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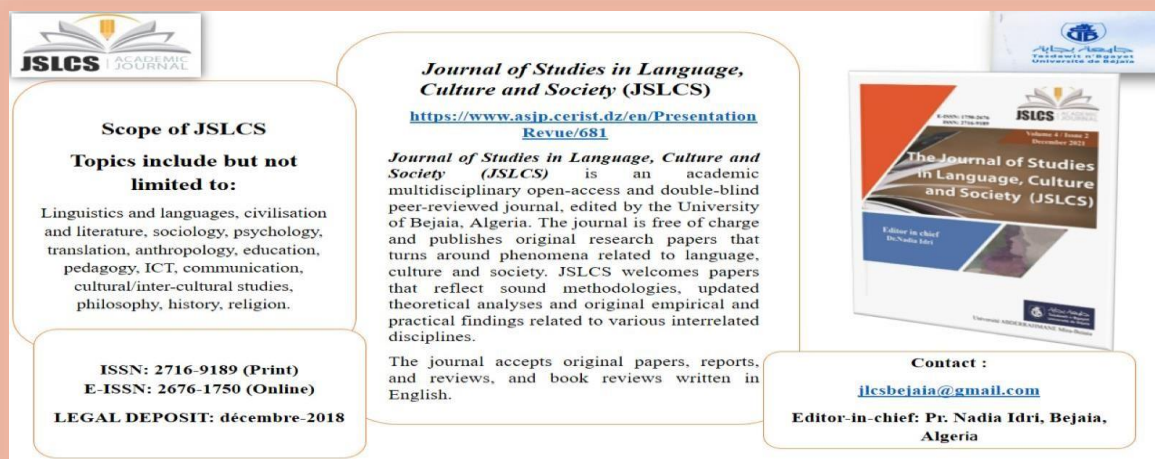


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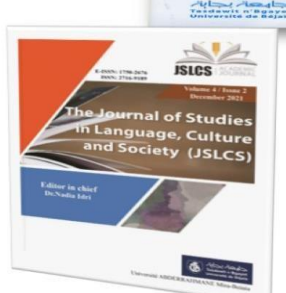
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Preface

Volume 6, Issue 2, 31 December 2023

Journal of Studies of Language, Culture, and Society (JSLCS)

Dear Readers, Contributors, and Scholars,

Welcome to the ongoing informative content we offer in each issue of the Journal of Studies in Language, Culture, and Society (JSLCS), where we present the instructive papers in Volume 6, Issue 2, December 2023. As we probe into this edition, we are once again met with a rich, interesting research from different countries that reflects the diversity and depth inherent in the intersection of language, culture, and society.

The first article, "Beyond Rote Drills: Proposing Novel Gamification Frameworks for Transformative EFL Classrooms" by Mohammed El Messaoudi & Mohammed Larouz, advocates for innovative gamification approaches in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms to enhance engagement and transformative learning experiences.

In "The Reshaping of Language Learning Motivation during COVID-19-imposed Distance Learning," Daniel Schug & Hanane Sarnou investigate the dynamic shifts in language learning motivation in the context of pandemic-induced remote learning.

"Asad Ali, Aqsa Younis, Qaisar Jabbar, Niaz Sidrah" contribute a "Morphosyntactic Study of Urdu ESL Learners: A Derivation by Interface," offering insights into the challenges faced by Urdu-speaking learners of English as a Second Language (ESL) through interface theory.

Belaid Louiza's "Exploring the Evolving Landscape of Gender Roles in Society: Transformation, Challenges, and Implications" provides a nuanced examination of the changing dynamics of societal gender roles and their implications.

Mariem Souissi's contribution, "The Ambiguous Representation of Pinter's Women in 'The Homecoming,'" critically analyses the portrayal of women in Harold Pinter's play, unravelling layers of meaning in their ambiguous representation.

Moufoutaou Adjeran explores the cultural hermeneutics of greeting rituals in Nigerian communities, specifically the Esan and Àlago, in "Greeting Others' Hermeneutics of the Greeting Rituals in Nigeria."

Saheed Afolabi Ashafa's "Allocation of Zakat to Debtors in Lagos State, Nigeria: Assessing a Neglected Category of Recipients" sheds light on the often-overlooked practice of allocating Zakat to debtors, offering insights into Islamic financial practices in Lagos State, Nigeria.

In this compilation, each article contributes to a rich tapestry of knowledge, offering diverse perspectives that deepen our understanding of language, culture, and society in the contemporary context.

A Glimpse into JSLCS

JSLCS continues to be a conduit for cutting-edge research that transcends disciplinary boundaries. Our commitment to fostering insightful discussions across various fields remains unwavering. This issue showcases a spectrum of topics, from innovative language teaching methodologies to insightful sociocultural inquiries, contributing to the ever-evolving dialogue on language, culture, and society.

Explore, Engage, Enlighten

We invite you to explore the diverse contributions within this issue, engage with the research, and find inspiration within these scholarly endeavours. Your continued support and participation contribute to the vibrancy of JSLCS, and for that, we extend our heartfelt appreciation.

Thank you for being part of the intellectual journey with us.

Best Regards,

Prof. Nadia Idri

Editor-in-Chief, Journal of Studies in Language, Culture, and Society (JSLCS).

BEYOND ROTE DRILLS: PROPOSING NOVEL GAMIFICATION FRAMEWORKS FOR TRANSFORMATIVE EFL CLASSROOMS

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Abstract

Traditional EFL instruction, rife with rote drills and dull textbooks, often leave students disengaged and demotivated. To address this quandary, this conceptual paper not only traces the roots of boredom, demotivation, and disengagement in EFL classrooms, but also suggests a roadmap to push the teaching-learning process to the next level and rekindle motivation. Grounded in a comprehensive literature review and theoretical analysis, the paper goes beyond listing a mere catalogue of "gamification mechanics" and proposes two novel frameworks. The study frameworks probe into the core principles and processes that underpin successful gamified EFL learning experiences, revealing the state-of-the-art mechanisms that fuel intrinsic motivation, active participation, and collaborative learning. Bridging the gap between theory and practice, the paper equips educators with research-informed in-class implementation strategies. It pinpoints critical factors for maximising student engagement, identifies key components for building impactful gamified EFL environments, and proposes a set of research hypotheses for future empirical exploration. Moreover, it offers tailored theoretical and practical recommendations for educators, policymakers, and researchers, empowering them to combat student disengagement in EFL classrooms. The paper at hand advocates for the integration of AI-powered Learning Management Systems (LMS) as a new vision to reimagine EFL classrooms as lively ecosystems, wherein learning English becomes a transformative odyssey, not a rote drill.

Keywords: Game-based approaches; gamified learning; student disengagement; student engagement

1. Introduction

Quite recently, considerable attention has been paid to how learning takes place in various educational settings. Several publications have appeared in recent years, documenting that learning is an active process which necessitates engagement to initiate and sustain the learning journey (Baron & Corbin, 2012; Lessard et al., 2008; Parsons & Taylor, 2011; Trowler, 2010; Washor & Mojkowski, 2014). However, learner engagement can become problematic when the purpose of a learning activity is not sufficiently clear. This crisis of engagement poses a significant challenge for educational institutions as it is associated with low academic

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performance, demotivation, disruptive behavior patterns, and high dropout rates. In a recent survey conducted by the Gallup Student Poll (2016), only half of the student population was found to be engaged, with 10% classified as both discouraged and disengaged, and 5% actively disengaged. The study reports that the issue of student disengagement is prevalent across all schools, where institutions struggle to create a participative and actively engaged learning environment (Dei et al., 1997; Lessard et al., 2008). A plethora of previous studies has shown that the significance and critical role of engagement in the academic experience cannot be understated, as it serves as a determining factor for effective learning (Lund Dean & Jolly, 2012; Wang et al., 2017; Washor & Mojkowski, 2014).

Worldwide, traditional paper-based education is being overshadowed by modern forms of instruction based on digital technologies. In relation to this, it has been reported that the rapid advancements in technology have brought about changes in the roles of students and teachers, subsequently leading to physical transformations in classrooms and schools (Gilakjani, 2017; Haddad & Draxler, 2002). A number of scholars point out that web technologies significantly influence student experiences, with online and offline interactions in modern educational environments bringing about considerable changes in students' feelings, values, beliefs, and behaviours (Selwyn, Nemorin, Bulfin, et al., 2017; Selwyn, Nemorin, & Johnson, 2017). Recent studies (Bennett, 2012; Bennett et al., 2008; Dingli & Seychell, 2015; Kivunja, 2014) note that digital natives, referring to the generation born in the 1990s commonly known as the Games Generation, Generation Me, or Generation Y, exhibit distinct interactions with the world compared to previous generations, including the Millennial Generation (born 1980-1989). Being unique, digital natives are reported to demonstrate a preference for tactile-oriented and hands-on activities, possesses strong technological literacy, and are often labelled as "technophiles" (Bennett, 2012; Bennett et al., 2008; Dingli & Seychell, 2015; Prensky, 2005). On this premise, educators face the challenge of reconstructing an education system that is supposed to cater to the needs of digital natives in precise terms (Selwyn, Nemorin, & Johnson, 2017).

For all intents and purposes, the problem (disengagement) lies in the fact that instructors continue to employ outdated educational approaches that fail to address the present needs, wants, and interests of today's students. It is against this background that Prensky (2005) previously aptly points out the absence of programming, genomics, bioethics, nanotech, and other subjects relevant to the digital era in the current curriculum. More recent studies give the nod that when the curriculum fails to align with student needs, teachers across all educational levels risk losing student interest (Balwant, 2018; Baron & Corbin, 2012; Li, 2022). Unanimously, a large number of studies hoist the white flag, acquiescing that this doomed reality necessitates a reevaluation of how students learn and why learning processes have changed in recent times. By all accounts, it is alleged that the traditional school system does not cater to the learning preferences of digital students, highlighting a gap or mismatch between millennials and traditional instructional methods (Lessard et al., 2008; Lund Dean & Jolly, 2012; Washor & Mojkowski, 2014). Henceforth, the task at hand involves discovering means to harmonise these contrasting aspects and establish an educational environment that not only sustains students' engagement but also cultivates a perpetual thirst for knowledge.

Earlier studies indicate that embracing game-based learning as a potential solution emerges as a promising approach. Discussions surrounding game-based learning have sparked more debates and research on the most effective game elements for facilitating positive learning experiences. These inquiries have led to the emergence of the concept of gamification in education (Kapp, 2016). The author further states that although the term "gamification" may initially seem unfamiliar or daunting, its underlying concepts are increasingly gaining

momentum. Even though the efficacy of gamification has been proved empirically worldwide, there is a dearth of studies on how to implement gamification in EFL classrooms in Morocco.

1.1. The Problem Statement

Morocco's education system has consistently ranked poorly in terms of quality and performance. The learning crisis in a developing country such as Morocco, is attributed to a lack of information about students' learning progress and retention levels (Boutieri, 2016; Llorent Bedmar, 2014; Mondiale, 2008). In response, alternatively, gamification has been offered as a promising way to engage students and enhance the learning experience based on global evidence. In tandem, previous research (largely explorative in nature) supports the idea that gamification principles can positively impact cognitive, emotional, and social aspects of learning in Moroccan classrooms (Dehbi et al., 2023; Lamrani & Abdelwahed, 2020; Ouahbi et al., 2021).

1.2. The Purpose of the Study

This paper aims at offering pointers on how to incorporate various technology components, such as mobile learning and computer-based tools, to investigate how gamified learning experiences can improve student engagement, language achievement, behavior, and cooperative learning. Succinctly, this paper is geared towards putting forwards two novel conceptual and theoretical frameworks in order to guide and structure research in gamification and report empirical evidence in EFL classrooms in Morocco and abroad.

2. Literature Review

Invoking previous reports and studies, gamified learning experiences hold great promise for enhancing student engagement and developing diverse skills within the realm of education. Armed with gamification principles and innovative tools like gamified platforms, educators worldwide have a remarkable opportunity to reshape the future of language teaching. This approach contributes to our understanding of how technology can improve learning outcomes, as supported by existing research in the field (Majuri et al., 2018). Confusion and misinterpretations can plague the implementation and effectiveness of gamified learning experiences. To navigate this murky terrain, a thorough understanding of gamification principles and applications in education is essential. The prospective review will shed light on these crucial aspects by:

- 1) *Defining gamification and its rationale in educational settings.*

- 2) *Unpacking the complex relationship between motivation, engagement, and gamification.*

- 3) *Evaluating the impact of gamification on learning outcomes.*

- 4) *Delving into practical strategies for successful implementation.*

2.1. Defining Gamification

Unequivocally, the term "gamification" was coined in 2002 but gained mainstream recognition in 2010, becoming a viable trend in various contexts. It involves the introduction of game elements into non-game settings to make activities more enjoyable and engaging (Deterding et al., 2011). In this respect, multiple definitions have been proposed, emphasising the use of game design elements, the creation of gameful experiences, or the process of making activities more game-like (Khaitova, 2021). It is important to note that gamification is not

directly associated with knowledge and skills but influences student behaviour, commitment, and motivation, leading to improvements in learning outcomes (Yohannis et al., 2014).

