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Highlights

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Discovering Thoughts, Inventing Future

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L'écriture Scientifique En Langues Africaines : Arguments En Faveur Des Traductions Scientifiques Dans Les Langues Africaines

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Introduction- En tant que phénomène social, toute langue dépend de ses usagers pour évoluer. La valeur linguistique d'un mot dépend, dans une large mesure, de la valeur que lui accordent ses usagers. Ceci ne va pas sans rappeler la célèbre phrase de Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) : « la signification d'un mot est son usage dans le langage ». Les réalités de l'âge moderne se reflètent dans les objets technologiques qui nous entourent, ceux-ci devenant à leur tour les produits de découvertes scientifiques. La compréhension et la bonne maîtrise du langage scientifique sont les conditions *sine qua non* pour survivre dans une époque dominée par la science. Les exemples ne manquent pas : imprimantes laser, dispositifs sans fil, appareils portatifs, etc. Tant de nouveaux termes qui doivent être exprimés dans toutes les langues de l'ère moderne.

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L'écriture Scientifique En Langues Africaines : Arguments En Faveur Des Traductions Scientifiques Dans Les Langues Africaines

Priye Iyalla-Amadi

I. Introduction

En tant que phénomène social, toute langue dépend de ses usagers pour évoluer. La valeur linguistique d'un mot dépend, dans une large mesure, de la valeur que lui accordent ses usagers. Ceci ne va pas sans rappeler la célèbre phrase de Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) : « la signification d'un mot est son usage dans le langage ». Les réalités de l'âge moderne se reflètent dans les objets technologiques qui nous entourent, ceux-ci devenant à leur tour les produits de découvertes scientifiques. La compréhension et la bonne maîtrise du langage scientifique sont les conditions *sine qua non* pour survivre dans une époque dominée par la science. Les exemples ne manquent pas : imprimantes laser, dispositifs sans fil, appareils portatifs, etc. Tant de nouveaux termes qui doivent être exprimés dans toutes les langues de l'ère moderne.

D'un point de vue synchronique, toute langue africaine est *de facto* une langue du XXI^{e} siècle. Elle doit donc exprimer ou du moins trouver une expression pour les formulations scientifiques et manifestations technologiques présentes dans son siècle. Une existence diachronique dans une réalité synchronique n'est plus recevable. Si l'on refuse de s'adapter aux revendications linguistiques de l'époque, alors on risque, au mieux, la mise en péril d'une langue et, dans le pire des cas, lorsqu'un groupe persiste dans l'utilisation d'expressions archaïques, sa mort. De prime abord, la plupart des langues font face à la difficulté de transmettre un sens linguistique à leurs descendances, tâche pourtant simple si l'on transmet des termes linguistiques exprimant l'environnement immédiat de ces derniers. Pour la majorité des jeunes africains de milieu urbain, il s'agit par conséquent de téléviseurs plasma, d'imprimantes laser, de laparoscopies, d'activités internet, de transferts Bluetooth, de fonctionnement sans fil ou autres réalités de l'ère technologique.

L'existence d'une écriture scientifique en langues africaines supposerait l'explicitation des concepts scientifiques fondamentaux liés aux inventions technologiques récentes dans la langue maternelle de l'enfant. Comme l'a noté Benjamin Lee Whorf (l'un des deux auteurs de la célèbre hypothèse Sapir-Whorf), « Nous disséquons la nature suivant des lignes tracées d'avance par nos langues maternelles. » Cela impliquerait que les langues maternelles ou langues africaines des usagers africains auraient à développer suffisamment de termes exprimant ces réalités scientifiques de sorte que les enfants africains dissèquent leur environnement naturel à l'aide de mots présents dans leur langue. L'observation de Sapir selon laquelle la langue maternelle détermine notre appréhension du monde prend d'autant plus de sens.

Dans le présent article, nous tentons d'élaborer un cadre pour l'écriture et, éventuellement, l'enseignement des sciences en kalabari et yoruba, deux langues du phylum Niger-Congo. Nous mènerons une étude comparative entre ces deux langues africaines et deux langues indo-européennes, l'anglais et le français, dont les termes scientifiques semblent avoir des expressions prédéfinies. Il convient d'en examiner les raisons puis de déterminer, à travers l'étude du kalabari et du yoruba, comment les langues africaines peuvent atteindre ce même mode d'expression prédéfinie. Comme l'a souligné Afolayan (1980 : 53) dès 1980, toute langue peut tout exprimer. Fromkin et Rodman (1998 : 14) exprimaient la même idée lorsqu'ils affirmaient que, d'un point de vue purement linguistique, aucune langue ou variété de langue (dialecte) n'est supérieure à une autre. Toutes les grammaires sont complexes et logiques ; ainsi, pour exprimer une idée, elles ont à leur disposition un ensemble sans limite de phrases. Une chose exprimée dans une langue ou un dialecte peut être exprimée dans n'importe quelle autre langue ou dialecte. On aura certainement recours à des moyens et des mots différents pour l'exprimer. Nous souscrivons entièrement aux idées exprimées par les auteurs susmentionnés.

Examinons d'abord les attributs de ce qui pourrait être défini comme une langue scientifique. Nous estimons qu'une bonne compréhension de ces concepts fournirait des directives linguistiques justes en ce qui concerne l'écriture du langage scientifique dans les langues africaines de cette étude.

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II. Langages Scientifiques

Comment déterminer qu'un langage est un langage scientifique ? Pour paraphraser de David Crystal (2007 : 384), tout langage scientifique possède un vocabulaire scientifique et une grammaire qui lui sont propres. En d'autres termes, un langage scientifique devrait contenir des mots reflétant le sujet hautement spécialisé des domaines de recherches en sciences. Ce langage devrait aussi avoir des caractéristiques grammaticales complexes telles que les formes passives, etc.

Dans leur analyse du discours technique et scientifique, Vinay et Martin (1976 : 19) considèrent les caractéristiques suivantes comme étant indispensables :

- Une absence quasi totale de distinction entre discours oral et écrit
- Un usage homogène de la langue, résultant en l'absence de registres de langue
- Une objectivité communicationnelle, résultant en la disparition de tout procédé exprimant des sentiments ou des appréciations subjectives
- Une précision et une concision au service de l'information technique, entraînant des unités lexicales complexes, etc.

Notre question est la suivante: les langues kalabari et yoruba ont-elles les caractéristiques mentionnées ci-dessus pour exprimer des sujets scientifiques ? Si ce n'est pas le cas, comment peut-on les configurer linguistiquement pour qu'elles possèdent ces caractéristiques ? Il paraît intéressant d'analyser plus en détail la configuration linguistique de l'anglais et du français qui, dans le cadre de cette étude, seront définis comme étant des modèles de langage scientifique. La raison en est simple : la présence du français et de l'anglais dans la publication scientifique actuelle. Par exemple, la *chimie*, une branche des sciences naturelles, trouve son équivalent anglais : *chemistry*. Comment dirait-on en kalabari ? Ou en yoruba ? La formulation de termes exacts en langues kalabari et yoruba suppose une bonne connaissance de la chimie en tant que science des substances, de leur structure et de leurs réactions lorsqu'elles interagissent. L'écriture scientifique en langues africaines suppose par conséquent l'élaboration d'un programme d'enseignement adapté.

Il est utile à présent d'étudier les configurations linguistiques de nos « modèles de langage scientifique. » Le présent article vise à déterminer des similitudes linguistiques qui aideraient à l'élaboration d'un modèle pour l'écriture scientifique en langues africaines : le kalabari et le yoruba.

III. Modèles de Langage Scientifique

Par modèles de langage scientifique, nous entendons les langues ayant construit des structures lexicales et grammaticales pour exprimer des faits scientifiques et techniques. Ces modèles sont construits par les usagers d'un même groupe linguistique, généralement à force de réaliser des procédures scientifiques dans la langue. On pourrait soutenir que le développement industriel du continent africain et, par extension, son développement scientifique, a été tronqué par la présence invasive des puissances colonisatrices dès la naissance de la civilisation technologique africaine. Il convient également de préciser que, malgré cela, il n'existe pas de contextes plus favorables que d'autres à la sophistication d'une langue, le plus simple étant que les membres d'une communauté linguistique entreprennent consciemment l'élaboration de termes dans leur langue. Ceci, enfin, estl'objectif du présent article.

a) Modèle de langage scientifique 1 : l'anglais

Le premier modèle de langage scientifique que nous souhaitons étudier, à travers sa configuration linguistique, est l'anglais. Edward Finegan (1987) observe que bien que le mandarin est pratiqué par un plus grand nombre de personnes, l'anglais est la langue la plus pratiquée et diffusée au monde. L'anglais appartient au phylum germanique de la famille des langues indo-européennes. Elle est la langue principale des États-Unis, du Canada, de la Grande-Bretagne, de l'Irlande, de l'Australie, de la Nouvelle-Zélande et de plusieurs îles des Caraïbes nouvellement indépendantes. Elle est également langue officielle dans plus d'une douzaine de pays africains.

L'orthographe anglaise semble davantage éloignée de la langue parlée que celle des autres langues. Nous constatons toutefois que, selon de nombreux observateurs, il existe des avantages à cette distance entre langue parlée et langue écrite. En effet, l'on notera l'extraordinaire uniformité de l'anglais écrit et sa capacité de diffusion dans le monde.

Au sujet de l'expansion lexicale de l'anglais, Comrie (1987) démontre que les mots composés, préfixes et suffixes jouent un rôle important dans l'ajout de mots en langue anglaise. Quelques exemples suffiront à illustrer ce processus :

Lexème	Préfixation	Préfixation + Suffixation
radiate(verbe)	irradiate	irradiation
efficient(adj.)	inefficient	inefficiency
generate (verbe)	regenerate	regeneration
ionize (verbe)	de-ionize	de-ionization
pole(nom)	bipolar	bipolarity

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Nous estimons que le défi auquel se confrontent les usagers et linguistes de langues africaines réside dans leur capacité à reproduire le modèle de vocabulaire technique ci-dessus dans leurs langues respectives. Nous proposons de relever ce défi à travers la reproduction du modèle de discours technique en langue yoruba.

D'un point de vue syntaxique, l'anglais est une langue SVO, ceci étant l'une des raisons de son usage répandu. Aussi, comme l'a noté Finegan, les langues SVO tel que l'anglais sont plus simples que les langues dont l'ordre syntaxique est SOV ou VSO. De plus, il convient de souligner que, outre leur statut sociologique et politique, le chinois, le français, le russe et l'espagnol (toutes des langues SVO) sont les langues les plus diffusées, ainsi que l'arabe parlé. Fortuitement, ces six langues, avec l'anglais, constituent les langues officielles des Nations Unies. L'avantage des langues SVO résiderait dans l'identification claire du sujet et de l'objet : tandis qu'en langues SVO, ils sont séparés par un verbe, il n'existe aucune séparation en langues SOV ou VSO.

Il convient de souligner que l'une des langues africaines que nous étudions ici, en l'occurrence le yoruba, partage cette structure syntaxique. Cette caractéristique facilitera la construction d'un discours technique et, par extension, l'écriture scientifique en langue yoruba.

b) Modèle de langage scientifique 2 : le français

Rowlett (2007 : 3) affirme que la langue française est actuellement classée comme la dixième ou onzième langue la plus parlée dans le monde. Le français est une langue romane dérivant, via le latin, de la branche italique de l'indo-européen. Les statistiques fournies par Battye *et al.* (2000 :2) démontrent que, selon un rapport du gouvernement français de 1999, environ 112 660 000 francophones sont classés comme *francophones réels* (c'est-à-dire pratiquant le français tous les jours, en langue première ou secondaire), tandis que 60 612 000 autres sont classés comme *francophones occasionnels* (c'est-à-dire pratiquant le français de manière occasionnelle, dans des pays en développement ou des sociétés bilingues). À ceux-ci s'ajoutent environ 100 à 110 millions apprenants le français comme langue étrangère. On peut ainsi considérer que le nombre actuel de francophones est d'environ 283 272 000 millions dans le monde. Crystal (2007 : 384) ajoute que, outre le grand nombre de francophones autonomes en Europe, un français africain existe au Canada francophone, aux Antilles et au Maghreb (Algérie, Maroc et Tunisie). En Afrique noire, le français est la langue officielle de seize états francophones indépendants.

D'un point de vue phonologique, une majorité des sons en français ne sont pas représentatifs de leur orthographe (cf. bleu, peur; brun, brune, vielle, ville, etc.). Toutefois, le français comme le yoruba sont des langues qui utilisent des marqueurs de tonalité ou d'accentuation pour faciliter la prononciation et distinguer certains mots présents dans la langue (cf. la, là ; ou, où; du, dû ; mais, maïs, etc.). Voilà probablement pourquoi le lexicographe R.C. Abraham utilise des exemples français pour illustrer le système tonal yoruba dans son dictionnaire ! (cf. Abraham, 1958 : xi). Le kalabari est similaire au français à cet égard, à l'exception peut-être de son utilisation de signes diacritiques souscrits ('ẹ' [ɛ], 'ọ' [ɔ], etc.), caractéristique que le kalabari partage avec le yoruba, également du phylum Niger-Congo.

Harris nous indique que, dans la structure syntaxique de la littérature française, l'ordre des constituants d'une phrase de base est SVO, c'est-à-dire que le sujet (qui est obligatoire) précède le verbe, qui précède le(s) complément(s), dans une phrase positive et déclarative. Aussi, il convient de souligner que, en sus de cet ordre SVO, il existe une grande variété d'ordres possibles, impliquant la dislocation d'un ou de plusieurs éléments associé(s) à un verbe à sa gauche et/ou à sa droite dans le groupe nominal.

Exemple: J'aime Marie (Je-Sujet, aime-Verbe, Marie-Objet/Complément)

Mais: Marie, je l'aime; Moi, j'aime Marie; Je l'aime, Marie, etc.

D'un point de vue morphologique, nous examinons ici les processus dérivationnels, avec une attention particulière aux techniques de formation des mots employées pour faciliter l'expression de faits techniques en langue française. Tandis que la préfixation domine dans les processus de formation des mots en yoruba, en français, le processus affixal le plus employé est la suffixation qui assure davantage la création de mots. En français, les mots illustrant une action ou un processus se terminent généralement par le suffixe « -age » ou « -ion ». L'auteur ou l'agent d'une action est représenté par le suffixe « -eur », qui est souvent fondé sur la forme suffixale « -age ». Prenons quelques exemples de Vigner et Martin (1976 :22-23) :

Verbe	Nom (Processus)	Nom (Agent)
broyer	broyage	broyeur
démarrer	démarrage	démarreur
souder	soudage	soudeur
forer	forage	foreur

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Dans le paradigme de discours technique, nous tenterons de reproduire plus loin dans cet article le modèle technique ci-dessus dans notre langue africaine.

c) Modèles de langage africain « scientifisé »

Nous avons opté pour le terme modèle de langage « scientifisé » pour décrire les langues africaines que nous souhaitons adapter à des fins scientifiques. Nous avons cité plus tôt (cf. Fromkin & Rodman, 1998) que toute langue est en mesure d'exprimer ce que son usager souhaite. On aura recours à différents moyens ou mots mais, quel que soit le concept linguistique que l'usager souhaite exprimer, son expression est possible. Dans la présente section, nous analyserons les configurations linguistiques de nos deux modèles de langues du phylum Niger-Congo, le kalabari et le yoruba.

i. *Le kalabari*

La langue kalabari fait partie de la branche ijoïde du phylum Niger-Congo, plus particulièrement du groupe ijo de l'est. Selon Williamson et Timitimi (1983) et plus tard Jenewari (1989), les autres membres de ce groupe sont l'okrika, l'ibani, le bille et éventuellement le nkoro. De même, Dapper (2003) affirme que les Kalabari sont une tribu du peuple Ijaw vivant dans la région du delta du Niger ouest du Nigeria. Le groupe comprend les langues ison, nembe, bille, kula, ibani, tombia, okrika, etc. On en trouve des usagers partout dans le monde mais plus précisément dans l'État de Rivers au Nigeria, Afrique de l'Ouest.

Harry (2005) nous indique que les premièresétudes de l'orthographe kalabari débutent en 1949 lorsque que B.A. Harry publie *« Kalabari tari go diri » (Introduction au kalabari)* suivi d'une autre introduction, cette fois de N.T. Akobo, en 1953 :*« Wa nimi n'ibi ai » (Ce qu'il faut savoir).* Ce n'est qu'à la suite de ces efforts individuels que le gouvernement commence à financer des projets de recherche sur l'orthographe des langues africaines, ouvrant ainsi la voie à la publication de manuels kalabari par des chercheurs érudits tels que Berepiki (1971), Williamson (1972) et Jenewari (1972). Plus récemment, on a mis en oeuvre des moyens plus modernes de diffusion de la langue.

C'est le cas par exemple du dictionnaire électronique anglais-kalabari de DawariBraide, actuellement en cours de préparation pour sa consultation en ligne. Le site virtuel se trouve à l'adresse suivante : www.kalabari-dictionary.org. Il existe toutefois un dictionnaire sous forme manuscrite, qui était en la possession de la regrettée Professeur Kay Williamson, mis en ligne par Roger Blench. Ce manuscrit, qui sert véritablement de dictionnaire, est consultable à l'adresse suivante : www.rogerblench.info/Language/Niger-Congo.

D'un point de vue phonologique, le kalabari est, comme le français, une langue tonale. Harry (2005) explique qu'en kalabari, les mots sont produits par une combinaison de tonalités et segments sonores (voyelles et consonnes). Certaines similitudes existent entre le français et le kalabari. Par exemple, les symboles phonétiques [i] and [ì] marquent le même son dans les deux langues, comme dans le cas de « ici » [isi] (français) et « igoni » [igoni] (kalabari);« frère » [frɛr] (français) et « lẹgi » [lɛgi] (kalabari). Notons toutefois, dans notre second exemple, que, pour le même son, le kalabari utilise le signe diacritique « ẹ » tandis que le français utilise l'accent grave « è ». Les signes ou marqueurs diacritiques sont des signes qui, lorsqu'ils sont ajoutés à une lettre, modifient sa valeur ou permettent de distinguer deux homographes. Selon Dapper (2003), ces marqueurs permettent de distinguer les lettres de l'alphabet kalabari figurant ci-dessous et leur changement de sens :

b; b dans bele; þele (clair; mouvement)
d; d dans dein; dima (paix; changement)
e; ẹ dans mie; miẹ (ceci ; faire)
i; ì dans iri; ìrìa (sec; jeune fille)
o; ọ dans obiri; ọþọkọ (chien; poule)
u; u dans ikulele; ikuta (fer; perle de corail).

ii. *Le yoruba*

D'après la classification de Williamson (1989 : 23), le yoruba appartient aux langues benoué-congolaises, un sous-groupe des langues nigéro-congolaises. La majorité des locuteurs se trouve dans les états du Sud-Ouest du Nigeria, comme Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Osun, Oyo et dans quelques régions de l'Edo, du Kogi et du Kwara. On peut trouver d'autres locuteurs aux Antilles, au Brésil, à Cuba, au Sierra Leone et dans certains pays d'Afrique occidentale comme le Bénin et le Togo. De récentes statistiques fournies par Crystal (2003 : 289) estiment le nombre de locuteurs du yoruba dans le monde à 25 millions.

Selon Pulleyblank (1987 : 142), la plupart des procédés de formation du mot en yoruba sont morphologiquement dérivationnels et non flexionnels. Ils répondent à deux phases : la préfixation et la duplication. Celles-ci sont divisées en deux parties : une classe « abstraite » et une classe « agentive ». Les préfixes de la classe agentive comprennent entre autres « a - », « o / ò » et « olu - ». En ce qui concerne les préfixes qui forment les noms abstraits à partir des phrases verbales, Rowlands (1969 : 184) remarque qu'il y en existe principalement deux : « i - » et « a - ». Les deux préfixes peuvent se greffer à une base verbale simple, par exemple « imo - » - connaissance (mo - savoir) ; « alo - » - allant (lo - aller). Dans de nombreux cas, « i - » et « a - » peuvent se substituer librement l'un à l'autre, par exemple « isoye », « asoye » (explication). Bamgbose (1992 : x) préconise l'usage de ces deux préfixes à des fins de distinction sémantique, c. à d. le

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préfixe « i - » pour désigner les noms abstraits (le procédé) et le préfixe « a - » ou « à - » pour les noms concrets (le résultat).

L'ordre syntactique de base du yoruba serait S - V - O, c. à d. que le sujet précède le verbe qui lui-même précède l'objet. Pulleyblank donne un exemple de cet ordre dans la phrase suivante : « Baba (nom) ra (verbe) Bata (objet) / Père acheta des chaussures. ». Awobuluyi (1979 : 20) donne le même ordre sujet - prédicateur - objet, et l'illustre dans la phrase : « Ojo ra moto / Ojo acheta un véhicule. ».

Toutefois cet ordre syntactique n'est pas fixe et peut changer selon les locuteurs et leur pratique de la langue. Néanmoins il est généralement reconnu que la structure S - V - O du yoruba facilite son apprentissage et, comme nous le verrons plus tard, elle est une caractéristique partagée par de nombreuses langues dans le monde.

D'un point de vue sémantique, les mots du yoruba peuvent être utilisés pour tout dire ou presque. La langue affiche tous les processus sémantiques de polysémie, d'antonymie, de synonymie, d'homonymie, etc. Afin d'assurer son expansion lexicale, l'une des techniques employées est ce que NEIDA et NERDC (1988) ont appelé un néologisme sémantique. C'est une technique qui implique les éléments porteurs de sens d'une langue dans le but d'acquérir les sens ou l'essence d'un terme ou d'une expression dans une autre langue (par exemple « ranmupe » - nasalisation). Une autre ressource sémantique est la technique de l'extension sémantique. Celle-ci vise à accroître le nombre de sens distincts présents dans la langue. Pour ne citer qu'un exemple, le mot « opo », qui veut dire « un poteau droit soutenant le toit », peut aussi vouloir dire « le radical d'un mot » (morphologie), « un poteau électrique » (lexique), ou « la limite d'un circuit électrique » (science physique).

D'un point de vue phonologique, le yoruba est une langue tonale et de ce fait, les marques de la tonalité y jouent un rôle important. Il existe aussi des signes diacritiques placés sous certaines lettres pour marquer une descente ou un ton grave comme dans « e / ẹ » ; « o / ọ » ; « s / ṣ » ; etc. Ce phénomène se produit aussi en kalabari. Il y a trois tons majeurs : Aigu, désigné par un accent aigu (') ; Moyen, qui est généralement non marqué ; et Bas, représenté par l'accent grave (`). Comme l'a remarqué Katzner (1995), ces accents ne marquent pas une accentuation mais plutôt une variation de la voix. Néanmoins, le plus important est d'observer que plusieurs mots ou groupes lexicaux du yoruba se distinguent les uns des autres par le ton. Par exemple : « igbá » (calebasse) ; « igba » (deux cent) ; « ìgbà » (temps). « ọkọ » (houe) ; « ọkọ » (mari) ; « ọkọ » (véhicule), etc. Awobuluyi souligne aussi que la grande majorité des verbes en yoruba sont monosyllabiques de forme C - V, c.-à-d. Consonne - Voyelle, comme l'indiquent les verbes suivants : « wa » (venir) ; « lọ » (partir) ; « mu » (boire) ; « ri » (voir) ; « ra » (acheter), etc.

À ce niveau, nous souhaitons reproduire le paradigme du discours technique développé en français, mais cette fois en yoruba. C'est grâce au processus morphologique de préfixation et de duplication partielle que cette opération a été possible :

Verbe	Nom (Processus)	Nom (Agent)
lọ	lilọ	alagbalọ (broyeur / humain)
(broyer)	(broyage)	ọlọ (broyeur / non humain)
ṣina	ṣiṣina	ạṣina (démarreur /humain)
(démarrer le moteur)	(démarrage de moteur)	iṣina (démarreur / non humain)
jorin	jijorin	ajorin (soudeur / humain)
(souder le fer)	(soudage du fer)	ijorin(soudeur / non humain)
gbẹho	gbigbẹho	agbẹho (foreur / humain)
(forer)	(forage de trou)	igbẹho (foreur / non humain)

d) L'écriture scientifique dans les langues africaines

De notre point de vue, l'écriture scientifique dans les langues indigènes implique des moyens linguistiques pour aider une langue à faire face à certains défis modernes. Nous nous réjouissons alors de remarquer les efforts des locuteurs de ces deux langues africaines en matière de grammaire et de lexique, afin de faire avancer leurs langues vers ce but. En ce qui concerne le kalabari, le Kalabari Language Development Unit, appartenant à un plus grand ensemble appelé Kalabari Bible Translation & Liturgical Review Committee, invente actuellement de nouveaux termes pour désigner les numéraux en kalabari, en utilisant le système métrique moderne. D'après les auteurs de ce travail (qui n'a pas encore été publié) : « Nous vivons dans une ère moderne en rapide évolution. Si nous ne nous adaptons pas de façon significative, nous ne pourrons pas communiquer efficacement avec les autres communautés linguistiques. » Il est sage de le remarquer en effet.

Avant les propositions de comptage numéral en kalabari, le système de compte impliquait un procédé mental assez compliqué de soustraction avant addition permettant d'arriver au nombre voulu. Par exemple, pour compter 5555, un locuteur du kalabari devait dire : « tẹsioforingieẹendẹ fa jei na jei na », ce qui correspond à : « soixante moins cinq mille, six cents plus quinze. » En d'autres termes, cinq mille six cents moins soixante

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plus quinze. Et tout ce calcul pour juste un nombre à quatre chiffres ! De plus, ce système de comptage ne peut gérer les grands nombres, le plus grand nombre existant dans la langue étant 8000. Dans une ère moderne où tout le monde parle de millions, de milliards, de billions, et même de billiards, chaque langue vivante ne devrait-elle pas se mettre à niveau et incorporer cet aspect moderne dans ses expressions ?

