended learning (2020/2021)	Post-pandemic (2021/2022)
(n=37/60 62%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.52	(n=44/55 80%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.59	(n=52/59 88%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.38	(n=37/53 69%) $\overline{X}$ = 8.24

The results for the bilingual group show a very high percentage of students passing the subject during the pandemic and the year in which blended learning took place. In the other two years, although the percentage is high, it is not as significant as in the two academic years in question. We should highlight the average obtained by students during the post-pandemic year, with an 8.24 being a high one. It should be noted that the linguistic requirements to be accepted in the bilingual group in the initial year of the degree are close to a B2 level since they receive more than 60% of their teaching in the foreign language. Therefore, this good performance is expected from them.

Table 6. Percentage of students who pass the subject and the average marks they obtain (group two only)

Normal (2018/2019)	Pandemic (2019/2020)	Blended learning (2020/2021)	Post-pandemic (2021/2022)
(n=20/88 23%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.41	(n=36/92 39%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.55	(n=38/101 37%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.49	(n=47/109 43%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.68

If we look at the specific data for group number two, the percentages for the pandemic and blended learning years far exceed those for the 2018/2019 academic year, rising by more than 15%. It is curious how in the 2021/2022 academic year the percentage has improved in comparison to the previous ones. The average mark of students who pass the subject in June remains constant over the four academic years.

Table 7. Percentage of students who pass the subject and the average marks they obtain (group three only)

Normal (2018/2019)	Pandemic (2019/2020)	Blended learning (2020/2021)	Post-pandemic (2021/2022)
(n=23/81 28%) $\overline{X}$ = 8.29	(n=46/92 50%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.69	(n=37/93 39%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.67	(n=40/76 52%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.33

Group three follows a similar pattern to that shown by group two, as in the pandemic year 50% of the students passed the subject. The previous year the percentage was particularly low: 28%. During the blended learning course, the percentage dropped to 39%. In 2021/2022 there was a significant improvement, rising to 52%. The average grades are consistently above 7.5, resulting in the paradox that the academic year with the lowest exam pass rates, has the highest average rate: 8.29.

Table 8. Percentage of students who pass the subject and the average marks they obtain (group five only)

Normal (2018/2019)	Pandemic (2019/2020)	Blended learning (2020/2021)	Post-pandemic (2021/2022)
(n=15/62 24%) $\overline{X}$ = 8.54	(n=27/55 49%) $\overline{X}$ = 8.53	(n=23/61 37%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.52	(n=22/77 31%) $\overline{X}$ = 8.28

Since group 4 consists of future French specialists, we move on to the next one. Group five repeats the pattern of the two previous years. The very low percentage in 2018/2019 rises in the year of the pandemic and then falls in 2020/2021 and 2021/2022. In this case, the average marks of the students who pass the exam are excellent, more than 8.2 in three out of the four academic years under scrutiny.

Table 9. Percentage of students who pass the subject and the average marks they obtain (group six only)

Normal (2018/2019)	Pandemic (2019/2020)	Blendedlearning (2020/2021)	Post-pandemic (2021/2022)
(n=24/46 52%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.1	(n=16/59 27%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.75	(n=29/78 37%) $\overline{X}$ = 7.62	(n=12/105 11%) $\overline{X}$ = 8.61

Finally, group six differs from the others. The percentage of students who passed the subject declined from 52% in 2018/2019 to 27% in the pandemic academic year. It slightly increased during the blended learning year before falling again in 2021/2022. However, in the latter year, the average score is 8.61. It is once again clear that the students who pass the subject are very competent in English.

6. Discussion

The data obtained show several very interesting situations, especially with regard to performance during the pandemic. It is clear from the percentages that all students perform better in the case of the academic years when both the lockdown and the mixed methodology (combination of face-to-face and online learning) were implemented. This fact may be due to several circumstances; first, the uncertainty resulting from the pandemic and the alteration in classroom dynamics (Hidalgo et al., 2021; Huei et al. 2021; Sutarni et al., 2021) it brought, replacing the face-to-face model with an online one, and with the assessment tests being similarly affected. In the case of blended learning, the reduction of face-to-face lessons together with the use of an online communication tool also distracted teachers and students to some extent, leading to special didactic circumstances.

It has been verified through performance that, once the usual teaching mode is re-established, the percentages are equal to the pre-pandemic ones. There is a stability of performance according to the evaluation parameters set in the teaching guide of the subject, focusing on the evaluation of all linguistic skills and considering the subject as a continuum. As we have seen, the bilingual group has been included among the statistics to be considered. This group follows the same pattern, although, as expected, due to the characteristics of the group, the results are much more positive in terms of obtaining the pass mark.

There are many factors to reflect on in this analysis. One of them is the pass marks in the first exam session include a fairly high average of impressive scores. This means that students who follow the subject regularly and acquire language awareness have no problem in showing their proficiency in the different language skills (Ardasheva et al., 2011; Bai & Wang, 2020; Rahardjo & Petiwi, 2020; Sercu, 2006), while the rest - who generally perceive the subject as one more based on learning by rote - tend to fail. This could also be influenced by the fact that the teachers are not the same in the different groups, but in this case, we should point out that all the students take the same test, so there are no differences in this

respect. There are, however, factors that cannot be influenced, as the configuration of the groups is established by the Secretariat and the students' linguistic skills is not a pertinent criterion. Therefore, randomly, there may be a group where bright students converge and vice versa; but, according to the statistics, the performance between groups is quite similar. Therefore, on the basis of this discussion, we proceed to the conclusions of the study in the following section.

7. Conclusions, future implications and limitations of the study

We conclude this study by stressing the importance of being aware of what it means to teach a foreign language. First of all, it cannot be considered as just another subject, since a language is not learnt at a specific moment but as part of the lifelong learning process. Therefore, the concept of communicative competence should guide the methodological designs applied in classrooms where English is taught. As far as teachers and students are concerned, they must be motivated, even if there are difficulties related to resources or to the grammatical tradition that has existed over the years (Fullan, 2018; Hargreaves, 1994).

As this study has shown, individual and collective circumstances also have to be born in mind and contexts greatly affect the processes of teaching and learning a foreign language. In our case, we have observed how the lockdown has led to different assessment conditions, raising students' performance in that particular period (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2022). On the other hand, it has been observed that those students who are able to follow the subject throughout the academic year obtain a relevant average grade, corroborating what has been indicated about the understanding of the subject as a continuum and not as a one-time action that is just another part of the curriculum or syllabus.

The main challenge arising from our contribution has to do with ensuring that performance can be uniform in all situations and issues and, above all, with transforming the conception of the foreign language in our reality. People should be made aware that foreign language learning will contribute to their social integration by allowing them to learn about other cultures and realities, as well as offering them the possibility of having a communication tool to be able to interact in other countries and with other people.

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Self-Regulated Learning and Listening Achievement of Turkish EFL Learners

ABSTRACT
Flipped classroom model has been an important pedagogical tool that has been widely incorporated and researched in recent years. Current studies have scrutinized the effect of the model on the achievement of language learners. The purpose of the present study is two-fold: (i) to examine whether the flipped classroom model has an impact on B1 level Turkish students attending English preparatory program at school of Foreign Languages in a state university, and (ii) to investigate if the flipped classroom model yields different results on the self-regulated learning levels of the participants. The participants of the study consist of 60 B1 level prep-class students attending B1 level Listening course, with 2 classes each including 30 students. Firstly, the students in one class were classified as control group (CG) and the ones in the other class as experimental group (EG). During the 8-week B1 module process, the listening lesson was taught with the traditional method in the CG and with the flipped classroom model (FCM) in the EG. The data were gathered through pre and post-tests of listening skills achievement exam and self-regulated learning scale. As for data analysis, mixed ANOVA analysis was used. The findings showed no significant difference on self-regulated learning levels but on listening skills achievement scores. Suggestions were discussed accordingly.
KEYWORDS
flipped classroom model, self-regulated learning, listening skills achievement, EFL, Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEF)

1. Introduction

Language skills are of great importance in foreign language learning. One of the language skills, listening, plays a crucial role in foreign language learning since the input we take while learning our mother tongue begins with listening (Akdemir, 2010). Today, listening is a compulsory course required by the Council of Higher Education for Preparatory Schools to teach English and other languages in Turkey. However, such factors as limited class hour, official language of country, different learning techniques of each individual may limit the opportunities for students to practice listening. In this case it is emphasized that students should

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organize their learning activities individually. Especially during the COVID-19 pandemic period, the transition to online education has allowed students to learn individually. The individual organization of the learning activities that takes place in the classroom or school is defined as self-regulated learning (Pintrich, 2000, p. 451). Self-regulated learning (SRL) allows students to monitor their progress and evaluate their own learning. SRL involves regulating one's feelings, cognitive behavior, and acquiring needful and covetable skills appropriate to the learning experience (Rasheed et al., 2020)

To date, more and more college students are expected to take a responsibility in their own learning by effectively benefiting from information and communication technologies, which makes online learning tools to be strongly recommended for students before coming to the class (Öztürk & Çakıroğlu, 2018). At this point, the importance of using the flipped classroom model (FCM) instead of traditional model has begun to be emphasized. In a traditional model, teachers explain the subjects, students listen to the teacher and take notes. After that, students study on their assignment at home. FCM (also known as inverted classrooms) reverse this language learning process. FCM is a blended learning approach in which students first watch online lectures at home and then complete their homework and practical work in face-to-face classes. Students are responsible for their own learning process. In FCM, teachers act as a facilitator. That is, they assist students throughout the lesson and enable students to help each other. Classroom learning activities include inquiry-based learning, active learning, and peer learning (Danker, 2015, p. 172).

FCM has been studied in many areas and a great amount of research showed that FCM affects students' learning in a positive way (Çakıroğlu & Öztürk, 2017; Liu et al., 2019). According to Fulton (2012), the most important advantage of FCM is that it increases the interaction time in the classroom. Teachers use videos for interaction between teacher and student. In this way, teachers can devote more time to fulfilling the learning and emotional needs of the students (Goodwin & Miller, 2013). In FCM, students can discuss the subjects with their teachers, which is not possible in traditional model (Bergmann & Wadell, 2012). It is expected that this interaction and discussion environment will contribute to students' listening skills. In FCM, teachers use differentiated instruction, problem/project-based learning, inquiry-based study models, that's why flipped learning is student-centered (Bergmann & Sams, 2014). Flipped classroom model has been an important pedagogical tool that has been widely incorporated and researched in recent years. Thus, the contribution of the present study might have been significant in the field in terms of the influence of the model on the development of listening skills and self-regulated learning of the EFL students because using FCM in lessons also requires students' SRL. While watching online lectures at home or completing homework and practical work in a class, students should monitor their own learning process

so that they achieve their learning goals. According to the studies, students who self-regulate their learning process have some characteristics such as having lot of cognitive strategies like repetition, organization, and elaboration, controlling the time to be used on tasks and directing learning processes for the achievement of their goals, all of which point out the importance of SRL in language teaching/learning (Torrano Montalvo, & González Torres, 2004). Considering the benefits of FCM and SRL found in the relevant research, the present study aimed to shed some light upon the existing literature on FCM and SRL by narrowing down its focus on Turkish EFL learners attending to English Preparatory classes at B1 Level and their listening achievement scores on the basis of 6-week intervention program.

2. Literature review

2.1. Theoretical framework

In recent years, the role of SRL in education has elicited much interest as a product of successful learning (e.g., Schraw et al., 2006; Zimmerman, 2000). SRL has been defined as a cyclical and recursive period which activates feedback mechanisms for students to understand, control, and adjust their learning accordingly (e.g., Zimmerman, 2000). To be a self-regulated student means to be responsible for, and capable of, one's own development, using "self-generated thoughts, feelings, and actions which are planned and cyclically adjusted to the achievement of personal goals" (p. 14).

Although there have been different approaches towards self-regulated learning, most researchers agree that self-regulation involves some basic components: "self-regulation involves cognitive, affective, motivational and behavioural components that provide the individual with the capacity to adjust his or her actions and goals to achieve the desired results in light of changing environmental conditions" (Zeidner et al., 2000, p.751).

Cognitive processes include information processing strategies such as rehearsal, elaboration, and organization. In terms of metacognitive processes, self-regulated students are good strategy users. They plan, set goals, choose strategies, organize, monitor, and evaluate at different points during the acquisition process. The motivational processes include students' emotions, willingness to learn, and desire to reach academic self-efficacy. Finally, the learning context refers to learning domains, methods, or environments (Zimmerman, 2000). Students can actively take the responsibility in their learning process by using SRL strategies such as planning learning activities, self-motivation, organizing, repeating, self-monitoring, and evaluating their own learning (Artino & Stephens, 2009).

FCM is a student-centered teaching approach used by teachers to reverse the traditional classroom model into a more active classroom environment (Keengwe et al., 2014, p. xviii). The idea of the FCM is that it includes both inside and

outside classroom activities (Alsowat, 2016). Students watch online videos at home. In this process, students are expected to scan different sources and do research about the subject. Then, they complete their homework and hands-on activity in an interactive face-to-face class. During the lessons, the subjects are discussed with teacher and other students and students reinforce their knowledge. After the lessons, students are expected to do more comprehensive research on the subject. Figure 1 shows the stages in SRL development process.

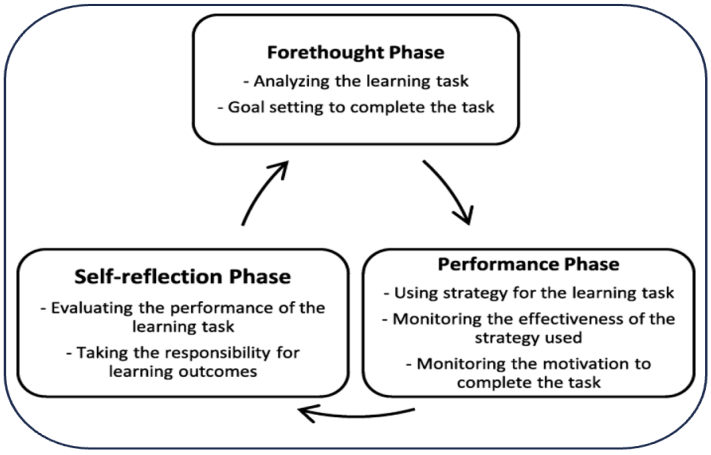

Figure 1: Self-regulated learning phases (adapted from Zumbrunn et al., 2011)

In the forethought phase, students work on the learning task and determine its aim to complete the task. In the performance phase, students use strategies to motivate themselves and to complete the learning tasks. They may need feedback during the process. In the self-reflection phase, students evaluate their performance in the learning tasks and their feelings about the strategies they used.

Building its rationale on the three phases of self-regulated learning discussed above, in the present study Self-Regulated Learning Scale (Erdogan & Senemoglu, 2016) was used to examine whether the intervention yielded impact on the participants' self-regulated learning levels. Table 1 presents the scale used in the study.

The Self-Regulated Learning Scale (Erdogan & Senemoglu, 2016) consists of 67 items and it has two subscales, self-regulated learning skills/strategies (45 items) and motivational factors (22 items). The first subscale included 3 subheadings: before study, during study and after study. On the other hand, the second subscale which includes motivational dimensions consists of five subheadings: self-efficacy, goal-orientations, task value, attributions for failure, and anxiety. The questionnaire has a 5-point Likert-type response format. The

Table 1. Self-Regulated Learning Scale (Erdogan & Senemoglu, 2016) used in the study

Dimensions	Number of items	Sample items
Before study		
Environmental structuring	4	I usually study where I can focus.
Planning	5	I write my weekly to-do-list in my notebook.
Arrangement of study time	4	I do my homework when I know our teacher will control them.
During study		
Organization and transforming	5	I find the key points in the text and draw connections between them.
Seeking appropriate information	3	I read the sources I find after class.
Seeking peer, teacher or adult assistance	3	When I don't understand, I seek the assistance of peer or an adult.
Seeking easily accessible information	2	I try to find the easiest way of doing my homework.
Self-monitoring	2	While reading a book or reviewing my notes, I sometimes stop and ask myself. "Do I understand the point here?"
Rehearsing and memorizing	4	I teach the topic I study to another person.
After study		
Self-evaluation	6	Generally I don't revise a homework I have finished.
Self-consequences after success	4	I promise to award myself after I get a good grade from an exam or homework.
Self-consequences after failure	3	Failures make me sad, but I don't do anything to change them.
Motivation		
Task value	5	I believe we'll use the things we learn in class in the future.
Self-efficacy	5	I think I'll succeed in the courses.
Anxiety	5	I get so excited in exams that I forget everything.
Attributions for failure	4	Extreme load of homework and exams makes me fail.
Goal orientations	3	The most satisfactory thing for now is getting a high grade

Cronbach's Alpha was computed 0.91 for the whole scale. The factor loadings of the items range from 0.47 to 0.91.