In the literature, gamification is considered an emerging technology with significant potential in technologically advanced schools, bridging the generation gap between teachers and students (Kapp, 2016). Its versatility has been recognised in various educational contexts, such as lectures, homework assignments, exams, and main learning activities, to motivate students, improve skills, and maximize learning (Mora et al., 2015). Before judging the rationale for integrating gamification in education, it is essential to highlight its potential benefits, such as increased student motivation, engagement, and retention (Kiryakova et al., 2014; Marín et al., 2018).

2.2. Rationale for Integrating Gamification in Education

Gamification in education seeks to create an attractive and enjoyable learning environment for learners, providing them with diverse and engaging experiences. Research suggests that strategically incorporating game elements can result in high levels of active engagement and motivation, leading to positive outcomes in cognitive, emotional, and social areas (Brull & Finlayson, 2016). Various studies highlight its impact on student motivation, engagement, learning outcomes, cooperative learning, and behavior change (Groh, 2012; Khaitova, 2021; Pappas, 2014). In the context of foreign language education, integrating gamification is particularly relevant. When gamification is applied to language education, it expands opportunities for experiential, self-paced, and lifelong learning (Dehghanzadeh et al., 2021; Gilakjani, 2017; Wulantari et al., 2023).

The primary advantages of gamification in language education lie in the "four freedoms of play": the freedom to fail, experiment, assume different identities, and exert effort (Legaki et al., 2019). The authors further underscore that by incorporating these freedoms, gamification allows learners to make mistakes, explore new strategies, gain different perspectives, and engage in varying levels of activity. In tandem, failure in games is reframed as an opportunity to gain experience, practice, and improve, fostering resilience and perseverance in the face of challenges. Understanding the rationale for integrating gamification in education sets the stage for exploring the relationship between motivation and engagement within this context. It has been reported that traditional instruction can feel like a slog, but gamification infuses learning with intrinsic motivation. Through game-like features, students experience the thrill of progress, unlocking rewards and achievements that drive them forward, not just external pressures (Sailer & Homner, 2020). Examining the connection between motivation and engagement within gamification helps to unravel how these factors mutually reinforce each other, leading to enhanced learning outcomes.

2.3. The Relationship between Motivation and Engagement in Gamification

Numerous literature reviews demonstrate the positive impact of gamification on motivation and engagement in educational settings. Students perceive gamified courses as more motivating, interesting, and conducive to learning compared to traditional courses (Buckley & Doyle, 2016). Gamification elements have the ability to transform mundane tasks into engaging and enjoyable experiences (Khaleel et al., 2020). Emotional outcomes such as motivation, attitude, and enjoyment are commonly reported through interviews and questionnaires (Huang et al., 2020). Educational institutions are increasingly incorporating gamification features to boost student motivation and participation, including the use of digital badges to validate course completion and involvement in extracurricular activities (Bouchrika et al., 2021).

Research studies indicate that gamification increases student engagement and participation in both classroom and online environments (Nistor & Iacob, 2018; Saleem et al., 2022). Elements such as experience points, levels, leaderboards, challenges, and badges are widely used and contribute to greater engagement (Dehganzadeh & Dehganzadeh, 2020). The integration of game elements and mechanisms into learning activities captures students' attention and absorption, promoting a higher level of engagement without requiring specific game knowledge (Alsawaier, 2018; Baiden et al., 2022; Boudadi & Gutiérrez-Colón, 2020).

On balance, the literature supports the efficacy of gamification in fostering motivation and engagement among learners. Educational institutions can inject learning with excitement and depth by embracing game-like features. These elements craft an immersive landscape where students actively participate, driving engagement and boosting both their experience and academic success. The relationship between motivation and engagement in gamification is symbiotic, with motivation acting as a driving force for engagement, and engagement fuelling motivation. When students are motivated, they actively participate in gamified learning experiences, which in turn increases their engagement levels. Understanding this interplay is crucial to explore the impact of gamification on learning outcomes, as it provides insights into how gamification can enrich students' knowledge acquisition, skill development, and overall academic performance (García-López et al., 2023).

2.4. The Impact of Gamification on Learning Outcomes

Numerous studies have explored the correlation between gamification and learning outcomes, highlighting the positive effects of incorporating game elements into educational experiences (Denny et al., 2018; Huang et al., 2020). Gamification has been found to develop cognitive, emotional, and social domains, ultimately leading to improved performance and learning achievements (Zainuddin et al., 2020).

One key aspect of gamification is its ability to develop problem-solving skills by presenting players with challenging tasks that match their skill levels. Through active exploration and discovery within a complex system of rules, learners are encouraged to overcome obstacles and expand their capabilities (Kladchuen & Srisomphan, 2021). The social aspect of gamification plays a significant role as well. When students publicly claim their achievements and receive recognition, their social standing blossoms. The public acknowledgement validates their efforts, offering a warm glow of appreciation that might otherwise remain hidden (Hamari & Koivisto, 2015; Meske et al., 2017). This social dimension enhances motivation and engagement in learning processes (Meske et al., 2017).

Research suggests that gamification positively impacts cognitive learning outcomes. Incorporating gamification elements has been found to enrich learning achievement, procedural and declarative knowledge, and higher-order thinking skills (Mullins & Sabherwal, 2020; Turan et al., 2016). Gamification has shown effectiveness in improving outcomes for lower-risk assignments, such as quizzes and practical activities, as well as overall course performance. As stated, the literature supports the notion that well-designed and properly implemented gamification strategies can lead to improved learning outcomes across various contexts. Gamification offers a promising approach to enhance educational experiences, providing learners with engaging and immersive environments that promote active learning, skill development, and positive emotional experiences. Recognising the impact of gamification on learning outcomes sets the stage for discussing its potential as a catalyst for behavior change.

2.5. Gamification as a Catalyst for Behaviour Change

Gamification deploys intrinsic motivation, rewards, and goal-oriented gameplay to encourage desired behaviours and habits in learners. Gamification, with its focus on leveraging competition and motivation, has the potential to encourage behavior change by promoting productive behaviours and discouraging unproductive ones (Aini et al., 2019; AlMarshedi et al., 2017; Mitchell et al., 2017). Gamification uses game elements as motivational affordances to enhance intrinsic motivation, leading to various psychological states that can drive behaviour change.

More than just points and prizes, gamification ferrets about in the intrinsic gratification of mastering challenges and fulfilling needs. It understands the complex back-and-forth of physical exertion, psychological reward, and social connection, empowering students to drive their own learning journey (Bassanelli et al., 2022; Morford et al., 2014; Nurtanto et al., 2021). The application of gamification principles, characterized by reward systems and progressive goals, has been shown to capitalize upon individuals' intrinsic desire for advancement and accomplishment, thus serving as a catalyst for positive change. It employs psychological shortcuts and well-established motivational strategies to turn behavior modification into a rewarding, game-like journey. It offers a powerful approach to promote positive behaviours, foster intrinsic motivation, and achieve desired outcomes in various contexts (Morford et al., 2014). This paves the way to discussing strategies for integrating gamification into the curriculum, selecting appropriate game mechanics, and designing effective gamified learning experiences to optimise student engagement and achieve desired educational outcomes.

2.6. Implementing Gamification in Education

Implementing gamification in education in general and in EFL classrooms in more particular involves the intentional integration of game elements and mechanics into the learning process to boost student engagement and motivation. Instead of dry worksheets and lectures, educators can sprinkle classrooms with playful elements like rewards, challenges, and progress tracking. This playful approach harnesses students' natural love for exploration and turns learning into an immersive adventure. This approach holds the potential to transform traditional education, making it more dynamic, interactive, and effective in fostering knowledge acquisition, skill development, and overall student success (Lee & Hammer, 2011).

Educators worldwide have embraced gamification in education and observed positive outcomes. The incorporation of game elements can induce deep engagement and a sense of flow, making learning more captivating (Nurtanto et al., 2021). The key aspect of gamification is the inclusion of tasks that learners must perform, leading to the accumulation of points, progression to higher levels, and the achievement of predetermined learning objectives (Aini et al., 2019). The selection of gamification elements depends on the defined objectives, with individual activities earning learning badges and social interactions fostering a sense of community, often through leaderboards (Lee & Hammer, 2011).

Gamification features have been integrated into various Learning Management System (LMS) platforms. For example, Docebo's Gamification App allows administrators to create badges and awards for learners who complete activities within the LMS (Dehganzadeh & Dehganzadeh, 2020; Kiryakova et al., 2014). Accord LMS offers social features that promote cooperation and team building, with leaderboards and badges rewarding student contributions. Blackboard incorporates an achievements tool, enabling students to earn recognition for their work (Somova & Gachkova, 2022). Rewarding students with badges and certificates, set by customizable criteria, fuels motivation and empowers both learners and teachers (Glover, 2013).

In brief, effective implementation of gamification in education holds significant promise for revolutionising the learning experience. Well-designed gamified learning, aligned with both objectives and passions, fosters deeper engagement, motivation, and knowledge retention. Leveraging the power of gamification to create dynamic and interactive educational environments can lead to improved learning outcomes and better prepare students for success in a constantly changing world.

3. Methodology

The current study followed a systematic approach to investigate the affordances of gamification in student learning, aspiring to unveil its impact on engagement in future empirical studies. The methodology employed for this research paper included the following steps:

- 1) **Research Question Identification:** The research question was clearly defined to provide a focus for the study. The primary objective was to explore the effects of gamification on student engagement in learning.
- 2) **Literature Review:** A comprehensive literature review was conducted to examine existing scholarly works related to gamification in education. Key theories, concepts, and empirical studies relevant to the topic were identified and analysed. This step helped establish the foundation of knowledge and identified gaps or controversies that this research could address.
- 3) **Theoretical and Conceptual Framework Development:** Based on the findings from the literature review, two robust theoretical and conceptual frameworks were developed. Relevant theories, models, or concepts were selected and integrated to form the basis for analysis and interpretation.
- 4) **Research Hypotheses or Propositions:** Building upon the theoretical conceptual frameworks, specific research hypotheses (or propositions) were formulated.
- 5) **Scope and Delimitations:** The scope and boundaries of the research were clearly defined. Specific aspects or dimensions of gamification in student learning were identified, focusing on the impact on engagement. Limitations and constraints that may have affected the study were also acknowledged.
- 6) **Data Analysis and Interpretation:** As this research was conceptual in nature, primary data collection was not conducted. Instead, data analysis involved critically examining existing literature, synthesising information, and drawing connections between theories and concepts. This process facilitated a deeper understanding of both the research topic and the research problem.
- 7) **Supporting Arguments with Evidence:** The development of conceptual and theoretical arguments was supported by evidence gathered from the literature review. Relevant studies, theories, and empirical findings were cited to strengthen the validity of the arguments presented.
- 8) **Drawing Conclusions and Implications:** Based on the analysis conducted, conclusions were drawn regarding the research question and the broader theoretical implications of the findings. The contributions of this research to existing knowledge were discussed, and recommendations for future research or practical applications were identified.

Procedurally, translating the steps above into practice, the researchers have embarked on a process of constructing the Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks. These frameworks have been developed from scratch, drawing upon the researchers' extensive knowledge and expertise in gamification. They involve a meticulous analysis and synthesis of various elements,

such as defining the key components of gamification in the context of education, identifying its potential benefits, and addressing the specific challenges that arise during its implementation. This research establishes a bicameral framework and structured approach to understanding gamification role in learning in general and EFL instruction in more particular.

4. Results

4.1. The Theoretical Framework

Notably, numerous theories have contributed to the understanding of gamification in education, including the works of McGonigal (2011) and Wu, Hsiao, Wu, Lin, & Huang (2012). However, the theoretical framework purely developed in this study integrates concepts from Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, Johnson & Johnson's cooperative learning theory, Csikszentmihalyi's flow theory, and Bandura's social cognitive theory. This theoretical framework offers a broad perspective on the research problem and supports the rationale for examining the variables of interest. Figure 1 illustrates the proposed theoretical framework.

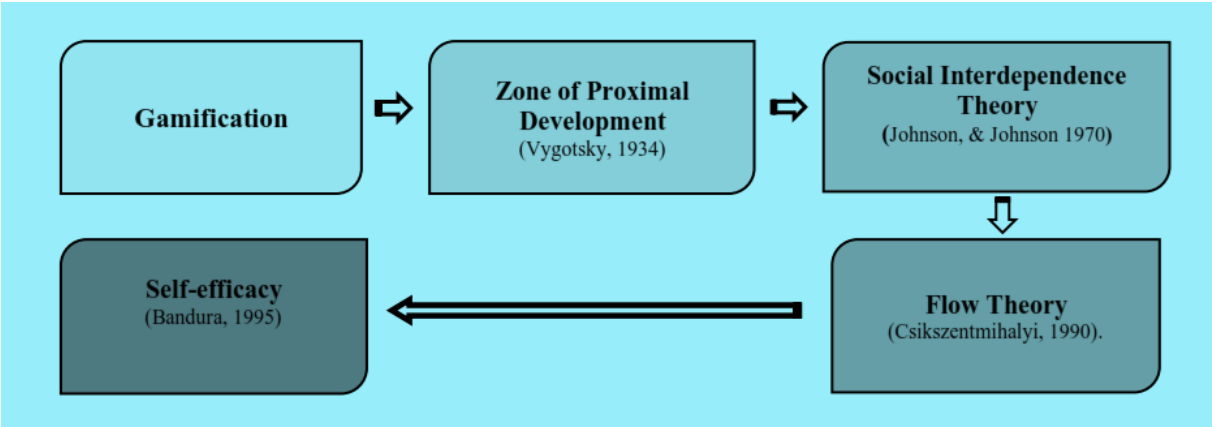


Figure 1: The Proposed Framework

4.1.1. Zone of Proximal Development and Scaffolding

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), as conceptualised by Vygotsky, refers to the learner's current level of development and the potential for advancement with the help of appropriate tools, such as language, cultural signs, and guidance from capable adults or peers. In this theoretical framework, the gamification approach employed aims to provide learners with an experience that aligns with their specific zone of proximal development (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). Adaptive learning systems elevate gamification, scaffolding student progress within their zone of proximal development for optimal growth (Iliev, 2019; Tang & Kay, 2014). This scaffolding approach facilitates their learning journey by providing appropriate support and guidance tailored to their individual needs.