C'est en se souciant de cela que les membres du Kalabari LanguageDevelopment Unit ont proposé une nouvelle approche où dix (10) est utilisé comme référence permettant la construction de n'importe quel nombre, jusqu'à un million et plus. Ils proposent donc le système suivant, par opposition à l'ancien :

Nombre	Ancien système de comptage	Système de comptage proposé
dix (10)	oyi (aati)	oyi (aati)
vingt (20)	si	maa oyi (deux dix)
trente (30)	suei	ẹtraoyi (trois dix)
quarante (40)	mesi	iniaoyi (quatre dix)
cinquante (50)	mesioyifinji	sọnọaoyi (cinq dix)
soixante (60)	tesi	sonioaoyi (six dix)
soixante-dix (70)	tesioyifinji	sọnọmaoyi (sept dix)
quatre-vingt (80)	inia si	niineaoyi (huit dix)
quatre-vingt-dix (90)	inia si oyifinji	eseniaoyi (neuf dix)
cent (100)	sọnọa si	ondra

Notons que les termes de l'ancien système de comptage ne sont pas réguliers, ce qui les rend difficiles à retenir pour les jeunes esprits (ceux qui sont supposés faire perdurer la langue). Ce nouveau système possède une certaine uniformité : un attribut indispensable au discours technique et à l'écriture scientifique dans une langue. De plus amples efforts pourraient aller jusqu'à rendre les termes proposés plus concis et plus succincts dans le but de mieux appréhender et exprimer la pensée scientifique.

En se basant sur ce format lexicologique en kalabari, les auteurs du système sont capables de créer des nombres plus grands qui permettent de compter jusqu'à un million, puis jusqu'à un milliard, et enfin un billion et au-delà, comme indiqué ci-dessous :

Nombre en français	Nombre proposé en kalabari
cent (100)	ondira
deux cents (200)	maa ọndira
trois cents (300)	ẹtaọndira
mille (1000)	gbọrutawa
deux mille (2000)	maa tawa
trois mille (3000)	ẹtatawa
un million (1 000 000)	gbọrumilia
deux millions (2 000 000)	maa milia
trois millions (3 000 000)	ẹtamilia
un milliard (1 000 000 000)	gbọrubilia
deux milliards (2 000 000 000)	maa bilia
trois milliards (3 000 000 000)	ẹtabilia
un billion (1 000 000 000 000)	gbọrutirilia
deux billions (2 000 000 000 000)	maa tirilia
trois billions (3 000 000 000 000)	ẹ tratirilia, etc.

Comme indiqué ci-dessus, les locuteurs d'une langue sont les mieux placés pour proposer des termes en utilisant les ressources propres à leur langue. Les ressources linguistiques de toute langue sont vastes : elles peuvent être morphologiques, grammaticales, lexicales, syntaxiques, morphophonologiques, etc. Par exemple, dans le cas d'« un billion », les auteurs proposent un terme qui serait conforme à la structure phonologique du kalabari, c'est-à-dire CV - CV (Consonne - Voyelle) quand un mot commence par une consonne. Ainsi nous obtenons « tirilia » pour traduire « billion », et non « trilia ». Il est important de remarquer cela pendant les formulations lexicologiques dans n'importe quelle langue. C'est aussi une stratégie de traduction qu'Iyalla-Amadi (2000) appelle 'emprunt phonologiquement intégré'.

De notre côté, nous avons proposé d'importer d'autres termes scientifiques et technologiques dans la langue kalabari. Ces termes sont :

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obokumaye	réfrigérateur	refrigerator
ọfrimaye	radiateur	radiator
samunọmaye	séchoir	drier
gbẹẹye	broyeur	grinder

C'est en respectant la règle de restitution du discours technique et en suivant certaines étapes de traduction technique et scientifique que ces résultats furent obtenus. Un autre critère à respecter est la nécessité d'être concis et précis dans l'expression d'un terme technique, comme le montre cet exemple : « Obokumaye »est un mot composé et la contraction d'une paraphrase plus longue « wakẹyeobokumaar' bẹye »(ce que l'on utilise pour garder une chose au frais).

Pour notre second modèle de langue africaine « scientifisée », le yoruba, nous avons établi un modèle des termes lexicologiques que nous avions utilisés. Cette compilation de termes lexicologiques évolués représente pour nous une démonstration de l'écriture scientifique par la reconnaissance d'une réalité scientifique dans un environnement donné, et ensuite par un choix linguistique conscient et délibéré dans la formulation de termes en langue africaine. Ceci est, selon nous, la façon la plus sûre de promouvoir la construction d'un vocabulaire scientifique dans n'importe quelle langue. Nous avons choisi de reproduire cette compilation de termes techniques évolués en yoruba :

Verbe	Nom (Processus)	Nom (Agent)
lọ	lilọ	alagbalọ(broyeur / humain)
(broyer)	(broyage)	ọlọ(broyeur / non humain)
ṣina	ṣiṣina	aṣina(démarreur / humain)
(démarrer le moteur)	(démarrage de moteur)	iṣina(démarreur / non humain)
jorin	jijorin	ajorin(soudeur / humain)
(souder le fer)	(soudage du fer)	ijorin(soudeur / non humain)
gbẹho	gbigbẹho	agbẹho (foreur / humain)
(forer)	(forage de trou)	igbẹho(foreur / non humain)

Afin de rendre des termes techniques et scientifiques qui permettent de mettre en lumière la science en yoruba, nous nous inspirons de l'excellent travail de J.A. Engr. Odetayo (1993), auteur d'un dictionnaire de génie physique anglais - yoruba. Prenons au hasard un échantillon de ces définitions techniques issues de ce dictionnaire :

aérodynamique	imọaayanalafẹfẹ
bifocal	eleejiatẹjumọ
calibrer	fiyeleiwọn
diélectrique	idaojiji
pivot	itilẹ
gravité	ifalulẹ
hydrostatique	ẹkọaisunraomi
ionisation	igbeero
cinématique	imọiṣipo
radioactivité	akitiyanafẹka
coefficient de vélocité	afiyeweyeiyana

IV. Conclusion

Dans cet article, nous nous sommes efforcés de montrer que l'écriture scientifique dans n'importe quelle langue du monde est possible et tout à fait réalisable. La condition la plus importante pour développer un système d'écriture scientifique est la volonté des locuteurs d'être en adéquation avec leur époque, scientifiquement et technologiquement. Le kalabari l'a prouvé en prenant le taureau par les cornes et en proposant un système de comptage métrique pour faciliter l'expression de la pensée scientifique et de ses termes chez les jeunes locuteurs du kalabari. Le yoruba l'a également démontré en créant un site web en yoruba, ainsi qu'en développant des termes en génie physique en utilisant les ressources internes de la langue.

De notre côté, nous avons appliqué certaines stratégies de traduction comme les emprunts phonologiquement intégrés qui pourraient s'apparenter à ce que Vinay et Darbelnet ont appelé *l'emprunt* (1979) et *l'adaptation* (adaptation à la culture d'un environnement indigène). Nous avons aussi pris en compte la lexicologie pour incorporer des termes techniques en yoruba en proposant un modèle de mots

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techniques, et en ouvrant la voie à de futures formulations dans les deux langues africaines.

Par langue « scientifisée », nous entendons : la capacité, par le développement d'une conscience scientifique, à exprimer des notions scientifiques et techniques en langue africaine de manière à faire apparaître une amélioration des conditions de vie, en accord avec les réalités de notre temps. Le développement d'une conscience scientifique n'est possible que par l'enseignement à partir de l'école primaire des concepts scientifiques et techniques en langue africaine. Ceci permettra aux enfants de « voir », ou de mieux visualiser, ces concepts grâce aux mots issus de leur langue et ainsi de les placer dans une position de façon à bien « disséquer [leur environnement naturel] selon les lignes posées par leurs langues [indigènes]. » (Benjamin Lee Whorf).

Nous souhaiterions conclure avec cette recommandation d'Awe et Oluwole (1992 : 10) que nous considérons comme *à-propos* :

Il deviendra nécessaire de commencer l'enseignement de la science et de la technologie dans nos langues africaines pour que les enfants nigérians et la vaste majorité des Nigérians capables de lire et d'écrire en anglais [et en français]puissent le percevoir comme faisant partie de la culture de l'humanité.

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Students' Attitude towards English Language Common Courses

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Abstract- This study is intended to investigate the students' attitude towards English Language common courses: Communicative English Skills and Basic Writing Skills (CES and BWS) which are delivered to all freshman students at Wolaita Sodo University, Ethiopia. The students' attitude towards the courses was not encouraging. They did not give enough time to study English common courses; rather they focused on their major courses only. As a result, their grades in these courses became very low. To explore the students' attitude towards these English common courses, descriptive research method was used. To collect data from both students and instructors, questionnaire and interview were employed. The major populations of this study were all freshman students at Wolaita Sodo University in 2016 G.C. The researcher selected 500 students out of 3,000 students using stratified sampling technique to address students in each department. Results showed that students believe their major courses are more important than English common courses. Consequently, they give much time to study their major courses. Most students also think that English common courses are not essential, but they think as additional courses.

Keywords: students' attitude, english common courses, medium of instruction, major courses, freshman students, communicative english, basic writing skills.

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Students' Attitude towards English Language Common Courses

Endale Endrias Arega

Abstract- This study is intended to investigate the students' attitude towards English Language common courses: Communicative English Skills and Basic Writing Skills (CES and BWS) which are delivered to all freshman students at Wolaita Sodo University, Ethiopia. The students' attitude towards the courses was not encouraging. They did not give enough time to study English common courses; rather they focused on their major courses only. As a result, their grades in these courses became very low. To explore the students' attitude towards these English common courses, descriptive research method was used. To collect data from both students and instructors, questionnaire and interview were employed. The major populations of this study were all freshman students at Wolaita Sodo University in 2016 G.C. The researcher selected 500 students out of 3,000 students using stratified sampling technique to address students in each department. Results showed that students believe their major courses are more important than English common courses. Consequently, they give much time to study their major courses. Most students also think that English common courses are not essential, but they think as additional courses. Students think that language courses do not need studying, so they do not pay attention to study the English common courses. The students do not like to participate in practical activities while learning the English common courses due to fear, influence of their mother tongue and etc. They also choose to learn in their mother tongue than in English. Finally, recommendations are forwarded based on the results and conclusions.

Keywords: students' attitude, english common courses, medium of instruction, major courses, freshman students, communicative english, basic writing skills

I. Introduction

Attitude is "a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor" according to scholars called Eagly and Chaiken (1993, 1). Again, as cited in Chambers, 1999, another scholar called Azjen states attitude as the individual's positive or negative evaluation of performing the particular behavior of interest." In line with the definition of these scholars, this study focuses on investigating students' attitude towards English Language common courses: Communicative English Skills and Basic Writing Skills (CES and BWS). The courses are given to all freshman students of Wolaita Sodo University. These courses were designed with the intention to make first year students competent in communicative English Skills and English Writing Skills. The instructional medium in Ethiopian Universities is English. In support of this, Kachru (1985, 16) states that English Language is used as a medium of instruction in many universities worldwide, particularly in non-native speaking countries with a vision for future access to the scientific and technological progress in the developed countries. Chen & Kraklow (2014) also confirm saying English has also become a necessary tool for global higher education institutions to compete with one another and promote more internationalization by accommodating both international and domestic students who use English as a medium of instruction. The English language has immense importance internationally. Thus, students who study at university level should be competent in using the language. These English common courses were designed out of this need. Learning any language depends mainly on the attitude of a learner. Thus, the learners' positive attitude to learn a language is quintessential for success in learning a language. Taking CES and BWS courses in the first year has much importance for the students' future time in helping them to communicate with their teachers and classmates and to express their ideas in writing without difficulties. In these courses, students are expected to get key elements to remove their communication and writing barriers they may face in their coming years of study.

However, the freshman students who take the aforementioned common courses do have wrong attitude towards them compared to the objectives why the courses were intended. It is common for students to feel uncomfortable towards these courses. The students do not see the courses as essential; rather they see them as less important and as if they do not add any value to their study. As a result, they give very less time to study these courses. They want to spend their time studying other major courses. They read or prepare themselves on the common courses only when they have tests and examinations. When they were given home works and assignments, most of the students come unprepared. If something like paragraph writing assignment is given to these students, instead of practicing and writing by their own, most of them have it done by other senior students thinking that they will score better marks. Writing is an ability that one masters not by getting it done by others but through self devotion. One can best learn to communicate and write in English if one is interested and continuously involved

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in daily practical activities. Generally speaking, the students do have very low attention to follow these English common courses.

Due to the above reasons, the students' performance in CES and BWS courses is very low. The students cannot communicate with their teachers and class students in English as expected having completed the courses. The gaps they do have in their CES and BWS courses is clearly observed especially when students deliver presentations and written assignments respectively. Lack of attention to these English common courses affects their learning of other courses and their future stay in the university since English is the medium.

The achievement in learning a foreign language depends not only on cognitive factors. but also on affective factors such as attitude and motivation Berna (2016, 1). Therefore, the researcher found it is very important to explore the students' attitude towards the English common courses.

a) Objectives of the Study

This study is designed to realize the students' attitude towards English Language common courses: CES and BWS courses given to all freshman students in Wolaita Sodo University. It also tries to set directions to help learners express themselves in better communicative and written English by suggesting on their wrong perceptions.

II. Research Design

In this study, the descriptive survey method was employed in order to know the learners' attitudes towards the English Language common courses given to first year students in Wolaita Sodo University. This is because this method is designed to portray the participants in an accurate way.

a) Population and Sample

In the data collection process, it is important to ensure that the data is representative of the population. The populations of this research were first year students of Wolaita Sodo University who were taking CES and BWS English common courses in 2016 G.C. They were 3,000 in number; out of this number, 500 sample respondents were selected. This makes 16.6% of the total population. Thus, the researcher believed this sample could represent the population. Out of forty three English teachers who were teaching English common courses, 20 teachers were used as questionnaire respondents, and the researcher selected five of them and five students for the interview.

b) Sampling Technique

The researcher excluded English Language students, because all English courses are equally important for them, and they do not have English common courses. The author used stratified random sampling technique to select respondents from different colleges, schools and departments in Wolaita Sodo University. From the students who were already grouped into departments, the researcher selected randomly from within each group.

c) Tools of Data Collection

Having decided the sample size, the researcher designed data collection tools for students and instructors. The data collection tools used for this study were questionnaire and interview. The students' questionnaire and interview were prepared in two languages - English and Amharic; this is because some students may be more convenient to respond in Amharic. The students' questionnaire comprised 8 items, and the teachers' consisted of 12 items. The respondents were given questions to answer using a 5 point Likert scale as: Strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree and strongly disagree. Also the researcher used interview because as Ballou (2008) states, Likert type items sometimes may not reveal the other sides of the medals in the questionnaires. Again the researcher wanted to triangulate the data obtained using questionnaire.

III. Results and Discussions

a) Results and Discussions of teachers and students questionnaire on students' attitudes towards learning English common courses

The tables below show the students' and teachers' beliefs on students' attitudes towards English Language common courses.

Table 1: Teachers' responses on students' attitudes towards English common courses

No.	Statements	SA f %	Ag f %	Uc f %	D f %	SD f %
1.	Students think major courses are more important to learn than English common courses.	7 35%	10 50%	2 10%	1 5%	
2.	Students think that studying major courses is equally important to studying English common courses.		1 5%	3 15%	11 55%	5 25%
3.	Students give much time to study their major courses than English common courses.	7 35%	9 45%	4 20%		
4.	Students give equal time to study their major courses and English common courses.		1 5%	3 15%	4 20%	12 60%

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5.	Students are interested in taking English Common courses		3 15%	7 35%	10 50%	
6.	Students think English common courses are not essential but they are additional courses.	1 5%	14 70%	2 10%	3 15%	
7.	Students think English is a difficult language for them to learn.	8 40%	9 45%	2 10%	1 5%	
8.	Students prefer learning in (their mother tongue) than learning in English.	3 15%	8 40%	7 35%	2 10%	
9.	When students are given English common courses' assignments, they do by their own.		2 10%	4 20%	5 25%	9 45%
10.	I think students like practical activities as they are learning English common courses.	2 10%	3 15%	2 10%	12 60%	1 5%
11.	I believe English is more important for only English majoring students; it is less important for other department students.				9 45%	11 55%
12.	While teaching English common courses, I do not treat English Department students and others equally.		3 15%		7 35%	10 50%

f=frequency %=percentage SA=Strongly Agree Ag=Agree Un=Uncertain Ds=Disagree SD=Strongly Disagree

Table 2: Students' responses on their attitudes towards English common courses

No.	Statements	SA f %	Ag f %	Uc f %	D f %	SD f %
1.	Major courses are more important than English common courses.	165 33%	111 22.2%	21 4.2%	145 29%	58 11.6%
2.	Studying major courses is equally important to studying English common courses.	202 40.4%	182 36.4%	58 11.6%	54 10.8%	4 0.8%
3.	I give much time to study my major courses than English common courses.	145 29%	95 19%	45 9%	128 25.6%	87 17.4%
4.	English common courses are not essential, but they are additional courses.	153 30.6%	207 41.4%	45 9%	50 10%	45 9%
5.	English is a difficult language to learn.	66 13.2%	99 19.8%	33 6.6%	136 27.2%	166 33.2%
6.	I like to learn English common courses	260 52%	161 32.2	16 3.2%	42 8.4%	21 4.2%
7.	I like to learn in my mother tongue than to learn in English.	99 19.8%	145 29%	33 6.6%	124 24.8%	99 19.8%
8.	I like practical activities while taking English Common Courses.	16 3.2%	41 8.2%	21 4.2%	178 35.6	244 48.8%

f=frequency %=percentage SA=Strongly Agree Ag=Agree Un=Uncertain Ds=Disagree SD=Strongly Disagree

b) Discussion of teachers' responses on students' attitudes towards English common courses

As it is indicated in table 1, item no. 1 above, majority of the teachers (85%) believe that students think their major courses are more important than English common courses. As per the teachers' interview, most students think that their major subject area courses are very important than English common courses and give more value to their major courses. They think that their major area courses are courses that provide them skills and knowledge that they will be using even after graduation in their field of study. They do not know that English is the medium that will help them a lot in gaining the skills and knowledge they deserve in studying a specific discipline. Again in item no. 2, table 1, majority of the teachers (80%) accept that students do not think that learning major courses and English common courses are equally important for them. This means that students give much attention to their major courses. This is revealed in item no. 3, table 1. In this item, (80%) of the teachers believe that students give much time to study their major courses than English common courses. Regarding this, one of the interviewed teachers explained that most of the students see the English common courses as additional courses that do not have much importance for their study. Evidently, most students do not come doing their assignments when they are given one. It is common to see some students trying to do their assignments in the classroom after 3 or 4 days stay without doing. In item 4, table 1, majority of the instructors (80%) disagree that students give equal time to study their major courses and English common courses. In item 5, table 1, (50%) of the teachers agree that students are not interested in taking English Common courses. According to one of the interviewed teacher, students do not think that English common courses belong to them. Most students do not show any interest in learning them. They do not show active participation in the topics that they have been learning since grade seven. In item 6, table 1, majority of the

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teachers (75%) also believe that students think English common courses are not essential, but they are additional courses. As the teachers' interview shows students do not know that English common courses are essential not only for this time but also for their future time of study. Many studies show that students who tend to have a better competency in English language tend to have a better achievement in their study, the interviewee added. Language is a key for learning. When a student has poor competence in English language, he/she has a tendency to have poor understanding of the subject matter that he/she studies, the teacher elaborated. Another interviewee also explained: Students do not value English courses as their major courses. This is the reason why they fail in the courses. If they value as their major courses, first, students will master the target language; second, they will gain better result in the courses. Again most of the respondents (85%) in item no. 7, table 1, believe that students think English is a difficult language for them to learn. Though the students have been studying English for more than twelve years, they find it difficult to understand. This shows that students do not pay due attention to the language. As a result, in item no. 8, table 1, the greater number (55%) of the teachers accept that students prefer to learn in (their mother tongue) than to learn in English. As one of the interviewed teacher's explanation, most of the students choose to learn in their mother tongue. The reason the interviewee gives is that students think that they understand better if they are taught in their own language. Of course this is true, the teacher continued. However, it doesn't work in learning the target language. In item no. 9, table 1, most of the respondents (70%) disagree that students do by their own when they are given English common courses' assignments. This is an implication that students did not internalize that the courses are important for them to improve their skills and knowledge in the area of these courses. Again in item no. 10, table 1, the larger part of the teacher respondents (65%) disagree that students like practical activities when learning English common courses. As said by one of the interviewed teacher, students act as if they were taking English courses for the first time. As they try to speak out English in the classroom, they show strong anxiety, and influence of their mother tongue is also observed. Therefore, they have very low interest to practically involve in activities. In item no. 11, table 1, all respondents (100%) strongly disagree that English is more important for only English majoring students; it is less important for other department students. As indicated by teachers' interview, English common courses are equally important for all students in different disciplines. The fact is that the medium is obviously English Language. Many researches show that the problem of Ethiopian students is not the difficulty of the subject matter/discipline they study, but it is the language problem, the interviewee added. In the last item of table 1, majority of the teacher respondents (85%) disagree that they treat English Department students and others differently while teaching English courses. This means that English common courses' teachers teach in the same way and treat equally both English majoring and other students.

c) *Discussion of students' responses on their attitudes towards English common courses*

As item no. 1 in table 2 depicts, majority of the students (55.2%) responded that they believe major courses are more important than English common courses. As it is explained in their interview, the students think that their major courses are very important for them not only for now but also for their future study in the university. On the other hand, in item no. 2, table 2, greater part of the respondents (76.8%) reacted that studying major courses is equally important to studying English common courses. As one of the interviewed students said, students believe in the importance of the English Language common courses. However, they fail to study them; they prefer to waste their time studying their major courses. They do not take English common courses as part of their courses. The current plan of Wolaita Sodo University to achieve 0.5% student attrition rate worsened the students' studying habit of English common courses. The students feel that there is "No Fail" policy. Most of the students simply want to get just a pass mark which is "C" in English common courses. Most of them do not expect more than this. Even though they believe that learning English common courses is equally important to their major courses, in item no. 3, table 2, the greater part of the respondents (48%) claimed the reality that they give much time to study their major courses than English common courses. According to their interview, this is because their major courses have continuity; and they will be more difficult gradually. If they do not give much time to study their major courses, they feel that they will go without understanding their major courses whose difficulty level gradually increases and they feel they may miss the foundation for their advanced courses that will be taken in the coming years. The students also think that their most important courses are their major courses. Even after graduation, the students sense they will be using the knowledge and skills of their major courses when they are employed. As it can be observed in table 2 item no. 4, greater part of the students (72%) responded that English common courses are not essential; they are additional courses. According to their interview, except very active students, others do not understand that English common courses are very important for their study. It is the language through which we study other courses. If a student lacks this language, he/she will not be successful in his/her study. At this level, English common courses are very essential because they were designed to fill in the gaps we do have regarding the

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language. Many students see them as additional and less significant; this is wrong perception, the student added. Another interviewee backed this idea saying - English common courses are intended to capacitate us for the coming study period. The language in which one learns through is a key part of the teaching-learning process. If one is not proficient in the language through which one learns, how can he/she understand the subject matter he/she studies? Therefore, English common courses do have a paramount importance for the success in our studies, the student explained. On the other hand, another interviewee responded that English common courses are not more essential than our major courses. She elaborated that having completed our study; we will not be using English since we are in the multilingual community that is not using English Language. Again most of the time, our teachers use Amharic to explain the main points. Students give much attention to understanding the content not to the English Language, the student briefed. In item no. 5, table 2, the larger number of the students (60.4%) responded that English is not a difficult language to learn. One of the interviewed respondents explained that students do not perform well in English. Most of the students think that language courses do not need to be studied; for example, when we were in lower grades, we did not study language courses - English, Wolaita Language and Amharic. This is the trend we have come across. Students score poor marks in English common courses not because the language is too difficult to learn, but because students do not pay much attention to study/learn the language. Another interviewee also said we have been learning the English Language for many years. This is enough time if one properly plans to learn the language. At lower grades teachers do not teach practically; especially speaking, listening and writing skills. If we had had situations in which we could learn by doing, we could have mastered it. Again many students think that they know English Language, but they do not know that they lack so many things. Knowing a language doesn't mean reading only. Rather a student should read and understand, speak, write and listen it, the student elaborated. For questionnaire item no. 6, in table 2, majority of the respondents (84.2%) agree that they like to learn English common courses. This means that students do not hate to learn in English. They would be very happy if they can use the language as they use their mother tongue. In the next item, in table 2, most of the respondents (48.8) express their belief that they like to learn in their mother tongue than to learn in English. According to their interview, this is because first, they think that they would understand better if they learn in their own language than in English. Second, they focus on understanding the content than the language. If the students were given an opportunity to choose to learn between English and their mother tongue, they would prefer to learn in their mother tongue. Regarding the last item, in table 2, majority of the respondents (84.4%) indicated that they do not like practical activities while taking English Common Courses. This means that the students do not have preference to participate in practical conversation in front of the class to improve their communicative skill, and they do not prefer to practice writing through repeated experience, according to their response. Of course, they are not seen participating in practical activities in a classroom. Their interview also clearly shows that students are afraid of making mistakes in front of their classmates. They do not want to be seen foolish before the class.