2.2. Previous Studies conducted on FCM and SRL

After the COVID-19 pandemic, the importance of the concepts such as online education, digital materials, use of digital programs, online assessment, etc. has started to be emphasized even more (Pavanelli, 2018; Wiginton, 2013). Specially in these days when the concept of online education comes to the fore, it has been more and more currently discussed in the literature how effective it is to keep the education both in terms of space and time within the classroom hours (Alsowat, 2016; Quint, 2015). Based on this centrality, the term flipped classroom model (FCM) has once again been widely studied and discussed in the relevant literature by relating it to the central topics such as ChatGPT, AI, SRL, and so on.

According to Bergmann and Sams (2012), FCM will help students' self-regulated learning. Bergmann and Sams (2012), in their study, adapted the lecture and explanation of the subjects in the course material into the FCM with activities and interactive tasks to be done in the classroom, and collected positive opinions from the students in terms of the effectiveness of the course. They obtained the opinion from educators who use the FCM that the theoretical topics are conveyed in advance through videos and the lesson time is quite effective in terms of giving more space to the relevant exercises and discussions.

There are other current studies in the field which point out that FCM has positive effect to the listening skills' development (Turan & Akdag-Cimen, 2020). In another study, Martin (2012) pointed out that FCM has many advantages such as encouraging collaborative learning environments, improving language skills (reading, listening, speaking, writing) and providing immediate feedback.

Similarly, according to Wu et al. (2017), students can work collaboratively on the tasks in FCM, through which cooperative environment will contribute to students' listening skills.

A great deal of research has been conducted on the self-regulated learning, especially after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, Altas and Mede (2021) conducted a quasi-experimental study in which they examined the FCM and its impact on writing achievement and SRL levels of students at university level. They found that self-regulated learning showed no significant difference between the groups. In another study, Lastochkina and Smirnova (2017) suggest that developing a self-regulated model for getting ESP listening skills makes the listening process clear and provides scaffolding related to the topic. According to their study, this is the efficient way of improving students' performance. Likewise, Ngo (2019) carried out a study to examine the EFL learners' SRL and their L2 listening skill competence. At the end of the study SRL activities were found to be considerably connected with the L2 listening competence of EFL learners. The results of these studies revealed that SRL processes were positively associated with L2 competence and students' listening skills achievement.

These studies show the effectiveness of FCM on the self-regulated learning of students and they lead teachers to use FCM, especially after the pandemic, because of the limited face-to-face class hours within the scope of measures. There are many studies examining the effect of the FCM on the success of listening skills in foreign language education. However, there is a gap in the existing literature in that there is lack of research examining the effect of the FCM on the development of the self-regulated learning of B1 level Turkish EFL learners. Besides, the present study goes one step beyond by comparing the difference between the success of the students in the class in which the flipped classroom approach and the traditional method are used in the listening lesson by seeking an answer to the question: "Does the use of FCM have a statistical and meaningful contribution to the listening skills achievements of B1 level English preparatory class students?"

3. Method

3.1. Research context and participants

The research has been carried out in the fall semester of the 2022–2023 academic year. The participants of this this exploratory study were B1 level Turkish students attending English preparatory program at school of Foreign Languages in a state university. Listening course is a compulsory course required by the Council of Higher Education for Preparatory Schools to teach English and other languages in Turkey. The course consists of five hours in total per week and lasts 8 weeks in a given module. This course aims at providing students with the basic and necessary listening skills they are expected to develop in B1 level with reference to CEFR.

The participants of the study consist of sixty (N=60) B1 level prep-class students attending B1 level Listening course, with 2 classes each including 30 students. Demographic information about the participants is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Demographic information about the participants

Demographic		Control Group		Experimental Group		Total	
Variables		Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	19	58	14	42	33	100
	Female	11	41	16	59	27	100
Department	Education	6	55	5	45	11	100
	Science and Letters	7	47	8	53	15	100
	Economics and	8	47				
	Administrative Science	9	53	9	53	17	100
	Engineering			8	47	17	100
Age	18	15	47	17	53	32	100
	19	9	53	8	47	17	100
	20	6	53	5	45	11	100

Firstly, the students in one class (n:30) were classified as control group (CG) and the ones in the other class (n:30) as experimental group (EG). During the 8-week B1 module process, the listening lesson was taught with the traditional method in the CG and with the flipped classroom model (FCM) in the EG. At the beginning and in the end of the 8-week module, listening skills achievement scores and self-regulated learning levels of the students from CG and EG were examined to determine if FCM yielded differences between the groups. In this respect, the research was aimed to answer the following research questions:

1) Is there any difference between EG and CG in terms of English listening skills achievement scores (After the implementation of the flipped classroom model)?
2) Is there a difference between the self-regulated learning of CG and EG students?

To answer the aforementioned research questions and to build on evidence of the described earlier studies, the present study will shed some light upon the effect of flipped classroom model on self-regulated learning. Therefore, and extending prior research, the goal of this study was twofold: it was aimed to examine in a quasi-experimental design if providing the flipped classroom model influenced mean values of students' post-test scores in listening and if the FCM had impact on the participants' self-regulated learning levels.

3.2. Data collection and procedure

Grant of application was received from the Board of Ethics before the implementation of the study (by the Grant 68282350/22021/G021, the board of Ethics/Pamukkale University). The data of the study were collected by examining the achievements of B1 level preparatory class students in the Listening course they took in the fall term of the 2022–2023 academic year. The data of this quasi-experimental study comprises of two different types of quantitative data as data collection instruments. Table 3 shows the intervention and the procedure of the study.

Table 3. The intervention and the procedure of the study

		Experimental Group	Control Group
Pre-test	1st week	a listening skills assessment exam self-regulated learning scale	a listening skills assessment exam self-regulated learning scale
intervention	2nd-7th week	Flipped classroom model	Traditional in-class model
Post-test	8th week	a listening skills assessment exam	a listening skills assessment exam
		self-regulated learning scale	self-regulated learning scale

According to the accepted concept of the flipped classroom model, the intervention process of the experimental group consists of three phases: pre, while, and post class. First, the pre-class phase contains two tasks: watching Videos and online quizzes in return. In order to acquire the basic information before class, students watched the brief videos provided for the next lecture each week. On each recording, they had the chance to comment and debate troublesome pieces in the chat-box. Each of the short videos was accompanied by an online questionnaire, intended to document the participation of each student, provide him/her further chances to revisit what he/she has learned, and offer him/her immediate input on whether he/she skipped any important points, in order to maximize the possibility that students will come ready for class. Next, in the while-class phase, the researcher used the time saved as a motivating incentive to involve the participants more fully in the process of learning the milestone concepts of the lesson band. By answering questions, each week the researcher started class time, both to check the comprehension of participants about the content in the given videos. Furthermore, in the online quiz, the teacher analyzed the results of her participants and answered any points of potential uncertainty. After getting students' feedback, the researcher used the time left in the session to have extra listening and speaking activities. Through student-centered active learning activities, she enabled active engagement of the students with the course material, where they created, cooperated, and put into practice what they learned from the videos they watched. Finally, in the

post-class, students at home logged into an online debate group where both the videos they watched, and the active study sessions focused on their experience. The aim of that phase was to get students' reflections by asking them questions such as: "Did you like the flipped class?", "What questions do you still have about the topic or exercise?", and "What suggestions do you have for improving the activity?" In addition, students had the chance to post questions for the researcher to answer.

The first quantitative data of the research were collected with a listening skills assessment exam as the pre-test and post-test in which the same test was administered, and the second data collection instrument was self-regulated learning scale, again as the pre-test and post-test. The listening skills assessment exam was used to determine whether FCM had an impact on the success of the participants, and it included two parts: one with ten multiple choice questions and the other with ten note taking questions. Self-Regulated Learning Scale (Erdogan & Senemoglu, 2016) was used to investigate if the intervention resulted in positive impacts on the participants' self-regulated learning levels. The scale consists of 67 items, and it has two subscales, self-regulated learning skills/strategies (45 items) and motivational factors (22 items). The first subscale included 3 subheadings: before study, during study and after study. On the other hand, the second subscale which includes motivational dimensions consists of five subheadings: self-efficacy, goal-orientations, task value, attributions for failure, and anxiety. The questionnaire has a 5-point Likert-type response format. The participants were asked to evaluate themselves between (1) corresponds exactly and (5) does not correspond at all.

3.3. Data analysis

The post-test control group design was used in the study. Firstly, students in CG and EG took a listening skills assessment exam and the self-regulated learning scale in the first week of the module. The results of the pre-test scores of the listening exam were tested by scrutinizing the listening skills pre-test scores (sum score) of the experimental group and the control group to examine if there was a significant difference in the success rate of both classes. Then, the same listening skills assessment exam and self-regulated learning scale were applied as the post-test in the last week of the module to examine the impact of FCM on the listening achievements of the participants. The participants in the EG followed FCA, reading the articles, studying the PowerPoint presentations, watching the videos, and doing the research when shared by the instructor before attending to the classes each week. Finally, self-regulated learning scale was applied again to both classes in the last week of the module to collect another quantitative data of the study (Erdogan & Senemoglu, 2016). It was aimed to examine whether there was a significant difference between the two classes at the end of the module.

The scale was transferred to Survey Monkey and the link was shared with the participants, and the participants were asked to complete it until the end of the first lesson of that day.

The quantitative data which were collected through Listening Skills Assessment Exam and Self-Regulated Learning Scale were analysed by means of SPSS 23 (Statistics Package for Social Sciences) data analysis program. To investigate the significance level of pre-tests and post-tests, ANOVA was used to analyse if there was statistically significant difference between the two groups. The significance level was accepted as $p<0.05$ in the study and discussions on the findings of the study were carried out based on this significance level. Descriptive statistics were used, and ANOVA was applied to compare pre and post listening skills exam scores and self-regulated learning scores between and within groups. The level of significance for the statistical analyses was accepted as .05.

4. Results

4.1. Preliminary analyses

In order to inspect whether our experimental design was equal at the beginning, we conducted preliminary analyses and tested whether the listening skills pre-test scores (sum score) of the experimental group and the control group differed significantly. Results showed no statistically significant differences, that is, the sum score ($t(58) = 1.10$; $p = .27$). Descriptive statistics for the listening skills pre-test scores are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of the listening skills pre-test scores

	Entire Sample				Experimental Group				Control Group			
	M	SD	α	n	M	SD	α	n	M	SD	α	N
Sum score	42.58	18.76	.95	60	40.63	17.22	.94	30	44.54	20.16	.95	30

The sum scores and p value of the listening pre-test scores revealed that the EG and CG of the experimental design used in the study included participants with similar degree of proficiency level with regard to their listening skills performance (with max 50 points).

4.2. Findings about the listening skills achievement

In order to determine whether the FCM yielded a significant difference between the listening skills achievement scores of the two groups, the between group statistics were given and a comparative analysis was made. As mentioned earlier, the listening skills assessment exam included two parts: one with ten multiple

choice questions (each 2 points and max 20 points) and the other with ten note taking questions (each 3 points and max 30 points). The participants' maximum score on the test is in total 50. Table 5 shows the comparison of listening skills achievement with mixed ANOVA.

Table 5. Comparison of listening skills achievement with mixed ANOVA

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Between Groups						
Group (CG / EG)	509.346	1	509.346	4.027	.050*	.075
Error	6705.338	53	121.453			

Note. *p<.05, **p<.01

Table 5 displays that there is statistically significant difference between the groups with respect to the pre and post-tests of the listening skills achievement exam (p=0.05, $\eta_p^2 = .075$). As a result, it can be claimed that FCM yielded a positive impact on the listening achievement of the experimental group. The findings also show that both groups made progress in the post-test (CG: M=45.74, SD=13.84 / EG: M=46.13, SD=12.75) compared to the pre-test (CG: M=44.54, SD=20.16 / EG: M=40.63, SD=17.22).

4.3. Findings about the effect of FCM on self-regulated learning

The self-regulated learning scale (Erdogan & Senemoglu, 2016) was used as pre-test in the first week of the module, and post-test in the last week of the module to examine the effect of FCM on the self-regulated learning levels of the experimental group, to find out whether there will be statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the control and experimental group after the intervention. In order to determine whether the FCM yielded a significant difference between the self-regulated learning levels of the two groups, the between group statistics were given in Table 6, and a comparative analysis was made.

Table 6. Comparison of overall self-regulated learning scores with mixed ANOVA

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Between Groups						
Group (CG / EG)	.245	1	.146	1.302	.314	.032
Error	9.354	48	.185			

Note. *p<.05, **p<.01

Table 6 displays that there was not statistically significant difference between the groups with respect to their pre and post-tests of self-regulated learning levels ($p=0.314>0.5$, $\eta_p^2=.032$). Hence, it can be concluded that FCM did not yield any difference between the experimental and control groups' self-regulated learning pre-test (CG: M=3.33, SD=0.38 / EG: M=3.29, SD=0.39) and post-test (CG: M=3.33, SD=0.38 / EG: M=3.43, SD=0.42) scores.

5. Discussions and conclusion

The first research question of the study sought to answer if there was any difference between EG and CG in terms of English listening skills achievement (after the implementation of the flipped classroom model). The findings of the study revealed that FCM yielded a positive impact on the listening achievement of the experimental group.

These findings are in line with the study of Turan and Akdag-Cimen (2020), in which they also discussed the positive effect of FCM on the listening skills' development of the students. Similarly, in his study, Martin (2012) also emphasized the advantages of FCM such as improving language skills. Additionally, Wu et al. (2017) also revealed that students can work collaboratively on the tasks in FCM, through which cooperative environment will contribute to students' listening skills. The significant difference between the groups and the impact of FCM found in the present study might be due to the nature of FCM which increases the input flood of the participants and also makes it more individualized for them to study on their own.

The second research question aimed to investigate if there was a difference between the self-regulated learning of CG and EG students. The findings showed that FCM did not create any difference between the experimental and control groups' self-regulated learning pre-test and post-test scores. These findings support the study of Altas and Mede (2021), in which they also concluded that self-regulated learning showed no significant difference between the control and the experimental group after the implementation of the FCM. In a quasi-experimental study, Elakovich (2018) also compared students in a lecture remedial math course by utilising the Motivated Strategies Learning Questionnaire to explore control of learning, self-efficacy and self-regulation. The findings showed no significant difference between the classes, which was discussed by the fact that the requirements of the flipped classroom did not encourage learners to become more independent learners than the learners in the control group. Similar to those studies, the characteristics of the participants might be the reason for the insignificant differences. As also indicated by the studies of Altas and Mede (2021) and Alsancak-Sirakaya (2015), there could have been different self-regulated learning levels if participants from average or below average had participated in the study.

As a final remark, it can be concluded that flipped classroom model is an important pedagogical tool that should been widely incorporated and researched in language education. Thus, the contribution of this reviewed study might have been significant in the field in terms of the influence of the model on the development of listening skills because it was found that increased input flood and creating more individualized environment yields positive effect on language learners.

6. Limitations and suggestions

Although the findings of the study contribute significantly to the existing research, it also suffered from some limitations. First, this study is limited to B1 level prep-class students. More research on FCM at graduate and postgraduate level could be useful. It is also noteworthy to indicate that FCM comprises different components and factors and it can be difficult to control confounding factors such as materials, tasks, teachers' abilities, and so on.

The findings of the study revealed that FCM increased participants' listening skills achievement. Considering these advantageous impacts of FCM, English practitioners are supposed to spend more time in "flipped teaching" of listening. Although teaching listening might seem to be difficult and rather burdensome to any practitioner, it is a "pass-way" for the ones who favour classrooms without borders. To examine this and expand the research, more studies are needed to make a comparative survey with students from different L1 backgrounds.

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Advanced EFL Students' Practices in Formal and Informal Language Learning Settings: An Exploratory Study of Learner Agency

ABSTRACT
This paper addresses the issue of agency that could be traced in the performance of advanced Polish learners of EFL, students of English philology. The study presented in the paper set to investigate the students' self-reports on learning goals, behaviours and strategies typical of their language-based practices. The students were instructed to describe and reflect on all the learning activities they were involved in in both formal and informal settings by writing their reflective learning journals throughout a week's time. The examination of the data has provided a picture of the students' engagement in an interplay of academic and self-directed practices, which helped them meet different goals and ultimately contributed to the improvement of their language proficiency. The students demonstrated an awareness of language learning processes and an ability to reflect on aspects of their agency, referring, among others, to their intentions and motivations in pursuing their objectives.

KEYWORDS
EFL learners, agency, learning strategies, learner goals, formal vs. informal settings, awareness of language learning

1. Introduction

Over the recent years, language specialists have shown an increased interest in theorizing on the construct of agency as well as learners' enactments of agency in L2 learning and teaching contexts (cf. Larsen-Freeman, 2019). An assumption that has got support nowadays is that L2 learning "can enhance learners' overall agentive capacity and is a potentially critical, transformative social practice" (Mick, 2015, p. 105). It is also of importance that learners' educational behaviours are looked at in terms of their efforts and choices driven by their beliefs, thoughts and feelings (Mercer, 2012). However, as participants of social practices, language learners have to comply with the requirements of the school system or a status of a foreign language learner who develops the command of a new language in a society deficient in the use of that language. That is why what needs clarification

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is how social practices situate individual learners and how learners act and invest in contexts they find themselves in (Vitanova et al., 2015).