With recourse to the framework conceptualization, the researchers stipulate that using gamification as a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and scaffolding strategy establishes a strong link between learning theory and practical implementation. Indeed, gamified activities can be designed to provide challenges and tasks that are within the ZPD, allowing learners to stretch their abilities and achieve optimal growth. In addition to this, gamification can serve as a scaffolding tool by providing supportive structures, feedback, and guidance to learners as they progress through the learning process. This combination of ZPD and scaffolding within gamification helps create a dynamic and adaptive learning environment that promotes learner autonomy and facilitates continuous skill development.

4.1.2. *Social Interdependence*

Building upon the concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and scaffolding, integrating social interdependence into gamified learning experiences further enhances the learning process. Collaboration, cooperation, and competition in gamified learning foster social connection, peer support, and shared learning experiences. The Social Interdependence Theory suggests that the success of individuals is influenced by the actions of others (Johnson & Johnson, 2002, 2009; Renard & Davis, 2019). This theory is demonstrated in the context of cooperative learning, which involves students with varying abilities working together in small groups towards a shared objective (Johnson & Johnson, 2002). The authors argue that there is compelling evidence that cooperative team activities promote higher-level thinking and better retention of information compared to students working independently.

It has been reported that gamification and Social Interdependence Theory share strong and compelling ties that can revolutionise the learning experience (Riar, 2020; Star, 2015). At its core, the Social Interdependence Theory emphasises the positive impact of collaborative and cooperative interactions among individuals. Gamification, with its ability to foster collaboration, competition, and social interaction, aligns perfectly with the principles of Social Interdependence Theory. Gamified learning environments spark teamwork and motivate collaborative efforts, uniting learners towards shared goals. This synergy between gamification and Social Interdependence Theory not only enhances student engagement and motivation but also cultivates important skills such as teamwork, communication, and empathy (Meske et al., 2017).

4.1.3. *Flow Theory*

Consistent with Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2009), when individuals are engaged in meaningful and challenging work, they often experience a state of total immersion, losing track of time and experiencing high levels of enjoyment and engagement. This optimal state is referred to as "flow." Gamification and serious games incorporate the key elements of flow, and researchers have drawn connections between flow theory and the use of gamification and serious games (Bressler & Bodzin, 2013; Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009). Flow theory emphasises the importance of high levels of engagement (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009), which aligns with the findings that serious games and gamification can significantly enhance engagement. In accordance, learning becomes a joyride, not a chore. Gamification unlocks a state of flow where students fully immerse themselves in activities, relishing the challenge and effortlessly absorbing knowledge. Engagement deepens, time seems to disappear, and the pursuit of learning becomes inherently rewarding.

Briefly, the researchers' reason that the link between gamification and the flow theory highlights the powerful potential of game-like elements in enhancing engagement and immersion in various activities. Gamification magic lies in crafting experiences with laser-sharp goals, instant feedback loops, and just-right challenges. This delicate balance ignites a state of flow, where individuals become one with the pursuit, driven by intrinsic reward and fully immersed in the journey. Whether in education, work, or personal development, gamification offers a promising approach to fostering optimal experiences, increasing motivation, and improving overall performance. Combining gamification and flow theory can offer a powerful way to design EFL learning experiences that are both engaging and motivating, helping students reach their full potential.

4.1.4. *Self-Efficacy*

Building upon the connection between the flow theory and gamification, another significant relationship exists between gamification and self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to succeed in a specific task or domain. Gamified elements like progress tracking, rewards, and social comparison boost self-efficacy by showcasing achievements. This enhanced belief in one's capabilities fuels motivation, perseverance, and confidence to tackle new challenges.

Self-efficacy, as defined by the renowned psychologist, Albert Bandura, refers to an individual's personal assessment of their ability to effectively perform actions required to handle potential situations (Bandura & Wessels, 1994). Numerous studies have shown a positive correlation between self-efficacy and achievement in foreign language learning (Cubukcu, 2008; Mahyuddin et al., 2006; Mills et al., 2007; Sun et al., 2021).

On the previous lines of reasoning, gamification offers opportunities for mastery experiences by initially setting the game at a low difficulty level, allowing players to experience success, and gradually increasing the level of difficulty. Research has demonstrated a positive relationship between self-efficacy and academic achievement in foreign language learning (Rachels & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2018). In addition, studies have found a connection between self-efficacy and gamification (Banfield & Wilkerson, 2014; Chinchua et al., 2022; Polo-Peña et al., 2021; Rachels & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2018).

Otherwise stated, and referring back to the theoretical framework, the researchers cogitate that the positive correlation between gamification and self-efficacy highlights the transformative potential of incorporating game-like elements into various activities. Fueled by opportunities to track progress, earn rewards, and engage in friendly competition, gamification nurtures a sense of self-efficacy, the belief in one's own abilities. This strengthened self-belief becomes the engine behind enhanced motivation, resilience, and a willingness to tackle new challenges. As the interplay between gamification and self-efficacy is further explored, exciting possibilities emerge for empowering individuals and unlocking their full potential across diverse domains.

4.2. *The Conceptual Framework*

In recent years, student disengagement has been plaguing schools worldwide, but gamification has emerged as a promising remedy. Integrating game elements into EFL learning was proven to captivate attention, boost motivation, and elevate student achievement.

To this end, a proposed conceptual framework has been meticulously crafted to capacitate EFL teachers with innovative avenues to enhance student learning outcomes through the strategic use of gamified approaches. This comprehensive conceptual framework outlines the dependent variables, comprising the interactive platforms of **Class Realm**, **Duolingo**, and **Khan Academy**, while also encompassing the key dependent variables, which include **student behaviour**, **language achievement**, and **collaborative learning**. Attempting to unveil the back-and-forth between gamification, engagement, and motivation, this conceptual framework describes pathways to optimal EFL learning. By so doing, EFL teachers can enable students to climb the ladder of achievement, unlocking proficiency and forging collaborative communities within EFL classrooms. Figure 2 highlights the proposed conceptual framework.

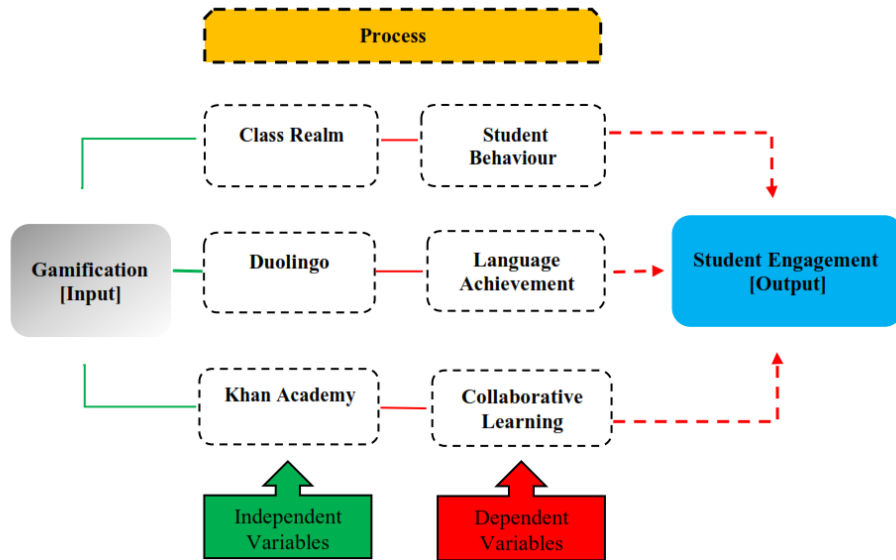


Figure 2: The Proposed Conceptual Framework

The figure above presents a conceptual framework designed to prescribe gamification as a panacea for improving student engagement. The framework proposes the integration of specific gamified platforms, including **Class Realm**, **Duolingo**, and **Khan Academy**, as input to facilitate the process and elevate student engagement. This conceptual framework offers a systematic approach to address student disengagement and enhance educational experiences. It underscores the importance of integrating gamification techniques as a powerful strategy to promote student engagement. The framework encompasses three primary components: input, process, and output.

4.2.1. Input

The input stage involves selecting and deploying specific gamified platforms tailored to address different aspects of student engagement. In this framework, three platforms are suggested: Class Realm, Duolingo, and Khan Academy. Each platform plays a distinct role in promoting student engagement in various areas.

- 1) **Class Realm:** This gamified platform focuses on tracking student behaviour patterns. Class Realm transforms classrooms into interactive hubs, fueling positive behaviour, collaboration, and friendly competition. The platform offers rewards, points, and leaderboards to motivate students and foster a sense of achievement.

- 2) **Duolingo:** With its focus on language learning, Duolingo provides an engaging and interactive interface to improve language achievement. Through gamified language lessons, students can enhance their vocabulary, grammar, and language proficiency. Duolingo's adaptive learning algorithms and game-like elements create an enjoyable and immersive language learning experience, leading to increased engagement and improved language skills.

- 3) **Khan Academy:** Khan Academy offers a comprehensive and gamified platform to promote collaborative learning. Khan Academy ignites the learning spark by offering interactive exercises, captivating videos, and personalised journey. The platform allows students to collaborate, share knowledge, and engage in group activities, fostering a sense of community and enhancing their overall learning experience.

4.2.2. *Process*

The process stage of the conceptual framework involves the implementation and deployment of the selected gamified platforms. In relation to this, EFL instructors are invited to integrate these platforms into their practices. The process is supposed to be dynamic, interactive, and aligned with the specific goals and objectives of each platform.

4.2.3. *Output*

The output of the conceptual framework focuses on upgrading student engagement. This framework bridges the gap between engaging gamified platforms and their effective integration into classrooms, paving the way for a surge in student motivation, active participation, language gains, collaborative learning, and a satisfying sense of accomplishment. The output stage measures the impact of the framework on student engagement and serves as a basis for ongoing assessment, feedback, and further refinement.

To put it briefly, the proposed conceptual framework provides a structured approach to utilise gamification to enhance student engagement in educational settings. Gamified platforms like **Class Realm**, **Duolingo**, and **Khan Academy** offer a treasure trove of game-like elements to motivate, engage, and boost language skills. This framework incorporates impactful features of gamification, transforming classrooms into dynamic, interactive spaces where engagement thrives, and education becomes an enriching journey.

4.3. *Research Hypotheses*

A crucial step in conducting a conceptual paper is the development of research hypotheses that can be tested empirically in future studies. In the case of this study, seven research hypotheses were generated to guide and shape future investigations.

H1: The utilisation of gamified platforms in the classroom positively influences student engagement levels, leading to increased motivation and active participation in learning activities.

H2: Gamification enhances students' perception of the learning process by creating a more immersive and enjoyable educational environment, thereby positively impacting their engagement and academic outcomes.

H3: The incorporation of gamified elements in classroom activities promotes collaboration, cooperative learning, and social interaction among students, contributing to higher levels of engagement and improved learning outcomes.

H4: Gamification strategies, such as points, rewards, and leaderboards, stimulate healthy competition among students, driving their engagement and intrinsic motivation to excel in their academic pursuits.

H5: The integration of gamified platforms in language instruction specifically improves students' engagement and language proficiency, as it provides interactive and immersive experiences that facilitate language learning and practice.

H6: The effectiveness of gamification in enhancing student engagement may vary based on factors such as age, cultural background, and prior gaming experience, suggesting the need for personalized approaches and adaptations to optimize engagement outcomes.

H7: Long-term implementation of gamified platforms in educational settings fosters sustained engagement, leading to improved academic performance, increased retention of knowledge, and a positive impact on students' general educational journey.

These hypotheses serve as informed predictions about the potential outcomes and relationships between variables within the context of gamification in student learning. The study lays the groundwork for future empirical research to gather data and evidence that either support or reject these predictions. This process is vital for advancing knowledge and understanding in the field, as it provides a framework for systematic exploration and investigation of the impact of gamification on student engagement, learning outcomes, and other relevant factors. The resulting insights from testing these hypotheses will contribute to the existing body of literature and inform educators, policymakers, and researchers about the potential benefits and challenges associated with the implementation of gamified approaches in educational settings. It is important to note that these research hypotheses are provided as examples and should be further refined and tailored to the specific research context and objectives of future studies.