IV. Conclusions and Recommendations

a) *Conclusions*

In this paper, the author has presented the attitudes of students towards learning English common courses - CES and BWS at Wolaita Sodo University. Based on the results and discussions, the following conclusions have been reached. The students believe that their major courses are more important than English common courses; consequently, they give more value and time to study their major courses. Most of the students think that English common courses are not essential; but they think as additional courses. The students think English is not a difficult language to understand, and they think that language courses do not need studying. Thus, they do not pay due attention to study/learn English common courses as they do their major courses. Most of the students choose to learn in their mother tongue because they understand better if they are taught in their own language. The students do not do by their own when they are given English common courses' assignments. Students do not like to be involved in practical activities when learning English common courses; they do have strong anxiety, and influence of their mother tongue. Teachers strongly believe that English is equally important for English majoring and other department students; as a result, they treat both equally while teaching English Language common courses. Wolaita Sodo University's over ambitious plan to achieve 0.5% student attrition rate has a negative effect on students' studying of English common courses.

b) *Recommendations*

From the findings above mentioned, the following recommendations are forwarded: It is necessary to raise students' awareness towards English that it is not only used by native speakers but also it is widely used among second and foreign language speakers as communicative tool. Students should know that having positive attitude towards the language will help them learn the language easily; in support of this Shameem (2015:7) states that Language attitudes may have an effect on second language or foreign language

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learning. Students should understand that English common courses are equally important to their major courses, and they should give equal weight and time to study their major courses and English common courses as English is a tool through which they learn new information and skills. The learners have to know that English common courses are essential, and they are aimed to fill the gaps in their Communicative English and Writing Skills. To learn the English Language easily, the students are supposed to give due attention as they work on their major courses. As the medium of instruction in Ethiopian higher educational institutions is English, students should strive to learn only in English, and they have to work English common courses' assignments by their own. Students should understand that though English is not a difficult language according to their response, the language courses need studying. The students should not be afraid to speak or write in English in and outside the classroom though they make mistakes. Both lower grade teachers and instructors in universities should try to help the students by using various teaching strategies that directly engage them in different practical communicative and written activities. The teachers also should use only English Language to make explanations to the learners. Teachers' strong belief about the importance of the courses for English majoring and other department students, and treating both in equal approach while teaching English common courses has to be strengthened. Wolaita Sodo University's over ambitious plan to achieve 0.5% student attrition rate should be reviewed as it has a negative effect on students' studying of English common courses.

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Differences in College Readiness Rates in Two School Years for Students in Special Education

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Abstract- Examined in this study were the college readiness rates (i.e., reading, mathematics, and both subjects) of students who received special education services in the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years. Data from the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 Texas Academic Progress Reports were obtained and analyzed. Students who received special education services had a statistically significantly higher reading college readiness rate in the 2013-2014 school year than in the 2012-2013 school year. Mathematics college readiness rates were statistically significantly lower in the 2013-2014 school year than the 2012-2013 school year. The college readiness rates for both subjects approached statistical significance and college readiness rates were lower in the 2013-2014 school year. Of importance were the very, very low college readiness rates of students who were enrolled in special education. Implications of these findings and recommendations for future research are discussed.

Keywords: *college readiness, reading, mathematics, both subjects, special education.*

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Differences in College Readiness Rates in Two School Years for Students in Special Education

Kathrine Mahler [α] & John R. Slate [σ]

Abstract- Examined in this study were the college readiness rates (i.e., reading, mathematics, and both subjects) of students who received special education services in the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years. Data from the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 Texas Academic Progress Reports were obtained and analyzed. Students who received special education services had a statistically significantly higher reading college readiness rate in the 2013-2014 school year than in the 2012-2013 school year. Mathematics college readiness rates were statistically significantly lower in the 2013-2014 school year than the 2012-2013 school year. The college readiness rates for both subjects approached statistical significance and college readiness rates were lower in the 2013-2014 school year. Of importance were the very, very low college readiness rates of students who were enrolled in special education. Implications of these findings and recommendations for future research are discussed.

Keywords: college readiness, reading, mathematics, both subjects, special education.

I. Introduction

According to the Texas Education Agency (2015b), 442,476 students received special education services in the 2014-2015 school year. Students who receive special education services constitute 8.5% of the student population in the state of Texas. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004) mandates that students with disabilities be educated in the least restrictive environment and receive a free and appropriate education. Also stated was the expectation that students with disabilities would become college ready and would enroll in postsecondary education institutions.

Brand, Valent, and Danielson (2013) reported that students with disabilities are less likely than their peers to graduate high school and pursue postsecondary education due in part to low expectations. Also noted was that students with disabilities benefit from and are more prepared for college by learning the general curriculum with accommodations (Brand et al., 2013; Wilson, Hoffman, & McLaughlin, 2009). School districts should utilize the data they already collect to make decisions for effective learning for students with disabilities (Brand et al., 2013).

The focus for students with disabilities has shifted from independent living and social skills to postsecondary education to increase long term employment outcomes (Wilson et al., 2009). Adults with disabilities are 38% less likely to be employed between the ages of 21 and 64 than are their nondisabled peers. The median monthly income for adults with disabilities was just under 50% less than that of their nondisabled counterparts (Brault, 2012).

According to Madaus (2006), over 75% of people with a learning disability who obtained a postsecondary education were employed full time. He also stated that the majority of people with learning disabilities earned a salary commensurate with their peers who were nondisabled. Madaus (2006) discussed that 76.1% of people with learning disabilities who were employed received healthcare benefits from their employers. As such, he contended that the employment outcomes were more favorable for the adults with disabilities who attended a postsecondary institution than for those individuals who did not continue their education after high school. He also concluded that the employment outcomes were similar for adults with learning disabilities and people without disabilities.

In a study conducted by Chandler, Slate, Moore, and Barnes (2014), college readiness rates for high school graduates in Texas who were part of a special population were analyzed. They examined college readiness rates from the 2006-2007 to the 2010-2011 school years for reading, mathematics, and both subjects. In their study, reading college readiness rates for all students increased by almost 20%, whereas, scores for students who received special education services only increased by over 2%. Mathematics college readiness rates for students who received special education services did not increase over the 5-year period. College readiness rates for both subjects for all students increased by about 17%, but decreased slightly for students who received special education services. Chandler et al. (2014) concluded that scores for all students, students who were economically disadvantaged, and students who were Limited English Proficient had a greater increase in scores over the 5-year period than students who received special education services.

a) Statement of the Problem

The National Center for Education Statistics (2016b) reported that 59% of first time college students, who attended full time, graduated within six years of beginning their degrees. The National Center for

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Education Statistics also reported that 11% of students who attend college are students with disabilities. Students with disabilities tend to be older independent students instead of students attending directly after high school (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016a). In the 2011-2012 school year, 8.9% of the dependent student population were students with disabilities. According to the Economic News Release Persons with a Disability: Labor Force Characteristics Summary (2016), in 2015, 16.88% of adults age 25 years and older with disabilities complete a bachelor's degree as compared to 35.49% of adults age 25 and older without disabilities. Of those adults with disabilities who earned bachelor's degrees, 25.3% are employed. Adults without disabilities who have earned bachelor's degrees are employed at a rate of 75.9%. Stated in the Economic News Release was that people with disabilities were more likely to work in the service industry than were people without disabilities.

b) Significance of the Study

In the 2013-2014 school year, 23,654, or 7.8% of graduates received special education services in Texas (Texas Education Agency, 2015b). Only a few research studies were located in which the college readiness rates of students who received special education services were investigated. The college readiness rates of students who received special education services were the focus of this investigation. Results from this investigation have implications for school leaders and teachers. The findings of this investigation could provide educational leaders, school administrators, and policy makers with data they could use to improve the success of students in special education.

c) Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the degree to which differences might be present in the reading college readiness rates of students who received special education services between the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years. A second purpose was to ascertain the extent to which differences might exist in the mathematics college readiness rates of students who received special education services between the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years was examined. The third purpose was to determine the degree to which differences might be present in the college readiness rates for both subjects for students who received special education services between the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years.

d) Research Questions

The following research questions were investigated in this study: (a) What is the difference in the reading college-readiness rates of students who received special education services between the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years? (b) What is the difference in the mathematics college-readiness rates of students who received special education services between the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years? and (c) What is the difference in the college-readiness rates in both subjects for students who received special education services between the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years?

II. Method

a) Participants

Participants in this study were students enrolled in traditional Texas public high schools (i.e., Grades 9 through 12) who were identified as receiving special education services in the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years. Data from the Texas Academic Performance Reports for the identified school years were downloaded from the Texas Education Agency. The data analyzed for this investigation included college readiness rates for students identified as receiving special education services for 626 schools in reading, 586 schools in mathematics, and 573 schools in both subjects for each of the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years.

b) Instrumentation and Procedures

Data from the Texas Academic Performance Reports for the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years were obtained from the Texas Education Agency. After the data were obtained and downloaded the files were imported to the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software program. The files were then converted to a SPSS data file and labels were given to the relevant data utilized in this investigation. Data were reported from the schools to the Texas Education Agency, therefore minimal errors in the data are assumed to be present. For validity and reliability information related to scores, readers are directed to the Texas Education Agency website.

c) Definition of Terms

The Texas Education Agency (2015a) in the Glossary of the 2014-2015 Texas Academic Performance Report, defined college readiness as meeting or exceeding ready criteria on the TAKS exit level test, or the SAT, or the ACT test. According to the United States Department of Education Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004), special education is specifically designed instruction that meets the needs of students with disabilities. Special education includes instruction in the classroom, physical education, travel training, vocational training, and related services such as speech, occupational and physical therapy.

III. Results

Prior to conducting inferential statistics to determine whether a statistically significant difference was present between the college readiness rates in

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reading, mathematics, and both subjects for students receiving special education services in the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years, checks were conducted to determine the extent to which the data were normally distributed. An examination of the standardized skewness coefficients (i.e., the skewness value divided by its standard error) and the standardized kurtosis coefficients (i.e., the kurtosis value divided by its standard error) revealed substantial deviations from normality. All four standardized coefficients for each research question were far outside the bounds of normality of +/-3 (Onwuegbuzie & Daniel, 2002).

The data for college readiness rates in reading, mathematics, and both subjects for students who received special education services were not normally distributed, therefore a nonparametric statistical procedure had to be utilized (Slate & Rojas-LeBouef, 2011). Accordingly, a nonparametric Wilcoxon's dependent samples *t*-test was an appropriate inferential statistical procedure to calculate when the variables (i.e., reading, mathematics, and both subjects) are related (Slate & Rojas-LeBouef, 2011). In this investigation, college readiness in reading, mathematics, and both subjects were present for the same group of students receiving special education services for the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years and were at the interval/ratio level of measurement.

For the first research question, the Wilcoxon's dependent samples *t*-test yielded a statistically significant difference in reading college readiness for students who received special education services between the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years, $z = 4.06$, $p < .001$. The effect size associated with this difference. Cohen's *d*, was 0.15, small (Cohen, 1988). Students who received special education services had statistically significantly higher college readiness rates, 2.20% higher, in reading in the 2013-2014 school year than the 2012-2013 school year. The reader is directed to Table 1 for the descriptive statistics for college readiness rates in reading for students who were enrolled in special education.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Reading College Readiness Rates for Students Who Received Special Education Services in the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 School Years

School Year	*n* of schools	*M*	*SD*
2012-2013	626	15.95	14.64
2013-2014	626	18.15	14.93

Regarding the second research question, the Wilcoxon's dependent samples *t*-test produced a statistically significant difference in mathematics college readiness for students who received special education services between the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years, $z = -6.45$, $p < .001$. The effect size associated with this difference, Cohen's *d*, was 0.26, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). Students who received special education services had a statistically significantly lower college readiness mathematics rate, 4.18% lower, in the 2013-2014 school year than in the 2012-2013 school year. Presented in Table 2 are the descriptive statistics for college readiness rates in mathematics for students who received special education services.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Mathematics College Readiness Rates for Students Who Received Special Education Services in the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 School Years

School Year	*n* of schools	*M*	*SD*
2012-2013	586	22.15	17.08
2013-2014	586	17.97	15.20

In regard to the third research question, the Wilcoxon's dependent samples *t*-test yielded a result that approached conventional, but did not reach the conventional level of statistical significance in both subjects college readiness for students who received special education services between the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years, $z = -1.79$, $p = .07$. The effect size associated with this difference, Cohen's *d*, was 0.08, which was a less than small effect size (Cohen, 1988). Students who received special education services had a lower college readiness rate in both subjects, 0.86% lower, in the 2013-2014 school year than in the 2012-2013 school year. Readers are referred to Table 3 for the descriptive statistics for college readiness rates in both subjects for students who received special education services.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for College Readiness Rates in Both Subjects for Students Who Received Special Education Services in the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 School Years

School Year	*n* of schools	*M*	*SD*
2012-2013	573	8.33	11.07
2013-2014	573	7.47	10.21

IV. Discussion

In this investigation, differences in college readiness rates between the 2012-2013 and 2013-2104 school years for students who received special education services were addressed. The college readiness areas of reading, mathematics, and both subjects were examined. Statistically significant results were present for both reading and mathematics. The results for reading reflected an increase in the percentage of college ready students from the 2012-2013 school year to the 2013-2014 school year. These results were similar to the results obtained by Chandler et al. (2014) and by Holden and Slate (2016). The percentage of students who were college ready in the

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area of mathematics decreased between the two years. The differences in college readiness rates for mathematics were greater than the results reported by Chandler et al. (2014). Similar to the results of Chandler et al. (2014), college readiness rates in both subjects between the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years decreased slightly.

Though the college readiness rates in reading increased between the two school years, the increase was at a low rate and attention should be paid to the decrease in students who were college ready in mathematics. Due to the decrease in mathematics and the slight increase in reading college readiness the percentage of students who were college ready in both subjects slightly decreased over the two years. Minimal growth was present in the area of college readiness for students who receive special education services.

V. Conclusion

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004) outlined the need for students with disabilities to pursue postsecondary education options and increase college readiness. According to the Texas Education Agency (2015), the number of students who received special education services increased by approximately 7,600 students between the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. The percentage of students who were college ready was 18.15%, 17.97%, and 7.47% in reading, mathematics, and both subjects respectively. These numbers are concerning because the majority of students who receive special education services are exiting high school without the academic skills necessary to enter a postsecondary institution. Further research needs be conducted on special education services and increasing college readiness in students who receive those services as well as investigating the barriers to college readiness for students with disabilities. Further research is needed in the more current assessments utilized for college readiness.

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Differences in Academic Performance by School District Size for Students in Special Education: A Multiyear, Statewide Investigation

By Glenn E. Barnes, Jr., John R. Slate, George W. Moore & Cynthia Martinez-Garcia

Sam Houston State University, United States

Abstract- In this empirical statewide, multiyear analysis, the extent to which the academic performance of students enrolled in special education was influenced by school district student enrollment was determined. Five years of Texas statewide data on the Texas Assessment Knowledge & Skills Reading, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Writing exams were analyzed as a function of three school district sizes: (a) small-size (up to 1,599 students); (b) moderate-size (1,600 to 9,999 students); and (c) large-size (10,000 or more students). Inferential statistical procedures revealed that students in special education who were enrolled in large-size school districts had statistically significantly higher passing rates on all five exams than did students in special education who were enrolled in either moderate-size or small-size school districts for all 5 years. Effect sizes were small.

Keywords: students in special education, school district size, texas assessment of knowledge and skills, passing rates.

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Glenn E. Barnes, Jr [α]., John R. Slate [σ], George W. Moore [ρ] & Cynthia Martinez-Garcia [ω]

Abstract- **In this empirical statewide, multiyear analysis, the extent to which the academic performance of students enrolled in special education was influenced by school district student enrollment was determined. Five years of Texas statewide data on the Texas Assessment Knowledge & Skills Reading, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Writing exams were analyzed as a function of three school district sizes: (a) small-size (up to 1,599 students); (b) moderate-size (1,600 to 9,999 students); and (c) large-size (10,000 or more students). Inferential statistical procedures revealed that students in special education who were enrolled in large-size school districts had statistically significantly higher passing rates on all five exams than did students in special education who were enrolled in either moderate-size or small-size school districts for all 5 years. Effect sizes were small.**

Keywords: students in special education, school district size, texas assessment of knowledge and skills, passing rates.

I. Introduction

School district consolidation and its relationship to student academic performance and cost effectiveness has been and continues to be debated in forums involving school reform. During the 2013 legislative session, Texas State Representative Roland Gutierrez from San Antonio amended an education bill to require the Texas Education Agency to determine whether bigger Texas school districts would be better than the many small Texas school districts in existence (Mathis, 2014). On the opposite end of the spectrum, legislation was proposed to split school districts considered too large to improve performance. Specifically, Texas State Representative Jason Villalba threatened to split the 160,253 student Dallas Independent School District if it did not move faster with reform measures (Mathis, 2013).

In an effort to increase both engagement with school and academic achievement, school districts across the United States have created small high schools (Weiss, 2010). Pittman and Haughwout (1987) and Avila (2011) contended that small schools or smaller learning communities have greater student engagement, higher graduation rates, and high extracurricular participation than larger-size high schools. All of these factors contribute to academic success and positive feelings about the school experience. Cotton (1996) identified that small schools produce equal or superior achievement for students than do large schools. Smaller schools benefit students when their family background is atypical (i.e., economically disadvantaged) of what is considered successful (Leithwood, 2009). Proponents of small schools have identified several variables that contribute to student success within small school districts. Howley (1996) and Riggen (2013) emphasized the influence of economic status on student academic achievement and its relationship to school size. Riggen (2013) in her Ohio school size study established that economic status had the largest influence on student reading levels. In a study of West Virginia students, Howley (1996) contended that small schools were instrumental in the academic achievement of impoverished students, whereas large schools facilitated the academic achievement of affluent students.

Friedkin and Necochea (1988) also observed the same trends between school district size and socioeconomic status. In their investigation, larger school size was associated with positive effects for affluent students. Bullard (2011) identified in her study of California schools that larger size schools had positive effects on SAT scores, however, a negative influence was documented for overall school achievement. Bullard (2011) determined that every 100 students added to student enrollment in a school resulted in a decline in academic performance. Smaller size, by contrast, was associated with positive effects for students in poverty. In a Washington state study, Wilson (1985) determined that school systems of less than 2,000 pupils had greater proportions of higher achieving schools. Wilson in his study focused on the mathematics achievement of students in relation to school district size. Turner, Camilli, Kroc, and Hoover (1986), in their study of 102 Colorado school systems, documented that elementary pupil achievement decreased as school district enrollment increased.

Andrews, Duncombe, and Yinger (2002) identified an optimum size for a high school is between 600-900 students, even when student economic background is taken into account. Black (2006) also

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contended that the arguments in support of large schools, especially in the area of diversified curriculum can be counteracted by small schools, when they restructure their curriculums to suit their strengths. Small schools need to utilize more independent study to compensate for the lack of available course offerings.

Researchers (e.g., Ketchum & Slate, 2012; Lenear, 2013; Morris & Slate, 2012) have recently conducted studies utilizing state assessment data have established a different trend in student performance. These researchers established a positive relationships between large school size and student performance on state standardized testing. In a 2012 study, Ketchum and Slate documented that high schools with enrollment between 2,099 and 4,697 students consistently outperformed smaller-size high schools on standardized testing. Lenear (2013) compared the performance of Black, Hispanic, and White students in relation to school district size. She determined that school district size had a statistically significant impact on the academic performance of Black, Hispanic, and White students. In another recent investigation of school size, Morris and Slate (2012) analyzed student performance on Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate exams as a function of high school size. They documented that students enrolled in large-size high schools had statistically significantly higher passing rates than did students enrolled in either small-size or moderate-size high schools.

In an analysis of elementary school size and Black students it was established that Black students attending large-size elementary schools outperformed Black students attending small or very-small size elementary schools (Zoda, Combs, & Slate, 2011). Similar results were reported for Black and Hispanic middle school students in a study conducted by Riha, Slate, and Martinez-Garcia (2013). In their study middle school students attending larger-size middle schools statistically significantly outperformed middle school students who attended small-size middle schools on all four academic measures.

Lenear (2013), Ketchum and Slate (2012), Barnes and Slate (2014) have generated optimal sizes for school district size in reference to academic performance and administrative costs. The Texas Education Agency recently conducted a study in conjunction with the University of Texas at Dallas Education Research Center identified that cost savings can be expected for consolidations involving small districts, but as the size of the consolidated district increases past 3,200 students, costs are expected to rise, not fall (Gronberg, Jansen, Karakaplan, & Taylor, 2014). In deciding whether or not school consolidation is advisable, factors such as class size, administrative costs, and transportation costs must be considered (Barnes & Slate, 2014). When school size is considered in isolation, schools between 500 and 1,000 students are probably operating at peak economic efficiency (Turner & Thrasher, 1970). Sizable potential cost savings may exist by moving from a very small district (500 or fewer pupils) to a district with 2,000 to 4,000 students, both in instructional and administrative costs (Barnes & Slate, 2014).

a) School District Size and Special Needs Students

A literature review was conducted to identify relevant empirical published articles regarding school district size and its influence on the academic achievement of students enrolled in special education. Searches were conducted utilizing the EBSCO Academic Search Complete database and various other print and online sources. Articles were selected based on school district size and student academic performance; if they were peer-reviewed; contained full text; and were produced between 1962 and 2015. The articles selected were focused on topics related to school district size, instructional expenditure ratios, students with programmatic labels, economies of scale, and the demographic changes that are occurring in Texas that influence education.

Texas public school enrollment in 2013 was 5,058,939 students which represents a 21% increase over the previous decade (Texas Education Agency, 2014). Approximately 8.8% of students in Texas public schools are identified as students enrolled in special education (Texas Education Agency, 2014). This growth in students enrolled in special education represents a 3% increase from 2001-2012 (Texas Education Agency, 2014). The State of Texas currently provides special education services to 443, 834 students (Texas Education Agency, 2014).

Texas Education Agency guidelines follow federal government guidelines when making the determination of a student's eligibility for special education and related services (Texas Education Agency, 2013). An Admission, Review, and Dismissal committee made up of parents, diagnostician, school administrator, and teachers determine a student's eligibility for special education services. A multidisciplinary team collects and reviews evaluation data in connection with the determination of a student's eligibility (Texas Education Agency, 2013). With the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act, the identification rates of students enrolled in special education services has fallen across the state and nation (Harper, 2013).

Dawkins (2010) documented that students enrolled in special education performed better in resources classes in English and inclusion classes for mathematics and science. Students with disabilities performed better academically in schools where fewer poor students were present and the population was smaller in number (United States Department of Education, 1993). Wilson (2010) documented that

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students enrolled in special education programs consistently achieved better in middle and upper class cohorts than students in low-income cohorts. Student performance by special education class type was also analyzed. Hogan (2013) analyzed test scores of third, fourth, and fifth grade students enrolled in special education to determine the influence of inclusion classes and resource classes for special education students. Students performed better in regular education inclusion classes versus their peers in resource classes (Hogan, 2013).

Roach (2005) analyzed the influence of instructional expenditures per student receiving special education services, percentage of students receiving special education services, percentage of students receiving special education services taking the exam, and special education data analysis system rating on students enrolled in special education services to determine their influence on state testing. He determined that economic status was the dominant predicator of success of students enrolled in special education programs. Exemplary campuses in the state of Texas identified students enrolled in special education at lower rates than schools that obtained lower academic ratings. Exemplary campuses also exempted fewer special education students from the Texas academic assessment system test than any of the other accountability ratings (Grubbs, 2000). Campuses identified as low performing in the Texas accountability system had both the highest special education identification rate, and the highest special education exemption rate of the four rating categories in the Texas accountability system (Grubbs, 2000). In support of this study, Driscoll (2012) contended that additional funding for regular and special education programs must be provided so that students have research-based educational programs that foster student achievement and assist in closing the achievement gap.

b) Statement of the Problem

Students enrolled in special education are tested and their passing rates count toward the accountability rating of school campuses and school districts (Texas Education Agency, 2014). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act requires that each public school provide services to eligible students enrolled in special education in the least restrictive environment and in accordance with each student's individualized education program (United States Department of Education, 2015). Special education services are provided to 453,669 Texas students, this amount has increased by 3.0 percentage points between 2001-2002 and 2011-2012 (Texas Education Agency, 2014).

School district leaders and policymakers are analyzing the possibility of consolidating districts to provide more efficient and effective services to students in the state of Texas, as the push for accountability increases. In conjunction with these efforts, the influence on the academic achievement of students enrolled in special education will be examined to ensure they meet the requirements of a free appropriate public education under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Results of this empirical research investigation will add to the literature on the relationship of school district size and its influence on the academic achievement of students enrolled in special education.

c) Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this multiyear-statewide investigation was to ascertain the extent to which differences might be present in the academic performance by school district size for students enrolled in special education in Texas schools. Analyzed herein were the passing rates on the 2006-2007 through the 2010-2011 school year Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Writing exams. Given the education budget situation in Texas (and in many other states as well), policymakers and educational leaders need to make decisions, in this case regarding school district size, based upon the best available empirical information.

d) Significance of the Study

School district size and its relationship to the academic achievement of students enrolled in special education was the central focus of this study. Findings in this study may provide evidence that school district size is a statistically significant factor in the academic performance of students enrolled in special education. Examining the performance of students enrolled in special education is relevant within the state of Texas because this group constitutes 8.8% of the current student population (Texas Education Agency, 2014). Findings of this study may be used to develop standards and policies that will help increase the academic performance of students identified with programmatic labels.

e) Research Questions

Research questions addressed in this study were: (a) What is the difference in TAKS Reading passing rates as a function of school district size for students enrolled in special education?; (b) What is the difference in TAKS Mathematics passing rates as a function of school district size for students enrolled in special education?; (c) What is the difference in TAKS Science passing rates as a function of school district size for students enrolled in special education?; (d) What is the difference in TAKS Social Studies passing rates as a function of school district size for students enrolled in special education?; and (e) What is the difference in TAKS Writing passing rates as a function of school district size for students enrolled in special

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education? These five research questions were repeated for each of the five years of data analyzed herein. Thus, a total of 25 research questions were addressed in this investigation regarding the relationship of school district size to the academic performance of students enrolled in special education.