In order to better explain agency of the L2 learner its connection to general human experience has to be drawn. Hewson (2010, p. 12) differentiates between two fundamental forms of agency, that is "acting, doing things, making things happen, exerting power, being a subject of events, or controlling things" vs. the case when one is "to be acted upon, to be the object of events, to have things happen to oneself or in oneself, to be constrained or controlled". This makes it clear that though representing an individual's activity, agency requires due consideration of other people's influence on the individual. Of significance are also properties of agency such as its purposeful nature and goal-directedness, as well as people's intentionality and varying amounts of power in the use of different resources and capabilities (Hewson, 2010).

From the perspective of educational settings it is worth considering a distinction between being a subject vs. an object of agency, which points to an interdependence between learners' cognition and their experience gained in the context in which their agency is situated (Vitanova et al., 2015). Recent views of language education, influenced by sociocultural approaches, have offered an interpretation of how individuals' cognition is interrelated with their socially generated and maintained relationships. In addition to this, a critical perspective on agency has underscored the social determinants of learner motivation and communicative competence as and both the impact of ideologies of language-learning contexts on the development of learner identities (Bouchard & Glasgow, 2018).

2. Understanding L2 learners' performance – conceptualizing agency and some other related concepts in SLA

In an attempt to better understand the concept of agency, it worth noticing that recent advances in SLA studies have confirmed that in order to adequately account for the acquisition of an additional language in instructed and natural learning contexts both formal, functional and psycholinguistic approaches as well as sociocultural ones have to be followed (Gass et al., 2013). Taking a similar standpoint, Ushioda and Dörnyei (2009) advocate that in order to strengthen the potential of cognitively oriented views of language acquisition a greater synergy between mainstream SLA, sociolinguistics and L2 motivation theory is needed. By linking the assumptions of sociocultural learning theories and a learner-centered approach in L2/FL teaching, a range of concepts have been pointed out as related to learner agency in the sense of being involved in the language acquisition and use processes. While Gkonou (2015), for example, defines learner agency as individual's capacity to act, associated with one's will to act influenced by their cognition and motivation, Vitanova et al., (2015) associate it with learner identity, L2 self, self-regulation and learner autonomy.

Norton (2000, 2010, 2014) is another researcher who explains learners' agency with reference to their sociocultural settings. She proposes that the relationship between the language learner and the language learning context be interpreted in terms of close interconnections among three key constructs, that is motivation, learner identity and investment. Learner **identity,** that is the learner's relationship to the real and future world and **motivation** change over time and space affected by power relations. The learner's desire to learn and practice a second or foreign language changes due to their **investment** into the language learning process, which means their participation in classroom interaction. The sociological concept of investment and a psychological concept of motivation show "meaningful connections between a learner's desire and commitment to learn a language and their changing identities" (Norton & Toohey, 2011, p. 420). Hence L2 learners' progress is determined to a large extent by their investment in classroom practices and other community language-based events that are available to them (Norton & Toohey, 2011). However, learner agency and their social interaction can be limited when highly motivated learners do not experience fully effective language practices in the classroom or within the community. It may even happen so that L2 learners may resist some of those practices (Norton, 2014).

Likewise, Ushioda in her later publications (2011, 2014) argues for the recognition of context in defining learner agency and a motivational dimension as part of it. In her opinion, learners should be looked at in terms of their individual thinking processes, emotional systems, identities, personalities, unique histories but also intentions and goals to reach. By promoting the so-called '**person in-context relational view' of motivation**, she puts forward a claim that both educationists and researchers have to take into account a range of micro and macro contexts that constitute a complex changing network of social relationships learners interact within. This means that what needs proper concern, apart from teachers' control over language learners' motivations and behaviours by means of selected classroom techniques, is the role of the individuality of learners, their intentionality and reflexivity (Ushioda, 2011). Ushioda (2014, p. 9) expounds a view that one's motivation is internalized and self-regulated in a particular environmental context when three psychological needs of the self, that is person's **sense of competence**, **autonomy** and **relatedness** are met.

When addressing **personal agency,** Ushioda (2014) equals it with learners' achievements in educational environments, which give learners a sense of competence and autonomy. What is more, when learners take up some actions not feeling competent, they develop neither intrinsic motivation nor interest in the learning activity. Personal agency is claimed to be preceded by **cognitive agency**, which means that learners can control their motivation and learning processes on the basis of their thoughts, beliefs and expectations. The process of regulation

of motivation at the highest level is connected with activating the learners' metacognitive self. Hence teachers scaffolding learners with adequate classroom activities can foster learners' metacognition and self-regulation and help them think strategically (Ushioda, 2014).

It is illuminating to look at the way how a relationship between the concepts of learner agency and autonomy has been explained. Ushioda (2014) claims that although the two concepts are not synonymous they can be found to be in close relationship in the conceptualization of L2 strategic behaviour. Gao and Zhang (2011), on the other hand, argue that personal agency impacts the development of L2 learner autonomy. They advocate that agency be treated as a fundamental factor which gives impetus to the development of learners' autonomous behaviour, characterized by the adoption of a range of cognitive and metacognitive strategies. The researchers believe that learners "optimize their cognitive and metacognitive processes" so as "to utilize any resources within the immediate settings and broad sociocultural contexts" (p. 39). Agency can thus be associated with the process of fostering strategic and autonomous learners' behaviours.

Gao (2013, p. 227) reiterates that agency is an attribute of agents who "can think, desire and act" and that it is related to the concept of power which directs the agent in implementing their will and intentions in particular environmental conditions, ultimately taking responsibility for their language learning. The best conditions for learners' agency are created then when learners have an opportunity to make their own decisions, negotiate, share their ideas and experiences. That is the reason why classrooms can play a substantial role in the development of learners' autonomy only when learners are able to express their values and identities.

As far as examining learners' agency is concerned, Gao (2013) recommends using learners' reflective thinking in order to help depict their concerns and desires in taking up their actions autonomously in particular contextual conditions with responsibility for their language learning process and outcomes. Since second language learners tend to control their learning process to a large extent, accounts of reports of their reflection on the role of agency in language skills improvement have led to some enlightening insights into aspects of self-regulated learning, including autonomous learning tasks initiated by L2 learners (Gao, 2013).

3. The study

This paper reports a small-scale exploratory study which aimed at a qualitative analysis of the data compiled by a group of advanced EFL learners, English philology students, in their reflective learning journals. Its primary goal was to investigate how the study participants approached their English language learning experience with a view to their self-development when immersed in a variety of language-based practices. To that end, the students' agency was treated as a crucial concept in

interpreting their decisions to perform particular types of activities as part of their academic courses vs. those initiated informally beyond academic settings.

The analysis of the data obtained from the study participants' journals was carried out in order to answer two research questions:

1) What kinds of language learning activities did the students perform in formal settings and how did they express their agency in reflecting on them?
2) What kinds of language learning activities did the students perform in informal settings and how did they express their agency in reflecting on them?

3.1. Setting and participants

A group of 10 second year graduate Polish students of the Department of English, Maria Curie-Sklodowska University, Lublin, specializing in linguistics participated in the study. They were an intact group following the same curriculum and time-table. As philology students, they had accomplished literature, linguistics, culture and methodology courses. Their language proficiency was at the CPE level and they had already developed some initial skills of teaching English as a foreign language.

3.2. Research method and data collection

As already mentioned, in order to explore a variety of instances of descriptions and reflections on learning tasks undertaken by the study participants, the ways in which they described aspects of their agency were sought. For the purpose of the study, the construct of agency was operationalized as an individual's realization of their own goals, motives and intentions in the course of their own actions, giving them a sense of competence and autonomy (Ushioda, 2009). With the view to the participants' reflections on formal vs. informal language learning activities it was also worth considering two forms of the enactments of agency, namely, making things happen, being the subject of events in contrast to being controlled as the object of events (Hewson, 2010).

Writing a reflective journal by the students was thought to be a suitable tool for keeping a record of their learning activities in a regular and condensed way. Its benefits have been conceptualized as: fostering self-awareness, constructing and expanding personal understanding and developing reflection and reasoning skills (Abednia et al., 2013). Reflective thinking has also been found to be helpful to learners in focusing on their agency as they can look at their "concerns, desires, and visions in the light of contextual and structural conditions" (Gao, 2013, p. 226).

3.3. Procedure and data collection

The study participants agreed to write personalized descriptions of all the

educational events they took part in for the period of seven consecutive days as a contribution to a range of assignments they performed as EFL teacher trainees. The task was voluntary for the students with no grades assigned. Before starting the journal proper, the students were given some general guidance concerning the content and structure of the journal. Having completed their EFL didactics course and teacher training practice the students were familiarized with the concepts of goals, strategies, procedures as well as were able to deliberate on their learning and teaching oriented practices.

The students followed some basic layout in order to keep a record of the types of activities performed each day. They mentioned the time spent on them and provided any observations, reflections and comments they found relevant. As all the journals were accomplished during the same week, from Monday to Sunday, in the final part of the winter term, they included numerous reflections on the same compulsory classes the students attended apart from those on a diversity of English-based activities they embarked on autonomously beyond formal academic instruction. Having completed their learning journals, the students promptly submitted them to the researcher in a printed form.

3.4. Data analysis and discussion

Engaged in a diverse number of language learning tasks during the week's period, the English philology students, participants of the study, spent varied amounts of time on the task. The total amount of time devoted to their language practice ranged from 22.5 to as many as 44.5 hours, not to mention differences between the lengths of their journal entries. Due to the limited scope of this paper, the current author has focused on such samples of the students' journals which gave evidence of their agency and helped answer the two research questions concerning the kinds of activities the students performed in formal and informal settings and the ways in which they expressed their agency in their reflections and comments.

3.4.1. Students' language learning activities implemented in formal settings

The activities offered in formal settings comprised: a lecture, a seminar and meetings with an MA thesis supervisor and classes in linguistics, EFL didactics and practical English. The students were expected not only to participate in them but also respond with varying kinds of feedback. They associated their performance most often with self-study or self-development, including such tasks as: preparation for classes (homework), intensifying language practice in a particular area in order to pass an exam or writing an MA thesis.

Some quotations from the students' journals below demonstrate how they reflected on their active listening to a lecture on SLA following the course objectives:

> […] Familiarised me with aspects of SLA […], exposed to specific vocabulary […] While taking down notes I unconsciously acquired the knowledge on the topic and I was exposed to spoken English. (S1)

> […] I was trying to be focused, though it was early in the morning. The topic was engaging, the lecture helped me to systematise my knowledge and also contained a lot of valuable information which may become of some help in the near future. The strategies I used helped me learn much more than just inattentive copying from the slides. Strategies: making notes, highlighting the most important issues, listening to additional information and comments. (S9)

> Advanced level of proficiency, specialist language, […] sometimes it requires effort to understand everything properly […] I find all of these factors interesting due to the fact that they point to various phenomena which concern me as a teacher-to-be. (S 10)

These short extracts show that the students not only perceived an essential role of an academic lecture as that of organizing the subject/specialist knowledge for future application, but also approved of its contribution to vocabulary expansion and exposure to spoken language. Apart from this, they articulated clear views on the usefulness of different academic listening strategies. They found listening to a lecture to be an effortful activity when they were not sufficiently alert or when strenuous cognitive processing of the material was indispensable.

Attending an MA seminar and individual meetings with the supervisor were described by the students as a self-study activity with the aim of writing a thesis. The following ideas have appeared in the students' journals:

> […] Searching for materials, scanning reading chosen materials, trying to find the useful ones. […] Thoroughly paraphrasing them, highlighting the most important words, taking notes, rewriting the product – 3 pages. (S3)

> I learnt how to recognize the most useful materials and select them from a huge library collection; learnt a lot of new vocabulary and concepts;[…] practiced reading and writing. (S6)

> I prepared a draft to enquire about the Professor's opinion on my ideas and to ask for any comments on his part. I searched for more sophisticated vocabulary concerning cognitive linguistics. (S1)

Preparing a draft of an MA thesis was found to be a particularly demanding long-term task that needed the adoption of proper strategies in acquiring new knowledge from academic literature and an ability to produce a required genre of the text in English to be verified by the supervisor. The interactive role of the supervisor was defined as that of providing a critical evaluation of students' drafts and feedback about their progress.

The students also spent a large amount of their individual study time preparing for the practical English exam at the CPE level. One of the students (S3) provided a detailed report on improving her reading comprehension strategies through peer

cooperation. Here are three journal extracts illustrating some points made in the student's reflections"

> I revised reading comprehension tasks with a friend to get a higher score […], read aloud parts of texts confirming the answers, managed to remember many collocations; […] beneficial cooperation. (S3)

> I highlighted crucial info in a text, analyzed distracters in multiple choice to reject them; relied on context, read each text twice. (S 3)

> could check and enhance my careful reading abilities which concern the skills of interpreting and inferencing. I believe I did well. (S 3)

Another sample of the student's journal (S1) depicted a strategic approach taken by her to prepare a speech on a topic of procrastination, selected out of her interest. It took her three hours to develop relevant background knowledge by reading some articles, watching TED Talks and doing some dictionary work. Below are three interesting and informative extracts from her journal:

> I got particularly interested in the subject. Reading various articles was a kind of pleasurable experience to me.[…] A different type of reading than linguistics – broadening our horizons. (S1)

> I prepared a final draft of my presentation, wrote down key words to elaborate my discussion. I tried to rehearse, checked the timing. (S1)

> In the past I tried to write down everything, I ended up with an essay which I learnt by heart. It was quite difficult to eradicate this bad habit. It is far more motivating and effective to prepare only some crucial words or slogans I want to expand on. (S1)

The student's remarks show that she was aware of the fact that due to a high level of language proficiency she could approach the course task as an intellectually inspiring activity. Moreover, she was motivated to work hard to get a high mark at the exam. She also evidently felt more competent being able to give a speech on the basis of targeted key words or slogans discarding her previous unproductive procedure of writing down an essay and learning it by heart.

3.4.2. Students' language learning activities implemented in informal settings

As for the informal learning activities, also called leisure activities by some students, they comprised: listening to the radio, music, songs, reading, watching films/video clips, playing computer games and surfing the net. The sections to come will be supported with selected examples of the students' views on a combination of relaxing, entertaining and educational properties of their English learning practices.

It is interesting to note, for instance, that one of the students (S1) who described listening to BBC News as a way of obtaining political and cultural information as well as a relaxing experience would still write down "some intriguing words on a scrap of paper" to check in a dictionary. She clarified what were her motivations for language oriented work in the following way: "Sometimes I deliberately look for new expressions and words that will be helpful during my speaking and writing […] I frequently pick up strangely sounding words and I try to decipher their meaning". (S1)

Another student (S6) mentioned that listening to BBC4 helped her practise listening skills as well as "was a great way to keep contact with English, especially in the day off from classes" Then she added that it also "exposed [her] to native speaker English and people speaking with different accents" (S 6).

The students' reflections revealed that even though they often performed self-selected pleasurable language-based activities, all the time they behaved as language learners focused on acquiring new elements of the English language. Moreover, they often felt frustrated when they did not understand some words or phrases.

Similarly, while listening to songs informally, for pleasure, the students persisted in their learner roles. S2, for instance, who mentioned listening to songs by Adema and Haste the Day for pleasure stated: "[…] yet often lyrics are worth checking for new vocabulary or figuring out the deeper sense of it. […] I was dwelling on one word from lyrics[…] could not work out its metaphorical meaning". (S2)

Another student (S3), showing preference for songs by Coldplay, mentioned the importance of working out their meaning by checking the song lyrics and their translation into Polish on the internet. Some other students underscored both linguistic and psychological benefits of listening to songs in English, such as learning new vocabulary when memorizing the lyrics (S6) and fostering their self-confidence (S8).

Reading in English was regarded by the students as an element of their lifestyle with texts being read to broaden their knowledge, satisfy curiosity, out of interest and for enjoyment. Student 1 stated that she read an article before a film premiere both to get some more information on its contents and simultaneously delve in "sophisticated journalist style". Another student (S9) claimed to choose articles to read on her Facebook out of curiosity.