4. Discussion

Primarily, the current study ventured to dissect existing literature and theory to build robust frameworks, revealing the core principles, dynamics, and inner workings of a transformative approach in EFL instruction. Laconically, this research paper sought to unlock the untapped potential of game-based approaches in education through the development of two comprehensive theoretical and conceptual frameworks, advocating for the remarkable affordances of gamified learning, boasting an arsenal of playful elements and mechanics.

4.1. *The Theoretical Framework Interpretation*

As stated previously, classrooms often struggle with student disengagement, but gamification offers a promising solution. Its ability to spark interest is backed by a wealth of educational theories. Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) finds echoes in gamification's carefully scaled challenges. Like a sturdy ladder, it offers tailored support, helping students climb towards new linguistic heights. Similarly, Johnson's cooperative learning theory resonates with gamification's emphasis on collaborative tasks. Students, united by the spirit of the game, ascend together, their achievements woven into a shared tapestry of progress. Csikszentmihalyi's flow theory adds another dimension. The immersive nature of gamified learning can propel students beyond the confines of traditional classrooms, transporting them into a state of deep engagement. This heightened participation fosters a vibrant ecological environment, nurturing positive interactions, productive habits, and a genuine love for learning. Finally, Bandura's framework for self-efficacy development finds fertile ground in gamification. Mastery experiences, vicarious learning, social persuasion, and emotional arousal – all find expression in well-designed games. Students witness their own progress, learn from peers, bask in encouragement, and experience the thrill of accomplishment, their confidence blossoming with each playful step.

Taken together, this approach has the power to upgrade the teaching-learning process by fostering student engagement, encouraging collaboration, creating immersive experiences, and even boosting self-confidence. In the next section, we will pinpoint a new conceptual framework that acts as a powerful lens to explore this potential (the affordances of gamified learning). This framework paves the way for innovative teaching practices and impactful interventions that can unleash the full potential of EFL learners.

4.1.2. The Conceptual Framework Interpretation

Probing into the complex issue of student disengagement, this study proposes a novel conceptual framework centred around gamification and its potential to revolutionise learning. Recognising the contested terrain of student motivation and engagement theories, the framework meticulously defines and interweaves these concepts, providing a robust foundation for rigorous research. It outlines key components and strategies, encompassing curriculum design, instructional methods, assessment techniques, and technology integration, all orchestrated to build an optimal environment that ignites student interest and fuels engagement. This is not a mere temporary fix, but a long-term solution anchored in established research and driven by a passionate belief in gamification transformative power.

The framework thoroughly explores the complex connection between gamification and student engagement, identifying effective approaches, recommended practices, and effective strategies designed for EFL educational settings. Ultimately, this framework aims at reigniting student passion for learning and contributing to their holistic linguistic development within the school environment, transforming disengagement into a relic of the past.

4.2. The Study Implications and Limitations

This study aspired to expose the multiple affordances of gamification in education in general and in EFL instruction in more particular by developing two novel theoretical and conceptual frameworks that will guide educators, policymakers, and researchers in this regard. Through rigorous analysis of literature and evidence, the researchers explored how game-based approaches can effectively boost student engagement and propel positive outcomes. The research, at hand, holds significant promise for stakeholders. Educators will gain practical insights with respect to how to integrate gamified elements into their practices. Policymakers will also be equipped with evidence-based strategies to craft informed educational policies. And researchers, as well, will discover new avenues for academic probe in this dynamic field. The frameworks, in question, uncover the full potential of game-based approaches, paving the way for innovative and impactful practices that will promote student engagement and EFL learning ultimately. The resulting implications and recommendations will serve as catalysts for advancing gamified learning strategies and their successful integration within educational settings.

Nevertheless, some limitations are to be acknowledged. The study primarily focuses on specific gamified platforms improving engagement in online classroom activities. While this is crucial, engagement encompasses other facets like language achievement, student behaviour, and collaborative learning. The objective, here, is to explore whether gamified platforms further engagement across these dimensions. Furthermore, the current study investigates student engagement with gamified software compared to traditional activities like textbook work, group work, and project-based learning. While this allows for rigorous investigation, other factors and activities also contribute to engagement and learning outcomes. Irrevocably, the study does not directly measure the long-term effects of gamification on academic performance or other aspects of the educational journey. While immediate engagement is crucial, considering potential long-term benefits and drawbacks of gamified platforms would be valuable.

These implications and limitations combined stress the need for further research on gamification full impact in Moroccan EFL classrooms. This, in turn, will clarify both the potential (affordances) and challenges of integrating gamified platforms in EFL instruction, paving the way for more informed and effective implementation strategies.

5. Conclusion

This article challenges the traditional paradigm of rote memorisation and disengaged learners in EFL classrooms by venturing into the fertile ground of gamified learning. Through the development of two novel conceptual and theoretical frameworks, the authors deconstruct the key elements of successful gamified EFL experiences, unveiling the intricate root systems of intrinsic motivation, active participation, and collaborative learning. More than simply theoretical models, these frameworks irradiate the critical factors that optimise student engagement, pinpointing the fundamental components that foster vibrant gamified environments. The significance of this work extends beyond theoretical discourse, laying the groundwork for robust research hypotheses and empirical exploration. Its implications resonate with educators, policymakers, and researchers alike, urging each stakeholder to play a vital role in realizing the transformative potential of gamification. This work stands not only as a rigorous academic contribution, but also as a call to action. It invites stakeholders to become architects of captivating quests, transforming the tedious rote chore into a landscape of meaningful EFL learning adventures.

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THE RESHAPING OF LANGUAGE LEARNING MOTIVATION DURING COVID-19-IMPOSED DISTANCE LEARNING

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Abstract

Language learning motivation (LLM) has been a major focus in research over the last decades, though it remains difficult to define and measure. Some study LLM as a binary phenomenon, with certain learner orientations, such as extrinsic motivation, being at odds with others, such as intrinsic motivation. More recently, the general tendency has been to study LLM as a dynamic phenomenon, subject to frequent changes based on innumerable factors, including and especially the learning environment itself. The COVID-19 pandemic and the large-scale imposition of online learning constituted a major change in the learning environment for students around the world, causing students and teachers to rethink their attitudes and habits regarding language learning. This paper offers a rigorous analysis of recent LLM research to understand how online learning impacted language courses. The study revealed an increased focus on the learning environment, autonomous learning, and innovation in teaching practice. Conclusions show that, even as we return to in-person instruction, the pandemic's long-term impact on language learning can already be seen.

Keywords: Language motivation, learner autonomy, learning environment, online learning, teaching innovation

1. Introduction

Language learning motivation (LLM) is thought to be one of the most decisive variables impacting learner success (Loziquez-Ben Gayed & Rivens Mompean, 2009). It pushes learners to persevere and make the necessary effort through periods of boredom, anxiety, and stress. Despite the significant interest LLM has generated, the concept remains difficult to define (Al-Tamimi & Shuib, 2009). Generally speaking, it is normally measured in terms of behaviors and efforts (Ushioda, 1996), and requires some sort of needs fulfillment to be activated (Al-Tamimi & Shuib, 2009), but the full picture is much more complicated.

Part of LLM's complexity stems from the fact that it is highly personalized and subject to frequent, unpredictable changes based on a myriad of factors; media consumption in the target language, traveling abroad (Menezes de Oliveira e Paiva, 2011), teachers (Solak & Bayer, 2014), personality, past experiences with the target language (Seven, 2020), and the desk setup in the classroom (Gocer, 2010) are just a sampling of the different elements capable of impacting a learner's engagement at a given time. To account for these different variables,

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increased attention has been given to the language learning environment (L2LE). Any modifications in the L2LE can trigger major changes in student attitudes and behaviors (Menezes de Oliveira e Paiva, 2011), making it a major factor in LLM research.

In the early part of 2020, the L2LE changed drastically for students all over the world as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic; classes at all levels were abruptly forced online as a matter of public health. In this online instruction, teachers rarely had the necessary training and students struggled to work autonomously and with limited interaction (Jansem, 2021). For most, this learning format lasted a year or more. Even though universities have largely returned to traditional, face-to-face learning, research indicates that motivation is at least partly based on one's past experiences with the language (Ushioda, 2014), so the impact of forced online learning is likely to continue to affect student attitudes well into the future.

It is in this context that this paper has found its inspiration. Viewing motivation as a complex, dynamic phenomenon on which the L2LE can enact long-term changes in students' attitudes and learning behaviors, this paper is guided by the following questions:

1. What were the principal factors impacting LLM during the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. How did teachers and students describe their experiences with these factors?

This paper begins with an overview of related research on LLM, with a focus on how it has been measured in the past. Following is an analysis of research studies on online learning motivation during the COVID-19 pandemic. This analysis will ultimately lead to a deeper understanding of LLM moving forward, that takes into account what was learned during the pandemic, ultimately addressing a third research question meant to inspire reflection:

3. How can LLM be expected to change following the return to in-person classes?

2. Literature Review: Evolving Perspectives on Language Learning Motivation

In early studies on LLM, motivation was seen as a relatively static phenomenon, based essentially on one's attitudes and goals for language learning. Research using Gardner's socio-educational model, for example, often compares students' levels of instrumental and integrative motivation. Students pushed by instrumental motives tend to be utilitarian in their learning; they study the language for the purpose of getting a job or finishing their degree. Integrative motives, however, relate to learners' attitudes towards the target language community and their desire to associate with it (Gardner & Lambert, 1959). Studies using questionnaires often measured students' integrative and instrumental orientations. Al-Tamimi & Shuib (2009) give one such example with engineering students in an EFL course; data from their Likert scale questionnaire revealed that learners often reported higher levels of instrumental motivation, given their professional goals, and lower levels of integrative motivation, with mixed views on anglophone cultures.

A similar trend is found in research based on the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), whose two major orientations, extrinsic & intrinsic motivation, exist on a continuum. The former resembles instrumentality; students learn a language because they want to pass a test or get a job. The latter, on the other hand, is more internalized, as the learner attaches a personal value to language mastery (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Again, questionnaires are often used to measure students' association with each of these orientations; Chumcharoenusk (2013) used a questionnaire to compare levels of different LLM orientations, showing that university students in Thailand and Cambodia had higher levels of extrinsic motivation. Gonzalez Ardeo (2016) had similar findings with Spanish university students.

The SDT considers that motivation is determined by three factors: 1) relatedness, or the extent to which a course or a goal relates to a student's needs and interests, 2) competence, or the extent to which a task provides an adequate level of challenge, allowing the learner to expand existing knowledge but without being overwhelmingly difficult, 3) autonomy, or the extent to which the learner has the ability to take control of their own learning (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Autonomy, as a matter of fact, is a crucial part of this theory and appears regularly in research on LLM. Daloiso (2009) claims that giving students the chance to practice autonomously helps teachers to retain their focus in class. Lamb & Wedell (2015) confirm this idea with their finding that learners are motivated by teachers who not only provide stimulating and communicative tasks, but also who offer autonomy. Wu (2003) also notes that encouraging autonomy promotes intrinsic motivation.

While these two theories have resulted in significant contributions to the field of LLM, recent years have seen calls for a more dynamic approach to motivation that highlights its complex, multifaceted nature. Against this backdrop, Dörnyei's (2009) L2 Motivational Self System (2009) focuses on three orientations that could drive student engagement: the L2 Ought to Self, the L2 Ideal Self, and the L2 Learning Environment (L2OS, L2IS, and L2LE, respectively). Learners pushed by an L2IS will make an effort to learn the L2 because it aligns with their deeply valued personal goals and how they envision themselves in the future. Conversely, those pushed by an L2OS are looking to avoid the negative consequences of not learning a language. This framework incorporates elements from several other LLM theories while providing more practical implications for teaching practice and class design, hence the L2LE orientation; the L2LE is a major distinguishing element of this framework and the most important for this paper.

Essentially, the L2LE includes all the social and cultural dynamics present in a given learning system and can have a major impact on learning behaviours (Papi & Teimouri, 2012; Aubrey, 2014). It may include the curriculum, relationships between peers and with the teachers, the setup of the classroom, the local culture's attitude towards the L2, one's past experiences with the L2, as well as a myriad of other factors. Contrary to other orientations, this concept can result in frequent fluctuations in LLM (Waninge, 2015), which could have potentially long-term consequences. To analyze these fluctuations, innovative research methodologies have been developed. With EFL learners in a Polish high school, Pawlak (2012) had students report their engagement levels at 5-minute intervals during a lesson. Students were then interviewed and asked to explain fluctuations. Interview responses were paired with questionnaire data. Spikes in motivational intensity were noticed during certain activities, such as group work. Interviews with EFL learners in other contexts further reinforce the importance of the activity in determining students' L2LE motivation. MacIntyre & Serroul (2015), for example, had participants re-watch recordings of themselves completing oral tasks and comment on their attitudes. Learners often reported lower motivation when the task was too easy. Waninge (2015) found that students most often cited interest when describing moments of high motivation; their interest stemmed from pre-existing goals, but also the affective and contextual elements present in the classroom, such as an enjoyment of the activity or the exchanges between peers and the teacher.