II. Method

a) Research Design

A causal-comparative quantitative research design (Schenker & Remrill, 2004) was used because it allowed for the testing of intact independent variables that are not amenable to experimental manipulation. Archival data from the Texas Education Agency Academic Excellence Indicator System database were analyzed for this article. The independent variable of school district size had already occurred, along with the passing rates on the TAKS tests. Accordingly, neither the independent variable nor the dependent variables were amenable to being manipulated.

Enrollment and academic data for the 2006-2007, 2007-2008, 2008-2009, 2009-2010, and 2010-2011 school years were extracted from the Texas Education Agency Academic Excellence Indicator System database. Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills test score data were analyzed to measure student performance rather than the STAAR (State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness) because of difficulties in implementation of the STAAR exam. Passing rate data for students enrolled in special education were obtained, along with school district enrollment numbers.

School district size was coded into three separate groups, using the definition provided by Cullen (2012). Enrollment was divided into small-size, moderate-size, and large-size districts (Cullen, 2012). Small-size school districts were identified as containing up to 1,599 students, moderate-size school districts had 1,600-9,999 students, and large-size school districts had 10,000 or more students (Cullen, 2012). These groupings were utilized so that results from this investigation could be compared to Cullen's (2012) study.

b) Participants and Instrumentation

All data were downloaded from the Texas Education Agency Academic Excellence Indicator System for the 2006-2007, 2007-2008, 2008-2009, 2009-2010, and 2010-2011 school years. From this website, the following variables were downloaded: school district student enrollment, student programmatic enrollment in special education, and passing rates on the TAKS Reading, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Writing passing rates. Data on the TAKS Writing test are not available for the 2011-2012 school year because that exam was not administered during that school year.

III. Results

To answer the five research questions previously delineated, a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) procedure was conducted, using school district size as the independent variable and the five TAKS measures as the dependent variables. Prior to conducting the MANOVA procedures for the five school years, its underlying assumptions were checked. Data normality, Wilks' Lambda, Box's Test of Equality of Covariance, and the Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances were specifically examined. These assumptions were not met, however, Field (2005) contends that the MANOVA procedure is sufficiently robust to be able to withstand these violations

For the 2006-2007 school year, a MANOVA revealed a statistically significant overall difference, Wilks' $\Lambda = .94$, $p = .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .03$, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988), as a function of school district size. Following this overall analysis, univariate follow up analysis of variance (ANOVA) procedures were calculated. A statistically significant difference was present for only the TAKS Writing test, $F(2, 313) = 5.73$, $p = .004$, partial $\eta^2 = .04$, small effect size (Cohen, 1988). Statistically significant differences were not revealed for the TAKS Reading test, $F(2, 313) = 0.50$, $p = .61$; the TAKS Mathematics test, $F(2, 313) = 0.61$, $p = .54$; the TAKS Science test, $F(2, 313) = 1.16$, $p = .32$; and the TAKS Social Studies test, $F(2, 313) = 0.29$, $p = .74$. Average passing rates on the TAKS Reading, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies exams were congruent for students enrolled in special education across the three school district sizes.

For the one statistically significant ANOVA, a Scheffé post hoc procedure was calculated to determine which pair of school district sizes differed. This post hoc procedure revealed that the TAKS Writing passing rates for students enrolled in special education were highest in large-size school districts in comparison to small-size and moderate-size school districts. Moderate-size school districts did not differ in their TAKS Writing passing rates from small-size school districts. Readers are directed to Table 1 for the descriptive statistics for the TAKS passing rates in the 2006-2007 school year by school district size for students enrolled in special education.

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Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for the TAKS Passing Rates in the 2006-2007 School Year by School District Size for Students Enrolled in Special Education

School District Size	*n* of school districts	*M*	*SD*
Reading			
Up to 1,500 students	28	71.64	10.77
1,600 to 9,999 students	198	70.89	11.67
10,000 or more students	90	72.30	10.04
Mathematics			
Up to 1,500 students	28	56.39	16.89
1,600 to 9,999 students	198	57.79	13.61
10,000 or more students	90	59.30	12.62
Science			
Up to 1,500 students	28	45.32	21.51
1,600 to 9,999 students	198	50.06	18.14
10,000 or more students	90	51.03	14.40
Social Studies			
Up to 1,500 students	28	70.54	17.64
1,600 to 9,999 students	198	71.09	14.71
10,000 or more students	90	72.31	10.02
Writing			
Up to 1,500 students	28	76.32	13.65
1,600 to 9,999 students	198	76.02	14.05
10,000 or more students	90	81.38	8.17

For the 2007-2008 school year, a MANOVA revealed a statistically significant overall difference, Wilks' $\Lambda = .87$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .066$, a medium effect size (Cohen, 1988), in overall student performance by school district size. Following the overall analysis, follow-up univariate ANOVA procedures were calculated. A statistically significant difference was yielded on the TAKS Science test, $F(2, 370) = 4.05$, $p = .018$, partial $\eta^2 = .021$, small effect size; and on the TAKS Writing test, $F(2, 656) = 13.41$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .068$, medium effect size (Cohen, 1988). Statistically significant differences were not revealed for the TAKS Reading test, $F(2, 370) = 0.01$, $p = .99$; the TAKS Mathematics test, $F(2, 370) = 2.38$, $p = .09$; and the TAKS Social Studies test, $F(2, 370) = .624$, $p = .54$. Students in special education had similar average passing rates on the TAKS Reading, Mathematics, and Social Studies exams across the three school district sizes.

Concerning the two statistically significant ANOVAs, Scheffé post hoc procedures were calculated to determine which pair of school district sizes differed. For the TAKS Science test, passing rates for students enrolled in special education were highest in large-size school districts in comparison to small-size school districts. No differences were observed on the TAKS Science exam between large-size districts and moderate-size districts or small-size and moderate-size school districts. Students in special education had higher passing rates on the TAKS Writing test in moderate-size school district in comparison to small-size school districts. Students in special education had higher passing rates on the TAKS Writing exam in large-size school districts than in small-size school districts. Readers are directed to Table 2 for the descriptive statistics for the TAKS passing rates in the 2007-2008 school year by school district size for students enrolled in special education.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for the TAKS Passing Rates in the 2007-2008 School Year by School District Size for Students Enrolled in Special Education

School District Size	*n* of school districts	*M*	*SD*
Reading			
Up to 1,500 students	61	73.70	13.07
1,600 to 9,999 students	219	74.00	12.62
10,000 or more students	93	74.02	10.42
Mathematics			
Up to 1,500 students	61	57.48	16.16
1,600 to 9,999 students	219	62.01	15.13
10,000 or more students	93	61.75	12.26
Science			
Up to 1,500 students	61	34.34	15.17
1,600 to 9,999 students	219	37.87	15.89
10,000 or more students	93	41.42	13.85

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Social Studies			
Up to 1,500 students	61	63.74	15.71
1,600 to 9,999 students	219	64.11	15.68
10,000 or more students	93	66.04	13.71
Writing			
Up to 1,500 students	61	70.59	14.98
1,600 to 9,999 students	219	75.77	13.48
10,000 or more students	93	81.24	8.40

For the 2008-2009 school year, a MANOVA yielded a statistically significant overall difference, Wilks' $\Lambda = .85$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .079$, a medium effect size (Cohen, 1988), on the TAKS exams as a function of school district size. Following the overall analysis, follow-up univariate ANOVA procedures were calculated. A statistically significant difference was yielded on the TAKS Mathematics test, $F(2, 314) = 4.86$, $p = .008$, partial $\eta^2 = .03$, small effect size; on the TAKS Science test, $F(2, 314) = 4.93$, $p = .008$, partial $\eta^2 = .03$, small effect size; on the TAKS Social Studies test, $F(2, 314) = 3.20$, $p = .04$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$, small effect size; and on the TAKS Writing test, $F(2, 314) = 17.38$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .10$, medium effect size (Cohen, 1988). A statistically significant difference was not present on the TAKS Reading test, $F(2, 314) = 0.75$, $p = .47$. Average passing rates on the TAKS Reading exam were congruent across the three school district sizes for students enrolled in special education.

For each of the four statistically significant ANOVAs, Scheffé post hoc procedures were calculated to determine which pair of school district sizes differed. The average TAKS Mathematics passing rates for students in special education were higher in large-size school districts in comparison to small-size school districts. Moderate-size school districts also had higher average passing rates than small-size school districts. Higher average TAKS Science passing rates were present for students in special education in large-size school districts than in small-size school districts. No differences were observed in Science passing rates between moderate-size and large-size school districts or between small-size and moderate-size school districts. With respect to the TAKS Writing passing rates, students in large-size school districts had higher averages than moderate-size and small-size school districts. Students in small-size school districts also differed in their TAKS Writing passing rates in comparison to moderate-size school districts. No differences were observed in Social Studies passing rates between small-size, moderate-size, and large-size school districts. Readers are directed to Table 3 for the descriptive statistics for the TAKS passing rates in the 2008-2009 school year by school district size for students enrolled in special education.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for the TAKS Passing Rates in the 2008-2009 School Year by School District Size for Students Enrolled in Special Education

School District Size	*n* of school districts	*M*	*SD*
Reading			
Up to 1,500 students	41	75.17	13.61
1,600 to 9,999 students	181	76.62	11.01
10,000 or more students	95	77.66	9.81
Mathematics			
Up to 1,500 students	41	60.29	13.37
1,600 to 9,999 students	181	66.48	14.23
10,000 or more students	95	68.01	11.83
Science			
Up to 1,500 students	41	39.44	14.74
1,600 to 9,999 students	181	44.81	16.59
10,000 or more students	95	48.58	14.76
Social Studies			
Up to 1,500 students	41	68.73	16.68
1,600 to 9,999 students	181	69.46	14.66
10,000 or more students	95	73.68	11.78
Writing			
Up to 1,500 students	41	70.71	16.51
1,600 to 9,999 students	181	76.49	14.68
10,000 or more students	95	84.05	7.43

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For the 2009-2010 school year, a statistically significant overall difference was revealed, Wilks' Λ = .93, $p <$ .001, partial η^2 = .038, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988), on the TAKS exams as a function of school district size. Following the overall analysis, follow-up univariate ANOVA procedures were calculated. A statistically significant difference was yielded on the TAKS Mathematics test, $F(2, 502) = 5.02$, $p = .007$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$, small effect size; on the TAKS Science test, $F(2, 502) = 2.97$, $p = .052$, partial $\eta^2 = .012$, medium effect size; and on the TAKS Writing test, $F(2, 502) = 8.79$, $p <$ .001, partial $\eta^2 = .034$, small effect size (Cohen, 1988). A statistically significant difference was not present on either the TAKS Reading test, $F(2, 502) = 1.19$, $p = .31$; or the TAKS Social Studies exam, $F(2, 502) = 2.05$, $p = .13$. Students enrolled in special education, regardless of school district student enrollment, had similar average passing rates on the TAKS Reading and Social Studies exams.

Concerning the three statistically significant ANOVAs, Scheffé post hoc procedures were calculated to determine which pair of school district sizes differed. For the TAKS Mathematics passing rates, students in special education who were enrolled in large-size school districts had higher passing rates than in small-size school districts. No differences were observed in TAKS Mathematics passing rates between small-size and moderate-size school districts and between moderate-size and large-size school districts. Average passing rates on the TAKS Science exam were commensurate for the small-size, moderate-size, and large-size school districts. With respect to the TAKS Writing passing rates, students in special education in large-size school districts had higher passing rates than small-size school districts. The TAKS Writing passing rates for moderate-size school districts were lower than large-size school districts. Small-size school districts did not differ in their TAKS Writing passing rates from moderate-size school districts. Delineated in Table 4 are the descriptive statistics for the TAKS passing rates in the 2009-2010 school year by school district size for students enrolled in special education.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for the TAKS Passing Rates in the 2009-2010 School Year by School District Size for Students Enrolled in Special Education

School District Size	*n* of school districts	*M*	*SD*
Reading			
Up to 1,500 students	153	64.32	13.28
1,600 to 9,999 students	255	63.67	13.35
10,000 or more students	97	66.08	12.29
Mathematics			
Up to 1,500 students	153	50.10	15.04
1,600 to 9,999 students	255	52.82	15.06
10,000 or more students	97	56.09	12.66
Science			
Up to 1,500 students	153	49.92	16.47
1,600 to 9,999 students	255	52.87	16.00
10,000 or more students	97	54.60	13.34
Social Studies			
Up to 1,500 students	153	76.08	13.79
1,600 to 9,999 students	255	76.64	12.09
10,000 or more students	97	79.12	8.88
Writing			
Up to 1,500 students	153	65.33	18.51
1,600 to 9,999 students	255	67.47	15.83
10,000 or more students	97	73.74	9.63

For the 2010-2011 school year, a statistically significant overall difference was yielded, Wilks' Λ = .94, $p <$ .001, partial η^2 = .029, a small effect size (Cohen, 1988), on the TAKS exams as a function of school district size. Following the overall analysis, follow-up univariate ANOVA procedures were calculated. A statistically significant difference was yielded on the TAKS Social Studies test, $F(2, 673) = 6.35$, $p = .002$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$, small effect size; and on the TAKS Writing test, $F(2, 673) = 6.82$, $p = .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$, small effect size (Cohen, 1988). A statistically significant difference was not present on the TAKS Reading exam, $F(2, 673) = 0.61$, $p = .54$; the TAKS Mathematics exam, $F(2, 673) = 1.52$, $p = .22$; and the TAKS Science test, $F(2, 673) = 1.24$, $p = .29$. Average passing rates were congruent for students enrolled in special education, regardless of school district student enrollment, on the TAKS Reading, Mathematics, and Science exams.

For the two statistically significant ANOVAs, Scheffé post hoc procedures were calculated to determine which pair of school district sizes differed. Students enrolled in special education had higher average passing rates on the TAKS Social Studies exam in small-size school districts than in moderate-size school districts. Higher average TAKS Social Studies passing rates were present in large-size school districts

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than in moderate-size school districts. Average passing rates on the TAKS Social Studies exam did not differ between small-size and large-size school districts. With respect to TAKS Writing passing rates, students in large-size school districts had higher averages than in both small-size and moderate-size school districts. Small-size and moderate-size school districts did not differ in their TAKS Writing passing rates. Readers are directed to Table 5 for the descriptive statistics for the TAKS passing rates in the 2010 -2011 school year by school district size for students enrolled in special education.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for the TAKS Passing Rates in the 2010-2011 School Year by School District Size for Students Enrolled in Special Education

School District Size	*n* of school districts	*M*	*SD*
Reading			
Up to 1,500 students	310	75.12	10.84
1,600 to 9,999 students	266	74.24	10.49
10,000 or more students	100	75.22	8.73
Mathematics			
Up to 1,500 students	310	66.26	12.69
1,600 to 9,999 students	266	66.12	11.80
10,000 or more students	100	68.43	9.02
Science			
Up to 1,500 students	310	59.76	15.03
1,600 to 9,999 students	266	58.19	13.21
10,000 or more students	100	60.16	9.98
Social Studies			
Up to 1,500 students	310	78.05	12.64
1,600 to 9,999 students	266	74.89	11.06
10,000 or more students	100	78.26	7.89
Writing			
Up to 1,500 students	310	71.09	15.85
1,600 to 9,999 students	266	72.90	12.99
10,000 or more students	100	76.95	8.31

IV. Discussion

In this empirical analysis, the extent to which differences were present in the academic achievement of students enrolled in special education as a function of school district student enrollment was addressed. Five years of Texas statewide data for the 2006-2007 through 2010-2011 school years were obtained and analyzed. A summary of the results for the five school years and the extent to which trends were present will now be discussed.

a) Small-size School Districts

For the 2006-2007 school year, school district size was not related to the academic achievement of students who were enrolled in special education. In the 2007-2008 school year, students in special education and who were enrolled in small-size school districts had lower average passing rates on the TAKS Science exam than their peers who were enrolled in large-size school districts. During the same school year, small-size school districts also had lower passing rates on the TAKS Writing exam than either moderate-size or large-size school districts. Students enrolled in special education in small-size school districts had lower passing rates on the TAKS Mathematics and Writing exams than their peers in either moderate-size or large-size school districts in the 2008-2009 school year. Also in the 2008-2009 school year, small-size school districts had lower passing rates than large-size school districts on the TAKS Science exam. During the 2009-2010 school year, students enrolled in special education in small-size school districts had lower passing rates on the TAKS Mathematics exam than students in large-size school districts. Small-size school districts also had lower average passing rates on the TAKS Writing exam than moderate-size and large-size school districts. Students in special education who were enrolled in small-size school districts had lower passing rates on the TAKS Reading exam than their peers in moderate-size school districts. Similarly, small-size school districts had lower average passing rates on the TAKS Writing exam than did large-size school districts.

b) Moderate-size School Districts

Moderate-size school districts did not differ in their passing rates from either the small-size or large-size school districts on any of the TAKS exams in the 2006-2007 school year. Students in special education who were enrolled in moderate-size school districts during the 2007-2008 school year had higher average passing rates than small-size school districts but lower average passing rates than large-size school districts on the TAKS Writing exam. During the 2008-2009 school year, moderate-size school districts had higher average passing rates than small-size school districts on the

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TAKS Mathematics and Writing exams. Moderate-size school districts had lower average passing rates than large-size districts on the TAKS Writing exam during the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 school years. In the 2010-2011 school year, moderate-size school districts had lower passing rates on the TAKS Reading and Mathematics exams than large-size school districts. Moderate-size school districts had higher passing rates than small-size school districts on the TAKS Reading exam.

c) Large-size School Districts

Students in special education who were enrolled in large-size school districts had higher average passing rates on the TAKS Reading exam than did their peers in moderate-size school districts during the 2006-2007 school year. Large-size school districts had higher passing rates on the TAKS Science and TAKS Writing exams than did small-size school districts in the 2007-2008 school year. They also had higher average passing rates on the TAKS Reading test than moderate-size school districts. Large-size school districts had higher average passing rates on the TAKS Mathematics, Science, and Writing exams than small-size school districts for the 2008-2009 school year. They also had higher passing rates on the TAKS Writing exam than their peers in moderate-size school districts. In the 2009-2010 school year, large-size school districts had higher average passing rates on the TAKS Mathematics and Writing tests than small-size school districts. Large-size districts also had higher passing rates on the TAKS Writing test than moderate-size school districts. Higher passing rates were present for large-size school districts in comparison to moderate-size school districts on the TAKS Reading and Mathematics exams during the 2010-2011 school year. Large-size school districts also had higher average passing rates on the TAKS Mathematics test than small-size school districts for the 2010-2011 school year. Presented in Table 6 is the summary of the statistical analyses for the TAKS measures of students enrolled in special education across the 2006 -2007 through the 2010 – 2011 school years.

Table 6: Summary of Statistical Analyses for the TAKS Measures of Students Enrolled in Special Education Across the 2006-2007 Through the 2010-2011 School Years

TAKS Measure	Statistically Significant Differences Present	Lowest Performing School District Size	Frequency of Small Effect Size
Reading	0/5 = 0%	Moderate	0/5 = 0%
Mathematics	2/5 = 40%	Small	2/5 = 40%
Science	3/5 = 60%	Small	3/5 = 60%
Social Studies	2/5 = 40%	Small	2/5 = 40%
Writing	5/5 = 100%	Small	5/5 = 100%

d) Implications for Policy and Practice

Based upon the five years of data analyzed, implications are present for policy and for practice. In this empirical investigation, statistically significant differences were present in the academic achievement as a function of school district size for students who were enrolled in special education. With the passing rates of students in special education who were enrolled in small-size school districts being lower than the passing rates for students in special education who were enrolled in either moderate-size or large-size school districts, the possibility of school districts being consolidated merits consideration.

Students in special education had higher average passing rates on the TAKS Reading, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Writing exams in large-size school districts than in either small-size or moderate-size school districts. With the rise in the academic expectations for students enrolled in special education in Texas schools, state policymakers and educational leaders should consider the results delineated herein regarding the relationship of school district size to the academic performance of students in special education. Students enrolled in special education had their lowest passing rates in small-size school districts. Small-size school districts had the lowest passing rates for students in special education on the TAKS Reading, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies tests for four of the five years analyzed. In 19 of the 25 TAKS passing rates calculated, small-size school districts had the lowest average passing rates. School district consolidation may merit discussion as a possible remedy for districts that are not meeting Texas state academic standards. Policymakers should consider the facts presented in this research when new bills are introduced related to school district reconstitution and school district size.

e) Suggestions for Future Research

Because the focus of this study was only on school district size for students enrolled in special education, several suggestions for future research are provided. First, researchers are encouraged to examine the issue of school district size for other groups of students such as English Language Learners, students in poverty, and at-risk. Second, because the data that were analyzed in this investigation were aggregated at the school district level, researchers are encouraged to obtain and analyze individual student level data. Analyses at the individual student level would permit a

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more refined analysis than was possible in this study. Third, Texas changed its state-mandated assessment from the TAKS to the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR). Due to problems in the implementation of STAAR, data from its administration were not analyzed in this investigation. Researchers are encouraged to extend this investigation by examining results of the STAAR, once it has been properly implemented.

Fourth, no attempt was made in this investigation to determine any causal factors in the relationship of school district size with student performance. Researchers are encouraged to delve more deeply into any underlying mechanisms that might explain why large-size school districts have higher passing rates than do small-size school districts. Finally, researchers are encouraged to conduct mixed-methods studies to obtain a more in-depth understanding of the relationship between school district size and the academic performance of students enrolled in special education.

V. Conclusion

In conclusion, the purpose of this research investigation was to determine the extent to which school district size was related to the academic achievement of students who were enrolled in special education. Specifically analyzed were the state-mandated assessments in reading, mathematics, science, social studies, and writing for a 5-year period. Higher average passing rates were typically present for students in special education who were enrolled in large-size school districts than for either small-size or moderate-size school districts. Accordingly, policy-makers and educational leaders are encouraged to use these results in their deliberations on school district consolidation.

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Peer Feedback in Learning a Foreign Language in Facebook

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Introduction- Feedback can have different forms and functions depending on its objectives as well as its provider: teacher feedback, student feedback, peer feedback, written feedback, oral feedback, etc. One of the most constructive forms of feedback may be peer feedback, since it involves group learning (Van Gennip, Segers and Tillema, 2010). According to Topping (1998, p. 250) peer feedback is "an agreement in which individuals consider the amount, level, value, worth, quality, or success of the products or outcomes of learning of peers of similar status." Cunningham (1992) argues that the interaction and communication that result fromthe production of feedback get more important in online instructional courses than in face to face courses, because, in his view, nothing can bring about learning more than the dialogue among the community members. Hewitt (2000) and Tuzi (2004) also emphasize the importance of peer feedback in online environments and point out that in such environments peer feedback can influence the students' outcomes more than in face-to-face environments because of the ease of communication as well as the absence of affective factors. Thus, researchers believe that deep learning can take place in online settings in which students give and receive feedback from one another in a calm, stress-free and individualized environment.What do we know about feedback from previous research?

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Peer Feedback in Learning a Foreign Language in Facebook

Elham Akbari [α], Robert Jan Simons [σ], Albert Pilot [ρ] & Ahmad Naderi [ω]

I. Introduction

Feedback can have different forms and functions depending on its objectives as well as its provider: teacher feedback, student feedback, peer feedback, written feedback, oral feedback, etc. One of the most constructive forms of feedback may be peer feedback, since it involves group learning (Van Gennip, Segers and Tillema, 2010). According to Topping (1998, p. 250) peer feedback is "an agreement in which individuals consider the amount, level, value, worth, quality, or success of the products or outcomes of learning of peers of similar status." Cunningham (1992) argues that the interaction and communication that result from the production of feedback get more important in online instructional courses than in face to face courses, because, in his view, nothing can bring about learning more than the dialogue among the community members. Hewitt (2000) and Tuzi (2004) also emphasize the importance of peer feedback in online environments and point out that in such environments peer feedback can influence the students' outcomes more than in face-to-face environments because of the ease of communication as well as the absence of affective factors. Thus, researchers believe that deep learning can take place in online settings in which students give and receive feedback from one another in a calm, stress-free and individualized environment.What do we know about feedback from previous research?

Several reviews made clear that teacher feedback can be very powerful contributors to learning outcomes (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Shute, 2008). Some kinds of feedback, according to these reviews, have more impact than other kinds: positive teacher feedback works, for instance, better than negative feedback, specific explicated works better than non-specific feedback and feedback on the "level of self" ("you must be very smart") does not contribute much. Voerman, Meijer, Korthagen, and Simons, (2012) found that teachers in secondary education do not give much feedback, although when they do, this is good for learning results of students. Besides, teacher feedback often occurs after an assessment and not formatively during lessons. The introduction of peer feedback may increase the amount of feedback students receive and may be better timed than teacher feedback.

Receipt of peer feedback may be beneficial for students for other reasons too, but the empirical evidence is limited. One reason for its possible effectiveness may be that students understand peer feedback better than teacher feedback (Falchikov, 2005). Feedback from multiple peers works better than feedback from one peer only (Cho & MacArthur, 2010). This multiple peer feedback may also sensitize students for multiple perspectives (Cho, Cho & Hacker, 2010), something a teacher cannot do easily. One interesting advantage of peer feedback may be that students get more opportunities to rework and resubmit their assignments which may be beneficial for learning (Nicol, Thomson & Breslin, 2013).The impact of received peer feedback in general does not have a high impact, however, so Hattie's (2012) reviews show. Perhaps, the peer feedback given is not good enough. Several researchers, therefore, tried with success to improve the peer feedback skills of students through instructions or training (i.e. Demirel, & Enginarlar, 2007; Demirel, & Enginarlar, 2016; Gielen, Peeters, Dochy, Onghena, & Struyven, 2010).