The students also provided reflections connected with watching TV, video and film clips on You Tube, which they treated mainly as an entertaining pastime, yet ultimately approached as an extension of their English language learning experience. They tackled such vital issues as: the use of subtitles, the strategies of guessing word meanings from context and checking them in a dictionary as well as the difficulty of understanding authentic speech (S3, S6). As shown below, some students underlined a high value of this kind of language learning experience:

> Watching TV series House MD, shameless, utterly best due to advanced vocabulary, fast speech, foreign accents; […] rewinding a couple of seconds, pausing, checking the term in a dictionary. […] Acquiring language in the most entertaining and pleasurable way. (S10)

> Watching British breakfast TV – Good Morning Britain to listen to the marvelous accent. […] I feel that English is my life-long hobby and passion. (S 4)

One of the students (S2) described playing computer games primarily for pleasure and out of curiosity, yet with some language benefits, such as talking with other gamers in English. Here is one of his comments on watching a game:

> Watching AGDQ stream Awesome Games Done Quick – an event during which players try to beat the game and explain how they are doing it; […] it raised funds for cancer prevention and early detection – for pleasure.[…] watching with curiosity, some words worth checking, interesting (technical – gaming). (S 2)

In summary, the analysis of the advanced students' reflective journals conducted in the current study has revealed different aspects of their agency in learning and using English as a foreign language. The students were able to account for their actions and explain the motives of their behavior in an array of language practices they embarked on. In planning for and taking control of formal and informal learning activities they displayed a high level of strategicness in pursuing their goals. They efficiently undertook a number of self-study tasks to complement institutionally organized educational activities. Their desire to improve their English language proficiency with their personal goals in mind, not only to satisfy their university teachers, was apparent.

As for learning English in formal settings, the students accepted the need for intensive practice and independent work to be done beyond their regular classes. They approached their self-development as a change in the strategy use and a determinant of achieving the desired success in future. Learning tasks were found intellectually satisfying when focus on language learning and knowledge acquisition could be linked.

The choice of particular radio programs, videos, films to watch by the students seemed to be driven mainly by their curiosity, interest or search for the ways of spending time in a pleasurable way. However, the students always remained in the position of language learners and wanted to understand the subtitles in the English language. Exposure to native speakers was treated as an important asset of learning English as a foreign language.

3.5. Concluding remarks

The tentative analysis of the advanced EFL students' journals carried out for this exploratory study has provided some valuable insights into the students' agency, that is their conscious, goal-oriented efforts to employ a range of language learning activities in both formal and informal contexts (Gao, 2013). The participants of this study proved to be strategic and autonomous language learners ready to invest a considerable amount of time and effort in the development of their English language competence (cf. Ushioda, 2009; Norton & Toohey, 2011; Gao, 2013). They were highly motivated to work on English intensively and the native-speaker level of proficiency seemed to be a model for them. Even in the case of formally organized academic events they showed an ability to become the subject of numerous learning practices. With the awareness of their learning processes they were able to create many opportunities conducive for language learning for themselves, independently of university requirements. A crucial factor was their interest in different areas of knowledge and forms of literacy.

It has to be mentioned that the study is not without its limitations. As an exploratory and qualitative study it has taken only a fragmentary look at the reflections of a small group of advanced EFL learners and concentrated only on how they described and reflected on language activities performed in formal vs. informal learning contexts for a relatively short period of time. As the study has not made any comparisons across students or worked out student profiles, this seems to be an interesting future direction of study. Some illuminating insights might also come from a longitudinal investigation of students' perceptions of their metacognition and personal self-development.

3.6. Implications of the study

Despite the limitations of this study, some pedagogical implications can be drawn. EFL learners' reflections on the ways which they willingly and efficiently adopt in their language learning process can provide teachers with some guidelines for raising the quality of their formal language instruction. Also, as pointed out by some students, creating conducive grounds for learning English at a high proficiency level requires integrating language goals with some content-area knowledge so that students can be exposed to language materials that are cognitively satisfying to them. Hence they should be given an opportunity to identify points of interest, approach the information critically and consolidate it with the knowledge already acquired.

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Learning Transfer through Corpus-Aided Instruction

ABSTRACT
The purpose of this study is to examine learning transfer in corpus-aided instruction. Fifty second language college students in writing classes participated in this study. Corpus research and qualitative research were employed to navigate the students' learning transfer. Findings show that corpus-aided instruction has some potential to increase multilingual learners' writing skills. This study will be of interest and value to scholars and teachers working in areas such as corpus linguistics, English for Academic Purposes (EAP), and second language writing, providing pedagogical implications for language educators and teachers. This study would also help ESL/EFL educators and teachers improve awareness of lexicogrammar along with the knowledge and information of corpus linguistics. It is hoped that language teachers and educators can build corpus literacy (i.e., the ability to use the technology of corpus linguistics for language development) to support their multilingual learners to develop 21st-century skills. Based on the preliminary findings, suggestions and implications are discussed.

KEYWORDS
corpus-aided instruction, learning transfer, EFL, academic writing, second language learning

1. Introduction

Writing is essential for learning in higher education. As a basic step for learning second language (L2) academic writing, they should acquire word and phrase combinations of disciplinary writing conventions in academic settings (Cortes, 2004). Due to multilingual learners' needs, Phraseology, the study of fixed expressions and multi-word lexical units, has been paid attention to for effective L2 instruction. The exploration of phraseology is grounded on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Halliday, 2004), which sees language as a social semiotic system. In SFL, lexicogrammar as a system of wording represents linguistic resources for construing meanings through words and structures, encompassing a much broader set of phenomena in phraseology (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

Applied linguists and researchers have investigated lexicogrammar with diverse components of a language. One of the features within lexicogrammar is a lexical bundle (Biber et al., 1999). Lexical bundles are the most frequently occur-ring sequences of multiple words and phrases in a written register indicating

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formulaicity of lexicogrammar in a language (Biber et al., 1999). Producing lexical bundles in written registers is challenging for international L2 students with different levels of writing proficiency and expertise (Cortes, 2004). Becoming adapted to the rhetorical styles and writing expectations of different disciplines is important in gaining membership in the academic community. Therefore, teaching lexical bundles would help multilingual learners improve their academic writing proficiency and boost their confidence in L2 writing.

Corpus linguistics is an essential field in examining a variety of linguistic features in lexicogrammar. Corpus linguistics, which arose in the 1990s, compiles lists of various common word combinations (e.g., lexical bundles and collocations). Johns' (1994) early work used "data-driven learning" (p. 296) to make language learning innovative in technological and methodological respects with the utilization of machine-readable text in corpus. In light of beliefs and findings of second language acquisition and learning, overall, this study has the potential for redefining second language learning as the development of flexible meaning-making language capacities across contexts and broadening the scope of L2 writing. The following research questions then guide this study:

1) Did learning transfer occur from the corpus-aided instruction to L2 learners' academic writing?
2) What were challenges of multilingual learners' learning transfer?

2. Literature review

2.1. Corpus linguistics

Corpus linguistics provides a variety of potential research investigations with regard to linguistic features, such as vocabulary, grammatical structures. And semantic domains. Through the corpus-based investigations, language re-searchers (Biber et al., 1999; Cortes, 2013) rigorously investigated the co-occurrence of seemingly similar structures and patterns, serving different functions in different contexts. Corpus data is recognized as valuable in gaining knowledge of language patterns and perspectives on the language system (Sinclair, 2004). A great deal of corpus research has made an impact on the attention to lexical association patterns, including systematic co-occurrence with other words. Corpus research with a frequency-based approach suggests new visions of existing language regularities and reveals previously unobserved language phenomena (Biber et al., 1999). Furthermore, corpus research represents a "natural" approach as regular patterns are detected in the data that are meaningful to multilingual learners based on their adaptive behaviours.

2.2. Learning transfer

Learning transfer has been spotlighted by L2 writing scholars and specialists (James, 2010; Johns, 1994; Leki & Carson, 1997) due to its significance in the

field of L2 writing over the past decades. Leki and Carson (1997) claim that the aims of learning ESL writing courses are ‘‘transcendent’’ (p. 39). This means that students should be able to apply learned knowledge in the ESL writing instruction to a new situation. Other L2 writing scholars (James 2010; Johns, 1994) also maintain that developing transfer of learning is critical in ESL/EFL reading and writing classes. Several studies (DePalma & Ringer, 2014; Nelms & Dively, 2007) have paid attention to pedagogical values of learning transfer. Nelms and Dively's (2007) study explores variables that may affect transfer of knowledge between general composition and discipline-specific writing intensive courses. The study suggests a crucial aspect that successful transfer of composition knowledge should involve changes in writing instruction. Perkins and Salomon (1992) explain that learning transfer takes place when learning in one context improves or weakens relevant outcome in a different context, providing specific types of transfer: near transfer (to closely associated contexts and performances) and far transfer (to fairly different contexts and performances). Near learning transfer occurs between similar contexts, such as instruction to the outcome in the same instructional context, while far learning transfer may occur be-tween contexts that seem remote to one another. Learning transfer is a transitional process between learning activity systems; therefore, it is necessary to identify if instructions are actually transferred to the target students' lexicogrammatical writing gains after the corpus-aided instructions take place.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The target population was international L2 students studying at the U.S. Midwestern university. The students assigned to learn academic writing in ESL composition classes were sampled for this study. The target international L2 students were selected according to the availability and the research criteria as purposive sampling. Fifty L2 college students taking ESL composition classes participated in this study, and their participation was voluntary. Thus, the students who did not agree on the consent were not included in the study. There were 22 male students (44%) and 28 female students (56%). 44 students (88 %) were from China, while six (12%) of them were from Malaysia. The range of the age was 18 to 24 years old (M=19.38, SD=1.40). The aver-age of the self-reported GPA was 3.3 with the range from 2.7 to 3.9 on the 4.0 scale. Fifteen students among them participated in in-depth interviews, writing conferences, and member-checking.

3.2. Research design

This study is part of a large project, and a qualitative portion of the study is reported. Qualitative research and corpus research were applied. Qualitative data are helpful in exploring learning transfer from corpus-aided instruction to the

learners' acquisition of lexical bundles in their actual writing. Hence, this study achieves collaborative inquiry and contributes to the interdisciplinary fields of second language acquisition (SLA), L2 writing, and corpus linguistics.

3.3. Data collection and analysis

Data from semi-structured interviews, writing conferences, and the students' written assignments were incorporated for in-depth understandings of the use of lexical bundles and learning transfer in the corpus-aided L2 writing instruction. Semi-structured interviews were employed in a summative way after the corpus-aided instructions. Interviews were conducted once or twice with the individual students depending on their availability. Each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. A semi-structured writing conference protocol (selectively adapted from Liu and Jiang, 2009) was used in a formative way. "Think-back" questions were asked to the participants to reflect on their learning experiences in the writing conference. Think-back questions are useful in obtaining specific information about past experiences because the participants can concentrate on what they have done as opposed to what can be done in the future. In this study, writing conferences strengthened the identification of learning transfer and the participants' use of lexical bundles in corpus-aided instruction.

Corpus concordance analysis was the major tool for the investigation of learning transfer in students' written products grounded on move analysis (Cortes, 2013; Kanoksilapatham, 2005; Swales, 1990). Then, all the qualitative data were analysed to identify recurring patterns or themes through the constant comparative analysis in Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Grounded Theory comprises a set of rigorous research procedures leading to the emergence of conceptual categories and a theoretical explanation of the actions that continually resolve the main concern of the participants. The current study covered contextual conditions, highly pertinent to the natural phenomenon of the research site for the qualitative research part. Semi-structured interviews, writing conferences, and member checking were performed after the instructions to identify potential variables of learning transfer, such as the participants' improved language features and skills from the corpus-aided instruction.

4. Findings

4.1. EFL students' learning transfer

Qualitative research examined learning transfer and development of the participants' academic writing from the word-level to the textual-level in a language. The genre of their papers was a research-based paper. The main focus was to see learning transfer from corpus-aided instruction to academic writing regarding the connection between the lexical bundles and functions in writing. Selective examples of lexical bundles with rhetorical patterns are presented as below:

Making topic generalizations

> Public colleges are more likely to suffer from budget slash and induce that more and more students own less resources for studying, such as professors. (Participant#3)

> Because the differences between the culture and the laws in two countries, people in America are more likely to announce bankruptcy than people in China. (Participant#4)

Making generalizations or interpretations of the results

> When it comes to adolescent homosexual people, coming out or not to parents could be a tough decision. (Participant#2)

Announcing present research descriptively and/or purposefully

> In this paper, I will write in details about three main problems with American education. (Participant#7)

Corpus Multimodal learning transfer is another area in which far transfer might be expected to occur. In the interdisciplinary era, research posters should be taken into account as a type of academic writing. In this study, therefore, research posters were examined for the evidence of multimodal learning transfer. Prezi is web-based presentation software similar to Microsoft PowerPoint slides. Hence, Prezi can be regarded as one of the multimodal texts. Several students' re-search posters and the Prezi presentation materials were collected. Research posters are valued as a way to present not only completed research results but also ongoing research and preliminary findings to the audience at a professional conference (D'Angelo, 2012). Research posters may broaden the multimodal nature in terms of the academic writing genre (D'Angelo, 2012).

In the process of the interviews, several students mentioned that they used the lexical bundles from the instruction and shared their research posters and the Prezi presentation. Two research posters from business and English literature classes were gathered from the students in Figure 1. The Prezi presentation was collected from the one majoring in English literature as in Figure 2. Three lexical bundles were observed: "be one of the", "is one of the", and "on the basis of". The two items, "be one of the" and "is one of the", were referential bundles indicating claiming relevance of field.

4.2. Challenges of the students' learning transfer

The main purpose of implementing qualitative research is to enhance interpretability and meaningfulness of the findings. A grounded theory methodology offered a systematic approach, focusing on the insight of learning challenges from the participants. The challenges of learning transfer emerged the degree of understanding. Participants acknowledged a need to use lexical bundles in their

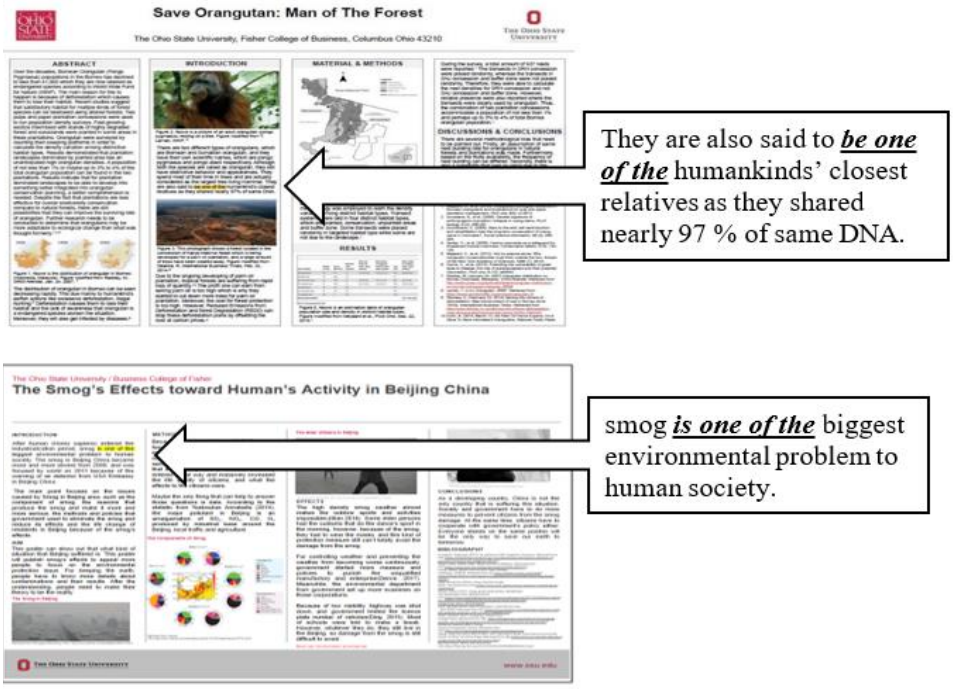

Figure 1: Lexical bundle used in the student' research posters

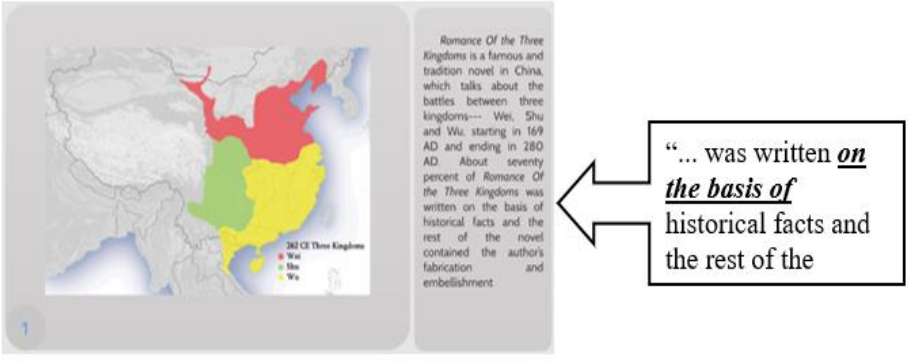

Figure 2: Lexical bundle used in the student' Prezi presentation

actual writing, such as producing a logical and coherent academic paper with appropriate lexical bundles aligned with the genre being written. However, some students were confused about the meaning of lexical bundles, which led them to avoid using them due to a lack of the applicability of lexical bundles:

> I don't usually use lexical bundles because I don't know how to explain my idea with them (lexical bundles). So, I usually use simpler words instead of the chunk of words. (Participant9, writing conference)

Other participants also expressed the personal needs of using lexical bundles in their writing. They desired to use a variety of lexical bundles, produce a congruent and logical paper, and articulate ideas fluently with lexical bundles. In particular, findings revealed more challenges of learning transfer: 1) overuse of known lexical bundles, 2) misuse or mistakes of lexical bundles. The participants had concerns about the correct use of lexical bundles regarding the meaning and function. For example, one student said:

> Public I used 'what's more' a lot in my paper because I can't remember the multiword phrases. They don't automatically come to my mind…I am not really sure how to use another multiword phrase [that] can be added in my paper. (Participant#3, interview)

Regarding the overuse of known and familiar lexical bundles, Granger (1998) reported that "students 'cling on' to certain fixed phrases and expressions which they feel confident in using" (p. 156). Cortes (2004) also found the pattern of the repetitiveness of fixed expressions in nonnative speakers' written essays. The challenges that the participants encountered resembles the findings of the previous research.