These studies show that teachers, through the creation of relevant, engaging materials and the fostering of a positive, friendly classroom atmosphere, are crucial to strengthening students' LLM. Indeed, positive experiences with L2 learning and use can positively impact the amount of effort students put forth in their learning (Develotte et al, 2008). The forced online learning brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, however, constituted a major change in the learning format that many students were accustomed to. Teachers therefore needed to think about motivation differently and adapt their courses to compensate for the absence of in-person social

exchanges. The following section describes how research articles were selected for inclusion in this study and summarizes findings from these forced online learning experiences to better understand how motivation was measured in research and thought about in classroom practice.

3. Methodology

To date, numerous reports have described the impact of forced online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The goal of this paper is to identify patterns in LLM research during this period in order to identify trends that could help inform research and teaching practice moving forward. A research synthesis has been selected as the appropriate methodology for this purpose, which, according to Copper & Hedges (2009), allows for creating generalizations, analyzing existing research, and identifying central issues to be studied in the future.

To conduct the research synthesis, the researchers established a list of criteria that would determine which studies were included in this analysis. The list of criteria is adapted from the methodology described in Chen (2023). A series of recent articles were gathered based on the criteria summarized in Table 1.

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
<i>Date of publication</i>	From 2020–Present (2023)	Articles written before 2020, as the pandemic had not yet been declared.
<i>Language of publication</i>	English or French, the common languages of the two researchers	Other languages, not spoken by both researchers
<i>Type of publication</i>	1) Empirical studies using original, quantitative or qualitative data 2) Articles in refereed journals	1) Non-empirical reports, theoretical papers, literature reviews 2) Articles in non-refereed journals
<i>Research participants</i>	Students and teachers, at all levels	Other stakeholders (parents, policymakers, principals, school directors, administrative staff)
<i>Article availability</i>	Full-text available	Abstract or title only, no access to full text.
<i>Location of the research</i>	A variety of geographical areas (different countries) should be represented.	No specific exclusion criterion, just an understanding that the study will seek to represent studies from a variety of contexts.
<i>Topic</i>	Generally speaking, the article should be about LLM and similar topics (learner engagement, autonomy, enjoyment, effort...)	Other topics not relating to teaching/learning, but not LLM. Motivation for learning in other topics

The search for articles took place on a variety of online platforms, including Google Scholar, university library databases, and in journals familiar to the researchers relating to language teaching. Search terms included “covid,” “language learning,” “online learning,” “online teaching”, and “learner motivation.” The term “covid” was a necessary item because the focus of this study is specifically on learning during the pandemic. Ultimately, 20 articles were retained for analysis, responding to all seven of the selection criteria.

After a close reading of the 20 articles, an a posteriori analysis, as described by Swain (2018) was performed to identify common themes across the articles. Given the exploratory nature of this study, researchers did not find it pertinent to define categories before analyzing the articles; establishing the themes after ensured that the analysis was kept open to better reflect what was found.

4. Results & Discussion

As stated previously, COVID-19 has had a noticeable impact on language learning and teaching, which in turn, strongly affected LLM. Issues that were rare or irrelevant in traditional language classrooms, such as problems with a home internet connection, navigating new technologies without teacher support, and not being able to see one's peers, were now having a strong, often negative impact on student engagement (Klimova, 2021). The effect of this situation was also seen in motivation research, with changing foci and differing research methods. This report analyzed 20 research articles on learner motivation to answer two major research questions regarding how LLM was studied at the height of the pandemic and how teachers and learners described their experiences with LLM. The analysis of literature revealed several major themes, as described below.

4.1) RQ1: What were the principal factors impacting LLM during the COVID-19 pandemic?

LLM was the subject of substantial research interest at the height of the pandemic. In earlier years, motivation research suggested a need for practical implications (Dörnyei, 2005), learner autonomy (Murray, 2011), and increased attention to the L2LE (MacIntyre & Serroul, 2015). The context of forced online learning called these three elements to the foreground. Following the a posteriori content analysis of the selected articles, the researchers established the categorization presented in Table 2.

L2LE	Learner autonomy	Innovative tool and strategy use
<u>Klimova (2021)</u>	<u>Albantani et al (2022)</u>	Sebastian & Souza (2022)
<u>Janssem (2021)</u>	<u>Stevani & Ginting (2022)</u>	<u>Schug & Torea (2023)</u>
<u>Ikhwan et al (2021)</u>	<u>Irgatoğlu et al (2022)</u>	<u>Al-Abidi et al (2023)</u>
<u>Rahardjo & Pertiwi (2020)</u>	Chen (2021)	Santos & <u>Vélez Ruiz (2021)</u>
<u>Anwar & Wahid (2021)</u>	<u>Hidayati & Husna (2021)</u>	<u>Fansury et al (2020)</u>
<u>Maican & Cocorada (2021)</u>	<u>Bardus et al (2021)</u>	Phuong (2022)
		<u>Alabay (2021)</u>
		<u>Muslimin & Harintama (2020)</u>

The above articles represent a wide range of countries including, but not limited to Vietnam, Turkey, Czech Republic, Romania, France, the United States, Ecuador, and Indonesia. All levels of language learning are represented as well, from primary school to university. Questionnaires, interviews, and mixed-methods approaches were used in these studies, providing a rich mix of quantitative and qualitative data.

4.2) RQ2: How did students and teachers describe their experiences with these factors?

Unsurprisingly, teachers and students had varied experiences during the pandemic. From the teachers' perspective, LLM decreased due to the lack of institutional support, an inability to adapt traditional courses to online platforms, and the absence of communication with students (Janssem, 2021; Klimova, 2021). On a positive note, language instructors at various levels reported on the different strategies that successfully kept LLM alive and even helped it grow in online courses. Games, different online platforms, virtual exchanges and many other strategies helped keep students engaged and provide them with authentic practice (Santos & Vélez Ruiz, 2021; Phuong, 2022; Schug & Toréa, 2023). This period was therefore characterized by a range of difficulties for teachers, but also some unprecedented innovation and creativity.

Although students often gave positive feedback about these innovative practices, research tended to show that learning experiences were often described in negative terms. For instance, while students started their courses with high levels of LLM, they recognized that this teaching format was not sustainable, and their courses were more watered down (Janssem, 2021). Lastly, the inability to communicate with peers also weighed heavily on learners as well, which would seem to highlight how vital the social element of learning is. The subsections below outline provide a brief description of research during this period.

4.2.a) A focus on teaching innovation & strategies

The forced online learning that came with the COVID-19 pandemic created a situation in which there were minimal to no opportunities for authentic interaction between peers or with the teacher. Given that this context could have disastrous effects on both language learning and learner motivation, teachers had to become more innovative in how they delivered their lessons. This innovation became a major focus of LLM research starting in mid-2020.

One such activity that was shown to have a substantial effect on student engagement is virtual exchanges, which saw an uptick in online courses. In several countries, including the US, Spain, France, and China, virtual exchanges allowed students to practice spoken language skills in an authentic context at a time when in-person interaction was impossible. In one program involving university students in Spain and the US, Sebastian & Souza (2022) described a 2-week online conversation exchange between Spanish learners of English and American learners of Spanish; students had conversation prompts but were essentially able to discuss whatever they wanted. Data collected at the end of the program revealed that students had a very positive experience, while open-ended questions revealed that the positive relationships between partners, the opportunity to improve language skills in a judgment-free space, cultural exposure, and the technology all made the individual meetings engaging and interesting for the students. Most importantly, however, was that participation in this program resulted in an increase in students' desire to travel and study abroad.

Similarly, Schug and Torea (2023) reported on an exchange program between a French and an American university, with students practising their target language in a series of organized communicative activities relating to their respective areas of study. Participants made journal entries after each exchange which, despite often mentioning technological and scheduling issues, generally indicated that students were very satisfied with the experience, with many making an effort to prolong the conversation and discuss unassigned topics. Students again referenced increased confidence while speaking, enjoying the dynamic with their partners, and expanding their language and cultural knowledge. At the end of the program, participant questionnaire responses indicated a higher association with the L2IS, as

students began to attach more importance to learning their target language to achieve their goals. These two studies highlight an important point about LLM: repeated positive experiences with the target language can lead to increases in long-term learning motivation. Providing such experiences can prove to be a challenging task in normal circumstances, but the novelty of the activity combined with the unique L2LE of being isolated during the pandemic created a situation where students were enthusiastic and excited about the socialization provided by virtual exchanges. The result in both studies was a long-term increase in LLM, as students had a greater appreciation for the value of the target language.

In addition to learning activities, LLM research at the height of the pandemic focused on learning platforms. Deprived of the traditional face-to-face format, language instructors had to experiment with other tools to ensure continuity in their courses, which naturally influenced how students' felt about their language learning. One such platform is ClassDojo, a tool used with Ecuadorian students learning English, as described by Santos & Vélez Ruiz (2021). Questionnaires, interviews with students, and journals completed by teachers showed that the specificities of this tool helped save learner motivation in online English courses. Pre- and post-questionnaires revealed that class participation greatly increased as a result of ClassDojo; students appreciated the elements of competition, entertainment, self-paced learning, and fun. Most importantly, however, was that, as students continued practicing on the platform, they felt more comfortable interacting with peers, leading to higher motivation. Similarly, a study on Microsoft Teams in a Saudi university English course encouraged students to discuss classroom materials using the online platform. While motivation did not significantly increase, students did report higher levels of autonomy with the mobile app than with face-to-face classes (Al-Abidi et al, 2023). Likewise, Microsoft Teams was found to be very much appreciated by learners of French at a Turkish university; interviews with students revealed that it was very user-friendly and offered a variety of capabilities not available in face-to-face lessons. While acknowledging some of the shortcomings of online courses, students benefited from the ability to re-watch video lectures, follow lessons from the comfort of their own home, and even find and upload additional materials on an easy-to-navigate system (Alabay, 2021).

The use of authentic digital content and online gaming also became commonplace as language teachers sought to engage students in creative ways; the result of implementing these strategies is generally an increase in LLM (Kaharuddin et al, 2020). In a remedial English course offered online at a Vietnamese university, Phuong (2022) reported that students were essentially extrinsically motivated and were engaging for the sole purpose of obtaining a passing grade. During the course, however, instances of intrinsic motivation were reported as students enjoyed the learning activities, particularly games. Focus groups revealed that these games were a welcome element of online courses that increased student enjoyment. Lastly, in a study at an Indonesian high school, interviews and questionnaires revealed teachers and students alike found that using digital content created by native speakers from anglophone countries provided learners with useful linguistic input and cultural knowledge. Additionally, students were against the use of traditional teaching materials in their online courses and felt that digital content, even from social media websites, provided a more engaging alternative (Fansury et al, 2020).

Of course, despite an often positive impact on motivation, these innovative teaching practices sometimes created difficulties not seen in face-to-face classrooms. In a remedial course offered to Indonesian university students, instructors opted to use the text messaging application, WhatsApp, for their lessons (Muslimin et al, 2020). Students struggled to interact in group message threads, because they hesitated to interrupt ongoing discussions. Additionally, given that messages were visible to all course participants, some

students felt anxious about communicating because they could not verify whether their language use was perfect. Internet connection problems and a lack of financial means to purchase phone data also created problems. Still, students reported actively finding ways to maintain their motivation during the course, such as reminding themselves why they were doing it (Muslimin et al, 2020).

The studies referenced above highlight several factors that were found crucial for maintaining LLM in online courses. First, learners need socialization; Samida (2004) references socialization as a key teaching strategy in general, and it is all the more important in the context of a language classroom (Dörnyei, 1998). This element may have been taken for granted in face-to-face classes, but its absence in online courses was clearly felt by learners. Through the study of games and virtual exchanges, LLM research during the pandemic revealed the virtuous cycle that could be possible when applying innovative practices. Students have positive experiences with a language, their motivation increases, and they continue to seek additional positive experiences. Additionally, recent studies have shown the importance of using a variety of materials that are relevant to learners, consistent with past recommendations (Daloiso, 2009). The use of digital content and gaming allows learners to see parallels between their learning and their everyday lives; these strategies provide novelty and pique students' interest.

4.2.b) The impact of an online learning environment on LLM

Despite receiving relatively little attention in earlier research, the learning environment (L2LE) has been shown to be a determining factor of LLM (Aubrey, 2014; MacIntyre & Serroul, 2015). The L2LE encompasses a wide array of factors, but research prior to COVID-19 has shown that certain elements tend to lead to higher levels of motivation and engagement: a culture or family background that encourages the L2 learning (Azarnoosh, 2014), opportunities for positive, authentic L2 practice (Ryan & Dörnyei, 2013), specialized language classes (You & Dörnyei, 2016), and interactive tasks that are both feasible and interesting to the learner (MacIntyre & Serroul, 2015; Pawlak, 2012; Waninge, 2015).