This low effectiveness of received peer feedback may also be caused by the fact that in most research the focus is on peer feedback in the context of peer assessment (Topping, 1998; Tseng and Tsai, 2007). Liu and Carless (2006) showed in a large scale survey that students do not like to assess their peers. Therefore, they and especially Nicol, 2010, 2011, 2013; Nicol, Thomson & Breslina, 2014; Nicol, D. J., & Macfarlane-Dick, (2006) propose to shift towards peer feedback that is not taking place in the context of peer assessment, but in the context of formative assessment or improvement of products or other learning outcomes. In their work peer review became the new word for peer feedback.

One other reason for the ineffectiveness of peer feedback may be that teachers and researchers emphasized the effects of peer feedback on learning of the receivers of feedback, instead of looking for effects for the providers of peer feedback. Cho & Cho (2011) directly compared the effects of providing and receiving feedback. Giving comments improved students' writings more than receiving them. Cho & MacArthur (2011) showed that providing feedback improved students'

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own writing products. This implies that providing feedback to peers can be an important learning activity. But why would giving feedback be so beneficial for learning? Van Popta, Kral, Camp, Martens, & Simons (submitted) found in a recent review of the research literature that there may be many benefits for the provider of feedback. They found that giving feedback to peers can help students to improve their higher-level learning skills, and to evaluate, monitor, and regulate their own learning. Students may learn to reflect, become more critical, and may even improve their own product. Providing peer feedback can lead to more knowledge, it can help students to make better evaluative judgements and to develop their metacognitive skills. Students compare and question ideas; evaluate; suggest modifications, reflect, plan, and regulate their own thinking. They think critically, connect to new knowledge, explain, and take different perspectives.

Various empirical studies, without showing the effectiveness of peer feedback directly, bring indirect evidence for the importance of peer feedback (e.g., Bauer, de Benedette, Furstenberg, Levet, and Waryn (2006), Belz and Kinginger, 2003; Belz & Vyatkina, 2005; Lee, 2004). These studies indicate how information and communication technologies can improve students' foreign language learning through online interaction with peers in the target language. Liu and Hansen (2002) state that peer feedback creates a collaborative process and increases consciousness towards audience needs. Moreover, peer feedback may provide opportunities for practicing foreign languages in meaningful contexts (Han, 2002; Havranek; 2002; Swain, 1995). Therefore, online peer feedback may promote goal-oriented and constructive collaboration in meaningful, interactive contexts, based on peers' awareness of each other's needs. To summarize, we may conclude that there are good reasons to expect that giving feedback to peers may be good for learning of the student-feedback-givers. There are, however, only a few empirical studies that support this. Moreover, research into the beneficial processes of feedback giving for one's own learning is also missing.

Apart from advantages, there may also be disadvantages of peer feedback. Students may misinform each other. They may give each other wrong advice. Giving good peer feedback may only be possible for the smarter students. Students may not like to become involved in peer feedback, for instance because they do not want "to give their know how away". Peer feedback may also be an inefficient way of learning, taking too much time. Many things may go wrong in the complicated processes of peer feedback. We just do not know enough about it yet.

a) Facebook and peer feedback

Despite the fact that there is much literature about social networks and their use in language learning, to our knowledge, there were only a few specific scientific studies on peer feedback within social networks in relation to language learning. Yet, there are two potential major benefits of social networks. First, they make it easier for language learners to practice language with native speakers of their target language. Secondly, learners are also able to provide and receive almost instant feedback (Brick, 2013). Students can give more often just in time feedback than teachers.

Facebook is one of the most popular social networking websites (Junco, Heiberger, & Loken, 2011). A brief look at Facebook reveals many foreign language teaching applications that can be used to teach and learn different languages through different methods. Through communication and interaction, learners can use this network to easily access native speakers, to interact and converse with them while actively engaging in learning and practicing the foreign language, to personalize their learning and to increase their autonomy by continuous access to the Internet. It is no surprise then that Kabilan, Almad, and Zainol (2010), found that Facebook was regarded by students as a viable online environment to be utilized to facilitate the learning of English.

Interaction via Facebook not only promotes language learning in meaningful, everyday contexts, it can also be a viable environment for peer feedback. Based on our experiences Akbari et al. (2015), peer feedback produced within networks as Facebook may have the following advantages:

1. Peer feedback can occur in different forms, such as vocalized communication (access through video call), short/long comments and/or writings, pictures, links and videos; it may also be communicated in form of a simple like or dislike.
2. The whole group, including the person for whom the feedback was originally written, can observe, evaluate and reply, and therefore learn from feedback given; this will result in feedback dialogues through which all participants can interact, exchange, and learn.
3. Since peer feedback is stored on the platform of online social networks, it is easily observable and therefore available to all users, which makes it possible for participants to go back and review previous feedback when needed.
4. Participants can simultaneously produce feedback to one or several classmate's posts and/or comments.
5. Peer feedback in such environments can be pure and correct since students have access to different kinds of online resources such as dictionaries, search engines and spelling checks. In addition,

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when searching, students have the opportunity to gain more information, which may improve their learning.

6. Peer feedback can be synchronous or asynchronous. Students have no time or space limit; it is therefore possible to give feedback an indefinite number of times.

Thus, peer feedback may be a good opportunity in Facebook to reach several important language learning goals. But is all peer feedback equally good or are there quality differences?

b) Different types of peer feedback

We did not find any research that distinguished different kinds of peer feedback and their possible differential effects. The literature about teacher feedback, distinguishes different kinds of feedback. Voerman, et al. (2012) distinguished four different types of *teacher* feedback relevant for the current study: non-specific positive, specific positive, non-specific negative and specific negative feedback. The following are the equivalent types of peer feedback used in this study:

- Non-specific positive feedback, which we renamed as compliment (e.g. "Good job")
- Specific positive feedback, renamed in this research as explained compliment (e.g. "well done, you applied this rule correctly")
- Non-specific negative feedback, which was renamed as criticism (e.g. "It's not correct")
- Specific negative feedback, renamed as corrective feedback (e.g., "No, you should say…")

In the current study, these four kinds of peer feedback will be distinguished in order to find out how good the peer feedback is (quality of peer feedback). Based on Voerman et al. (2012) we assume that explained compliments and corrective feedback are of higher quality than compliments and criticisms that lack explanations.

Giving and receiving feedback to and from peers may be a new experience for learners. Perhaps they need time to get used to it, to learn how to give and receive feedback or to overcome shyness. Therefore, both the quality and quantity of peer feedback may vary over time. Some previous researchers studied how feedback can be improved (i.e. Demirel, & Enginarlar, 2007; Demirel, & Enginarlar, 2016; Gielen, Peeters, Dochy, Onghena, & Struyven, (2010).) through instructions and support from teachers. We did not find any studies, however, focusing on developmental patterns of given peer feedback over time.

c) Research questions

The current research aims to find information about the role of different kinds of peer feedback produced within interactions in the social network Facebook, in improving foreign language skills and competencies, compared with peer feedback in a face-to-face environment. Moreover, this study aims to find information about the development of peer feedback patterns over time and about the relations between quality of peer feedback and learning outcomes. We wanted to know if giving high quality feedback would lead tot better learning outcomes. The general research question was: *How is online peer feedback developing in Facebook and in face-to-face classrooms and how do kinds of peer feedback contribute to better learning outcomes?*

First, we want to find out what kinds of peer feedback students produce in the two groups and how the peer feedback develops over time, taking the four kinds of peer feedback distinguished above as the starting point. We will use the term quality of peer feedback to refer to the four kinds of peer feedback. Then, we will look for relations between the kinds of peer feedback provided and learning outcomes. This leads to the following sub questions:

1. What differences in amount and quality of peer feedback occur in interactions via Facebook and interactions in a face-to-face group?
2. How does the amount and quality of peer feedback develop over time and to what extend is this development different in a Facebook group as compared to a face-to-face group?
3. What is the relationship between the kind of peer feedback produced and learning outcomes?

II. Method

a) Design

This study is a field experiment with a pre-test-post-test-non-randomized-control group-design. This means that the students were not assigned randomly to the two groups. Instead country of living determined in what group students participated. Possible differences between the two groups were checked through several pretest and demographic measurements.

b) Participants and Sample

The sample consisted of nonimmigrant Iranian international PhD students having problems using the English language well enough to speak and write it at university level. There is a very well known and big virtual community (about 400 members) in the Schengen zone countries of which most of the Iranian PhD students are members. To announce the free language course to those who want to improve their English language proficiency, we sent an email to the existing group list and asked the Iranian PhD students to inform us about their willingness to participate. Two hundred students replied to the email that they were willing to participate in the course. We then emailed them to provide them with the course details and to inform them that the face-to-face course was to be held in Utrecht University for students residing in the Netherlands and the virtual course was to be held through Skype (for the lectures)

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and Facebook (for peer feedback and other interactions). They were also informed that teachers were native speakers from the US. In total 83 students announced their readiness to participate. After the placement test (TOEFL test described below) and an interview, forty individuals, between the ages of 25-35, with an intermediate command of the English language were selected. The students living in the Netherlands participated in a face to face variant of the course, whereas the other students living in various European countries (including the Netherlands) participated in the virtual variant of the course.

The teachers of the two groups were different, but comparable: both were native speakers and experienced male teachers. They were the same age (27) and had similar teaching experience.

The students were then divided into two groups of 20 based on the following criteria: the experimental group (which used Skype and Facebook for language learning) consisted of students living in different Schengen zone countries such as Germany, Denmark, Belgium, The Netherlands. The control group, (which attended face-to-face meetings for language learning) included Iranian students living in different Dutch cities.45 percent of students divided into the two groups were women while 55 percent were men. It is important to note that there was no random assignment to the two groups and the groups differed in the countries they lived in. Therefore, we checked whether the two groups were comparable by testing their language abilities, attitudes toward peer feedback and demographic variables, before the courses.

c) *Intervention in the experimental group (Facebook group)*

At the beginning of the course, a page was created in Facebook titled "Teaching English to Persian Students". The teacher and students were enrolled in the page in which they were required to perform the activities asked by the researchers. The purpose behind creating this page was the establishment of increased communication and interaction among students and between students and teacher, the performance of the assignments and especially the production of peer feedback by students. In fact, these students were encouraged to have interactions with their classmates and to give feedback to each other. Students were permitted to use any kind of support instruments and/or educational resources available to them on the wall of the group or in their peers' posts and feedback. These support instruments and resources mainly consisted of posts, likes, comments, pictures, videos, links, uploads, etc. Alongside these synchronous and asynchronous online interactions, students were permitted to pose questions that dealt with the activities assigned, to which other students and/or the teacher responded. Moreover, when appropriate, students shared with others what they considered to be interesting or useful about the material studied.

This experimental group received English lessons for one hour a day, during one month (except for the weekends) through in total twenty formal teaching sessions via Skype. Every day, the teacher called students via Skype at a specified time in the evening. The class began with conversations between the teacher and students. Then, the teacher started teaching and at the end of the class, the students were assigned some tasks to perform in Facebook until the next day. It should be mentioned that these tasks included uploading the answers to the exercises, which were placed at the end of each book lesson. Every student had to write a short paragraph on a daily basis, on a specific subject, and then to post it on the group's wall. Moreover, students gave feedback to each other in the Facebook page.

d) *Intervention in the Control Group(face-to-face group)*

In this group, students participated in various activities via formal teaching of the English language in a traditional classroom in Utrecht University for one hour and forty minutes a day (about one hour for teaching and forty minutes for students to give feedback to each other). There were 20 of these lessons in total, lasting one month (everyday except for the weekends).These classes were also conducted by a (different) male native English speaking teacher. In this group, students were requested to write (typed and printed) daily short paragraphs on a specific subject; fellow students had then to give them feedback regarding their writing. Students had to perform the exercises which were placed at the end of each book lesson and to deliver it to the teacher. This was all the same as in the Facebook group. That is, the experimental group students were stimulated to give each other feedback through posts on the Facebook wall between the "teacher led meetings". However, in the control group students' assignments were studied and commented by peers during class time inside the classroom, which is why an extra forty minutes was added to each session in addition to the specified one hour of instruction and in-class interaction. In this group, in each class session, students were divided into groups of four to five, in which they exchanged assignments with classmates and gave/received feedback to/from one another for twenty minutes. During the next ten minutes, they discussed the feedback given/received, and the last ten minutes were spent on students asking the teacher questions regarding the feedback that they did not understand.

The teacher supervised all in-class activities and helped when needed, leaving the majority of the discussions in the hands of students. This group was told nothing about using or not using any kind of new technologies in the classroom and our observations

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revealed that nobody had used it. Of course students used their mobile phones and computers / tablets, but neither for feedback nor for language learning.

e) Teaching Method, Peer feedback and Class Management

In this English language course, all participants in both groups used a book to learn English entitled "*Face 2 Face"* (Redston & Cunningham 2006); the two teachers organized their lesson plans and/or activities according to this book, as much as possible in the same ways. Each lesson of the book included four sections (A, B, C, and D). Students were to study two pre-determined sections a day before participating in class activities and/or raising questions. The teacher explained ambiguous grammar points and clarified the necessary linguistic concepts when needed. The instructors also taught students one figure of speech per day. In general, the first part of each session was spent on conversations among students and the teacher concerning different issues. The second section of the class meeting was dedicated to answering students' questions, removing any remaining ambiguities and teaching important linguistic concepts. The last section was spent on speaking about students' assignments. In the control group students' assignments were studied and commented by peers during class time inside the classroom, whereas the students in the Facebook group gave feedback in their own time.

III. Data Collection

a) Research Instruments

i. *Learning outcomes*

Prior to beginning the course, as well as after the course's completion, all participants were administered a pre-test and a post-test. The official standard Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) was used in order to investigate students' learning levels in the beginning and also to measure the students' linguistic outcomes after the courses. The test measures the ability to use and understand English at university level. And it evaluates how well one combines one's listening, reading, speaking and writing skills to perform academic tasks. It consists of listening, grammar, reading and writing questions. These four sections have 120 multiple-choice questions in total. The total reliability was 0.94 (Educational Testing Services, 2011). Reliability coefficients for the parts of the test were 0.85 for Reading, 0.85 for Listening, 0.88 for Speaking and 0.74 for Writing. The scores were transformed to the levels 1-5 according to the standard procedures of TOEFL.

ii. *Attitudes towards peer feedback*

Before the courses, all participants completed a questionnaire designed by the researchers, with the following two subscales: The first subscale "Peer feedback and learning English" contained three items about the role of peer feedback in learning English. An example item is "The peer feedback activity improved my language skills." A reliability test on the three-item scale revealed an acceptable internal consistency (α = .88). The second subscale "peer feedback in general education" contained five items, for example: "I think the idea of peer feedback is a waste of time". A reliability test on the five -item revealed an acceptable internal consistency (α = .82). Since the two questionnaires were highly correlated, they were merged in one 8 item questionnaire (α = .84).

b) Data Analysis

i. *Coding scheme for Peer feedback*

Facebook records and exposes all of the activities performed by participants. The recorded daily Facebook activities were then saved in PDF formats. To ensure that all students' activities on Facebook were recorded, researchers checked the relevant Facebook pages hourly and asked students not to delete their different feedback statements and activities.

All activities related to the face-to-face classroom were recorded through a video recorder, and the students delivered to the researchers their writings of the day before along with the feedback given to them by their peers. Therefore, the data gathered from this group are based on both peer feedback on the students' assignments and the direct observations of classroom activities and watching classroom videos by the researchers.

Four different codes were used to categorize students' peer feedback:

- Compliment ("It's excellent")
- Explained compliment (" everything is ok, since you used the correct rule")
- Criticism ("don't say I am agree")
- Corrective feedback ("You should say: I agreed")

Six researchers familiar with peer feedback were involved in the coding of the peer feedback in participants' activities. First, they were divided in two groups and asked to select the four types of feedback mentioned above from among participants' activities during the first three days. Then, the resulting categorizations of the two groups were compared to find out the interrater- reliability. The average reliability (coefficient Kappa) was .79. The data were divided into four parts (weeks) to investigate the developmental process of peer feedback production in detail.

IV. Results

a) Check on pre-existing differences between the groups

In the pretest-posttest control group design, we needed to check whether the groups differed before the

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education took place or not. There were three kinds of data available: the TOEFL test, the feedback attitude questionnaire and demographic variables (such as age and gender). On the TOEFL test the means and standard deviations were M=2.25; SD=0.55 for the face-to-face group and M=2.08, SD =0.44 for the Facebook group. There was no significant difference (t (38) =1.11; p=.27), indicating that the groups were comparable in learning level. If there was a difference it was in favor of the control group. There were also no differences between the groups on the attitude towards peer feedback questionnaire. Thus, there were no attitude differences either. Furthermore, there were no differences in the number of men and female in the two groups: nine men and eleven women in the face-to-face group and eleven men and nine women in the Facebook group (Chi square = 1.76 ; n.s.). There was also no significant difference in age (Chi square = 0.40; n.s). We concluded that the two groups were comparable at pretest time in English learning level, attitudes toward peer feedback and demographic variables.

Research question 1: What differences in amount and quality of peer feedback occur in interactions via Facebook and interactions in a face-to-face group?

MANOVA was used to compare the various types of feedback produced in the two groups. There was a significant overall effect: F (4, 35) = 25.68 (p< .00). In the Facebook group students gave each other more often feedback than in the face-to-face group. The results presented in Table 1 indicate that there is a significant difference between the two groups in terms of three of the four types of feedback: compliments (F=16.84; p<.00), explained compliments (F=4.33=; p<.04), and corrective feedback (F=6.82; p. <.01). As can be seen in Table 1, in the Facebook condition, students produced significantly more compliments, more explained compliments, and more corrective feedback compared to students in the face-to-face group. The difference in the number of criticisms provided (more in the face to face group) was not significant (F=4.06; p=.051). In both groups the amount of corrective feedback is much larger than the amount of other categories of feedback (Table 1).

Table 1: MANOVA Tests of Between-Subjects Effects results for comparing kinds of Feedback in the 2 groups (number of times feedback was given)

		Descriptive Statistics for groups		MANOVA results (Corrected Model part)				
Feedback Type	Group	Mean	SD	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Compliment	Facebook	6.05	6.29	336.40	1	336.40	16.84	.00
	face-to-face	.25	.64					
Explained compliment	Facebook	.45	.69	1.22	1	1.22	4.33	.04
	face-to-face	.10	.31					
Criticism	Facebook	.50	1.32	8.10	1	8.10	4.06	.051
	face-to-face	1.40	1.50					
Corrective feedback	Facebook	23.85	16.95	1102.50	1	1102.50	6.82	.01
	face-to-face	13.35	5.99					

Here are examples of the four kinds of feedback from the data:

1. Compliment: “your sentences are very good.”
2. Explained compliment: “your sentences are very good and you used past tense in the right form.”
3. Criticism: (“I found two mistakes in the section 1) going clubbing and meet with friends).”
4. Corrective feedback: “I think you should write: one of the famous streets instead of street.”

The interviews showed that, in general, students were quite positive about the use of peer feedback. They, for instance, said: “Giving and receiving feedback were useful for me, but I think that giving feedback is more useful than receiving it.” “It was surprising me how useful peer feedback was.” “I’ll use peer feedback in my teaching in the future”. According to the informal observations and the activities recorded in Facebook, we saw that students voluntarily and enthusiastically asked their classmates to give feedback to their writing several days after the course. Sometimes, when students were discussing online, a student even gave feedback on his or her own writing. Thus the resources and facilities available in the online environment of online social networks increased students’ opportunity to provide feedback, especially corrective feedback.

Research question 2: How does the amount and quality of peer feedback develop over time and in how far is this development different in a Facebook group as compared to a face-to-face group?

To compare the changes in different types of feedback between the two groups we used four repeated measures analyses with Time (Week 1, 2, 3 and 4; the course took four weeks) as a within-subject factor and Group (Facebook versus face-to-face) as a between-subject factor. The results of these analyses appear in Tables 2,3,4 and 5 and in Figures 1, 2, 3 and 4. As Table 2 and Figure 1 show, for compliments-given (category 1 in Table 1), significant effects of Time

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(F=8.27; p = .01), Group (F=18.55; p=.00) and the interaction Time* Group (F=17.44; p= .01) were found. This indicates that the average number of compliments differed for the four weeks and that the number of compliments also differed between the two groups. Closer inspection of Figure 1 shows that the number of compliments was higher in the Facebook group (already in the first week). Furthermore, the significant Time × Group interaction effect for compliments shows that the exchange of compliments developed differently over time for the two groups. In fact, in the Facebook group the number of compliments decreased from Week 1 to Week 3, rising again in Week 4. For the face-to-face group, the number of compliments was rather constant (and low) over the four weeks of the study.

Table 2: Repeated measurement analysis for compliments

Between SS	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Squares	F	Sig
Intercept	82.66	1	82.66	22.25	.00
Group	68.91	1	68.91	18.55	.00
Error	141.19	38	3.72		
Within SS					
Time	1.90	1	1.90	8.27	.01
Time*Group	1.71	1	1.71	7.44	.01
Error	18.43	38	.49		

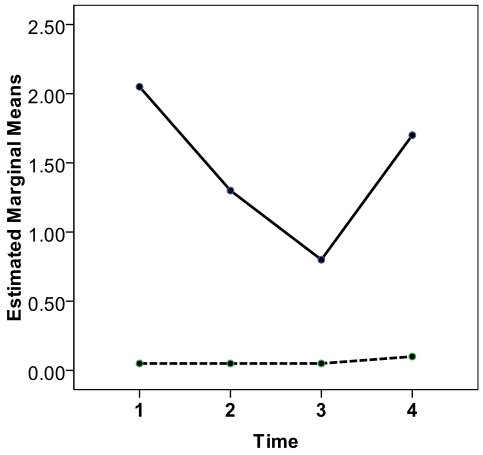


Figure 1: Mean-Plots of compliments; Solid line (—) shows the Facebook Group and Dash Line (---) shows the Face-to-Face Group; 1,2,3,4 are the 4 weeks of the course

With respect to the explained compliments we only found a significant main effect of the between-subject factor Group (F=4.33; p=.04; see Table 3 and Figure 2), indicating that students in the Facebook group used more explained compliments than students in the face-to-face group. The Time and Time*Group interaction effects were not significant.

Table 3: Repeated measurement analysis for explained compliments

Between SS	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Squares	F	Sig
Intercept	.76	1	.76	10.70	.00
Group	.31	1	.31	4.33	.04
Error	2.69	38	.07		
Within SS					
Time	.11	1	.11	.18	.68
Time*Group	.15	1	.15	2.41	.13
Error	2.39	38	.06		

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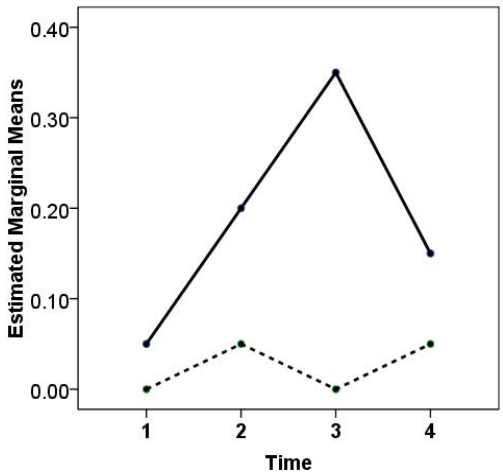


Figure 2: Mean-Plots of explained compliments; Solid line (—) shows the Facebook Group and Dash Line (---) shows the Face-to-Face Group; 1,2,3,4 are the 4 weeks of the course

Regarding giving criticism, we did not find a significant difference between the Facebook and the face-to-face students (see Table 4). However, we did find a significant effect of the within-subject factor Time (F=4.67; p=.04), indicating that the number of criticisms formulated differed over the four weeks of the study. Inspection of Figure 3 shows that the number of criticisms formulated increased from Week 1 to Week 2, but dropped in Week 3.

Table 4: Repeated measurement analysis for criticism

Between SS	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Squares	F	Sig
Intercept	7.13	1	7.13	16.44	.00
Group	1.23	1	1.23	2.84	.10
Error	16.04	37	.43		
Within SS					
Time	.81	1	.81	4.67	.04
Time*Group	.04	1	.04	.24	.63
Error	12.36	37	.33		

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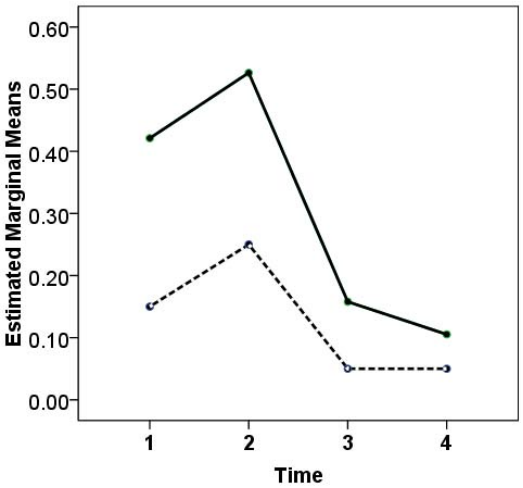


Figure 3: Mean-Plots of criticisms; Solid line (—) shows the Facebook Group and Dash Line (---) shows the Face-to-Face Group; 1,2,3,4 are the 4 weeks of the course

Finally, regarding corrective feedback we found a significant effect of the within-subject factor Time ($F=4.69$; $p=.01$), a significant effect of the between-subject factor Group ($F=6.78$; $p=.01$), and a significant Time × Group interaction effect ($F=4.92$; $p=.01$; see Table 5). Inspection of Figure 4 shows that the number of corrective feedback messages exchanged increased in both groups from Week 1 to 3, but then dropped in Week 4. This Figure also shows that in general the number of corrective feedback messages exchanged was significantly higher in the Facebook group, than in the face-to-face group.