Secondly, the misuse (or mistakes) of lexical bundles was the issue of the participants. Some mistakes of lexical bundles (e.g., in the other hand, one of the company) were discovered in the writing conferences. This tendency may indicate that the instruction did not fully make the students internalize lexical bundles. This misuse pattern was found to be similar to the results from Huang (2015) and Pan et al.'s (2016) studies. Huang (2015) explained all instances of lexical bundle misuse with "ungrammaticality" and "inappropriacy" (p. 20). Pan et al.'s (2016) study compared L1 and L2 writers' lexical bundle use and found that L2 writers often misused discourse-organizing bundles neither grammatically nor functionally. Pan et al.'s (2016) study provided the potential pedagogical implication that second language writing teachers should focus on structural patterns of academic writing. Therefore, participants had some challenges of using lexical bundles in their papers with a vague understanding of functional lexical bundle use and showed the tendency of avoiding, overusing, and misusing lexical bundles.

5. Discussion

5.1. Benefits of using lexical bundles in L2 writing instruction

The Many researchers (Byrd & Coxhead, 2010; Coxhead & Byrd, 2007; Hyland, 2012; Simpson-Vlach & Ellis, 2010) advocate direct instruction on lexical bundles in writing courses for L2 students. Cortes (2004) insists that "as lexical bundles are very frequent in published academic prose, it is necessary to encourage students to use these expressions" (p. 420). Hence, novice L2 writers must learn the discourse conventions (i.e., lexical bundles) of academic writing with the adequate use of lexical bundles (Biber et al., 2013; Cortes, 2004; Pan et al., 2016).

Lexical bundles are beneficial in L2 writing instruction with the principles of frequency, range, teachability/ learnability, and the usefulness in academic writing (Byrd & Coxhead, 2010; Nation, 2001). Coxhead and Byrd (2007) note several beneficial effects of using lexical bundles in academic writing: 1) providing ready-made sets of words for crafting academic prose, 2) facilitating fluent language use, 3) recognizing L2 writers as a "member" of a discourse community, and 4) representing register-specific ways of expressing particular meanings. The findings in this study showed that the corpus-aided instruction is effective in increasing multilingual learners' writing skills.

Therefore, explicit corpus-aided instruction would be effective in L2 college students' writing proficiency. The findings can be aligned with prior literature about the effectiveness of intentional language learning (Schmitt, 2008). Schmitt (2008) affirms that intentional vocabulary learning leads to "a better chance of retention and of reaching productive levels of mastery" (p. 341). Explicit deliberate learning (i.e., intentional learning) is best for learning salient elements of word knowledge along with the rate and efficiency of learning, while incidental learning comes from a sufficiency of time and exposure (Nation, 2001). Therefore, it would be critical to consider how to maximize the learning conditions of different corpus-aided instructional practice.

Using lexical bundles in writing instruction is helpful in developing language learning autonomy. Johns (1994) supports learner autonomy by data-driven learning, and corpus linguists (Gavioli, 2009) also stress learner autonomy through corpus linguistics. Applying lexical bundles to different assignments is closely related to language learning autonomy in that multilingual learners independently explore the use of lexical bundles without the instructor's guidance and understand them in cognition. Corpus-aided instruction allows self-access of the relevant materials with learner autonomy and helps L2 students become active researchers for the application of the lesson to the actual use in their academic writing.

5.2. Actualization of learning transfer in L2 students' academic writing

Learning transfer is the major issue throughout this study. "Transfer remains a vital construct in L2 writing pedagogy" (Hirvela et al., 2016, p. 52). Hirvela et al. (2016) strongly contend that teaching writing should be closely connected to

students' transfer and application to their own written products. Task similarity/difference is closely connected to learning transfer for ESL writing students (Leki & Carson, 1997). This study examined learning transfer from word-level lexical bundles to textual-level moves/steps in L2 students' academic writing (Nelms & Dively, 2007; Perkins & Salomon, 1988). Participants in this study showed various connections of lexical bundles to rhetorical moves/steps in both text and different semiotic systems. Cortes (2004) suggests having students "notice" the lexical bundles frequently used in academic writing. To maximize students' learning transfer, it is necessary to utilize corpus-based pedagogy in L2 writing instruction.

6. Conclusion

This study is of significance due to the pedagogical value, the usefulness of the most frequent words in language teaching (Nation, 2001), regarding the research of L2 composition and corpus linguistics in SLA and academic writing. A phraseological approach associated with corpus linguistics enables us to redefine and broaden aspects of linguistic theories. Furthermore, the utility of corpora can work as a basis for material designs and curriculum development and create a great impact on revealing the representativeness of the English language used by international college students (Byrd & Coxhead, 2010; Simpson-Vlach and Ellis, 2010). Lexical bundles in corpus linguistics have the potential to explore phraseological differences between registers and disciplines (Römer, 2009). Well-designed writing instruction can result in transfer in ESL contexts. Accordingly, corpus-aided instruction maximizes learning transfer with a focus on lexicogrammar.

This study also stimulates active awareness and perceptions of the prevalent usage of lexical phrases in practice. The idea of the overall research design in this study was generated from the implications of prior research (Hyland, 2012; Simpson-Vlach & Ellis, 2010) that the future research should link the constituent of applied linguistics (i.e., the analysis of lexical bundles) and the pedagogical use (i.e., the application of the use of lexical bundles) in the boundaries of composition studies and applied linguistics (Silva & Leki, 2004). Novice L2 writers must learn the discourse conventions (i.e., lexical bundles) of academic writing with the adequate use of lexical bundles (Biber et al., 2013; Cortes, 2004). Therefore, this study contributes to the development and advancement of L2 writing instruction and curriculum in the long term by providing effective language learning methods with the use of lexical bundles in learner corpora.

Learner-generated corpora can be helpful in guiding corpus-based writing pedagogy. Learner corpora involve "pedagogic mediation to contextualize the data for the students' own writing environment" (Flowerdew, 2009, p. 393) and play an important role in selecting and structuring teaching contents (Granger, 2002).

Swales (2019) also indicates that corpus-based research should have pedagogical value. Therefore, learner corpora enable L2 writing teachers to identify potential learner needs based on their use of a target language and evaluate the level of lexical and grammatical complexity of learner language.

To systematize corpus-aided pedagogy for L2 students and corpus literacy for L2 teachers, several suggestions are encouraged for the future research. Authentic materials from the students' writing are recommended. Students' written products include valuable information about linguistic features and structural rhetoric that can be used in the future writing class. Since this study revealed that corpus instruction would be effective to L2 learners, more research of corpus-aided instruction should be implemented to develop corpus-aided pedagogy. Lastly, many researchers (e.g., McCarthy, 2008; O'Keeffe & Farr, 2003) have integrated corpus linguistic techniques into teacher education, setting up guidelines for teacher education in corpus literacy. Although this study touched upon corpus literacy to some extent, future research should further extend standards and guidelines of corpus use for curriculum and instruction in teacher education.

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Language as a Medium of Grammar Instruction: Jordanian EFL Secondary-Stage Teachers' Beliefs and Practices

ABSTRACT
This study examines EFL teachers' beliefs, practices, and the (mis)match between them in regard to the language used as a medium of grammar instruction. The participants are nine experienced female EFL secondary-stage Jordanian teachers. Data were collected through a mixed quantitative-qualitative descriptive-analytical approach. Teachers' beliefs were investigated by a questionnaire, their practices via a classroom observation checklist, and the (mis)match between them was discussed during a focus group of teachers. The results showed that all teachers' beliefs were matching their practices, a consistency that was attributed to contextual factors, students' preferences, students' language proficiency and teachers' experiences as learners.

KEYWORDS
grammar teaching, mother tongue, language as a medium of instruction, teachers' beliefs, classroom practices

1. Introduction

The value and the role of using the mother tongue (L1) in English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom is a controversial issue among teachers and researchers (Kharma & Hajjaj, 1989; Levine, 2003; Littlewood & Yu, 2011; Voicu, 2012). To gain beneficial insights, language research (e.g., Ashton, 2014; Nishimuro & Borg, 2013; Pajares, 1992; Richards, 1996) suggested studying teachers' beliefs and practices which this paper investigates. Should grammar be taught using the first language (Arabic), the target language (English), or both?

In most EFL teaching contexts, teachers share L1 with their learners and the classroom is the only place where they are both exposed to L2 (Richards, 2017). The association of using L1 with the discredited Grammar-Translation Method made teachers shy away from using it (Cook G., 2010; Kelly & Bruen, 2015) despite empirically-evidenced reports (Butzkamm, 1998; Butzkamm & Caldwell,

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2009; Cook V, 2001; Cummins, 2007; Hall & Cook, 2012; Widdowson, 2003) showing that L1 is a viable pedagogical resource.

However, in Jordan, there has been little local research into teachers' beliefs and the amount and value of using L1 in EFL classrooms (e.g., Maqableh & Smadi, 2001), the purposes of using L1 (e.g., Hussein, 2013), and even less research on language transfer (e.g., Al-Zoubi & Abu-Eid, 2014). Similarly, there has been little qualitative research into teachers` grammar-related beliefs and practices. Since Jordanian EFL students' weakness in grammar has been established in a body of previous research (e.g., Alhababha et al., 2016; Malkawi & Smadi, 2018; Mustafa, 2001), there was an urgent need to carry out more research to understand the Jordanian grammar teaching context in an attempt to reinforce the grammatical competence of Jordanian EFL learners. This study seeks to answer the following questions:

1) What are Jordanian EFL teachers' beliefs regarding the language used as a medium of grammar instruction?
2) What are Jordanian EFL teachers' actual practices related to the language used as a medium of grammar instruction?
3) How consistent are teachers' beliefs and actual classroom practices concerning language as the medium of grammar instruction?

2. Review of related literature

Following the abandonment of the Grammar-Translation Method, using L1 was restricted in favour of the exclusive use of L2 in EFL classrooms (Cummins, 2007; Levine, 2003, Voicu, 2012) despite empirically-evidenced reports that L1 is a viable pedagogical resource (Butzkamm, 1998; Butzkamm and Caldwell, 2009; Cook V., 2001; Cummins, 2007; Hall & Cook, 2012; Widdowson, 2003). Translation during instruction was rejected by most structure and meaning-oriented language teaching methodologies (Voicu, 2012). The Direct and Audio-lingual methods abandoned using L1 to make students practice thinking in L2. The Silent Way, Suggestopedia, and Total Physical Response allowed using L1 exclusively for classroom management purposes. Communicative Language Teaching and Krashen's comprehensible input hypothesis banned L1 use to maximize L2 input. Conversely, Community Language Learning permitted using L1 to make students feel more secure during conversations (Richards & Rodgers, 1982). Lozano's Suggestopedia theorized for learning in a comfortable environment in which L1 supposedly helps (Adamson, 2004). Some research findings supported using L1 to facilitate learning, reduce cognitive processing loads, lessen pressure on working memory, enhance verbal thinking and mental translation, and support vocabulary retention (e.g., Alley, 2005; Belz, 2002; Blyth, 1995; Kramsch, 1998; Levine, 2003, 2009, 2011).

Villamil and de Guerrero (1996) recommended using L1 in making meaning of a text, retrieving language from memory, exploring and expanding content, guiding through language tasks, and maintaining a dialogue. Nation (2003) advised teachers to maximize L2 use because their job is to develop the linguistic abilities of their students who rarely encounter English outside language classes. Levine (2003) recommended shaping an approach that is based on pedagogical training, language research results, and successful classroom experiences.

Cummins (2007, p. 1) listed three theoretical principles that contradict the monolingual assumptions. First, according to cognitive psychology, learning builds on prior knowledge whether it is encoded in L1 or L2. Second, across languages, literacy-related skills and knowledge, the lingual transfer is a normal process. The third principle is Cook's 'multi-competence' proposing that second language learners have special mental structures that are different from the monolinguals (p. 1).

In theoretical research, Butzkamm and Caldwell (2009) called for a paradigm shift in foreign language teaching in terms of meaning, communication, understanding, grammar, and translation by benefitting from the use of L1 which is the "magic key that unlocks the door to foreign language grammars" (p. 385). Littlewood and Yu (2011) suggested a three-stage plan to use L1 inside EFL classrooms. At the presentation stage, teachers can use L1 to introduce structures to support language awareness (Butzkamm, 2003; Dodson, 1972). At the practice stage, it can be used in drilling to help learners produce similar structures (Butzkamm & Caldwell, 2009; Munro, 1999). At the production level, teachers can benefit Duff (1989), Auerbach (1993), and Deller and Rinvolucri (2002) by the use of L1 in activities.

Voicu (2012, p. 214) suggested that using L1 should be invested with beginner learners for understanding grammatical rules through translation exercises and comparing the two languages` vocabulary and grammar. Richards (2017) questions whether foreign language teachers, predominantly non-native speakers worldwide, really need to have native-like language ability since the criteria for being a good teacher are having content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge. and discourse skills.

In empirical research, Copland and Neokleous (2011) investigated using L1 in two after-school Cypriot private language institutions. The observation of language classes showed that three out of the four teachers used L1 frequently during lessons. However, the post interviews revealed that all four teachers believe that using L1 should be very limited. Discussing the discrepancy between teachers' beliefs and practices revealed a sense of guilt toward what they considered a negative class routine. Scheffler (2012) investigated secondary school students' views of using translation during grammar lessons. Comparing grammar translation and communicative lessons, students reported that grammar translation lessons are not only more interesting and informative but also make them feel secure and confident.

Ahmad, Radzuan and Hussain (2018) investigated EFL teachers' and students' beliefs regarding using Arabic during grammar lessons at Saudi universities. The study first revealed that both female and male Arab and non-Arab teachers believed that Arabic can be used to guarantee understanding, maintain discipline, and take feedback. The reasons for using L1 were students' low English language proficiency, the teachers' attempt to build good relationships with students, and saving class time. Second, the non-Arab teachers believed that since the EFL classroom is the only place for exposure to L2, the use of Arabic should be planned.

In the Jordanian context, Maqableh and Smadi (2001) investigated the amount, value, and teaching aspects of using Arabic during English lessons. The results showed that teachers used the Arabic language most of the lesson time and this positively improved students' achievement. The questionnaire revealed that teachers and students support the use of L1. Hussein (2013) investigated the purposes of using Arabic during teaching English in private and governmental universities. The study revealed that Arabic is used mainly to help students understand new and difficult words, to explain complex syntactic rules, and to save time. Al-Zoubi and Abu Eid (2014) explored the influence of Arabic on learning English. 266 randomly chosen, first-year university students took a translation test that comprised 24 Arabic sentences that they had to translate into English. It was revealed that the percentage of correct answers was 47% and that errors committed had mainly to do with the verbs "to be" and the use of the passive voice where transfer errors were the highest.

3. Method and procedures

3.1. Research context and participants

The participants of the study were nine experienced Jordanian female EFL eleventh and twelfth-grade teachers working in public schools of the Ramtha Directorate of Education in Jordan. The participants were chosen randomly from the fourteen secondary-stage EFL teachers in the city. Table 1 below summarizes the sample demographics:

Table 1. Participants of the study

No.	Qualification	Experience (in Years)	Grade Taught
1	MA	20	12
2	BA	21	11
3	MA	16	11
4	BA	22	12
5	BA	16	11
6	BA	2	12
7	BA	22	12

8	BA	15	12
9	BA	17	12

3.2. Data collection and procedure

This study used a mixed quantitative and qualitative descriptive-analytical approach. To answer the research questions, data were collected through the use of a questionnaire and a classroom observation checklist. The questionnaire was an adapted version of the questionnaire designed by Mohamed (2006). The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section collected demographic information pertaining to the teachers' qualifications, years of experience, and the grade(s) they teach (Table 1). The second one addressed the teacher-reported beliefs. The respondents are asked to rate each item on a five-point scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

The second data collection tool in this study was a classroom observation checklist that was also adapted from Mohamed's (2006) questionnaire to identify the teachers' actual pedagogical practices in on-site grammar lessons. Nonetheless, in the current research, the items were incorporated into an observation checklist. The aim of the classroom observations, which lasted for one week, was to provide direct evidence of the participating teachers' grammar practices in terms of the medium of instruction. Due to the time restrictions and ensuing lockdown imposed by the COVID-19 epidemic (and later pandemic), each teacher was observed teaching one grammar lesson.