The forced online courses that accompanied the COVID-19 pandemic created a situation where teachers had to know and deal with the contexts in which students were learning and how they impacted engagement. Indeed, research from this period has shown the necessity of a deep understanding of the students' learning environment; teachers must be aware of how learners acquire and practice language both inside and outside of the classroom (Nguyen, 2021). Language teachers in some contexts were able to adapt to their online lessons effectively. In one Indonesian secondary school, for example, students reported that the change in teaching format did have an impact on their motivation and their course achievement. The impact, however, was low, indicating that teachers were able to successfully implement online learning in a way that sufficiently resembled their in-person learning (Rahardjo & Pertiwi, 2020).

With several studies reporting LLM levels dropping in online courses, two common themes emerge: isolation and a lack of internet connectivity. Even in cultures with large numbers of internet users (Fansuary et al, 2020), the online L2LE created severe inequalities. Technology problems and a lack of internet connectivity resulted in frustrated learners, slow progress, and even giving up (Ikhwan & Andriyanti, 2021; Klimova, 2021). Questionnaire results showed that learners in Indonesia completed their activities and remained committed to passing their course, but reported low levels of motivation; this trend was due, in part, to an L2LE characterized by numerous technological problems, slow internet connections, and a nostalgic preference for in-person courses. (Ikhwan & Andriyanti, 2021). A similar trend was observed with university students in the Czech Republic; while students

expressed wanting to improve their English, the L2LE during this period proved too complex to navigate (Klimova, 2021). Students reported that a change in course format, from weekly in-person lessons, to short-term, intensive online courses made it difficult to stay concentrated. Furthermore, internet connection issues, a lack of sufficient technology, delays in getting responses, and the absence of regular interaction led to 47% of participants saying they did not feel motivated to learn in this environment. Even those who remained motivated acknowledged that this context was not sustainable and their LLM was not going to remain high.

Internet connectivity was not the only technological problem students experienced. In a study on Indonesian learners of English, questionnaire and interview results showed that some teachers gave more work to make up for the lack of interaction (Anwar & Wahid, 2021). This additional work did not always have clear expectations and evaluation criteria. Moreover, for students without computer access, their learning environment was a smartphone; creating video projects yields heavy files that can quickly take up all the space in one's phone memory. Lastly, many students reported that information for contacting the professor was not readily available and communication remained difficult.

In addition to the limitations of technology and poor internet connections, part of the isolation also comes from a lack of institutional support. Janssem (2021) noted that, in one Thai university, teachers felt they did not have the necessary support or materials to create effective online lessons; even those who supported online learning for language courses recognized the importance of getting proper tools and training for implementation. Student feedback on the online courses echoed this sentiment, with many stating that their courses lacked depth or that their teachers did not master the technology. Consequently, they lost interest and reported being unable to focus long enough to do supplementary activities.

Student attitudes and the institutional context may also play a role in how the L2LE is shaped. In their study with Romanian university students taking online foreign language classes, Maican & Cocorada (2021) show that many of learners agree that e-learning should continue to play a role in language education in the future, but a majority feel that it should not again be the only learning format available. Other feelings, like anxiety or embarrassment, were also present, causing students to participate less, even when they wanted to improve. The small importance accorded to foreign language courses when calculating students' overall grade point averages may also have been a factor here, as language electives counted less than other courses (Maican & Cocorada, 2021).

As shown above, the abrupt shift to online courses created a L2LE in which many of the factors shown to be motivating in language courses prior to COVID-19 were absent. A lack of course depth, authentic language practice, and interactive activities constituted a major change from face-to-face lessons. Add to this the large presence of technological issues, a lack of materials, and spotty internet connections, and it is not surprising that the L2LE was often not conducive to long-term LLM. With the default L2LE being online environments, teachers needed to be creative and explore different pedagogical tools to retain students' attention, to help them persevere through the inevitable logistical troubles.

4.2.c) Learner autonomy in online courses

Offering opportunities for autonomous learning has long been considered a hallmark of motivating teaching practice (Daloiso, 2009; Lamb & Wedell, 2015). Learners are more engaged when they have some control over their learning (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Closely connected to LLM, autonomy requires guidance and careful direction, particularly at early stages (Hismanoglu, 2000). In various university contexts, however, students have struggled because they did not know how to be autonomous (Terrier & Maury, 2015; Missoum, 2016)

In the context of unstable internet activity, a lack of institutional support, and difficulties contacting the professor, learner autonomy was crucial for ensuring student success. Many students, despite being initially motivated, quickly became frustrated as their learning was unguided and progress was difficult to track. In response, some learners found ways to make their own progress. In a study of Ukrainian university students, it was shown that a large portion of learners were using smartphone apps to progress in their language learning. These apps, though not part of the course, were carefully chosen by students. They selected apps that helped them develop specific skills they, whether it be grammatical accuracy, vocabulary acquisition, or production and comprehension. Though all apps had their advantages and disadvantages, it was generally found that students had trouble maintaining their motivation in their autonomous practice, despite the initial desire to progress (Bardus et al, 2021).

Similar results were found in other contexts. In an online Arabic course offered to students at an Indonesian university, a questionnaire revealed that students were generally highly motivated to master the language and even looked for ways to overcome difficulties and make progress. The progress was unfortunately limited, however, as students reported not having the strategies to advance on their own (Albantani et al, 2022). In an English course offered at a Turkish university, researchers compared learner autonomy before and after the onset of the pandemic and online learning. Questionnaire data revealed that students were actually more autonomous before the pandemic, contrary to expectations. Researchers hypothesized that this finding was perhaps due to the fact that learners did not have to actively use English for communication in online courses, as would be necessary in in-person courses (Irgatoğlu et al, 2022); likewise, motivation and learning strategy use also fell in online courses. Even at the primary school level, a questionnaire to English teachers in Indonesia found that learners were less autonomous in online courses during the pandemic. Students understood the importance of learning autonomously, but often lost focus due to typical online distractions, such as pop ups and games; they also feared working independently because they simply were not used to working without guidance from their teacher (Stevani & Ginting, 2022).

Still, some positive changes were observed, as students adapted to online learning and became more independent. In Stevani & Ginting's (2022) report, students appreciated the authentic documents found online. In an online Chinese course offered to foreign students at a Chinese university, Chen (2021) found that students were initially not very independent; they asked questions that were already answered in various study guides and course documents. They did not want to complete the independent practice exercises prepared by the teacher, because they did not see the relevance to their test result goals. As the course went on, however, learners became more autonomous in their learning and took initiatives to do practice exercises just to expand their own language and cultural knowledge. Indonesian learners of English at the secondary level generally reported being somewhat pleased with their online English courses, despite the difficulties with communicating with their teachers. As the course went on, they reported somewhat high levels of potential for autonomous learning, such as being able to identify their weaknesses and expressing a desire to voice opinions about their English courses. Furthermore, many students participated in a variety of independent practice activities, such as taking private lessons, watching films in English, or reading books in English (Hidayati & Husna, 2020).

The studies referenced above differ somewhat from previous studies on learner autonomy; they seem to indicate that, while participating in online courses, students understood the need to play a more active role in their learning, even if they lacked the resources to do so. This new level of independence, though it lacked guidance and resources during the

pandemic, is likely to impact student learning moving forward and needs to be taken into consideration while planning courses.

4.3) RQ3: How can we expect LLM to change following the return to in-person classes?

As stated in the introduction, the ultimate goal of this analysis is to examine major trends in LLM research during the pandemic and draw lessons that will help to better describe how learner motivation has changed and how it can be encouraged in the classroom moving forward. This subsection explores very recent research from the period immediately following the return to in-person learning, in order to identify practical implications for classroom practice.

First, it would be natural to expect that students have changed their expectations regarding how language courses should be taught. Web applications, virtual exchanges, and digital content gave learners authentic experiences with the L2 when in-class interaction was not possible; these tools had very positive effects on LLM and teachers should reflect on ways to continue their use in the return to traditional lessons. In recent studies, innovative practices such as the use of ChatGPT (Ali et al, 2023), online courses (Siok et al, 2023), and even teaching via telephone and email (Sarani, Ayati & Naderi, 2023) had positive associations with higher LLM. These studies build on earlier research showing the advantages of using technology to facilitate student learning, particularly with e-tandems (Develotte et al 2008) and flipped classrooms (Hernández Nanclares & Pérez Rodriguez, 2015). Although technology incorporation requires careful planning and a deep understanding of students' capacities, it remains an aspect of everyday life. Teachers should therefore strive to continue organizing courses in a way that offers the autonomy and freedom given in online learning, while still capitalizing on the benefits of interaction and guidance present in face-to-face learning.

Additionally, forced online courses have reinforced the importance of guiding learner autonomy. The connection between motivation and autonomy has been established for many years (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ushioda, 1996), yet research before and during the height of the pandemic indicates that students, even with high motivation and a desire to learn, struggle to be autonomous, to the detriment of language acquisition & learning. Though Al-Abidi et al (2023) have shown that exceptions do exist, it is important to note that even the students in their study did not experience increases in motivation, despite their increased autonomy. The main takeaway from research in these online courses is that instructors must help students become autonomous. To do so, numerous strategies exist to encourage independent practice, such as carefully guided personal projects (Labetoulle, 2017) and learner diaries (Woodfield & Lazarus, 1998). Still, encouraging autonomy is a long-term process that requires teachers to help students define their goals and create a realistic plan towards achieving them (Vlaeva & Dörnyei, 2021). Given that it may not be possible for all students to be constantly engaged during all parts of a lesson, whether in-person or online, autonomous practice gives them the chance to work on tasks that are relevant and interesting to them, ensuring long-term motivation and effort.

Lastly, online learning highlighted again the importance of the L2LE on LLM. As stated previously, the L2LE received comparatively little attention in LLM research in the years prior to the pandemic (MacIntyre & Serroul, 2015). But with the unceremonious switch to online courses, students' individual learning environments literally could not be ignored. A lack of steady internet access exacerbated inequalities all over the world (Walters, 2020); students were unable to consult online learning platforms or attend video conference calls. The digital divide resulted in large-scale disengagement and drops in motivation, a shift that was particularly pronounced in some poor and rural contexts (Devkota, 2021). These issues worsened the lack of communication and engagement many students reported in the studies referenced

above. While many assume that the university students of today are constantly connected, this experience with online courses proves that that is not always the case. Devkota (2021) calls on institutions to adopt an approach adapted to their specific contexts to bridge the digital divide moving forward. It bears repeating that computer access is not the only important aspect of the L2LE, though it was perhaps the most prominent at the height of the pandemic. A multitude of other factors can play a role, including parents' attitudes towards language learning (Martin, 2021), the status of the target language (Rosiak, 2022), and even the classroom seating chart (Henry, 2015). As these factors and numerous others can have strong impacts on LLM, it is important that language teachers perform a thorough analysis of the learning environment to offer more relevant and feasible activities.

5. Conclusion

The goal of this paper was essentially twofold. First, the researchers wanted to examine how language learning motivation was experienced and studied at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, at a time where many students were forced to attend lessons online and work independently, regardless of whether they had internet at home. Second, a goal was to identify takeaways from the unexpected change in the learning environment that could be used to foster LLM in the language classroom.

It was revealed that studies on LLM during the pandemic followed the overall tendency of motivation research, which involved studying motivation as a dynamic phenomenon subject to frequent changes (Waninge et al, 2014). Students across the world saw drastic changes in their LLM and effort levels while learning online. The factors causing these changes, such as a lack of internet access and social support, were widely studied; the dynamic and multi-faceted nature of LLM continues to be a focus in research even today. Future research should continue to explore the myriad of factors capable of impacting students' desire to learn a foreign language.

Additionally, this paper sheds light on the use of technology in online language learning and issues in learner autonomy. It is fair to expect that students got used to a certain level of independence during the pandemic and that we, as teachers, should continue to encourage and guide them. Moving forward, research on autonomy and how technology can facilitate and enhance learning should take a greater place in motivation research.

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MORPHOSYNTACTIC STUDY OF URDU ESL LEARNERS: A DERIVATION BY INTERFACE

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Abstract

This study is an attempt to investigate morphosyntactic concatenation of the ESL learners' errors under the theoretical tent of Interface Modular Approach posited by Chomsky (1995). Interface Hypothesis is a perspective on interfaces in L2 acquisition that has gained a lot of traction compares various interface types in grammars that are close to native in order to discuss the nature of the end state knowledge of highly skilled L2 speaker[s]. For conducting this study, the dubbed interface hypothesis that developed over time is that, in so far as near-native speakers have issues at all, these are likely to be related only with certain interfaces. The aim of this study is to analyse the interface of syntax/morphology of L2 English of Urdu learners. For the analysis of morphology/syntax interface, data is collected from 15 students of Grammar Model high school through an essay writing. Data is analysed according to *inflectional morphology*, *arguments*, *loan words* and *phrasal verbs*. The study theoretically predicts that interface approach is advanced modular inter-connected system, Urdu ESL learners committed such investigated errors but syntactically, they are due to *incompatible* upper module of cognitive systems as thematic and functional layers are generated cyclically.