Table 5: Repeated measurement analysis for corrective feedback

	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Squares	F	Sig
Between SS					
Intercept	3468.91	1	3468.91	86.19	.00
Group	273.01	1	273.01	6.78	.01
Error	1529.34	38	40.25		
Within SS					
Time	32.40	1	32.40	4.69	.04
Time*Group	34.03	1	34.03	4.92	.03
Error	262.82	38	6.92		

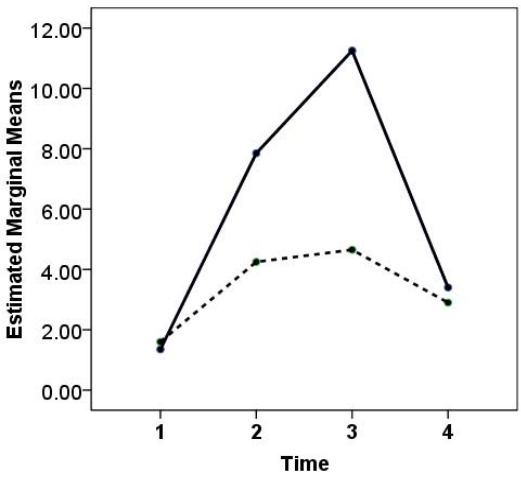


Figure 4: Mean-Plots of corrective feedback; Solid line (—) shows the Facebook Group and Dash Line (---) shows the Face-to-Face Group; 1,2,3,4 are the 4 weeks of the course

Research question 3: What is the relationship between the kind of peer feedback produced and learning outcomes?

The learning outcomes in the two groups (TOEFL test) were M Facebook = 3.28 (SD = 0.30) and M face-to-face = 2.45 (SD = 0.51). At the pretest the

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averages and standard deviations were 2.08 (SD= 0.44) and 2.25 (SD = 0.55), respectively. This difference was not significant statistically. The scores on the TOEFL post-test were significantly higher for the Facebook group than for the face to face group ($F(1,38)=6.90$; $p<.01$). There was also a significant Group × Time interaction effect, indicating that students' learning outcomes developed differently from the TOEFL pre-test to post-test in the Facebook group compared to the face-to-face group ($F(1, 38) = 5.00$, $p = .00$): The Facebook students learned significantly more than the face-to-face students.

Table 6 presents the correlations between type of feedback and learning outcomes separately for the two groups. For the face-to-face group there were no significant correlations. But, in the Facebook group, we can see two significant correlations: between Criticism (.51) and Corrective Feedback (.67) with learning outcomes (Table 6). The more criticism and corrective feedback students produced, the more they learned themselves.

Table 6: Correlation coefficients for relationship between learning and "feedback types" produced

Variable	Coefficient (p-value)	
	Facebook Group	face-to-face Group
Compliment	.37	.25
Explained compliment	.00	.15
Criticism	**.51***	.06
Corrective feedback	**.67****	.21

*= p<.05; **=p<.01

Within the Facebook group students learned more when they gave more criticisms and more corrective feedback. The number of compliments (with and without explanations) did not contribute to the learning outcomes.

In order to predict the learning outcomes based on students' feedback a regression analysis was used. Posttest learning outcome was the dependent variable in this model, and group (dummy variable of Facebook versus face-to-face), as well as the four types of feedback were the predictors (Table 7). The Adjusted R Square of model is 0.66. See other model fitting results in Table 8:

Table 7: Regression Analysis predicting learning outcomes from group and kinds of feedback

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	9.76	5	1.95	15.93	.00
Residual	4.17	34	.12		
Total	13.93	39			

Table 8: Regression Analysis (predicting Learning outcomes using Type of Peer feedback & Group)

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficient	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	1.38	.11		12.48	.00
Compliment	.01	.01	.13	.94	.35
Explained compliment	-.00	.12	-.00	-.01	.98
Criticism	.01	.04	.03	.30	.76
Corrective feedback	.01	.00	.24	2.29	.02
Group	.74	.16	.62	4.46	.00

Group and Corrective Feedback were the two significant predictors of learning outcomes. Corrective peer feedback related the most to learning results (see Table 7 and 8).

V. Discussion

Our research questions can be answered as follows: Iranian PhD students gave each other much more often feedback in the Facebook group than in the face-to-face group. These were especially compliments in the beginning and explained compliments and corrective feedback later on in the course. Towards the end of the courses, explained compliments and corrective feedback were replaced by compliments without explanations. The students in the Facebook group learned more than the students in the face-to-face group. The amount of corrective feedback and the amount of criticism predicted learning outcomes within the Facebook group, but not within the face-to-face group. Only the amount of corrective feedback contributed to the differences in learning outcomes between the two groups.

A first issue to be discussed concerns the different types of peer feedback produced in the face-to-face and the Facebook environments. The current

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research indicates that there were significant differences between the number of times peer feedback was produced in face-to-face classrooms and in the Facebook environment, both in general and in terms of kinds of peer feedback. An explanation can be the difference in the conditions and facilities in the learning environment of the two groups. Facebook provides students with various facilities which are not accessible or are difficult to access in the face-to-face classrooms, such as different written, audio and visual facilities, which, while attractive to language learners, make it possible for students to present their feedback in a variety of formats, including audio, video, or written formats. Moreover, because there is no limitation in the time and place of using Facebook, there is more comfort and there are more possibilities for students to give feedback. In addition, besides having enough time, students' access to various online resources such as search engines, dictionaries, spell checkers and other syntactic/lexical or even sociolinguistic resources may empower them to offer more corrective feedback, with more comfort and confidence. Giving feedback, especially corrective feedback, may largely depend on students' ability and knowledge (especially in recognizing a mistake), but online resources allow them to give feedback even in situations where they may not completely know the correct form/content prior to searching for it online and then providing the corrective feedback. As a result, giving peer feedback in Facebook may not only motivate students to improve their own knowledge via online resources available to them, but it also gives them the possibility of giving more corrective feedback in a more correct form, and thus a more constructive way, as opposed to the resource-limited and time constrained environment of a face-to-face classroom. All of this may also help students to become more self-confident, daring to give corrective feedback.

The second research question in this study referred to how peer feedback developed in the two groups during the educational course. We were interested in discovering whether the process of peer feedback production remained the same during the course or increased or decreased over time. The results indicated that there was a significant difference between the two groups in the patterns of development of different types of peer feedback production throughout the course. In the beginning days of the course, the Facebook group gave considerably more compliment feedback than the face-to-face group. According to the observations made by the researchers, this is because in the first few days of the course, students were not yet accustomed to giving feedback, or were not confident enough to criticize one another or offer corrective feedback. Giving compliments was probably easier for them. Moreover, since the participants were in the virtual space, they first needed to establish a friendly, interactive communication with other students through positive compliments. In the middle weeks of the course, as students became more familiar with one another and with each other's linguistic competence, explained compliments and corrective feedback increased considerably in the Facebook group. To a much lesser extend the same trend appeared in the face-to-face group for corrective feedback only. Students in both groups learned, as the courses progressed, different ways of both giving to each other and receiving feedback from one another, which also contributed to the increased amount of feedback exchanged. In the last week, however, the situation was slightly different in that corrective feedback decreased in the Facebook group while the number of compliments increased. An explanation for these observations could be the degree of students' learning: the higher degree of learning in the Facebook group compared to the face-to-face group resulted in a lower number of mistakes, which in turn led to lower degrees of exchanging corrective feedback and higher degrees of compliment feedback.

A final research finding in this study addressed differences in learning outcomes as a result of the type of feedback exchanged. Results indicated that in the Facebook group a significant and positive relationship between the amount of corrective feedback and learning outcomes occurred. This question of the influence of feedback types on students' learning has been in contention among linguists for quite some time already. Ferris (1999), for example, asserts that many students, teachers and researchers agree that corrective teacher feedback has an important effect on students' learning outcomes. Lyster and Saito (2010) and Mackey and Goo (2007) also argued that many foreign language acquisition theories predict that corrective teacher feedback results in a faster development of foreign language acquisition. For linguists one of the most interesting topics is the influence of corrective teacher feedback on learning and how it occurs (Chandler, 2003; Ferris, 2006). In recent years, many studies (Ellis, 2010; Ferris, 2010; Sheen, 2010; Santos, López-Serrano, & Manchón, 2010; Rezaei, Mozaffari, Hatef, 2011) have investigated the effectiveness of corrective teacher feedback in learning a foreign language. The findings of all these studies on teachers' feedback resemble the results of the current study that corrective peer feedback influences the amount of learning in positive ways. Research conducted by Ellis and Sheen (2006), Lightbown (1998), Loewen (2004), Lyster (1998), and Sheen (2004) indicates that the degree of corrective teacher feedback can predict foreign language acquisition: the higher the amount of corrective teacher feedback given, the higher the degree of learning. In addition, Van Beuningen (2011) who also investigated the influence of corrective teacher feedback on foreign language writing, reports that corrective feedback is a reliable predictor of students' degree of learning.

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Therefore, in general, it seems that corrective teacher feedback is of a significant importance in the promotion of foreign language learning. However, there is one exception: Truscott (1996) did not find this relation between the amount of corrective feedback given by the teacher and learning outcomes. Furthermore, the general research literature on teacher feedback in other domains than language learning, also questions the value of corrective teacher feedback (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Our study made clear that giving corrective peer feedback in language learning fulfilled similar functions as receiving corrective teacher feedback in language learning, contributing to higher learning outcomes of the providers of peer feedback. We have to realize, however, that we only found correlations between corrective peer feedback and learning outcomes. This means that we cannot rule out alternative explanations, such as that better students and / or better learning students give more corrective feedback than weaker students and / or slower learning students.

One important issue refers to the differences produced as a side effect of peer feedback conditions in the two groups. In the Facebook group students could (and sometimes did) use extra materials such as videos and websites. Moreover, students in the Facebook group spent more time in giving feedback than the students in the face-to-face group where feedback was given in the 40 minutes extra time per session. These differences may be responsible for a part the learning effects found. We tend to consider these side effects as "all in the game", however. This kind of feedback support and the spontaneous extra time investment are only possible in a social network environment and not in face-to-face environments.

One might wonder whether the differences found between the Facebook and the face-to-face group in peer feedback and results should not be attributed to other differences between the groups. We could rule out several alternative explanations. There were no differences between the groups in prior learning, attitude to social media, sex, or age. Two alternative explanations could not be ruled out completely, however. One alternative explanation could be that the teacher in the Facebook group was better than the one in the face-to-face group. We found no indications in the evaluations, the log files nor the observations, however, that this was the case. Finally, an alternative explanation could be that the composition of the groups made a difference. Although all participants came from Iran, the people in the Facebook group lived and studied in different countries of Europe, whereas the participants in the face to face group all lived and studied in the Netherlands. We could not think of any reason, however, why Iranian students living in different European countries would learn English better than Iranian students living in the Netherlands. Thus, we conclude that the differences found can be attributed to the differences between the two learning environments. In the Facebook condition students produced more feedback and especially more corrective feedback than in the face to face condition.

We should be cautious in generalizing our results to other subject matter areas or other kinds of learners. The research population was limited to peer feedback exchanged among a group of Iranian PhD students living in Schengen area countries. Their problems in learning English may be different from those of other students. In their case for instance, lack of confidence, lack of active language use and shyness may be more extreme than with other students. Generalizations should better be related to the role Facebook can have in overcoming lack of confidence in using a foreign language, overcoming shyness and helping students to use a foreign language more often. Furthermore, more widespread, larger-scale studies among students of different nationalities living in various parts of the world are needed. More studies should be performed with different designs such as using a face-to-face group with online feedback, using Skype without Facebook, giving feedback in Facebook without teaching. In addition, as this study only concerned students learning the English language, future studies should also investigate language learning in the environment of social networks for languages other than English. Further research is also needed into the value of the different kinds of peer feedback, especially explained feedback and corrective feedback. The conditions under which peer feedback tends to flourish, seem better in a social networks than in traditional classrooms. Further research should look into these conditions in more detail.

Our results are promising for educational practice: on-line social networks can become important vehicles for learning a foreign language, especially for facilitating kinds of corrective peer feedback that students like and help their learning processes in new ways.

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An Analysis of Preposition (Idiomatic Phrases, Prepositional Phrases and Zero Prepositions) Detection Errors in the Writing of Graduate ESL Learners of Pakistan

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Abstract- In this paper we describe a methodology for detecting preposition errors in the writing of ESL graduate learners. To investigate the nature of errors in the writing skill problems of graduate learners, two fifty graduate male and female learners randomly selected from four colleges and one university were asked to complete two writing skill tasks: Fifth word deletion and open composition test. The study is related to the research question: Why ESL graduate learners commit errors in their writing skills? (a) Prepositions, phrasal verbs and idiomatic phrases. It is detected that preposition overuse and preposition omission are the common problems for ESL. Besides, students deem prepositions quite tricky to use in their writing. So the findings show the wrong use of prepositions specifically 'with, in, of' and unnecessary insertion of prepositions. It is observed that errors are because of the interference of L1 in L2. Besides, the final results of the two tests showed that Prepositions (prepositional verbs, prepositional phrases, phrasal verbs, zero prepositions) are quite problematic for ESL learners. The learners try to put prepositions on the same patterns of L1 which ultimately leads them towards errors.

Keywords: prepositions, idiomatic phrases, prepositional phrases, zero prepositions and interference of L1 in L2.

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ANANALYSISOFPREPOSITIONIDIOMATICPHRASESPREPOSITIONALPHRASESANDZEROPREPOSITIONSDETECTIONERRORSINTHEWRITINGOFGRADUATEESLLEARNERSOFPAKISTAN

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An Analysis of Preposition (Idiomatic Phrases, Prepositional Phrases and Zero Prepositions) Detection Errors in the Writing of Graduate ESL Learners of Pakistan

Sumaira Akhtar [α], Waqas Sohail [σ] & Muhammad Rizwan [ρ]

Abstract- In this paper we describe a methodology for detecting preposition errors in the writing of ESL graduate learners. To investigate the nature of errors in the writing skill problems of graduate learners, two fifty graduate male and female learners randomly selected from four colleges and one university were asked to complete two writing skill tasks: Fifth word deletion and open composition test. The study is related to the research question: Why ESL graduate learners commit errors in their writing skills? (a) Prepositions, phrasal verbs and idiomatic phrases. It is detected that preposition overuse and preposition omission are the common problems for ESL. Besides, students deem prepositions quite tricky to use in their writing. So the findings show the wrong use of prepositions specifically 'with, in, of' and unnecessary insertion of prepositions. It is observed that errors are because of the interference of L1 in L2. Besides, the final results of the two tests showed that Prepositions (prepositional verbs, prepositional phrases, phrasal verbs, zero prepositions) are quite problematic for ESL learners. The learners try to put prepositions on the same patterns of L1 which ultimately leads them towards errors.

Keywords: prepositions, idiomatic phrases, prepositional phrases, zero prepositions and interference of L1 in L2.

I. Introduction

The performance of the learners in writing skill performance-based assessment tasks such as the constructed-response in essay mode is often evaluated by the language experts. Most commonly used rubrics to assign a score to writing in performance-based assessments (PBAs) are analytic, holistic and primary traits rubrics (East & Young, 2007). But for the purpose of this study, the researcher has used analytic scoring technique because it can upgrade (Xi & Mollaun, 2006) reliability among measures. Each linguistic feature is assigned a separate score in analytic scoring technique. In a writing skill assessment task, it provides sufficient diagnostic information of the underlying ability of the learners. On the other hand, in holistic scoring technique only a single score is assigned to the overall performance of the learners in a writing task and this is what is practiced by the examiners in Pakistan. A probable threat posed by this technique is that it does not expose merits and demerits of the learners' writing skill (Weigle, 2002). The present study focuses on prepositions and grammatical accuracy to analyze the writing skill of ESL graduate learners. Keeping in view the nature and purpose of the study, it is important to explain what is meant by '*errors'* and '*mistakes'*. The words and sentences used by the learners during their writing task are checked by language instructors in the process of evaluating ESL learners' writings. They are commonly termed as errors, mistakes and slips. The presence of errors refers to the learners' inability to employ properly the semantic categories, structure of grammar and other linguistics units. The terms 'mistakes' and 'errors' are repeatedly confused and interchanged with each other with the notion of their being synonymous for each other. Actually they are not semantically synonymous; there is a lucid and clear line of difference between these two terms. There are a variety of definitions of 'errors' and 'mistakes' which seem quite relevant to this study and support to make a difference between these two terms. In an unequivocal way, Norrish (1983) drew a line between 'errors' and 'mistakes' by positing that errors refer to the deviation of the learners from the systematic rules of language that they have not learnt; they use them in a wrong way again and again. Norrish describes mistakes as a deviation that is inconsistent, it means that a learner is delivered an accurate form and he tends to use only one form at times and skip the other form. So this inconsistency of the deviation of a correct form is termed as a mistake. Winkler (2008) is of the view that we can know from the mistakes of the learners how far they understand the language than the correct things they say in their communication. Davidson (2007) has made a difference between errors and mistakes, he analyzed that mistakes occur due to a momentary laps or carelessness in thought, the correction of which is possible. At a deeper level, errors refer to the faulty expression. It is something that has not been learnt as

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well as the correct version is not known by the learners. In this way, the correction of errors is not as straightforward as is the case with mistakes. According to Brown (1980) mistakes allude to the failure in order to use a system that is known by the learners in an approved manner. He further precedes his argument that it is a performance error. Finally, we can infer from Brown's point of view that in his native language, a native speaker can make a mistake but he cannot make an error which non- native learners typically commit. To Edge (1989) an ESL learner can correct his mistakes by himself/herself but to correct his errors, he definitely requires the supervision of some competent language instructor. From aforementioned discussion, it is quite vivid that errors are the result of lack of knowledge with regard to the language rules.

A learner has to go through a complicated, hit and trial process to learn a second language. In Pakistani education system, English language teaching has always occupied a superior status. Students are scarcely conscious towards the process of English language writing skill in Pakistan because particularly at college level there is not any systematic procedure and implementation of error analysis system. Besides, in this regard teachers hardly make any committed effort. Consequently in English language writing skill, ESL learners go on making errors and mistakes. Teachers do not rectify these errors and as a result they become a constant feature of learners' writing skill in the long run. The linguist is seriously concerned with the errors of the learners in modern languages pedagogy because the analysis of the errors of ESL learners provides useful information to teachers about the problematic areas that require to be rectified. On students writing skill, an integral part of second language instruction is the feedback. It supports in knowing how far the students have been able to steer on the road of amelioration in their writing skill. Perhaps on the part of teachers, this is estimated to be one of the most vital responsibilities. No doubt, the feedback given by the teacher affects of how ESL learners should move toward the writing skill process and make revisions to their writing for improvement (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994). In learning a language, error analysis gives an access to the learners' strategies that they employ to point out the factors involved in learners' errors, to be familiar with the difficulties of learners to learn a language (Richards, Plott & Platt, 1996). For teachers, students and researchers, the analysis of the students' errors is greatly effective and valuable (Michaelides, 1990).

The response of the teacher towards students' errors attracts the researchers more than anything else. Ferris (2002, 2003) and Goldstein (2001, 2005) both give great importance to "judicious" and "purposeful" error correction. On the techniques of error correction research, a lion's share of error correction research has its fundamental focus on it. There are two major error correction techniques (1) direct and (2) indirect error feedback. Hendrickson (1980) explained that the provision of correct structures is the direct error feedback and overt correction. According to Ferris (2003, p. 52) in indirect error feedback, the teacher merely identifies the students' errors and underlines them but reluctant to offer correct forms or structures. For students, an indirect error feedback is beneficial. Ferris (2002, 2003) opines that in the beginning stages direct feedback is appropriate for ESL learners because when the students are beginners; their errors are "untreatable". In other words, the students do not have the competence to correct their errors such as the structural and vocabulary errors.

a) Problem Statement

From school and college level, English language is taught as a compulsory subject. Conversely, in spite of its being taught for so many years, the ESL learners at graduate level still have problems in their second language especially in prepositions and grammatical accuracy. The learners have to face many difficulties of how to write accurately in accordance with syntactic rules. They even cannot develop meaning between sentences. They cannot write an essay accurately with the correct use of prepositions. In writing skill, linguistic features are of great significance. In this feature, the lack of competence brings about a great detriment to their educational performance. So this study was conducted to investigate this problem.

b) Purpose of the Study

The most important object of the study was to find out the problematic areas related to the area of prepositions and grammatical accuracy in the writing skill of ESL graduate learners. To have an access to the most challenging domains of the learners in their process of writing activity; each linguistic feature under analysis was evaluated through repeated measures in two writing skill performance-based tasks.

II. Methodology

This section briefly discusses the methodology used in the present study: nature of study, research design, population and sample and instrument used in data collection procedure.

a) Research Design

The study uses descriptive research design to describe the nature of the problems and difficulties of graduate ESL learners' writing skill proficiency. So, this study describes an authentic and actual phenomenon without the intervention of any experiment. The focus of the descriptive nature of the present study is to describe the errors of ESL learners and provide practical measures to be taken to solve them.

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b) Population and Sample

The population of the present study comprises the students doing their Bachelor studies in both public/ private sectors college/university of Punjab, Pakistan. The sample comprised two hundred and fifty male and female students from medical and non-medical both arts and science groups were selected for this paper. The researcher follow quasi- random sampling technique.

c) Research Instruments

Two types of tests were used as instruments to collect data from the graduate ESL learners. The first test fifth word deletion used to assess their overall grammatical accuracy and capability to fill blanks appropriately, the second test was a controlled discussion question that was to be answered in an essay form entitled "Terrorism". In fifth word deletion, they were asked to put apt prepositions in idiomatic and prepositional phrases. Besides, they were asked to point out carefully zero prepositions.

III. Literature Review

a) Interface of L1 in L2

Articles are involved in the interaction of linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge and a variety of discourse processes. The article system is a reflection of an interface (Maratsos, 1974) (Huebner, 1985). The differences between Hindi and Urdu are sociolinguistics, because at phonological and grammatical level they are closely related. (Schmidt, 1999, p. xiv), and these languages are morphophonologically different (Bhatia, 1993). The expression of definiteness is the same in these languages. Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi (Kachru, 2006), (Schmidt, 1999), (Bhatia, 1993) are articles languages. According to Hegarty, 2005, to the child universal set of features are accessible and the child's acquisition selects only those features that are installed in his/her L1. These features are drags into language-specific lexical items. The children acquiring their L1 compose lexical items with a sequence; the sets of features are accessible to them. In L2 acquisition, the process is different. The features that are not present in the first language are obtainable to learners and acquirable, but on the other side, morphological differences in how features are assembled in lexical items present a factual learning problem, even in the case of L1–L2 pairs when both languages opt for the equivalent subset of related features. In this case, the acquisition problem entails the learners' figuring out how the relevant features are remapped onto new language-specific morphophonological forms.

b) Interference of L1 in L2

Bertkua (1974) declares that the interference of L1 is accountable for errors in L2. Bryant (1984 P: 3) tried to scrutinize the errors of articles by analyzing round about 200 English essays written over a three year period by the University students of Japanese, and he evaluates the frequency of errors in articles encountered among Slavic and Asian students which have no article system (Bryant 1984, p. 3). Cohen recommended that errors are due to the *deep misconceptions* of article system (Cohen 1998, p. 156). Spontaneously, the usage of articles depends upon the speakers and circumstances. A number of researchers are of the view that the article organism is unlearnable, they consider it a natural exposure of language (Duly, Burt, & Krashen 1982). It is a fact that if articles are learnt under fixed pattern where they are spoken by native speakers (Kimizuka 1968, p.79). Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1983) said that *definite* and *indefinite* articles fundamentally depend on discourse context to determine them (Celce-Morcia-Freeman 1983, p. 172). Rutherford (1987) explains his argument that it is quite obvious to say that the subjects of the sentences are essentially governed by discourse not syntax, the interaction between grammar and discourse emerge from determiners (Rutherford 1987, p. 59). Master (1987 & 1997), Parrish (1987), all have studied the *learning of articles.* Most of the researchers revolve around the English functional words which have a considerable focus on English article system (Chaudron & Parker, 1990) seem to focus on two prevailing areas: the process of acquisition pedagogy and its effectiveness. Master (1987) highlighted that articles are acquired differently and they depend on the fact whether they occur in the native language of the learners. The definite article *the* precedes the indefinite article *a* (Huebner, 1983). Numerous studies have been conducted on the wrong use of the definite article *the*. The proficient learners can improve their correct use of indefinite articles *A* (Huebner, 1985) viewed the over generalized of definite article *the.* Thomas (1989) tends to say that across proficiency level, the zero article is generalized. Master, (1997), proposed that in early stages of language learning for those learners who have articles languages (like polish Urdu Asian, Slavic etc) seem to dominate in all environments. Parrish (1987) proceeds to point out an order of acquisition that *zero, definite* and *indefinite* articles are consecutively acquired. Inter language is the process of L1 and L2 learning which is solely related to an intermediate language as a stage between the native and non native language. Lennon's analytically classified (Brown, 1994) which consists on prepositional errors regarding disordering 2%, substitution 61%, omission 11% and addition 26% are drawn after data analysis in Leonon's study. The ultimate results indicate that in domain of substitution i.e. 60% is the highest incorrect use of prepositional system of L1 (Urdu) and L2 as well as in the process of selecting proper and relevant prepositions in order to describe distinctive relationships in linguistic elements. Primary category of errors is

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communication strategy-based (James. 1998). The occurrence of interlingual errors is fundamentally due to the interference of native language. On the other hand, over co-occurrence restrictions of prepositions are viewed under the category of intralingual errors (James 1998).

c) Language Transfer

Inter language consists of the features of native language and non native language. The mother tongue of the learner largely influences the learning of their L2. Selinker (1972) argues that language transfer refers to the processes that produce fossilized competences that are central to the second language learning processes. There are two types of transfer: negative transfer and positive transfer. Positive transfer from native to foreign language occurs when the native language and foreign language have the same form and its similarity assists L2 acquisition. Negative transfer occurs when native language pattern or rules bring about an inappropriate form in the target language.

d) Error Analysis

Since 1950s, the error analysis (EA) in both languages Second as well as Foreign language (L1/FL) learners is playing its leading role in L2/L1 pedagogy. To develop linguistic system, EA tries to investigate learner's inter language which can emerge between the L2/FL (Selinker 1972). A British linguist, Pit Corder (1967) refocused his concentration on errors from the language acquisition and language processing perspective. He mentioned in his paper: *'The significance of learner Errors'* that errors are quite important because improvement is not possible without errors. In this way, they are termed as *developmental errors*. Richard noted that error analysis shows straight roads to deal with differences between the way adult native speakers of the language use and the way people learning a language speaking (Richard, 1971, pp. 0.1). EA has adopted several ways to contribute in the teaching of languages. Firstly, it provides to language developers and teachers the identification, description and classification of errors which offer an informed knowledge of language which are deemed somehow problematic for learners at large. Moreover, it makes strategies and policies to improve the learning and teaching process regarding error correction and remedial teaching (Richard 1980). Secondly, the errors of learners give a certain account of the competence and linguistic knowledge (Gass & Selinker 2001) offers valid information to teachers that students are still required to learn. EA attempts to explain those errors which are because of psycholinguistic strategies and mechanism (Dulay, Burt & Krahen 1982).