To establish their validity, the instruments of this study were reviewed by an expert jury of university professors of linguistics, curriculum and instruction, and measurement and evaluation who judged the appropriateness of the instruments for the purpose of the study. Since both instruments were adapted, the researcher did not pilot the instruments but rather deemed it sufficient that their reliability was established by the original author (see Mohamed, 2006, pp. 64–67). To maximize the credibility of the teachers' responses, teachers were assured that their contributions would only be used anonymously for the purposes of the current research.

Furthermore, the interrater reliability of the observation was established by having a colleague, who had taught English for 21 years, attend five lessons with the researcher who was the only observer of the other four lessons. Both observers did not interact with the teachers observed or the students, and the observed teachers were informed that the data collected were to be used solely for research purposes and that the observer(s) were not assessing them. The fellow teacher independently filled in the observation checklist. The correlation between the researchers' and the second rater's observations amounted to 0.97, which is appropriate for the purpose of this study. To maximize the credibility of the teachers' responses and to create a conducive research environment in which the

participating teachers felt safe to engage in conversations amongst themselves and with the researcher, they were assured that their contributions would only be used anonymously for the purposes of the current research.

3.3. Data analysis

The results of the first research question, which asks about the teachers' grammar-related beliefs about their own language use, are summarized in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Teachers' grammar-related beliefs as gleaned from the questionnaire

No.	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	%
1	I use Arabic during grammar lessons	4.11	0.928	82.2
2	I translate English grammar rules into Arabic	4.22	0.972	84.4

The study revealed that 82.2% of the respondents believed that they could use Arabic during grammar lessons, and 84.4% believed that they can translate rules to Arabic whenever needed.

The second research question addressed the teachers' grammar-related classroom practices. The data were collected through the researcher's notations on the classroom observation checklist filled out during classroom visits. The results are given in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Teachers' grammar-related practices as revealed by the observation

No.	Item	n	%
1	Using Arabic during a grammar lesson	8	88.9
2	Translating English grammar rules to Arabic whenever needed	8	88.9

The classroom observations revealed that during the grammar lesson, eight out of nine teachers (88.9%) used Arabic and translated English grammar rules to Arabic. Only one teacher (11.1%) did not use Arabic words and did not translate English grammar rules into Arabic.

Regarding the consistency between the teachers' beliefs and actual practices, all nine teachers' beliefs were consistent with their classroom practices. After finishing data collection and analysis, the researcher initiated a focus group by inviting the nine participating teachers to meet at a secondary school in Ramtha city in Jordan on September 2020. The focus group aimed at discussing the match between teachers' beliefs and practices and the potential factors dominating them.

4. Results

The questionnaire in this study showed that only one out of nine teachers believed that she should not use Arabic during grammar lessons nor translate rules to Arabic, a belief that she practised during her grammar lesson. During the focus-group

discussions, she commented on her belief saying, "why should I use Arabic when I can speak English fluently". She added that at the beginning of each school year, her students feel shocked because she does not say any Arabic words, but over time they become used to her style. She believed that if all teachers decided to speak exclusively English, students will work hard to master the English language at least to be able to understand what their teachers say. Her belief was supported by another teacher who said "using Arabic really deprives excellent students from listening to and speaking English, but it is a blessing to mediocre and weak students".

In contrast, one participating teacher said that if she uses English as the only medium of grammar instruction throughout the lesson, she will surely find at the end that few students could understand her. A second teacher believed that there is no need to speak English all the time even if it is an English language class. A third teacher commented that she can explain the whole lesson in English but would feel uncomfortable because she knows that weak students will completely lose her. She added that even in the Scientific stream of the eleventh grade whose students are usually better than students of other branches, only three or four students can understand an English-only grammar lesson. Teachers also mentioned that they feel comfortable when they teach English grammar using Arabic because this is the way they were taught as students.

5. Discussion

The discussions showed first that using Arabic was relevant to direct contextual factors such as busy schedules, crowded classrooms, heavy teaching loads, long syllabi and time constraints, a result consistent with many studies (e.g., Assalahi, 2013; Basoz, 2014; Borg, 2003; Breen et. al., 2001; Farrell & Bennis, 2013; Farrell & Lim, 2005; Freeman, 2002; Mohammed, 1991, 1996; Nishimuro & Borg, 2013; Phipps & Borg, 2009; Thabet, 2002; Yusof et al., 2019). Second, secondary-stage teachers take into consideration that their students are motivated by passing the General Secondary Education Certificate Examination and that nearly all of them are privately tutored. Third, students' low language proficiency force teachers to use L1 to guarantee students' understanding. Finally, teachers teach in the same way they were taught grammar as students, a conclusion mentioned by many studies (e.g., Farrell & Lim, 2005; Phipps & Borg, 2009; Yusof et al., 2019).

6. Conclusions and future implications

To summarize, this study investigated teachers' grammar-related beliefs and practices in an attempt to understand the context responsible for Jordanian students' weak grammatical competence. Based on the findings of the current study, it is recommended that EFL teachers maximize L2 input and that the Jordanian Ministry of Education enhances current teaching quality by training teachers to practice reflection to evaluate their practices and improve them.

7. Limitations of the study

The generalizability of the findings of this study can be limited by the following factors:

1. The study was limited to female secondary public schools in the Ramtha Directorate of Education, which is a part of the Irbid Third Directorate of Education during the Academic year 2019-2020; the findings can be generalized only to similar educational contexts in Jordan.
2. The study was restricted to the students of the eleventh- and twelfth-grades in female public secondary schools in the Ramtha Directorate of Education. So, results could be generalized to the students studying in similar conditions or contexts.
3. Because of the Covid-19 epidemic lockdown, the study lasted for only two weeks. A longer duration may have different results.
4. The participants of the study were just observed while the researcher, and often a colleague, were filling in a checklist. Grammar lessons were not audio-taped, nor video-recorded, which limits the retrievability and corroboration of the classroom observation data.
5. The targeted research item was the medium used for grammar instruction The inclusion of other grammar-related aspects (e.g., the nature of grammar practice activities) may have widened the scope of the results.

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Breathing Enlightenment and Necessary Change into English Language Programs with Creative Writing

ABSTRACT
Employing a number of crucial discoveries in neuroscience and drawing from years of valuable teaching experience, I show that creative writing is the most effective and natural kind of writing to help English language learners (ELLs) develop their writing skills. Based on over 25 years of language teaching experience, I argue that creative writing helps students find their unique writing style and voice, nurtures confidence in the craft, creates a genuine relationship with the skill, and successfully articulates their feelings and thoughts to a desired audience. Core writing problems for ELLs are addressed and creative writing is suggested as a powerful solution to many of these issues. A very successful creative writing workshop developed at an American Intensive English Program is offered to illustrate how essential the various genres of creative writing are for ELLs. This creative writing program developed the ELLs' writing skills significantly more than any of the traditional kinds of academic writing activities or assignments. In most cases, the ELLs improved 30% to 45% on their writing exit exams after completing the creative writing program. The exit exam results for the academic writing course were considerably lower when compared to the creative writing program results. The article concludes by showing how discoveries in neuroscience and cognitive psychology support the use of creative writing over other forms of writing used in Academic English Programs and Intensive English Programs.

KEYWORDS
creative writing, holistic, observation-focused, ownership, creative thinking, inner personhood, educe

"I am the poet of the body,
And I am the poet of the soul."
Walt Whitman,
Leaves of Grass

1. Introduction

In this article, I will first discuss the general need for creative writing. Next, I will touch on the frequent problems English language learners (ELLs) encounter in Academic English Programs (AEPs) and Intensive English Programs (IEPs) and the obstacles that both native users of English and ELLs face in academic writing.

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I will, then, offer creative writing as the logical solution. I will reinforce this claim with support from higher education and the results from a successful creative writing program I established at an American university. I will conclude by offering discoveries from the neuroscience and cognitive psychology communities that also favor creative writing as the most useful, natural, and powerful tool for helping students become successful writers. This is based on decades of research regarding how our brains learn, employ information, and perform skills in the most effective ways possible (Immordino-Yang, 2016; Sousa, 2011).

2. An Overview: The Need for Creative Writing

The general opinion held by most U.S.-based AEPs and IEPs is that ELLs need to focus on academic writing (e.g., academic essays and research papers) because that is what will be required of them in their undergraduate or graduate programs. These same AEPs and IEPs, however, fail to realize that in order to learn how to write and write well, students (either native or non-native users of English) need to practice writing *a number of different genres*. Interestingly enough, it is creative writing which can best meet this need of employing *multiple kinds of genres* and *tools* (e.g., poetry and prose; similes and metaphors) to help develop the ELLs' writing skills and foster a natural development and marked progress in the craft. This is why so many forward-thinking language programs around the world (e.g., the Czech Republic, Germany, Russia, and Spain) use creative writing activities, methods, and techniques as fundamental language learning tools for their respective writing programs (Randolph, 2020). Moreover, Zinsser (2001) correctly points out that "[y]ou learn to write by writing. It's a truism, but what makes it a truism is that it's true" (p. 49). I would also argue, based on the number of successful and effective creative writing workshops and programs I have set up, that it is creative writing which helps students write better. These workshops and programs are deemed "successful and effective" because a number of the IEP directors supported my method, as it helped the ELLs improve their writing test scores more than the traditional academic writing classes. This is, I believe, primarily because the ELLs connect immediately with the creative writing topics and techniques. It is a more natural way of expressing oneself than that of the traditional grammar-based and template-driven writing styles (for more on this, see Nash, 2004 and Fanselow, 2014).

Creative writing styles are developed *internally* from "within" the students' own personhood whereas academic writing styles are *external* in nature; that is, they are often a forced style of writing based on an assigned textbook or an English as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL) program agenda. Furthermore, as we will discuss below, creative writing helps because it has a number of genres and techniques that enhance the ELLs' writing styles. In essence, creative writing develops multiple kinds of writing, not only creative

writing. Students learn natural methods of argument and persuasion through writing dialogues; they learn reflection and description through writing character monologues; and they develop summary and analysis by creating genuine plots in their short stories and narrative poems. In short, it is creative writing that nurtures a sense of comfort, control, and confidence in enhancing the students' writing development, ownership, style, and voice (Randolph, 2012; 2014; Randolph & Ruppert, 2020; Urbanski, 2006).

If I use a sports analogy to support my argument, it becomes very clear. Let us take volleyball as an example. Volleyball players do not practice one skill to perform just one function on the court or make just one kind of play. Each player (save the libero) works on passing, setting, blocking, spiking, and serving. In terms of physical conditioning, they do yoga, run, stretch, and lift weights. Doing only one training activity or practicing one kind of drill would simply not work. The same is true for writing, especially for those learning *how* to write. A learner's brain needs to be flexible, and it develops by using multiple tools and methods (Eagleman, 2015; Sousa, 2011; Willis, 2006).

It should be noted, as I mentioned above, that I have set up many successful and long-running creative writing programs in the States and abroad. Unfortunately, neither time nor space will allow me to detail each one here. I have selected the specific program below as a model because it had the most significant impact on the ELLs who were preparing to directly enter that American university as full-time students in both undergraduate and graduate programs. Other creative writing workshops and courses that I created surely helped the students' writing, but those particular students were not necessarily preparing to enter an American college or university. They merely wanted to improve their creative and critical writing and thinking skills before returning to their home countries, and the creative writing workshops met this need.

3. The Basic Issues ELLs Face with Academic Writing

According to Anderson (2022), the four major challenges that ELLs encounter in academic writing are: 1) a limited proficiency in the language (e.g., they lack the needed vocabulary to paraphrase and write high level papers); 2) a lack of understanding and use of the various conventions and rules of academic writing (e.g., when and how to properly use sources); 3) a limited ability to do the needed research and use what is learned (e.g., not being aware of appropriate sources); and 4) a limited capability to write at a university level due to their personal history (e.g., not being trained in their home culture about the basic structure of academic paragraphs) (Anderson, 2022, paras. 3–14).

Throughout the years, my ELLs have shared their own issues about academic writing. Below is a list of challenging problems that I gathered in 2016 from two advanced writing classes. The ELLs felt strongly that they were a) not able

to produce developed arguments in research papers; b) not comfortable with the topics because of a lack of cultural knowledge; c) not able to relate to the abstract nature of the topics; d) not able to express adequate knowledge of lexical items to paraphrase and to persuade the reader; and e) not able to write from multiple perspectives (Randolph, 2016).

It appears, then, that my ELLs have observed, in addition to the actual skill of writing, that the writing topics also present a problem because there is often no, or very little, relation or connection with the students' interests or personhood, and the topics are abstract in nature. Moreover, as mentioned above (Anderson, 2022), the various kinds of writing (i.e., analyses and research-based writing) present issues because many ELLs are not trained to write these kinds of papers prior to coming to study in AEPs or IEPs. Even those international students who complete their senior year at an American high school often struggle. The fundamental stumbling blocks point to these two issues: We are not only asking ELLs to think and write in a non-native language about topics of little interest or understanding, but we are also asking them to use certain styles and techniques which are equally challenging (Randolph, 2012). Instead of simply writing and learning how to write, they are met with a myriad of other issues, which are often unhelpful, unmotivating, and frustrating (Urbanski, 2006).

4. Support for Creative Writing in Higher Education

Despite the current reality that substantial research in higher education (Antoniou & Moriarty, 2008; Fanselow, 2014; Harper, 2015; Hecq, 2015) and the neuroscience community (Erhard et al., 2014; Gonzalez et al., 2006; Immordino-Yang, 2016) support creative writing and argue that the techniques and tools used therein are helpful for all writers, AEPs and IEPs continue to emphasize academic writing in their courses because they believe it to be the most important kind of writing. In addition, they contend that it will be most helpful for their students' undergraduate and graduate careers (Randolph, 2012). For decades now, I believe that directors at AEPs and IEPs have misunderstood the essence and value of creative writing.

It is ironic, however, that many other departments on university campuses share a different opinion; they sincerely honor and greatly value creative writing. What I find particularly significant are the results of a survey I conducted regarding higher education faculty members from 14 distinct departments and their views on creative writing (*N=25*). The departments ranged from accounting and pre-medical programs to engineering and religious studies. I asked the professors to choose "strongly agree," "agree," "neutral," "disagree," "strongly disagree," or "other" concerning the following statements:

- I think that creative writing ought to be taught in ESL programs.
- Creative writing enhances students' minds and helps them with critical thinking.

- I use creative writing in my classes.
- I think if students had creative writing, they would write better papers and more critical pieces in my class.

The support for using creative writing to foster ELLs' writing skills was robust. 88% either "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that creative writing ought to be taught in ESL programs. 96% either "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that creative writing enhances the students' minds. 57% used creative writing in their classes; these included the professors from the engineering and philosophy departments. Those who did not use it, reflected on revising their own pedagogy and were willing to incorporate some creative writing activities in their classes. And lastly, 80% either "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that creative writing would help the students' writing performance in the professors' respective courses (Randolph, 2012, p. 72).

What stood out as most intriguing were the professors from the Master of Business Administration (MBA) programs and the philosophy and religious studies departments, as they were the strongest supporters of creative writing. In my follow-up questions, they responded that creative writing, more than any other kind of writing, gets students (both domestic and international) to write with more confidence, develop their own style and voice, and consider topics from various perspectives (Randolph, 2012, p. 73). The professors from the MBA programs claimed that creative writing is essential because it encourages students to think outside the box and develop both critical and creative ways of approaching various challenges in the field. In addition, they felt the tools that creative writing nurtures are pivotal in order to prepare the minds of their students for the changing dynamics in both domestic and global business ventures.

I would like to note that it is not my intention to belittle academic writing. If we carefully examine creative and academic writing, we can see that they share a number of common attributes (Nash, 2004; Randolph, 2019). For instance, both require a logical and coherent development of ideas, both depend on sound grammar and syntax, both clarify and communicate concepts, both require paraphrasing ideas and using citations (albeit in different formats), and both, in one way or another, tell a story to the reader or researcher. In fact, what I am suggesting is to use more creative writing techniques in all levels of AEP and IEP writing courses so that our students become better academic writers. Each kind of writing is important, and each can help ELLs become stronger thinkers and writers. That said, creative writing ought to be used more as it is simply the better tool of the two in terms of skill development.