Keywords: Interface hypothesis; morphosyntactic interface; second language acquisition; inflectional morphology

1. Introduction

Acquiring a second language (L2) coupled with mastering one's mother tongue (L1) is unavoidable as the world has become a smaller, more interconnected 'global village', and everyone, except for a select few, encounters some levels of difficulty when acquiring a second language (Fromkin & Rodman, 1998). If someone (learners) is exposed to a cluster of perplexed sequential multilingualism, the situation in Pakistan is comparable. Pakistani language learners who initially begin studying English in school level due to its academic and official nature, encounter difficulties and make phonetic, syntactic, morphological, and lexical errors because there is not a suitable natural environment in which to practice their second language. This is surprising and alarming in Pakistan since then (Haidar & Fang, 2019),

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English is the official language, the language of education, and is linked with promoting social mobility and where English also emerged as a dominant and prestigious language in the globe.

A child begins learning their first language (L1) before the age of three, at three months. This language is also referred to as his/her mother tongue or primary language (Elman *et al.*, 1996; Karmiloff and Karmiloff-Smith 2001). In today's interconnected world, learning a second language has become essential for practically everyone in the globe particularly in Pakistan. Each language in the world has a set of grammatical principles/rules. Recent studies (Khan, 2020; Jo, 2000; Sorace, 2000; Haidar & Fang, 2019; Islam, 2012) on L2 acquisition have placed a lot of focus on interfaces between the language system and the external grammar components, such as Syntax and Discourse, or between the various grammar modules, like Syntax and Semantics, Syntax and Morphology (Borer, 1998), or Morphology (Embick, 2007; Islam, 2012) and Phonology. This has given rise to motivation and inclinations that the challenges faced by L2 learners can be attributed to issues integrating language phenomena pertinent to certain interfaces. Linguistic Interfaces; the application of interface principles to language learning content, procedures, and outcomes is the most significant recent advancement in Chomsky's theory of constructive linguistics for SLA.

While Universal grammar (UG) theory and research continued to place a strong emphasis on syntax, lexical, grammatical, semantic, and pragmatic/discourse meanings are all given far more weight when linguistic interfaces are taken into account. This method builds on Chomsky's Principles and Parameters Model (1981), which states that the output of phonological and semantic modules must relate to the core computational system (syntax), continuing his earlier assertion that the language faculty is modular (with separate components for Syntax, Phonology, Semantics, etc.) Despite the significantly improved focus on meaning, there are still several SLA-related challenges that a UG method that primarily places an internal focus on the learner's mental organization cannot adequately address. Lexical meaning resides in the words that are stored in learner's mental dictionaries/lexicon[s].

When one learns an additional language, some of the words that learned already are equivalent in meaning to words that are known in our L1, but many are not translation equivalents. Grammatical meaning is often carried by inflectional morphology, including information about *number, gender, tense, and aspect*. The word form 'cats', for instance, includes the lexical meaning of cat plus the grammatical marking of 'plural'. The addition of context and real-world knowledge in pragmatic/discourse meaning can be accounted for as a syntax-pragmatic/discourse interface. While some of these interfaces might be universal and require no special knowledge, others clearly reveal L1 and L2 differences. These could contribute to incomplete second language learning as well as serve as a substantial source of language transfer (i.e. fossilization) according to Maqsood *et al* (2019). The most difficult aspects of multilingual acquisition are lexical and grammatical meaning since they account for language variance.

In L2, phrase-and sentence-level semantics frequently necessitates some resetting of parameters, but options are fairly constrained because universal concepts apply to all languages. The learner must therefore travel through the inflectional morphology in order to acquire meaning in a second language, making morphology the acquisition bottleneck. The pragmatic phrasal and linguistic meaning is free and they are all and only encoded unless functional layers are attached via step-wise fashion completing one module successively upgraded into subsequent module[s]. The primary focus of this study is to investigate the sequentially successive language acquisition system that operates in L2 (Urdu L1 learners) in Pakistan to account for the errors and its rectification according to the interface modular approach (Chomsky, 1981; 1998; 2011).

2. Literature Review

According to the Interface Hypothesis (henceforth IH) Sorace, (2000) and her works. It is more difficult to learn structures that involve an interface between syntax and other domains like semantics and pragmatics than structures that are entirely developed in syntax as syntax provides the formal structure that how sound, meaning are encoded within the words, it suggests a universal frame technically called morphosyntactic frame of the sentence. Nakayama & Yoshimura (2016) worked on Japanese ESL learners and talked about how Japanese English learners acquire L2 inflectional morphology. They examined English writings from learners in two proficiency levels (High and Low) and discovered that while their L2 did not suffer much from the transfer of null subjects and objects from L1, it did not successfully insert inflectional morphemes like the third person singular -s in PF (Chomsky, 1995). The findings of this study indicate that while both groups have very low rates of missing '-ed' and subjects, the rate of missing -s is much higher in the Low group than the High group. These could lead to more arguments in support of the IH. Realizing overt subjects followed by past verbs shows that creating tension sentences is possible.

Khan (2020) extensively worked on the Pakistani ESL learners and said that numerous researches on Pakistani English vocabulary had been done, but only a few have addressed morphology. Therefore, the goal of this study was to investigate how Urdu loan words have been morphologically incorporated into Pakistani English. The investigation of the primary causes of this morphological integration process was another goal of the study. This study employed the qualitative research methodology. In the integration of these foreign words, four distinctive morphological (Embick, 2003) processes had also been discovered.

Viewing the recently conducted studies on ESL on IH, this study formulates some core investigative objections and aims to pursue, as the Urdu is the head last language and learning English by Urdu L1 speakers, creates crucial problems. For dealing this phenomenon, Interface modular approach is best to deal with Urdu learners who are learning English as second language. This study is twofold as it is going (a) to analyse the morphology-syntax interface of L2 English learners whose first language is Urdu and (b) investigating the errors in inflectional morphology of L2 English.

3. Method and Materials

This study is qualitative in nature. It is investigating the errors of Urdu learners who are acquiring English as second language. For achieving the desirable results, each applied studies needs data. For this study, data has been accumulated from Urdu ESL learners. Data has theoretically been analysed under the core perspectives of the IH. It is more difficult to learn grammatical phenomena at the interface (Embick, 2007; Stewart, 2007) and L1 verb form transfer affects L2 morphosyntax. If these are on the correct track, the same logic can be used to explain how Urdu learners of L2 English acquire inflectional morphology, argument structure, loan words and phrasal verbs.

3.1 Participants

Participants for this study have randomly been recruited on the basis of their availability from remote area and they are fifteen students from Grammar Model High School in Punjab (Pakistan). For empirical data for this study, it has been collected from speakers whose first language is Urdu and they are acquiring English as second language. Essay writing (EW) used as tools for data collection from the speakers. They were asked to write essay on different topics which are part of their syllabus. The students are fully prepared for writing an essay as it is the core subject in ESL syllabus.

3.2 Procedures

For getting more credible data, it has been assured that natural and accurate samples can be achieved. For this, the study is following the proper procedure for data collection. First of all, all the students are assigned 5 topics on one type of essays like descriptive essays. They are now in free hand to collect information to the related topic from any source. Second they have been given 2 days for preparation and informed the date of data collection. On the specified day, they have been arranged into one fully ventilated room and given one topic for essay writing. At this stage, they have given the guideline on to organize the essay. They have been given proper time to write the essay according to the length of the essay.

4. Data Analysis

For selection of samples, random sampling technique has been adopted. If samples have been selected on preferences basis like highly appreciative and highly unappreciative, the results will be contradictory and then, we will have to specify the variables as the previous have been conducted by Khan (2020). Different examples have been collected from the essays written by the students.

4.1 Inflectional Morphology and Syntax

Inflectional morphology (Jo, 2000) is characterized as morphology with grammatical content, such as which is pertinent to syntactic operations. For instance:

Case-marking is used to indicate an NP's syntactic role in a sentence. Here are some examples of *case marking* from the essays of students.

1. Quaide Azam contributed a lot in the formation of Pakistan. ***He** contribution is unforgettable.
2. Corruption is increasing day by day in our country. **We** must take serious steps to control over it, as Pakistan is ***us** country. Heard about the incident from ***he**.

Clauses of a particular type are identified by inflectional markers like *tense* and *aspect-affixes*. Here are examples;

1. He struggled**ed** too much for the achievement of his goal. But he didn't get it.
2. Walking**ing** with the help of stick-on mountain tops, was easy for us.
3. He ***eat** the whole meal and went on job.

In agreement between adjectives and the nouns they modify, or between verbs and their subjects or objects, *person* and *number markers* frequently play a role. These are some examples;

1. Allama Iqbal and Quaide Azam were our **national** heroes.
2. This **kind** of things are not allowed in our society.
3. The **weather** is very **beautiful**.

In some ways, **inflection** can be seen as a component of the **binding agent** that binds sentences.

4.2 Arguments

Arguments are defined as words or phrases that a verb logically requires or that the verb's meaning implies within the thematic domain. Typically, arguments must accompany a verb, as in the following examples.

1. Our vehicle runs.
*Vehicle with run.
2. She ate the whole meal.
*She and meal.
3. Ali placed the bottle in the refrigerator.
*Ali, the bottle, refrigerator.
4. Ali placed the refrigerator.
*Placed.

Interpretation: In the above cited examples from (1-4) the interesting data has been reported. In example (1), the verb **run** has just one *argument* which is its subject noun phrase (NP). Intransitive verbs are those that take *only one argument*, according to conventional

In the example (2), the verb- eat requires two arguments which are its subject and object noun phrases and these types of verbs are actually transitive verbs as they require two arguments (a) internal and (b) external arguments. The verb placed in example (3) needs a subject, an object, and a different way to express location. Therefore, if a verb needs three, intransitive is the term typically used to describe arguments.

4.3 Loan Words

When a word is borrowed from other language, the level of morphological integration (Islam, 2012) provides information about how widely the word was used. The phonological, morphological, and syntactical systems of the beneficiary language can also be used to represent a borrowed item (i.e. code-switches), but there is still a chance that the item will appear again in the beneficiary. Language raised the likelihood that word would be widely used in new language structures.

Here are some examples from the essays of students.

1. **Shriah** should be followed by the people of our society. Islamic Law
2. **Qawali** is played on the mehndi night of Muslims. A style of Muslims music
3. Muslim women carry **dupatta** on their heads. A long piece of cloth
4. Sufism is very famous in Muslim society.
5. A thought of school which emphasis on the search of Allah.

4.4 Interface Items

Cases that exist somewhere between the two levels of organization, i.e. cases where it is not entirely evident what belongs to morphology and what belongs to syntax.

Clitics (Franks, 2000) are minor grammatical components that are not *free morphemes* because they cannot exist on their own. But they also don't exactly resemble affixes. They do not bear emphasis in terms of phonology, and they combine with a nearby word to form a single phonological word that we shall refer to as the host of the clitic. Proclitic are clitic that arrive before their hosts, while enclitics are clitic that come after their hosts. Because of this, morphologists and syntacticians are both interested in linguistics. They both exhibit the traits of bound morpheme and syntactic units. Basic clitic as free morphemes without accents may

be phonologically reduced and subordinated to a nearby word. However, in terms of their syntax, they appear in the same spot that the comparable free word can occupy.

Simple clitic in English includes forms like **-ll** or **-d**, like in the lines below:

- a. I'll take tea.
- b. She'd like the apple.

The contracted forms of the auxiliary verbs will and would in these phrases are will and would, and they appear exactly where the independent words would have gone after the subject and before the main verb.

Like simple clitic, special clitic is phonologically dependent on a host, but they are not shortened versions of independent words. Compare the following French examples:

- a. I see Raza, or Je vois Raza.
- b. I see him, I le vois, C.I can see him. I see him.

Despite being written as a separate word, the object pronoun 'le' in French is phonologically dependent on the verb to the right of it; in other words, the verb and object pronoun are sounded as a single phonological word. In French, there isn't a standalone term that denotes 'he'. Le and the other object pronoun forms are hence unique clitic in French.

Phrasal verbs

Phrasal verbs are those that combine a verb with a preposition or particle, for example:

Ask somebody out invite on a date.

Back something up reverse

Back somebody up support

Chip in help

Phrasal verbs frequently have idiomatic meanings, as the aforementioned examples demonstrate, and in that regard are similar to words. The combination of a verb with a particle or preposition in English may appear to be another type of compound in terms of structure.

The two elements of the phrasal verb can, and in certain cases must, be separated, in contrast:

- a. *I called up him.*
- b. *I called a friend up.*
- c. *I called her up.*
- d. *I called up her.*

The particle can come before or after a whole noun phrase when it is the verb's object. In the first instance, it is close to its verb; whereas in the second instance, it is distant from the verb. Additionally, the particle must be kept separate from the verb when the object is a pronoun.

5. Discussion

This section is interpreting the discussion.

5.1 The Syntax-morphology Interface

The methods in which words are constructed in various languages are the subject of morphology. Identifying the rules that let people combine words into phrases and phrases into sentences is, in contrast the focus of syntax. Therefore, morphology and syntax are typically concerned with different levels of linguistic organization. Despite this, morphology and syntax interact in a variety of ways. The morphology-syntax relationship frequently has a sense of directionality; in some instances, the morphology seems to drive the syntax, while in other instances, the syntax seems to drive the morphology. When the derivation/inflection distinction is important, this perception closely matches it. Words, phrases, and sentences make up language. The rules/principles of language apply at all levels and universally claimed syntax is all the way down. Morphology is the study of word formation and structure at the word level.