Belhaj (1997) conducted a research on his student's errors which they committed mostly in their translation papers. The end results showed that students had verb formed tense errors and errors in the domain of relative clause, prepositions, articles, noun, adjective and miscellaneous. Radwan (1988) highlighted lexical and grammatical errors of the learners. The result pointed out that students committed most of errors in the area of articles. Dessouky (1990) also seemed to investigate the similar problematic area regarding second language learners, but the difference laid on the occurrence of these errors. Kao (1999) examined the errors in the writing skill of Taiwanese students. Kao (1999) studied one hundred and sixty nine compositions which were written by 53 Taiwanese college students. In this study, 928 errors were identified. The greatest frequency among these errors occurred with regard to grammatical errors was 66%, lexical errors were 18%. Lin scrutinized 26 essays of Taiwanese college students and the outcomes showed that in sentence structure, the error frequency was 30.43%, wrong use of verb form was 21.01%, and wrong use of words and sentences fragments were 15.94%. Chen observed that the most frequently occurred grammatical errors were the misuse of English articles in the compositions. Han et al. (2006) have offered a maximum entropy classifier in order to identify the errors in articles; it has achieved 83% accuracy. Chodorow et al (2007) analyzed the identification of errors in preposition and he has drawn a consequent report regarding 80% precision and 30% recall of these errors. Ultimately, Gamon et al (2008) utilized an intricate system which contained a language model and a decision for both articles and prepositions errors. On the other hand, Yi et al (2008) suggested a web account organism in order to correct determiners/ articles errors (P 62%). Turner and Charniak (2007) reported the best results on articles. Additionally, errors are deemed positive and systematic which are generally meant rule-governed and internally consistent. In tune with tendencies in researchers of L2 and social inguistics, Ellis (1985) argued about the existence of systematic variation of L2 learning regarding production. In advance, this variation can be predicted as well as explained. It has two types of variability: variability of linguistic context or situational context and variability of individual learner factors. Some researchers have elaborated that in order to explain the frequency of errors, it is the high degree of polysemy and the number of preposition has nearly made the task of systemization impossible. Accordingly, this confusion is reflected in grammars, books as well as in textbooks. Specifically in the latter, care is not taken to make emphasis on vital areas because a given preposition has more than one meaning. It is dependent on the content because and some verbs require an obligatory preposition. Farnandez (1994, p .52) argued that students tend to learn verb without learning and they are required to follow the specific preposition. Correa and Gonzalez (1992) analyzed four prepositions of location in English; such as: *in, on, at* and *over*. Both of these researchers have concluded that we find learner's common errors

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which occur primarily due to the interference of mother tongue (L1) into the second language (L2). The most exciting premise underlying this hypothesis is that similarities can facilitate learning and differences can hinder it between the two languages and ultimately as a result, the frequent errors occur in second language (L2). In second language writing, two main errors are valuable: (1) interlingual (2) intralingual errors. At the outset, it was the widespread conviction about language errors which are occurred by the transformation from one language to another, some considerable studies have been conducted by Richard (1971) in the sphere of learner's errors. Richard was the pioneer to break new grounds in this framework who robustly refuted this certainty that L1 interference is accountable for learner's errors. His study includes learners of Japanese, Chinese, French, and West African backgrounds. A many errors have been put forward, for instance, prepositions, articles, distribution and production of verb groups and the use of questions. He is of the view that a number of learner's errors generated in the process of language acquisition and the mutual interference of the target language.

e) English prepositions

English has 60 to 70 prepositions that is a higher number (Koffi, 2010, p. 29). Furthermore, over 90 percent of prepositions usage is estimated to involve nine most frequently used prepositions: (with, to, from, at, in, of, by, for and on). However, on the basis of their functions, prepositions can be categorized such as preposition of time, instrument, direction and agent. Prepositions occupy a huge multiplicity of meaning which is context dependent. A specific preposition can change the actual meaning. Generally, prepositional errors can be found in both speech and writing of non-native learners. In the process of discovering the language, a learner's errors are considered crucial as they can give an enough evidence of learning and unfolds many procedures and strategies which are employed by the learner (Corder, 1981). Different prepositions are used to indicate many relationships because one preposition can have various translations. When students try to speak or write anything; they consciously make an endeavor to find similar structures to Urdu in English. So learners cannot forget their prepositional knowledge of L1 (Lam, 2009. P .3).

Prepositions are called group of words or merely words which become apparent either before (noun phrase or indicate syntactic associations (Methew, 1997). Agoi (2003) verified that prepositions are used to explain the link of noun or noun equivalents which it governs. Hamadallah and Tushyh (1988) pointed out that prepositions are basically measured as functional words which establish a link between phrases, clauses or words in sentences. EFL and ESL learners, have to face problems to use prepositions exactly. As far as a phenomenon known as language transfer is concerned, a few rules are applied from L1 to L2. It happens during the learning of new language. For second language learners, it seems to create problems because every language has its own rules and we cannot make unnecessary changes in it. Thahir (1987) described that prepositions create problems for Arabic learners of English because Arabic prepositions are a few in number. According to Abbas (1961) only twenty (20) prepositions are in Arabic. To Hayden (1956) English language has fifty seven (57) prepositions. There are three problems are common for ESL regarding prepositions: (1) deleting the necessary prepositions (2) usage of incorrect preposition (3) using unnecessary prepositions. According to Arab researchers, Arab EFL learners and, Jordanian EFL learners have to face tough time in the usage of English prepositions. (Al-Marrani, 2009) reported that the learning of English prepositions is a permanent problem for EFL. Hamadallah and Tushey (1988) mentioned that (EFL) as both Arabic and English language belong to two different languages so Arab learners of English language have to face problems in learning process of English. Thahir, (1987) analyzed that as a second language, students find many problems when they make an actual usage of prepositions.

f) Phrasal verbs, Idiomatic phrases and prepositional phrases

McArthur (1992) interprets that Samuel Johnson was the pioneer to introduce phrasal verbs in 1755, calling them a *composition,* but Walker (1655.P 1) calls them as some particles as words which could be included as part of the signification of the foregoing verb. It shows the verb-particle combination semantically. Phrasal verbs are used in speech and in an informal writing. They also occur with growing frequency and in more formal writing. A change in form and construction are accompanied by a transform in meaning (Goldberg, 1995, pp. 8-9). The particle may be put after the verb's object, separate from the verb to which it is connected. This alternation occurs in transitive sentences. There are also some phrasal verbs which consist on this construction and they are ungrammatical (Curzan & Adams, 2006, p. 148). A preposition is the first word of a phrase that contains a noun or a pronoun. In sentences, prepositions show a relationship between its object. So most of sentences must have preposition in English. They can show relationships in time and they can show relationships between objects in space. So, in English, prepositions have entirely different functions and meaning in sentences. In speaking and writing, we use prepositions. The learners remain conscious of how to use it because it is very useful both in speaking and writing. It is very essential because it expresses the meaning expressed by adjective and adverbs: when,

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where, how and what kind. Prepositions which begin grammatical structures often called prepositional phrases which always begin with a preposition and end with a noun or a pronoun which is the preposition's object. For instance:

They take a rest *after the singing competition*.

g) Challenges towards Prepositions

Prepositions are problematic for the ELL as each language has a set of rules which are responsible for the clash points. (James, 2007). One of these clash points, prepositions are at the heart. According to Celce- Murica and Larsen-Freeman (1999), prepositions are typically completed by the use of inflections. But in each language, prepositions do not behave in the same manner. A mismatch problem can be detected between English and other languages. A second language learner will elucidate an English word from its native equivalent; but this method seems inadequate for function word but it works for content words. There is a diversity of opinions along with a mismatch problem between languages. Preposition is called a word which shows the location of one object in relation to another. It seems multifarious for English language learners (ELL) to learn the nuance of all the English prepositions, how to bring into play them and how to comprehend them. In the contemporary teaching strategy, despite these challenges, prepositions are scarcely addressed. Prepositions are not only hard to recognize but also inflexible for teachers to teach. In the definition, one is incapable to explicate a preposition without using one or two more prepositions. So, the teacher would have to elaborate those new prepositions. In this way, the teacher and the student are trapped in a spiraling whirlwind of prepositions. Without using an alternative preposition, a teacher cannot define a preposition. The meaning and the definition are often fuzzy and have not an unambiguous understanding for the students. Several teachers and the textbooks do not teach prepositions and that's why student remain in constant trouble.

To Noam Chomsky (1981), UG is an exact system of rules. In this way, universal grammar explores two deep-seated aspects: First, the theoretical frame-work of prepositions secondly, an interaction of UG with SLA. It is that in order to explain the frequency of errors is the high degree of polysemy and the sheer numbers of prepositions have nearly made the task of systemization impossible. This confusion is reflected in textbooks and grammars. So a due care is not taken on the important areas because a given preposition has more than one meaning. It is dependent on the content that there are verbs followed by prepositions. Farnandoz (1994, p .52) argued that students tend to learn verb without learning and they are required to follow the specific preposition. He has analyzed four prepositions of location in English; such as: *in, on, at* and *over*. Both of these researchers have concluded that we find learner's common errors due to the interference of mother tongue. Similarities can facilitate learning and differences can hinder it between the two languages and ultimately the frequent errors occur in second language (L2).

h) Contrastive Analysis of Prepositional Errors

To Lado, in foreign language learning, the comparison between native and foreign language lays the key towards ease or complexity. The elements which are different will be difficult and those that are similar will actually be less difficult for the learners (Lado, 1957, pp .1-2). In sixties, CAH (contrastive analysis hypotheses) developed during the domination of behavioral psychology and structural linguistics. Brown states in his book "Language learning and teaching" that the heaviest barrier towards L2 acquisition is the first language interference. However, a structural and scientific analysis of both languages in question would yield taxonomy of linguistic contrasts between them which enable the linguistic to predict the complexities a learner have to encounter in turn (Brown, 2000, p. 208). A linguistic model of CAH was expounded by Bloomfield (1933). Further, this model was elaborated by Lado (1957). James (1985) pointed out that the psychological fundamentals of CAH are 'Associationism'. The assumption regarding CAH is that in L2 utterances, the second language learners use to transfer certain features of native language. (Lado, 1957, p.2). The meaning of 'transfer' in this context is that to carry on the habits of L1 into L2 (Corder, 1971, p. 158).

Three versions regarding CAH are classified: *Week*, *Strong* and *Moderate*. *Strong version* is highly impractical and unrealistic version (Brown, 2000). Wardaugh (1970) viewed that this version expects primarily of linguists to have a set of linguistic universals (Brown, 2000). Moreover, it must be formulated within a comprehensive linguistics theory which properly deals with phonology, syntax and semantics at the very least. An observational use of CA is termed by Wardaugh in the *week version* of CA (Brown 2000). Wardaugh (1970, p. 125) is of the view that teachers and students have successfully employed this weak version of CA regarding the unique linguistic knowledge to observe the difficulty in the L2 learning (1970. P. 126). Oller and Ziahoss (1970. P. 186) proposed a moderate version of CA. According to their perceived differences or similarities, the categorization of abstract and concrete patterns is the basis of learning. So, when patterns are distinct in form and meaning then confusions can be created in it.

i) Error frequency Rate in prepositional System

In a corpus of one million English words, one in ten words is a preposition (Fang, 2000). For theories of syntax, prepositions are problematic. Prepositions are held to be one of the four main lexical categories along

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with nouns, verbs and adjectives, and are contrasted with the functional categories (FC) like determiners, inflection and case. In generative theory of syntax, the distinction between lexical and functional categories has played a central role. The scheme that the functional element Infl(ection) heads the sentence (Huang, 1982) ultimately led to a parallel re-analysis of Noun Phrases as Determiner Phrases (Abney, 1987). Since Pollock's (1989) Split-Infl hypothesis, the questions about functional categories have largely concentrated on the nature of the formation of functional projections, rather than the verity of their existence (Belletti (1994) for a first-rate depiction of the development of agreement projections in Generative Grammar). However even the categorization of prepositions as a closed class is awkward. and their membership is taken to range from 50 – 60 members, as it is found in traditional grammars of English (Warriner & Griffith, 1977), to 248, as found in a corpus study of prepositions (Fang, 2000). It is accepted that innovative prepositions can be put into the class (Kortmann & Konig, 1992) even though at a very slow rate.

j) Acquisition of English prepositions in English

Primarily, prepositions are taken to be a closed class, a characteristic of functional categories and not lexical ones. Prepositions put a semantic content in sentences, as demonstrated through their theta-role assignment, but a few exceptional prepositions are argued to be empty Case assigners which are unable to assign any theta-roles and the so-called Dummy Case Assigners. Prepositions are taken by most fields of language research to be a single, homogeneous category despite these fundamental contradictory characteristics. In modern syntactic research, the inconsistencies are pointed out in the category of prepositions (Tremblay, 1996). As these accounts differ in their details, they all pointed out a theoretical division between prepositions which are lexical in nature and those which are syntactic and functional in nature. The largest parts of prepositions express semantic relations, as realized in their assignment of theta roles. But a few, like *of* and (arguably) the dative *to* seem to be syntactic because they are required for Case assignment, but do not include any thematic properties to the structure. The majorities of prepositions assign Case as do verbs while the syntactic ones assign Case inherently in a parallel observation (Ura, (2001).

k) Empirical Evidence of Prepositional Errors

The researchers have tried to conduct a survey on *acquisition of preposition of time* by English undergraduates at Jordanian university or at Balqa University. Zughoul (1979) highlighted in learning preposition that Arab EFL learners face extraordinary problems. (a) Grammar translation problem which is a traditional method of teaching motivates students to translate in their minds, (b) the interference from their native language, Arabic (c) by a preposition; the English preposition is not expressed in Arabic. In addition, its equivalent is expected to be different part of speech in this domain. Scott and Tucker (1974) expressed that to Arabic prepositions, English rarely correspond to it. The concept of substitution in preposition stemmed from both English and Arabic forms. Hashim (1996) made a meticulous inspection and concluded that the main cause of errors for EFL learners is because of the influence of mother tongue. Kharma and Hajjaj (1997) have examined that prepositions are the most troublesome aspect of syntax. Moreover, is called an eternal problem for EFL learners. Hamadallah and Tushyeh (1988) reported that in a contrastive analysis of both English and Arabic prepositions, it is found that to a non-native speaker of English, preposition constitute a learning difficulty for them. Onike (2007) conducted a study in which he examined that under second language learning situation, the learners typically misuse prepositions. Furthermore, the conclusion indicates that the problem of usage is because of interference factor. Catalan, R.M.J (1996) observed variability as well as frequency in errors regarding the specific use of English prepositions. In this study, the sample was consisted on 290 essays. These essays were written by third year students of English by three Spanish secondary school students in Madrid Spain. In the list of participants, there were 172 females and 118 males approximately. The test draws conclusion that for the students, prepositions are certainly difficult for foreign language learners. She made an emphasis that most frequent errors are commonly substitution than addition and omission errors. She further precedes her argument that for Spanish learners of English, prepositions are deemed somewhat tricky area to comprehend. Fion (2005) observed ESL Chinese learner's acquisition of English spatial preposition (in, on, at). The consequences expose three focal problems of ESL learners regarding preposition: (a) the overlook of the preposition (at) (b) the interpretation of the function of spatial preposition (c) idiomatic difficulties. The preposition "at" is used more fewer times than the other two because they regard it more abstract. ESL learners have absolutely found out that the acquisition of idiomatic is the worst and most difficult to learn for them because it is abstract in nature. Sudhakaran (2008) noticed prepositional errors Malay students of ESL from International Islamic University Malaysia; he analyzed the procedure of preposition in both writing and speaking process. Besides, he draws conclusion that students have omitted necessary prepositions. In the same writing task, some learners did their best in preposition (to, of, an) in speaking as well (for, in, about). Boquist (2009) analyzed a study which is primarily based on L2 acquisition of English preposition. In this study, he endeavors to commence the new-fangled approaches towards teaching prepositions for second language learners. The end result of this study

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fundamentally indicates the fact that for several reasons, prepositions are relatively complicated to grasp especially for second language learners. The reason is that there are certain clash points which are imposed by prepositions. There are numerous errors which are committed by Iranian students in their translation. Moreover, the researchers made a comparison between the errors of senior and junior students in order to identify the errors. In this manner, these errors have been corrected at the university during their study. In this study, 40 senior and 40 junior student's errors have been examined at Azad and Payan-e- Noor University in Iran 2009/2010. The errors are categorized into two categories. The top findings showed that in English grammar, there are considerable shortfalls and 98% of the respondents have grammatical errors which are because of intra-lingual influence. It is indicated by (Scott and Tucker, 1974) the negative impression of mother tongue in interference in learning English prepositions is the root-cause. In addition, the errors of EFL/ESL learners their use of English preposition are demonstrated by (Hamadallah Tushyeh, 1988). In English prepositions, the positivity of mother tongue interference is highlighted by (Scott & Tucker, 1974).

l) Defining writing skill and its significance

Writing is considered a formal interpretation which contains a logical and succinct model. Furthermore, within a minimum amount of space, it has the inclusion of information. It is peculiar to human species because it is observable recording of language. It offers us the flexibility in order to transmit our ideas independent of space and time. Through the usage of a set of signs, it illustrates language in a textual medium. It has been explained and interpreted from a numerous ways and this indicates how complicate the writing process is. In order to display the graphical and grammatical system, we make use of the visual medium in writing (Widdowson, 1979). In broader term, writing is not just to write down language into symbols rather it is a product and process dexterity that requires purpose, instruction, coherence, feelings, knowledge, organization, experience and purpose to communicate. It has various forms regarding formal and informal academic texts. At the level of grammar, each type of writing marks manifold feature which are largely observable within the sentence. As far as the level of text structure and the level of grammar are concerned, it is observable beyond the sentence (Nunan, 1999). Taken as a whole, there are three important objects of writing namely "entertainment", it includes novels, newspaper features and comic strips, "action", it has product labels and public signs, "information, it includes magazines and newspaper (Nunan, 1999). Irmscher (1979) made an inspection that writing skill is extremely important because it is considered essential for concentration and personal development. Likewise, in a graphic form, discipline and focus are obligatory for the representation of thoughts. Byrne (1979) stated that in a syntactic order, writing is a production of a sequence of sentence arrangements that made a link to form a coherent whole. In the commencement of writing, words are formed by the use of symbols and letters and afterwards arranged in a sequential order by applying syntactic rules in order to form clauses and sentences. Murray (1985) argued that as far as the creative activity of the writing is concerned, it is steeped discovery because the writer's exclusive objective is to discover, construct and shape meaning especially when he moves his pen across the page. Writing is fundamentally a private activity which tends to involve four stages: editing, drafting, revising and planning. A recursive on-line approach is, however, used by many good writers regarding the writing of a draft. It is interrupted by revision leading to reformulation and planning. Graham and Harris (1993) stated that in learning, writing has occupied the central position because it performs an active role in the development of the learners as well as his ultimate success in educational career. Above and beyond, the teachers need to become competent writers in order to assist the learners in their efforts. Lannen (1989) scrutinized that writing is a process which transforms the absolute material that is discovered by trial or errors and research inspiration to transmit a lucid and obvious message. In addition, it is a process that is extraordinarily supportive in order to reflect deliberate decision. Writing boasts up the potential of the learners to enhance language learning. In this way, they make multiple experiments with vocabulary, sentences and words which they learn in the class domain to make an effective communication. Berdan (2006) pointed out that learn the writing skill is the basic component of education and this imperative quality is regarded as the greatest asset for learners in their entire life.

m) Linguistic Difficulties

Principally, there are numerous native and non native speakers and users of English in English speaking world. Approximately, it is spoken by 1000 million people (Deterding & Kircptrick, 2006). In Pakistan, English bears an upper rank as it is deemed an effective medium of communication as well as in colleges and universities; it is a medium of instruction. At school level, it is taught as a compulsory subject; but ESL learners are still incompetent in writing skill. Even though they are admitted to college yet they have several grey areas in it. Akhtar (1997) affirmed that English is not taught as a language but as a subject in Pakistan. On the other hand, teachers stimulate the students to memorize a few selected essays, questions and grammatical rules. Resultantly, the students reproduce the crammed data in order to get through tests and exams instinctively. In this way, less concentration is directed towards the creative aptitude

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of the students. In addition, teachers encourage students to ponder over the literature based syllabi. They make an emphasis on the genres of literature instead of the language proficiency which can make them creative writers. Mahbob and Talat (2008) experienced that in Pakistan, English language learning seems to be requisite. Broadly speaking, they are of the view that in English language writing skills, no serious measures have yet been taken in Pakistan regarding amelioration of ESL learner's performance. Harris (1993) viewed that language is not considered an innate natural ability rather it is a cognitive ability which can be achieved by years of training. Saddiqui (2007) pointed out the participation of the learners regarding writing skill activities. It is not enough for the learners to confer instructions and guideline or teaching steps to put in order flawless content. Unfortunately, sheer verbal instructions are focused and their genuine contribution is meticulously neglected in writing procedure. It is the innermost root cause of their anxieties because in order to get through the examination, they have a preference to memorize notes from the standard guides and help books. Correspondingly, the learners have no self-reliance for what they have written. The reason is that the feedback and response from the teacher convey a gesture of trepidation for them which enormously blemish their inventive faculty and potential. Saddiqui further pointed out the defective evaluation criteria which hinder their creative competence. Typically, in the main stream of colleges, examinations are conducted in order to estimate and calculate the memory not the creativity of the learners. The literary genres are the object of focal point for lecturers and teachers and non- literary genres are not under inspection which leads toward the production of ESL learners in Pakistan. Chowdhury (2003) pointed out that in Pakistan the existing trends and circumstances are altering because now people are progressively alert about the education. Pathetically, there are still lots of teachers who have the same cold, authoritative and unproductive pedagogical techniques. Nunan (1999) acknowledged that the most important source of linguistic problems is written discourse because it consists on clauses which are internally complex. A majority of learners do not have the aptitude to produce more complex language in written expressions. Keshavarz (2008) said that the analysis of errors in identifying the linguistic difficulties can assist the ESL learners. Yule (1996) observed that the discourse structure focus on the main elements that play a vital part to form a well-stretched text. Schiffrin (1994) opined that the linguistic product of discourse is related to TEXT and as a linguistic role its study is impossible without reference to contextual elements. Moreover, it is not the interferences that are available to the hearer and reader but the linguistic contents, for instance, expressions meaning of words and sentence.

n) Non-linguistic Difficulties Psycho-cognitive

Writing is an activity of ESL learners which do not involve audience or the consultation with the reader during the process. It is quite opposite as compare to speaking process. The psycho-cognitive problems of ESL learners decide and finalize the information of their readers and locate the reasonable way to express. Because of this, it made the learners confused to decide that what type of style in writing should be adopted. Cognitive difficulty lies in the fact of how the learners can organize their concepts and ideas on the paper. Essentially, in certain conditions, it seems somewhat problematic when an assignment is given to the learners as an essay. Likewise, the object of it is not obvious and for any personal reasons, the piece of writing is not being composed. Among ESL learners, this sort of problem is quite prominent because the content is already available in the textbooks which are exclusively designed for exams. This is the reason for why students pay less concentration on their assignments as they are well familiar that they will simply cram the textbooks and achieved good score in exams. Consequently, for Pakistani student writers, it is difficult to invoke audience and the teacher is the one and only audience in the writing task. The learners are well recognizable for the demand of the examiner which is the reproduction of the crammed content from the text books which is chiefly the deep-seated cause to cripple the inventiveness and resourcefulness of the learners. As far as the English language writing skills are concerned, apprehension and emotion are possibly the most analyzed psychological complications and variables. Betancourt and Phinney (1988) asserted that L2 less skilled writers remain in constant apprehension regarding the course of action in writing. But different writers have different source of apprehension. In all probability, it relies on the proficiency level and the degree of experience of L2 learners. On the other side, when the bilingual writing experience increases the percentage of apprehension mechanically decreases. The learners who possess the lower quality of writing have to face a high degree of apprehension. Lee (2005) pointed out that in writing skills; Lee's free reading on the part of ESL learners causes in less apprehension. On the other hand, in second language writing, free reading facilitates in reducing the apprehension of the writer. Clachar (1999) highlighted that emotions can influence the strategies of the writing utilized by ESL learners. On two diverse topics, ESL learners were delegated regarding writing activity: first one is an unemotional procedure and the second one is an emotional text that was designed for the elicitation. It is indicated that more time is devoted to syntactic issues, lexical and morphological; the sheer intention behind this is to underline the intended meaning regarding fidelity. Furthermore, as far as the particular linguistic structures are concerned, they tend to articulate the semantic connotation at large. On

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opposite side, it is omitted in the non-emotional text writing. Cognitive models are exceedingly ready to lend a hand in solving writing problems (McChutchen, Tesk & Bankston, 2008). At this juncture, the term *problem solving* leads towards the conceptualization regarding information process. To Calkins & Daiute, 1986), the presence of audience can increase the length and quality regarding the output of the students. Argumentation, the writer must construct his argument in the process of writing with solid evidence and reason. These evidences and objections must be finalized according to the prejudices, viewpoints and objections of the audience. This is not necessarily the matter that given concentration which is delivered to the audience is irrelevant to narration. In the learning of the students, writing skill performs a distinctive part to construct an environment. In addition, it develops organizational and cognitive strategies which are appropriate in linking outline information, new concepts, strengthen their conceptual framework and organize knowledge (Bangert-Drowns, Hurly & Wilkinson, 2004). By and large, self-monitoring, concept building and planning are attached to the activity of writing in order to promote the establishment in the sphere of knowledge (Bankert-Drowns et al, 2004). Moreover, to write well is the prevailing challenge as it is a test of language proficiency, thinking ability and memory simultaneously. As far as the topic form-term memory is concerned, it requires swift revitalization of domain-specific knowledge (Kelloge, 2001). About significance knowledge, writing competence has its dependency regarding the capability to probe unequivocally (Nickerson, Perkins & Smith, 1985).