There are, however, significant differences between the two kinds of writing. The most striking one is that creative writing employs a wide array of genres such as poetry, fables, flash fiction, short stories, novels, drama, and creative non-fiction. In addition, creative writing uses a number of effective tools such as alliteration, dialogue, foreshadowing, metaphors, similes, and symbolism. Creative writing

also strongly involves the emotions, the senses, and personal experiences, all of which are deeply supported as crucial learning elements by the neuroscience community (Immordino-Yang, 2016; Lieberman Doctor, 2015; Ratey, 2002). We must always keep in mind that ELLs are not only learning how to write, but, in many cases, they are still *learning the language*. So, we must ask, is a formulaic, rigid style of writing more suitable for them, or one that nurtures their acquisition of the language, promotes a discovery of their immediate and intimate self, and helps enhance their writing as creative writing does? Is a relatively shallow and uncreative template-driven style of writing helpful or one that pushes the ELLs deeper into understanding who they are as individuals and encourages them to follow the path of education, which is to "educe" or "pull out" their own inner wisdom and knowledge? Are we training them to become masters of writing, or are we forcing them to become slaves of a formulaic and limited style of writing?

At this point, I would like to offer my working definition of creative writing. I believe it will shed light on just how useful and powerful it is. I define creative writing as the following spiritual activity that promotes continual personal enrichment:

> Creative writing is a way of embracing, observing, experiencing, thinking, and writing about the past, present, and future through tapping into one's soul, spirit, mind, body, brain, consciousness, and art of mindfulness. Creative writing is a holistic activity that includes using emotions, senses, memories, ideas, experiences, and insights in order to learn from these as well as learn from one's immediate and surrounding environment. That is, creative writing is a state of mind and a way of life. It is highly observation-focused which allows for constant growth. (Randolph, 2020, slides 13–15)

Academic writing, on the other hand, is usually strictly structured, highly formulaic, and often deals with topics that are either too abstract or far removed from the ELLs' personal life or cultural understanding. It does not promote ownership, nor does it really inspire development of a style or voice. In fact, Nash (2004), a professor at the University of Vermont in the School of Education and Social Services, claims that academic writing can be very limiting in that "it's mostly just a matter of understanding how to fit some new pieces of the knowledge puzzle into the old research templates; a matter if you will, of knowing how to pour new research wine into the same old format bottles" (pp. 54–55).

For ELLs to understand that writing is not merely a skill but a state of mind, a way to view life, a journey of self-expression, and a way to learn, there must be meaning and ownership in what they write. Allen (2000) discusses critical issues he faced with an academic writing course that he taught to domestic Canadian undergraduates, and he touches on the same issues that many ELLs face in AEPs and IEPs. Allen's students wrote adequately enough to pass the course, but they did not appear to be learning much. They were really not learning how to write nor

develop a style to foster their own voice. According to Allen (2000), "[t]heir work lacked authenticity. They had no idea how to engage meaning around the kinds of topics they found in the *Norton Reader*... Their writing was make-believe... They focused on 'not making mistakes'" (p. 250). In addition to not improving their writing skills, Allen was concerned because his students were not developing any sense of style that expressed their personalities or experiences.

Allen pinpoints an underlying problem by exposing that most kinds of academic writing do not allow students (both native and non-native users of English) to find meaning in their work, nor are they really able to internalize or personalize their writing. Allen (2000) suggests

> [t]he "writing problem" in our universities is really a humanism problem. We teach humanism and dodge its practice. We ask our students to study and understand meaning at the same time that we offer little opportunity for them to make original meaning. (p. 287)

After a few semesters of realizing the academic writing-based classes were not working in terms of developing his students' skills, Allen substantially restructured his course's content and had his students do creative writing. It was then he noticed a dramatic transformation. His students found meaning in their work, developed their own style, and also—perhaps most important—significantly improved their craft. Allen's students even reported his writing class was helping them write better in their other university courses (Allen, 2000).

If the above cases of Nash and Allen show us the problems that academic writing can often pose for native users of English, then how do we rationally expect our ELLs to fare any better? Again, I do not wish to suggest we completely eliminate academic writing in AEPs or IEPs. However, it does not appear to be the most effective kind of writing for our ELLs.

5. The Natural Solution: Creative Writing

As mentioned above, I have created and implemented creative writing activities (both in EFL and ESL contexts), and I have designed and taught intermediate and advanced level creative writing programs, workshops, and capstone courses for AEPs and IEPs in the States and abroad. The inspiration for the activities and courses was the result of observing the frustration that my students felt because of their lack of a command in writing papers on abstract topics that were either program or textbook driven. They were also dealing with some basic language issues. I quickly noticed that my students were struggling just like Allen's undergraduate students had struggled due to similar reasons.

However, once I introduced the creative writing activities or started the creative writing classes, I observed an immediate change in both the students' attitude *toward* writing and the *actual* writing being produced. I will now discuss

one specific program that truly transformed the students and the way writing was taught and understood at an American IEP.

One of the best recorded success stories regarding my advocacy for and implementation of creative writing took place at the Center for English as a Second Language at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, Illinois. In 2010, I was asked to teach writing to an advanced section of ELLs (level five) but was surprised that they could not adequately write a solid paragraph. I consequently inquired what the students focused on at the high intermediate level (level four). I was told they wrote paragraphs and three to four academic essays on U.S.-related topics; for example, the U.S.-Mexico border issue and same-sex marriages. I was immediately astonished by two points: First, the content of the writing topics seemed unrelated to that group of ELLs; and second, these students were still struggling with the basic idea of a paragraph.

After observing the same issues with my advanced students for two eight-week sessions, I asked the director of the IEP if I could restructure our high intermediate section (level four) and turn it into a creative writing workshop. This, I felt, would better prepare the students by developing control, comfort, and confidence in their writing, and I knew–based on other programs I had created–it would help them with the academic writing in their higher-level courses.

The tools used in creative writing are numerous. For instance, the students learn how to effectively use a myriad of new lexical items and various kinds of sentences that help in pacing, tone, and effect. They also begin to play with the language which allows them to take risks and develop more quickly as writers and users of the language (Maley & Duff, 1989, p. 9).

I was granted permission to implement the creative writing class in the spring of 2011. During the eight-week session, my ELLs worked on short forms of poetry, flash fiction, persuasive personal letters, children's stories, dialogue-focused stories, and short autobiographical narratives. We also worked on developing well-structured and coherent paragraphs. These paragraphs were important because we used them as our *evaluation tools* to critique and reflect on each other's work. That is, in addition to peer reviewing the poetry, prose, and letters, the students wrote paragraph-length critiques, focusing on one strong point and one point that needed work regarding their creative writing pieces. In short, the ELLs used both creative and critical writing in this workshop.

As we moved along through the eight-week session, my ELLs' sense of clarity, detail, comfort, cohesion, and unique style became noticeably developed. What also stood out was the *joy* they exhibited in the writing process and in sharing their work with the class. The reason was simple: They were writing about experiences, memories, and concepts that they knew about, and this gave them confidence to write and write better.

We also did a great deal of modeling in the program. That is, my teaching assistants and I modeled the creative writing activities and concepts for and with

the students. Such a practice is crucial in order for the students to embrace writing, play with the tools and techniques, and see that writing is a complex process of discussing ideas, brainstorming, writing, rewriting, peer reviewing, editing, and proofreading (Urbanski, 2006, pp. 26–30).

Because of its success, the creative writing seminar was permanently adopted and implemented into the IEP curriculum. The decision was based on three significant factors (Randolph, 2012, p. 73). First, the students in the program were required to take exit essay exams in order to move from one level to the next. On average, before implementing the creative writing seminar, 50% to 60% of the ELLs passed from level four to level five; however, they still struggled with paragraph structure and continuity in essays. In contrast, after implementing the creative writing seminar, 80% to 95% of the ELLs passed the exams. The writing instructors in the program who graded the exit exams noticed an overwhelming difference in the quality of sentence and paragraph structure. They also noticed more attempts at risk-taking and experimentation with the language (e.g., a creative use of metaphors and effective alliteration). Second, the instructors teaching the other skills in the program, like reading and grammar, noticed a marked improvement in their ELLs' coherence and depth in writing. Their grammar use was reported as much improved as well. And third, the students reported to the director and on class evaluations that they became more engaged in the writing process. They no longer saw writing as just a skill, but they discovered it to be "a way of thinking" and "a new way of observing life." Moreover, they felt their creativity was accepted and this motivated them to blend their creativity with their critical thinking. This experience was paramount in the developmental process, as its effect on the learners was both inspirational and motivational. The synthesis of critical and creative thinking, in general, is a great benefit for all learners because it promotes confidence and control in acquired skills and activities (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013).

According to the students, "creative writing helped them learn to 'play with the language,' 'appreciate the language,' and 'view it as a living thing that grows'" (Randolph, 2012, p. 73). With the new student enthusiasm, the faculty and director's support, and the added energy from the graduate assistants teaching the additional sections of level four, creative writing found its way into the IEP and helped the ELLs with the academic-based writing that awaited them in level five. These students all went on to succeed in their pre-medical, nursing, engineering, and education programs; and, they received high praise from their advisors on their ability to write well, focus on the topics, and pursue the various arguments from both sides of the issues covered in these classes. This, I believe, was solely due to their training in creative writing, because the decades of academic writing at this IEP did not yield the same results.

6. Support from Neuroscience and Cognitive Psychology

If there is one field that the English language teaching and learning community ought to work more closely with, it is neuroscience. Discoveries and deeper insights are being made daily about the brain and how we learn best. I would thus like to make four arguments for using creative writing in AEPs and IEPs based on recent research done in neuroscience and cognitive psychology (Immordino-Yang, 2016; Randolph, 2019; Randolph & Ruppert, 2020; Ratey, 2002).

6.1. Emotions

Perhaps one of the strongest reasons to use creative writing in AEPs and IEPs is the fact that it promotes the use of the emotions in learning far more than academic writing. Immordino-Yang (2016), in her book, *Emotions, Learning, and the Brain*, goes into great detail about the impact that emotions have on learning. She shows that "[i]t is literally neurobiologically impossible to build memories, engage complex thoughts, or make meaningful decisions without emotion" (p.18). If we reflect for a moment, we see the need for emotion in learning is built into our evolutionary DNA, for emotions have ensured that we encode, store, and retrieve information that has helped us to survive throughout human history.

The topics we use in creative writing are guided by an effective balance of reason and emotion (Randolph & Ruppert, 2020, p. xi). Reason is used to make the poem or story coherent, ordered, and genuine. Emotion is used to make the reader feel the situation and help the author communicate his or her thoughts on a very genuine and humanistic level. In short, reason and emotion work hand in hand to make the writing clear and tangible, understandable, and intriguing.

6.2. Flexibility and Variation

In her cutting-edge book, *Research-Based Strategies to Ignite Student Learning*, Willis (2006) explains the importance of flexible learning or approaching learning from various techniques and methods, and she asserts that

> [t]he more ways something is learned, the more memory pathways are built. This brain research discovery is part of the reason for the current notion that stimulating the growth of more dendrites and synaptic connections is one of the best things teachers can learn to do for the brains of their students. (p. 3)

As above, academic writing tends to be formulaic and template driven which is fine for advanced writers; however, our ELLs are in a dynamic and fragile process of learning English and how to write. Creative writing, on the other hand, gives students a myriad of ways to write and communicate their feelings, insights, and thoughts through poetry, prose, drama, and creative nonfiction. That is, writing in

various ways ultimately enhances our ELLs' writing and thinking skills and helps them become versatile in the craft.

6.3. Personalization

Willis's (2006) work suggests that the more teachers allow their students to personalize the content or skill, the more their students learn and find meaning in the process. Eagleman (2015) compares human brains to snowflakes in that each is intricately unique; as a consequence, the way we perceive reality is unique. "You don't perceive objects as they are. You perceive them as you are" (p. 33).

Highly academic topics or abstract concepts have their place in English language learning, to be sure. However, while our students are trying to learn the language and develop a very demanding skill like writing, we need to allow them to write based on who and what they are. This includes their inner personhood and their unique memories and experiences. If we allow them to use their own self as the subject of their work, they not only foster a challenging craft in an intimate way, but they also undergo a unique self-discovery. And ultimately, in personalizing the content of the writing, they make it their own, they give it meaning, and this becomes the natural segue into developing their own style and way to play with and manipulate the language and the craft. Thus, creative writing, through personalizing the content and the skill, allows ELLs to become the masters versus the slaves of the writing process.

6.4. Enjoyment

The fourth argument is perhaps the most essential: We need to do creative writing because it is simply a great deal of fun. The ELLs enjoy it, and it gives them a chance to actually create and contribute to their own language development. Furthermore, given how I have observed the students engaging, experimenting, and taking risks with the creative process, it truly appears that creative writing produces more positive neurotransmitters that create happy students. Immordino-Yang (2016) has shown that happiness is chemically produced by eliciting dopamine, endorphins, oxytocin, and serotonin. Each of these is responsible for creating a happy mental state, and each is elicited during the creative process and sharing the work in a classroom community. Of these four, dopamine (the motivation neurotransmitter) and oxytocin (the comfort, safety, and trust neurotransmitter) are perhaps the ones most responsible for the fun and happiness produced while doing creative writing and sharing the poems and stories in the class. Again, if our ELLs are emotionally engaged in the content and the craft, reacting positively to the flexible nature of the genres, internalizing the topics, and using their personhood, then great joy and enthusiasm will naturally motivate them. It is this joy, this valuable creative instinct that makes both writing and learning inspiring endeavors.

7. Conclusion

Writing is no easy skill to master, and it becomes even more burdensome for learners who are working in another language, addressing topics that are abstract in nature, and writing in a style that is equally unfamiliar. Creative writing, however, can help our ELLs build a strong sense of comfort, control, confidence, and ultimately joy in writing because they are inspired to use what they are familiar with in order to communicate their feelings, ideas, and thoughts. The topics come from their personhood, and they learn to develop a unique style based on who they are. I thus encourage AEPs and IEPs to consider using more creative writing as a tool to help their ELLs learn to write. This will motivate them to genuinely enjoy the writing process, and it will develop their writing skills for their university level classes as well as their life beyond the classroom. Through this enlightening experience, our ELLs will feel the rich and vibrant energy of Walt Whitman; they too will understand the meaning and importance of his insight, "I am the poet of the body, And I am the poet of the soul" (1855/1986, p. 44). By following the path of creative writing, our ELLs will embody its definition and truly connect with the reality that it nurtures a unique way of embracing life and allowing the spirit and the mind to grow with the simple yet profound offerings of each passing moment.

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In-Faculty Practicum for TEFL Undergraduates at a Specially Created, On-The-Premises Language School: A Study in Innovation

ABSTRACT
Teacher trainees often consider the practicum to be the most critical aspect of their pre-service training. However, its duration is frequently insufficient, necessitating teacher-trainers to explore methods of increasing the trainees' direct teaching experience. The present study focuses on one such attempt – the establishment of a language school within a faculty – and its six-year existence. The study examines how participating teacher trainees received the project, with 30 of them taking part in a survey, which forms the basis of qualitative analysis and an overall project evaluation. Responses from the participating trainees reveal that they perceive the program as a unique and the most beneficial part of their teacher-training period. The trainees report having made significant progress, particularly in areas such as workload management, lesson-planning, utilization of materials, addressing students' needs, and general teaching fluency. The project's Director of Studies conducted observations to evaluate these areas, and the results align with the trainees' self-evaluations. The project is an innovative practicum type that encourages reflective practice and has led to changes in the ELT training carried out by the faculty.

KEYWORDS
practicum, teacher training, self-regulated learning, reflective teaching, peer observations, pre-service teaching

1. Introduction

The practicum has long been recognized as a key component in pre-service teacher-training programs and is judged by the trainees themselves as the most valuable part of their vocational preparation (e.g. Grudnoff, 2011; Mattsson et al., 2011; Pospíšil, 2017). It provides an immersion-type environment (Erben, 2005, p. 283) facilitating natural, experiential learning in authentic classrooms, and is undoubtedly the most direct way of connecting teacher-training theory with hands-on practice, thus surpassing in authenticity the microteaching sessions often carried out in teacher-training classes (Johnson & Arshavskaya, 2011). During practicum trainees encounter situations that are typical of the target teaching environment and are encouraged to discuss and analyze these with

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their mentors. This contributes to the development of teacher confidence and self-reflection skills, the latter of which is generally seen (see e.g. Farrell, 2018; Ghaye, 2011; McGregor & Cartwright, 2011; Richards & Farrell, 2011; Richards & Lockhart, 1994; Rushton & Suter, 2012) as essential for the development of teaching professionals. Furthermore, the practicum tends to promote the growth of teaching fluency (Erben, 2005, p. 284).