At the outset, it was observed that the greatest reason of second language errors is that when the learners transfer from L1 in L2. They automatically commit errors. The learners of native language have to face certain challenges in order to make a grip on L2 features. The influence of native language is just a little bit L2 learners because it influences 3-25 % of errors. (Sattayatham & Honsa, 2007). Richards (1971) challenges this conviction and argued in his research that the learner's errors are owing to the strategies which are used in language acquisition. Error analysis supports teachers to find out proper methods in second language classroom to select material and develop curriculum which can smooth the progress of the learning process (p. 208). Bataineh (2005; p.56). He highlighted that the error of indefinite articles committed by first, second, third and fourth year EFL students; use of indefinite article with adjectives, uncountable nouns, marked/unmarked plural, misuse of the indefinite article, put indefinite article *a* as part of the noun/adjective. This whole detail shows that it is because of the learner's native language (Sattayatham & Honsa, 2007).

A number of ESL/EFL practitioners, specifically writing teachers, become conscious that the article system (i.e. *a, the, an* and *null*) is a trouble for ESL learn them correctly. The English article system fundamentally consists of three main classes: *a, an, the* and *null the zero* articles. The principal function of the three articles is to demonstrate that the conception may or may not be marked off or indicate the object because it is thought of within certain imaginary and physical limits.

The article system is an interesting domain of inquiry as its three members appear so often in the field of second language. However, in English language *a* and *the* constitute two of the ten words which are most frequently used. So it seems quite complex task to locate written or spoken sentences which don't have one of the three articles at least. In many ESL teachers, researchers, textbooks and syllabuses, the articles are occupied short shift despite this frequency. Thus, the prevailing view of the teachers and textbooks standpoint is that in the process of acquisition, the articles will simply get learned. As far as the research standpoint is concerned, to the noun phrase (NP), articles are mere appendages which are often not considered essential to spoken communication. Normally, a native speaker of English acquires the article system by the age of three. The majority of native speakers are unable to formulate rudimentary rules for the usage of article because it is quite automatic system for native speaker. The errors of non-native speakers in the article system are somewhat easy to identify. Therefore, repeatedly misuse of the system from the non-ESL oriented native speaker leads towards endless irritation. If the misuse of the article system can lead towards negative disposition for the listener or reader, this seems rather natural for non-native speakers of English, specifically university students who often express themselves in written mode. Conversely, in the written mode, article errors are most glaring. Understandably, students want to familiar about how to improve their usage of article; because this leads towards numerous pedagogical approaches to teach the article system. A material builder and developer should know how the article system works, how it is acquired and how it is used by native speaker; for it is indeed to build a truly efficacious pedagogical method in order to teach the article system.

IV. Objectives

- The present study focuses on the investigation of errors in Prepositions of graduate ESL learners.
- Prepositions, phrasal verbs and idiomatic phrases are examined.

a) Research Question

(1) Why ESL graduate learners commit errors in their writing skills?

(a) What is the frequency of errors in Prepositions? (phrasal verbs, idiomatic phrases)

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b) Nature of Current Research

The present study opts for quantitative analysis for two sets of data in order to investigate the frequency and type of errors found in prepositions of Pakistani graduate ESL learners. For this study, the quantitative approach is opted purposely as it can statistically be reliable. This study not only allows the outcomes to be analyzed, but also makes a clear comparison with other parallel studies. In the first set of data, the researcher analyzed the errors in prepositions and grammatical accuracy of ESL learners respectively through fifth word deletion. This test marked out the errors in these domains and counted correct answers. In the second test of data, topic-based analysis of prepositions and grammatical accuracy was mainly focused. In these two sets of data, the necessary prepositions, zero prepositions as well as an apt use of idiomatic and prepositional phrases were assessed and calculated afterwards.

Analytic and deductive approaches are related to the research design of this study. An analytic approach centers around a single or multiple specific aspects of language proficiency. What we actually mean analytical approach is that the phenomenon of second language is largely analyzed in its constituent parts as well as one or more of these certain constituent parts are brought under analysis in detail.

One significant linguistics feature is examined in this study namely prepositions in the English language writing skill of ESL graduate/masters learners. A descriptive research design is used which enumerates existing phenomenon without any manipulation of the subjects. Hence, the researcher makes a measurement of things as they are without the intervention of any experiment.

c) Population and Sample

In order to check the frequency of errors in the writing skill, the researcher selected fifty participants from each institution. The total four colleges and one university id focused to conduct this research. In this study, the researcher followed the sample size with a minimum number of 250 for the generalizability of her findings.

Fundamentally, the participants of this study belonged both to the rural as well as urban backgrounds. As far as the age of these learners is concerned, they ranged from nineteen to twenty one years. Moreover, they were from Urdu medium background who had from school level studied English as a compulsory subject. In English language writing skills, it was dominantly expected that they had acquired necessary knowledge required for creative competence in order to communicate ideas. It is important to mention here that in public sector colleges, the majority of graduates have faced problems in their writing skills in Pakistan.

d) Research Instruments

Two types of tests were used as instruments to collect data from the ESL learners in order to investigate prepositional errors and grammatical difficulties of ESL learners. To analyze L2 writing proficiency, two tests were used by the researcher, because for gathering the required data, test is considered the most reliable and authentic tool.

In the first test, every fifth word is deleted with intent. The students were asked to supply the missing word appropriately and grammatical features. In the second test, there was a composition to make a discussion in an essay mode on "Terrorism" comprising 250-300 words approximately in order to assess their errors in prepositions and their overall grammatical ability. The topic given to the students was selected keeping in view their language proficiency so that they can display their creativity.

e) Data Collection Procedure

The researcher collected data from two hundred and fifty graduate ESL learners to make an investigation into the English language compositional problems. Side by side, the participants were provided precise instructions how to attempt each test. During this process, the researcher didn't put them under any time pressure to complete this task. However, the researcher calculated the completion time of each test to view how far the participants were quick in response. As far as the topic based activity is concerned, the learners were not only given an outline of the topic but also some key points were discussed for twenty minutes before the actual commencement of the writing proceeding so that the participants might have sufficient grasp of the topic. The topic of the essay "Terrorism" was intentionally selected by the researcher as it didn't support the learner's crammed knowledge.

f) Data Analysis

The data from two hundred and fifty graduate ESL learners from four colleges and one Universities were read, analyzed and classified carefully into various error categories. Descriptive statistics analysis method was used, which primarily focused on the error frequency of the learners. The data were carefully analyzed and presented in tables and frequency bar graphs by using Microsoft Excel.

g) Validity and Reliability

It is essential that the usefulness must be maximized for the validity and reliability of an instrument. For a particular population under investigation, it should be developed keeping in view a specific object in order to make an instrument useful. For this study, the vital thing in the development of the instruments designing was the identification of errors regarding prepositions and grammatical accuracy. I measured the ESL learner's writing skill competence through these two

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instruments. The usefulness of an instrument solely depends upon reliability to provide the required information about the ability which is to be measured (Bachman, 1990; Bachman and Palmer).

h) Data Analysis

The data were analyzed following analytic scoring rubrics technique. The major focus was functional category such as Prepositions and grammatical accuracy. In the present study, the statistical procedure was descriptive statistics which intentionally made a focus on frequency count of the ESL learner's errors and presented then into tables. In frequency bar graphs, the same data were also presented by using Microsoft Excel. Side by side, in order to draw frequencies Antconc software has been used in this research study. In statistical studies, graphical presentation of the information is of enormous significance which seems to perform two functions: (1) presents the gathered information (2) and the way learners perform in each grammatical category. Moreover, frequency classifies which type of error occurs how many times and shows how many learners committed the same type of errors.

Table 01: Fifth word Deletion Test (Prepositional Errors)

Category	Error Frequency
Phrasal Verbs	450
Prepositional phrases and Prepositions	718

The table 01 is related to the performance of ESL learners in the performance based test, fifth word deletion. The column 01 is related to the errors of the learners in phrasal verbs and prepositional phrases. The column 02 is related to the error frequency of the learners in this test. The error frequency in phrasal verbs is (N=450), in prepositional phrases it is (N=718).

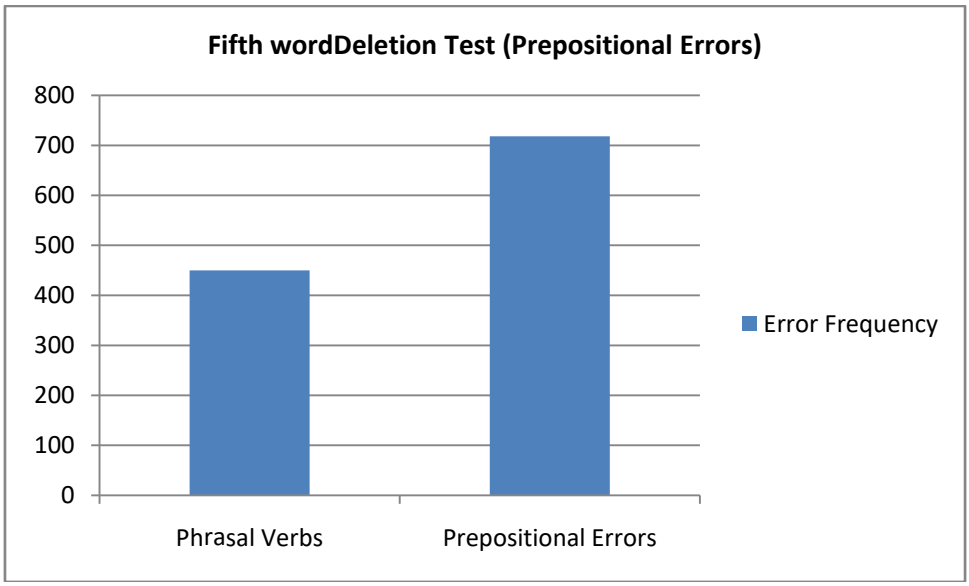


Figure 01

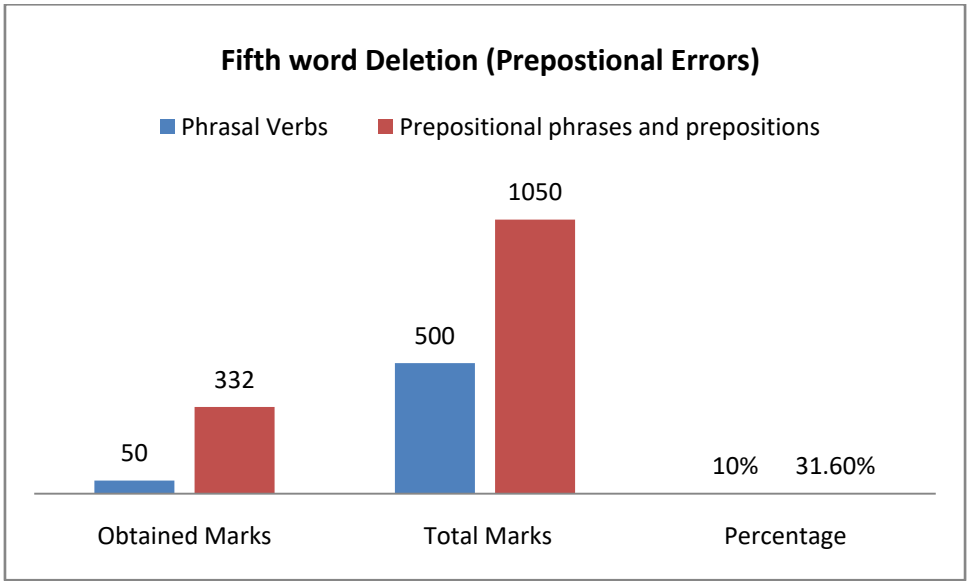


Figure 02

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Table 02: Composition Test

Category	Error Frequency
Definite article	150
Indefinite Articles	120
Zero Articles	152
Preposition	182
Tense	116
Auxiliary	172
Conjunction	105

The table 04 is related to the performance of ESL learners in the performance based test, an open composition. The column 01 is related to the errors of the learners in definite, indefinite, zero article, prepositions, tense, auxiliary and conjunction. The column 02 is related to the error frequency of the learners in this test. The error frequency in definite article is (N=150), in indefinite article it is (N=120), in zero article it is (N=152), in prepositions it is (N=182), in tenses it is (N=116), in auxiliary it is (N=172) and in conjunctions it is (N=105).

The above analysis shows that in this test if we accumulate the definite, indefinite and zero article errors (N=150+N=120+N=152) they are (N=422) in total. In this way, the learners have committed more errors in the domain of articles. The second most frequently committed errors are in the domain of prepositions (N=182). The third most frequently committed errors are in the domain of auxiliaries (N=172). The forth most frequently committed errors are in the domain of tenses (N=116). The fifth most frequently committed errors are in the domain of conjunctions (N=105). The same information has been presented in the figure 07 given below.

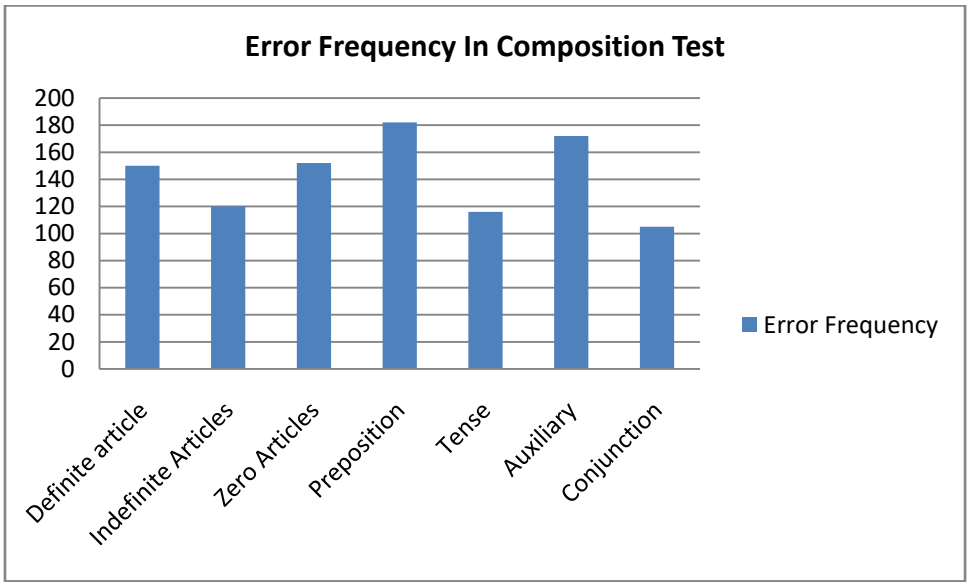


Figure 03

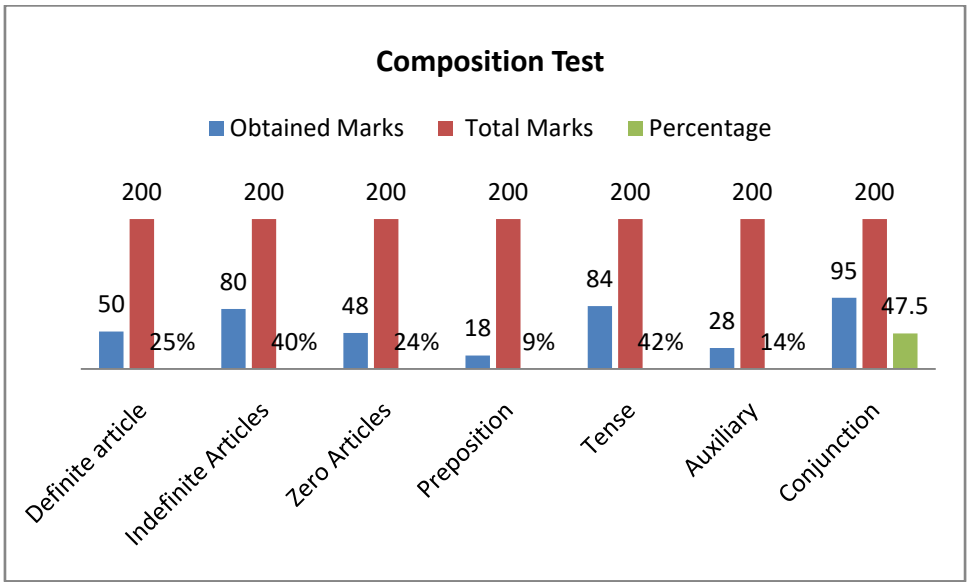


Figure 04

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V. Findings

In order to address research question, the researcher gathered data by two performance based tests: (1) Fifth word deletion (2) Composition.

There were frequent errors of Tenses (N=116), conjunction (N=105) and prepositions (N=182). The learners used unnecessary prepositions in their use of phrasal verbs and idiomatic phrases; they also used prepositions with non prepositional verbs.

- In fifth word deletion, the learners committed more errors in prepositions (N=1145), especially in inserting the following prepositions: *with, in, by, on, and of*. There were also errors in the area of definite articles (N=500).
- The learners committed frequent errors in the use of prepositional phrases (N=718), and less errors in the zero articles (N=450) and in phrasal verbs (N=450). Side by side multiple errors were observed. For example, the learners have problems in verb forms, subject -verb agreement, definite article, prepositional verbs.

VI. Discussion and Conclusion

If we analyze the overall performance of the learners in the linguistic feature under investigation, it is quite understandable that in their writing skills, the graduate/master learners had more problems in *prepositions* domains. One reason is that because a large number of students more or less belong to different backgrounds. Since this study is closely related to the falling standards of academic writing skill of ESL graduate learners. Without making an investigation into it, it seemed not possible to predetermine anything. The researcher gathered data by using two performance based tests (fifth word deletion test and composition) in order to address the first research question: What is the frequency of functional errors of ESL graduate learners in their writing skill? In the analysis of grammatical accuracy, it was pointed out that the learners committed more errors in article, preposition and in tense/verb than other areas of grammar. During the research it was noted that most of the learners in composition were unable to contextualize the topic. Because according to Eggins (2004), in order to derive meaning, contextualization refers to the capability of addressing the topic. But for contextual knowledge, we can never decide the exact meaning because context lies in the text (Eggins, 2004). As Myles (2002,p . 10) argued that it depends on proficiency level, if the text is creative and rich in contents, there is greater possibility for errors at morphosyntactic level. The researcher also noticed the use of various tenses in a single sentence and the wrong use of verb forms which consequently violated accuracy. The learner's concepts about gerund and progressive tense were not clear; they were unable to make a difference between them. They use past tense instead of present tense; even they were totally unfamiliar about the use of modal auxiliaries in accordance of their specific function. It was noticed that the students have serious problem towards vocabulary and because of this they cannot write properly. It seems necessary to accelerate ESL learners' vocabulary knowledge to write well. For the learners, it is essential to have sound and deep knowledge of words that refers to a word's literal and metaphorical meaning, syntactic-morphological forms, semantic relations with other words such as synonyms, antonyms and collocations (Gass & Selinker, 2008; Kieffer & Lesaux, 2007). The researcher stresses that the learners' inaccurate and limited knowledge of words is due to the lack of research in the area of vocabulary especially in Pakistani context. Learners' vocabulary knowledge can be developed by using variety of ways: learners' direct instructions by creating a words sharing atmosphere in the class, memorization of words and by developing the habit of dictionary usage (Yopp & Yopp, 2007) However, for accurate writing, grammatical proficiency is the first step of the journey. (Valette, 1991). The outcome of the present study seems in complete harmony with the outcomes of the study which conducted by (El-Sayed, 1982; Kim, 1987, 1988; Kao, 1999). As far as error analysis is concerned, El-sayed (1982) observed that the participants committed (1140) total errors and among these errors (159) were found in the use of pronouns, (640) in verbs, (143) in the use of articles and the rest of in the adjectives, prepositions and nouns. In order to analyze the errors of Korean learners, Kim (1988) conducted a research study. In this study, the participants were 120 intermediate Korean ESL learners and for these learners, the task was the translation of forty two Korean sentences into English. The learners committed (720) errors related to tenses, (930) errors related to the moods of verbs and (885) related to voice. Kao (1999) conducted a study on what type of errors are largely committed by Taiwanese college students in their writing skill. So, 169 compositions were collected from 53 Taiwanese college students for this purpose. The total errors of the learners were (928) and the frequent errors were pointed out in the domain of grammar. The learners committed 18% errors in semantics 66% in grammar and 16% errors in lexical items. On the other hand, prepositions create problems for ESL learners. As compare to other languages, English prepositions have been commonly used in English and they are 70 in total. (Koffi, 2010, p. 297). According to Grubic (2004), a foreign language speaker has to face three problems regarding prepositions: (1) deleting the obligatory and required prepositions (2) usage of erroneous preposition (3) using additional prepositions.

In main practical conclusion, it was noticed that overall grammatical accuracy appeared to be problematic to the learners in their writing skill. Cutting it

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short, the performance of the learners gives an idea that they stumbled upon all the features under analysis.

The study gives a few points through which a line of action can be practiced to improve the existing standard of the learners' writing skill. The pace of changing the learners to improve their writing skill seems to be slow in the current conditions. In this regard, it requires committed approach not only on the part of teachers but students and government as well. Bringing changes in the curriculum to reserve more space to the writing skill components, the training of teachers and making them aware of the L2 learning processes, theoretical perspectives and previous empirical studies in connection with second language writing, specific and idea-based feedback of teachers to the learners' writing and bringing changes in the pedagogical methods can assist to a great extent in order to make the learners competent as well as creative L2 writers.

Future Study

The researcher proposes that there needs an exhaustive research in the field of L2 writing particularly in Pakistani context. It is eagerly required because this area has not captured as much consideration and thoughtfulness of the researchers as the other language domains have done. Hence, in second language writing, there is need to broaden the scope of research and the focus should be laid both on the linguistic knowledge (grammatical, lexical, orthographic) of the learners and prepositions. The present study focal point is only on the graduate/master male and female students' compositional problems selected from Public/private Sector College/university with reference to prepositions, idiomatic phrases and prepositional phrases and zero prepositions and grammatical accuracy. The upcoming studies can be conducted on female graduates or on both male and female at undergraduate level in order to assess whether gender differences affect the outcomes in the occurrence of errors. Furthermore in Pakistani context, it is also suggested for the forthcoming studies to investigate writing strategies of L2 learners that they make use in their first and second language such as translation activity.

In the future study what seems to be of vital significance is collecting more oral data (e.g. via recordings, spontaneous speech during conversation classes) because this can surely be more fruitful regarding L2 learning.

Appendix A

Fifth Word Deletion

1. In July 2010, following ……. monsoon rains, the Indus …… rose above its banks ….. flooded the surrounding area. …… the rains continuing for …… further two months, large …… of Pakistan were affected …… various degrees. As of …… August, the heaviest flooding …… moved southward along the …… River from already severely …… Northern districts in Khyber ….. of heavily populated areas ….. Western Punjab and the …… province of Sindh. In …… recovery phase, there will ….. a need to assure …… balance between two strategies : ……. action, where still needed, …… at protecting lives and …… disease, malnutrition and disabilities …… the vulnerable populations in ….. affected areas, and to ….. the foundations for the …… actions designed to strengthen ….. institutional capacity to pursue ….. terms health developmental goals ….. a context of good …… , to assure human security …… extend social protection in ….. .
2. Early recovery includes efforts …… be activated in all …… from the initial phase ….. relief so that the …… foundations for fully fledged ….. work are laid. Early …… continues during the prolonged ……. of extended emergencies and …… long transition that follow ….. the aftermath of natural …… and the post conflict ……. . There is no clear-cut …… but rather a contiguum …… the relief and recovery …… . It is important to …… that the disaster management …… is an unbroken chain …… human actions whose phases ……. . The health cluster and …… want to thank all …… health partners for their …… and interest in the …… recovery process. It only …… that due to time …… the consultation process had ……. be limited. As this ……. a dynamic document which …… have to be adopted ….. the changing reality over …… next months. The goal …… the health recovery plan …… in this document is ……. support the reactivation of ……. health care system in …… affected by the floods …… special emphasis on maximizing ….. . The aim of this …… is to describe the ….. actions to be undertaken ….. the health sector from …… 2011 on, to facilitate …… recovery activities and as …… follow up to the ……. interventions currently underway. On …… other hand, the institutional …….. with the district and ……. health authorities is insufficiently …… .

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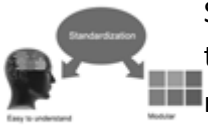


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References	Complete and correct format, well organized	Beside the point, Incomplete	Wrong format and structuring

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