During practicum trainees become familiar with out-of-classroom routines involving not only lesson planning and preparation but also the administrative aspects of being a teacher. Trainees may be encouraged to familiarize themselves with curricular documents and observe their implementation in day-to-day school life. They learn how to manage class-switching in the shortest of breaktimes; observe staffroom communication between colleagues, staff meetings and other school activities. All this eases the transition from teacher education programs to actual teaching career and raises trainees' awareness of theoretical and practical components of the profession and their interconnectedness. Moreover, well-executed practicums increase the likelihood of novice teachers' persevering in their profession within the early years of employment (Twomey, 2007).

Whilst most successful education systems are those that effectively combine the theoretical preparation of teachers with a strong teaching-practice component (Braun, 2008), no definition of the most efficient practicum model has been universally agreed upon. Various models exist (see e.g. Mattsson et al., 2011), and with varying results (Gray et al., 2017). Among the main variables in the models are the number of practicums during the whole course of teacher training; their duration; the degree of independence; the timing within the overall course; and the assessment tools. Gray et al. (2017) suggest that trainees prefer extended practicums to shorter ones. Much depends also on the thoroughness of the mentor (Pospíšil, 2017). However, mentors do not always receive training in providing feedback and may not always be fully aware of the importance of their role. Moreover, as Ure et al. (2009) observe, their work may not be sufficiently monitored by the teacher educators.

Johnson and Arshavskaya (2011) recommend that teacher-training programs ought to ensure that the all-essential theory-to-practice link is exploited not only at the end of a program but during the course of it, so that trainees have regular opportunities to hone practical skills along with theory. This is in line with Korthagen (2001), who advocates a practice-to-theory model in which practice comes first and facilitates the gradual acquisition of theory and experience.

While the practicum is an official requirement in the Czech Republic, the way in which it is carried out varies from faculty to faculty. Teacher-training courses are organized primarily by faculties of education but sometimes also by other faculties (of science, the arts etc.). On the whole, faculties of education include more direct classroom experience than do the latter-mentioned institutions, which

tend to prioritize the development of technical skills required within the given field. At the faculties of arts, the main focus is on the development of sound theoretical foundations in the respective fields of expertise and the space for practicum is often restricted. Consequently, the practicum sometimes fails to meet the students' needs and expectations (Pospíšil, 2017) in terms of both its duration and the quality of feedback.

As an English-teacher trainer at a faculty of arts, I was aware of the lack of teaching opportunities in its study programs and started to seek different ways of extending them. In keeping with Mattsson et al.'s (2011) I embrace the notion of there being three strands of knowledge that play a part in the education of pre-service teachers, namely: "declarative knowledge (knowing that), procedural knowledge (knowing how) and conditional knowledge (knowing when and why to apply certain procedures)" (p. 5). Whilst not adhering to the purely technicist view of teaching as a set of discrete behaviours that can be practised and eventually adopted by the trainees, I find that in the work of a foreign-language teacher the fluent command of certain specific classroom procedures both saves time and helps create an environment conducive to learning. That these techniques and procedures need to be understood in the light of theory goes without saying. But surely these techniques also have to be presented to trainees – and tried out by them – 'for real', so that they may evaluate them and decide whether or not they will include them in their repertoire, respecting principles of self-regulated learning. The question was where to find the space in what was already a very tight study program.

Following the usual path of bringing the sense of 'real' classrooms into the TEFL courses in the form of classroom videos, micro-teaching slots and voluntary observations seemed to offer only limited opportunities. It became clear that real teaching time would simply have to be sought outside the scope of the study programs. And there seemed to be no solution more ideal than the setting up of the faculty's own language school. The aim of this article is to present a report of how this idea was brought to fruition and what we have learnt during the six years of its existence.

2. The on-the-premises in-faculty language school *JazykoFFka*

In 2016 the faculty published a list of requisite levels of English for each administrative position and applied for a grant to provide tuition which would help employees reach the standards and keep them. I came up with the idea that a faculty's own language school run by its English teacher-trainees could be established. While it would help the faculty, it would give its teacher-trainees the much-needed teaching practice. The suggestion was approved by the faculty's management and the school, henceforth in this study referred to as *JazykoFFka,* was founded.

The approximately 120 employees who were targeted were divided into 20 groups based on placement tests. Their proficiency ranges from A1 to C1+. The length of classes is set at 90 minutes per week. The courses are free for all faculty employees.

The teaching is carried out by English-language teacher trainees. They are paid an hourly rate comparable to that typically paid at private language schools in Prague. The teachers rotate mostly on an annual basis so that as many of them get a chance to participate. They are obliged to participate in further methodological training and in compulsory peer observations. They are also involved in administrative affairs of the school and help run the placement tests, final test administration, teacher substitutions, timetabling and accounts.

The main coursebook chosen for all classes was the Oxford University Press *Navigate* series, supplementary materials (such as items from the National Geographic *Keynote* series for use in the most advanced classes) being purchased as per teacher suggestions.

To monitor standards, the director of the school carries out regular 45-minute observations and follow-up feedback sessions aimed to both encourage and foster improvement. In addition, each teacher is obliged to actively participate in two peer-observations per term, to complete and return an observation protocol, and to discuss findings with the observed teacher. Throughout the year the teachers are provided with on-going support in regular methodological seminars. These typically have a main topic (e.g., the teaching of pronunciation), in connection with which teachers are expected to come along prepared not only to present appropriate sample materials and classroom techniques but also to ask questions regarding specific problems they might have encountered in relation to that skill.

The progress of the course participants is monitored not only during the year by means of regular unit tests, but also in an end-of-year assessment designed to measure the student progress. These tests record a general upward tendency commensurate with the time spent in the classrooms. However, a long-term analysis of these tests is problematic because of employee fluctuation.

At the end of each term the employees are asked to complete course-evaluation forms. The comments are typically highly positive as regards both teaching standards and the courses in general, and, thus, they provide the teachers with a good deal of encouragement. Since the covid-19 pandemic the courses have been running online. Although this gives the teachers an opportunity to learn new teaching techniques, the employees miss the personal experience of live lessons. In its 6 years of existence the *JazykoFFka* has provided teaching experience for 30 teacher-trainees and catered for over 500 student places (many of the students are actually the same and stay at the school to maintain the level of their English).

At the end of each year teachers are asked to fill in an anonymous questionnaire designed to evaluate the school as a whole and their own learning experience.

This questionnaire consists of ten open questions designed to provide an evaluation of the school and the usefulness of the training tools provided. The current study showcases responses from 30 teachers, which were coded, categorized, and analyzed. The following chapter provides the results. It aims to describe the experience from the perspective of the trainee students and serve as recommendation for anybody who might consider launching a similar project.

3. Results – the school as seen by the teachers

The prevailing feature of the responses was the high frequency of positive adjectives, superlatives and intensifiers with which the respondents evaluated the overall experience of being *JazykoFFka* teachers. This was especially apparent in sections which reflected the teachers' awareness of the progress they had made. Such comments were present in all answers, in which repetitions of the more general "learning an awful lot", "improving" and "gaining experience, teaching fluency and automaticity" are interspersed with mentions of gaining confidence and loss of initial anxiety. The teachers highly valued the amount of freedom they had to experiment and try out a wide variety of techniques and develop their own preferred approaches and teaching styles, reaping the benefits of self-regulated learning combined with regular mentoring. Several mentioned that this was the most important element in their teacher-training and called the experience a "unique program".

The most frequently reported area in which progress was achieved is that of learning to cater for students' needs (e.g. regarding their proficiency, personal preferences and specific professional language needs) and learning to communicate with students about their expectations and requirements. The second most frequently mentioned specific area in which progress was made was felt to be that of effective textbook use and materials adaptation and development. Additionally, the majority of the teachers mentioned that they felt improvement in the areas of lesson planning and time management and learned to better prepare for lessons.

Various mentions of increased efficiency were also common. Teachers reported that lesson planning and preparation initially proved to be a frustratingly time-consuming activity but eventually required less time. The teachers reported a reduction from an initial 60 minutes needed to prepare a 90-minute lesson to c. 30 minutes. This was due to the development of various strategies such as the preparation of reusable materials, the designing of materials for use by more than one group, the maximizing of textbook exploitation and adaptation as a preferable option to designing new materials, the setting of personal time limits for preparation, and the use of good sources of reliable materials on the internet. Other strategies mentioned included making their plans less detailed (shifting from the initial writing out of detailed instructions for everything to eventually just sketching a lesson outline); becoming better acquainted with their textbooks

and thus knowing better how to work with activities; developing their ability to improvise (and occasionally even to teach without planning); learning to rely more on published teachers' books as sources of ideas rather than searching elsewhere; and acquiring a greater sense of what and how much could be achieved in one lesson and thus avoiding overplanning.

What the teachers were happiest with was the fact that extremely positive relations had been established between all course participants. This had greatly contributed to creating a highly enjoyable learning environment in which the initial anxiety from having to communicate in a foreign language was quickly abandoned. Several teachers mentioned a sense of pride in seeing their students' progress and realizing how much can be shared and expressed with even a limited level of language proficiency. In feeling that, they made a very positive move towards adopting the principles of communicative language teaching.

Asked to formulate a message to future teachers in the same project, they unequivocally labelled the experience as invaluable ("If I were to choose which component of my 5 years at university was the most useful for eventual employment it would definitely be teaching here", Teacher 5), and as an opportunity to experiment with teaching in a non-threatening environment where experimentation is not only possible but actually welcome. They appreciate being given the chance to develop their skills – both pedagogical and interpersonal – under professional guidance and with on-going feedback and support, thanks to which they have gained confidence and reliably assessed the extent to which teaching is the right profession for them. They have also found this the ideal environment in which to test in practice and very directly all the practical skills they developed in their TEFL seminars. Teacher 18 summed all this up by saying that "This is the best school for anyone thinking of taking up teaching as a profession".

One of the tools the teachers highlighted as essential was the regular peer observations. As observers, the teachers appreciated not only the new ideas they encountered ("I instantly adopted some of the techniques and used them in my own classes", Teacher 2) but also the fact that they were led to self-reflection and the realization of some of their own weaknesses ("I realized I didn't pay enough attention to teaching and recycling vocabulary", Teacher 16). As observers, the teachers appreciated the feedback from their peers, and the contribution of it to self-reflection ("The observers' views helped me identify the problematic aspects of my teaching, especially when different observers pointed out the same things", Teacher 13) but they also learnt to give and receive feedback and respond to negative points ("I had to think how to express criticism and how to receive it, and without being afraid of either.", Teacher 4). As regards working with criticism, one of the teachers expressed the view that training in this area would be very helpful as not all teachers know how to formulate and deliver constructive criticism and know what to focus on. The answers here revealed a high degree of maturity in

these novice teachers in terms of an ability to critically evaluate the experience of observing lessons and identify respects in which that experience was beneficial. It would appear that in such a project peer observations are a vital tool for learning to teach, and that even novice teachers are capable of providing quality feedback.

Asked to compare the *JazykoFFka* experience with official practicum, most were of the opinion that both experiences are quite different and indispensable. The main advantage offered by the language-school experience would appear to be lesson duration, which is 90 minutes as opposed to the 45 minutes generally timetabled at secondary schools. Teachers felt that preparing lesson plans for these longer lessons is much easier, as there is more space offered for the creation of variety and coherence, as well as to be more relaxed regarding time management and to spontaneously decide to devote more time either to a classroom activity that is proving especially enjoyable and beneficial or to an area of acquisition that is presenting a challenge. This all combines to make the language-school experience a more flexible one. At the same time, however, *JazykoFFka* classes take place only once a week, which, in comparison with secondary-school tuition, leaves the teacher with a diminished feeling of continuity. Trainees also observed that it was much easier for them to form successful relations with adult students than with teenagers.

There were three areas of the *JazykoFFka* project the teachers considered problematic: methodological, affective, and student-related. As regards methodological issues, the most frequently mentioned was the teachers' inexperience in planning and the time it required. Teachers also mentioned that learning to manage lesson time and follow lesson plans proved much more challenging than expected. They also felt pressure as a result of having to prepare interesting lessons every week, of not always knowing how to present new material effectively and of how to activate students, and experienced disappointment with "activities that looked good on paper but didn't quite work in the class" (Teacher 17). Some teachers felt restricted by the syllabus ("I occasionally felt a mismatch between the official needs (testing) and the need of the students just to enjoy the classes and talk", Teacher 22).

As for affective issues, the most commonly mentioned were nervousness, a lack of confidence especially when getting to know new students, and a fear of not being able to answer students' questions. Teachers also initially felt unsettled by the experience of being observed but reported that this feeling gradually faded as observations were a regular component of their work.

The largest number of problems were student-related, including practical issues like absences (and the consequent need to adapt lesson plans), and "people mismatch" in some classes. Some teachers also mentioned uncertainty as to how to deal with learner beliefs (e.g. students' claims not to like a certain textbook or their inability to accept that language learning happens also through communicating and

not only working through grammar exercises). But, as Teacher 28 observed, some of these problems actually supported the learning process: "It was hard, working with a student who often said how ridiculous some of the textbook exercises were. Whilst this was initially frustrating, I gradually learnt to see some sense in it and view activities more critically. And I learnt how to cope with such students".

Teacher 9 observed that one of the toughest challenges consisted in the fact the students were busy working adults: "For me the toughest aspect was finding the balance between wanting to teach them as much as possible and realizing that they are adult learners whom I cannot shower with homework and expect them to do it, or even make them do some learning at home at least once a week".

4. Conclusion

As the school's director I carry out regular observations and manage to see all teachers at the beginning and end of the year. Detailed notes taken at start-of-term observations help greatly with the preparation of repeat observations and with assessing the main areas in which progress was made, which very much correspond with the teachers' own perception of self-improvement. The most visible growth is in the confidence and fluency with which teaching is carried out, as well as in the planning and structuring of lessons.

Progress is also visible in the performance of the course participants themselves, the results they achieve in the final tests demonstrating very clearly that the courses have considerable effect on their language proficiency. Given both the low frequency of lessons (once a week) and the very busy lives of the participants, all adult professionals, this can surely be regarded as an achievement on the part of the trainee teachers and of the project itself.

The lesson learnt from those areas the teachers viewed as problematic (see above) is clear: these young teachers need to be thoroughly trained in matters of lesson planning (using concrete, practical examples of lesson plans and of ways of compiling them), effective coursebook use, classroom management techniques, and in dealing with adult learners and ways of approaching their beliefs and attitudes. Regular meetings and workshops to discuss these matters are highly recommended as they have proved invaluable to the success of the project. Their effect on the professional development of the teachers and the self-regulatory nature of the project appears to be considerable.

The project demonstrates the feasibility of creating an environment for teacher training within one's 'home' institution, using local space and resources and founding an innovative type of practicum in which trainees not only receive regular feedback on their own work but also see long-term progress in their own students, a situation that is all too hard to create in shorter-term practica. The experience is evaluated very positively by the trainees, who claim it to be a unique program and one of the most meaningful components in their vocational preparation. The trainees feel

they make considerable progress in many aspects of lesson preparation and delivery, which is proved by both the official observations and the responses contained in feedback forms from peer observations. On an affective level, trainees feel they gain confidence, whilst on a practical level they become more efficient in preparing and conducting lessons. The experience serves to simulate an environment close to that of a 'real' school, as teaching is complemented with other regular duties including reflection, observation of peers, attendance at meetings and workshops, and for close interaction between the teachers. At *JazykoFFka* all of this happens on a much larger time scale than within the usual official practicum, which, in the Czech Republic, is rarely of more than a month's duration, whilst the *JazykoFFka* experience takes place over a whole academic year. The trainees, however, point out that both forms of experience are important as the official practicum provides experience in teaching at real schools.

One of the greatest benefits of *JazykoFFka* to the research and professional development of the current author – also author and supervisor of the project as a whole – is the close, on-location contact with the trainees, the language learners and the teaching itself; this would have been hard to achieve by simply monitoring a group of TEFL students involved in standard practice, which take place at different locations and therefore could not have been as closely and consistently monitored by the teacher trainer, let alone by the trainees' peers. This has also led to the reevaluation of some components in existing TEFL courses taught at the same institution (e.g. lesson planning and management, efficiency techniques, working with coursebooks etc.).

As has been illustrated in literature, the practicum is without doubt a key tool in pre-service teacher training, and interviews with trainees not only after their practicum experience but also later in their careers have shown that this is how trainees themselves also see it. And yet the length of the teaching practicum is still barely sufficient in many countries. Consequently, teacher trainers are obliged to find other ways of creating space for the practicing of teaching, and unfortunately many of the available options (which include microteaching, materials development, the viewing of recorded lessons etc.) are artificial and lacking in authenticity as they happen outside the real classroom and in the artificial conditions of teacher-training workshops and seminars. Whilst commercial language and teacher-training schools may carry out teacher training in the authentic conditions of the real language-school classroom, universities typically do not avail themselves of such options – unless, that is, they create their own on-the-premises language schools. Not only does the *JazykoFFka* project stand as convincing and tangible proof that this can be done, but it has also demonstrated that the results can be highly beneficial to all concerned: from teacher trainee to teacher trainer, from individual language learner to academic institution, from research to practice.

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