Understanding and employing the proper word structure, such as word roots, prefixes, and affixes, are essential morphological abilities (called morphemes). Solid understanding of grammatical morphemes, including the use of the *-ing* for a right usage of the present progressive verb, /s/ to denote the plural form, and having a strong understanding of verb tense is essential for morphology. Morphological construction and syntactic design are plainly reliant together. Inside a given language, plural subjects can require plural types of limited action words, derivational appendage can change an action word's contention structure necessities, and similar provisions can be presented by modifiers which should be properly bent. Complex word-inside structure in polysynthetic dialects addresses the same legitimate substance as sentence-interior construction in secluding dialects, with expansive yet not endlessly factor radiance between these limits.

6. Conclusion

The overall prediction of this is that L2 learners may eventually, achieve native-like acquisition at the internal interface, or the interface connecting language-internal modules, such as syntax, semantics: whereas there will be prolonged optionality for adult L2 learners at the external interface, or the interface connecting a linguistic module with a language-external domain, such as syntax and discourse. Morphology and language structure share a jargon of classifications and highlights –things, action words, tenses, cases, and so on. The two of them show progressive design and headedness.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript. The research was conducted in an unbiased manner, and the results and interpretations presented in this paper are based solely on the data collected during the study.

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EXPLORING THE EVOLVING LANDSCAPE OF GENDER ROLES IN SOCIETY: TRANSFORMATION, CHALLENGES, AND IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract

This endeavour explores the growing trend of women pursuing traditionally male-dominated professions, looking at the significant implications it has on societal norms and gender dynamics. The increased interest of women towards these fields has a dramatic shift in the perceptions of gender roles, creating a crucial step towards achieving genuine gender inclusivity. By emphasizing the importance of improved access to education and career avenues, this study aims to explore the key factors causing this change and empower women to challenge conventional gender roles. To challenge stereotypical roles and prejudice, women are increasingly pursuing a wide array of careers. This trend emphasizes the indispensable skills and ingenuity that women contribute to many fields, cultivating greater innovation and promoting organizational effectiveness. To collect data, we conducted an online survey with fifty-five participants from Ibn Khaldoun University, Tiaret, besides a naturalistic observation in the same setting. It is worth noting that our sample's selection was probabilistic. The findings have revealed that gender biases and barriers still exist; nevertheless, women's potential for progress in male-dominated settings is still overwhelming. Overcoming these barriers requires institutional support, as well as workplace policies that foster an inclusive culture. This trend opens the door for a more egalitarian future by challenging prevailing beliefs and advocating for inclusivity, enabling individuals to thrive in their respective fields. Our collective efforts to break the gender barriers contribute to an adaptable workforce, benefiting both individuals and society as a whole.

Keywords: Gender equity; gender roles; stereotype; workforce.

Introduction

The subsequent shift in gender roles has received significant attention in recent years. To gain insight into the impact of changing gender roles on individuals, families, and communities, this study aims to explore the intricate dynamics of these roles as they develop within modern society's framework. Through a comprehensive investigation of this phenomenon, our objective is to foster a deeper understanding of the intricate challenges and potential advantages that emerge from these ongoing shifts. Scholars have extensively acknowledged the notion of the gender gap, which emphasizes the existence of disparities and inequalities between genders, particularly in social, financial, and political domains, as well as in matters related to resource allocation, rights, and privileges. The gender gap serves as a prominent indicator, highlighting the clear disparities and imbalances that exist between men

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and women in various aspects of life. The manifestations of the gender gap can be observed in various factors, including income disparities, limited access to employment opportunities, educational achievements and school dropout, inadequate healthcare accessibility, underrepresentation in political spheres, and limited decision-making autonomy. These manifestations uncover the complex nature of gender-based inequalities.

The existence of this widespread gender gap poses a significant challenge, revealing the deeply ingrained structural inequalities that persist between genders. Gender-based discrimination, traditional prejudices and biases often limit people's potential and achievements. To narrow the gender gap, we must work together to support legislation and programs that guarantee equal rights and opportunities for men and women. We must also advocate for gender equality and challenge established gender stereotypes. By implementing such transformative measures, we aim to advance society towards an equitable trajectory.

In the existing corpus of scholarly research, academics have thoroughly examined multiple aspects of gender role shifts and their dimensions. Leathwood and Read (2009); Deborah, (2014); Boutemedjet, (2019); Dandachli and Barry, (2020) have investigated the correlation between gender-based disparities and workplace discrimination, elucidating the underlying mechanisms that contribute to the persistent educational and occupational gaps. Additionally, Abdulkadri et al. (2022) investigated the gender disparities in education as well as employment, besides the critical perspectives of the non-traditional shift of gender roles.

Building upon these foundational studies, the present research aims to explore not only the dimensions of changing gender roles but also the effect of these transformations, primarily observed in Western cultures, on our societal structures. Through an empirical investigation that incorporates both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, our goal is to enrich the current discourse by offering new perspectives. Hence, we foreground the importance of addressing the gender gap and also provide valuable insights for policy interventions and societal changes that promote a more inclusive and equitable environment.

1. Literature Review

1.1 Shifting Societal Paradigms

De-traditionalization is a sociological concept that pertains to the absence or shifts of traditional practices within a given society. Essentially, the evolution of gender roles is leading to significant shifts in power dynamics. It is important to note that societal changes in gender roles can be influential on various aspects of life, including education and the workforce (Bouguesri, 2020). De-traditionalization encompasses the phenomenon wherein societal norms, values, and practices are questioned. The phenomenon entails a transformation in attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours that diverge from deeply rooted and culturally embedded customs. De-traditionalization can manifest in multiple dimensions of societal existence, encompassing gender roles, familial arrangements, religious observances, and educational frameworks (Leaper, 2000a; 2000b). When referring to gender roles, de-traditionalization denotes a shift away from the customary norms and stereotypes linked to masculinity and femininity. The process entails interrogating and redefining established gender norms, thereby enabling individuals to delve into alternative forms of expression and identities that transcend the limitations imposed by traditional gender binaries (Adkins, 2003; Holmes, 2009).

In the field of education, de-traditionalization presents a significant challenge to the conventional gender roles and expectations that have historically dictated specific behaviours and roles for male and female students. This statement acknowledges the diverse array of experiences, interests, and talents that students possess, and advocates for a more inclusive and equitable approach to education (Deborah, 2014; Boudersa, 2018). It encompasses the promotion of equal opportunities for academic excellence among male and female students (Bouzida & Yassine, 2023), even in subjects that have historically been associated with the opposite gender. Furthermore, the conception of de-traditionalized gender acknowledges the importance of encouraging a supportive and inclusive educational setting in which all students, regardless of their gender, feel respected and empowered. Teachers are strongly encouraged to diligently review and critically evaluate conventional teaching methods and materials that may perpetuate gender stereotypes. Thus, it is recommended that individuals and institutions adopt strategies that foster gender equity and stimulate critical analysis of gender roles. In this perspective, de-traditionalization embodies a process of transformation that re-conceptualizes conventional social norms and expectations. Subsequently, the promotion of greater gender equality, inclusivity, and freedom of self-expression is advocated in various aspects of society, including education (Coleman, 1961; Belaid and Sarnou, 2019; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Bouzida & Yassine, 2023).

In traditional perceptions of gender roles, femininity has often been regarded as an innate characteristic associated with women. Research on gender bias in the workplace has shed light on the obstacles women encounter when it comes to receiving recognition for their contributions, especially when these contributions align with traditional feminine attributes. To address these biases, efforts are made to raise awareness, provide diversity training, and develop an inclusive work culture that values all forms of contributions, irrespective of gender-associated traits (Leathwood & Read, 2009). This aforementioned brings to light a pressing concern that requires immediate attention to foster a professional environment that is equitable because, in present-day society, there is an observable inclination towards the reversal of traditional paradigms (Ramet, 1996).

Accordingly, Adkins (2003) has argued that there are studies which support the claim that gender is acquiring an inappropriate status. While others have claimed that there is limited argument indicating a restructuring or replacement of gender power dynamics (cited in Leathwood & Read, 2009). In Western contexts, for example, the values associated with femininity are frequently imposed on males, resulting in the disapproval of behaviors that are considered naturally masculine. This societal phenomenon often leads to a suppression of male expression and a limited understanding of the diverse range of characteristics that can be exhibited by genders. By adopting this viewpoint, we acknowledge that masculinity cannot be fully understood in isolation. Instead, it should be analysed within the broader framework of power dynamics. Power, in this prospect, is viewed as a relational concept, meaning that it exists through the interactions between individuals. Furthermore, power is productive, as it shapes and influences the construction of masculinity. It is only through the perception of power that masculinity gains its meaning, as explained by (Shepherd, 1996)

When examining the power relations of gender and the ways that discourses of masculinity are articulated in everyday life, sensitivity must be shown to how discourses of sex are spatialised and how spaces are sexualised... masculinity is dependent upon situational context, and the individuals, the location, and the 'history' of power relations which make up this situation. (p. 79)

In the realm of medicine, the presence of a higher proportion of females in society has many implications. This phenomenon may be attributed to the elevated levels of hormones that permeate the environment, potentially influencing males in therapeutic and psychological ways (Leathwood & Read, 2009; Deborah, 2014). Conversely, it is crucial to acknowledge that conversations centred on feminization can inadvertently contribute to a gender dichotomy, where males are depicted as victims of both feminized cultures and hormones. This perspective places a strong emphasis on the feminine, while simultaneously diminishing the importance of the masculine. Consequently, it suggests that males in times of crisis are more prone to engaging in self-destructive behaviours such as suicide, struggling academically, and resorting to violence (Deborah, 2014).

1.2 Gendered Workplace

Initially, the term "gendered" refers to the attribution of characteristics to either masculinity or femininity or the manifestation of patterns of differentiation based on gender. For instance, the categorization of colours such as pink and blue as gendered is based on their cultural associations. Pink is commonly linked to femininity, while blue is often associated with masculinity. In specific societal contexts, there is a tendency for women to engage in part-time employment, whereas men are more likely to be involved in full-time work. Furthermore, there exist disparities in occupational choices based on gender, wherein women tend to gravitate towards nursing while men are more inclined towards education. These disparities also encompass discrepancies in average earnings derived from paid employment. The distinctions and associations between males and females, which are shaped by societal norms, are commonly known as gendered (Mastekaasa & Smeby, 2008). Thus, gender, as a social construct, is a learned behaviour that assigns distinct roles and responsibilities to individuals based on their biological sex within peculiar social contexts (Leaper & Friedman, 2007; Deborah, 2014).

The distribution of women's time and responsibilities, both in the workplace and within the household, is influenced by their social class. The responsibilities imposed on women with regard to their various roles are shaped by their social and economic standing. Based on Kathleen, McGinn, and Eunsil's (2017) work, the active involvement of women in gainful employment holds considerable significance. Women currently constitute 40 % of the global workforce, and their engagement in this form of employment not only contributes to the overall expansion of the global economy, but it also strengthens its long-term durability (International Labour Force, 2009; Labor Market Report, 2020). In the Algerian context, the turnout of females with high rates towards financial independence has received a polarized reaction from the part of males claiming that their choices would limit males' chances in employment.

Correspondingly, the workplace structure is shaped by a combination of formal and informal rules, as well as gender dynamics. Policies, regulations, and labour laws serve as formal mechanisms that establish guidelines and regulations about various aspects of employment, including working hours and entitlements to leave. Informal rules refer to the norms and behaviors within a workplace that are not explicitly defined, yet significantly impact the dynamics of the organization. (Cortes & Pan, 2017; Dandachli & Barry, 2020)

1.2.1 Women's Participation in the Workforce

Between 1930 and 1970, the choices offered to women underwent significant transformations. It is important to recall that women were still seen as secondary wage earners at that time, in comparison to the opposite gender. This was true even for educated women who achieved higher positions, as they were still expected to have relatively short careers. As per Yellen (2020), there has been a shift in women's attitudes towards work and their employment prospects over time. In many countries, women's employment rates are frequently high,

indicating the importance of their participation in the public workforce. To understand this phenomenon, we should take into account the circumstances that contribute to its occurrence. These factors could involve the ratio of females in the workforce, the rate of employment, and the proportion of women engaged in part-time work. As maintained by Banks and Milestone, (2011):

The movement of women into the labour market is thus part explained through women's own desires to achieve economic independence and escape their 'natural fate', and is part accounted for by the ways in which capitalism must secure its own future through seeking new sources of cheaper, flexible labour (p .05)

1.3 Occupational Gender Perceptions

The issue of persistent disparities in employment patterns between men and women has been extensively studied in the field of social sciences. The correlation between occupation and various social attributes, including lifestyle, prestige, and education, elucidates gender-based disparities. Additionally, the existing body of research on occupational grading has primarily focused on predominantly male-dominated occupations. In the mid-1980s, approximately half of the population supported a gendered division of labour, where men were seen as the primary earners (the 'breadwinners') and women were expected to be caregivers. There was a strong conviction in the conventional gender barrier during that period. Since then, the number of people who share this viewpoint has steadily declined. Conversely, by 2012, approximately one out of every eight people believed that this should be the case. In the context of whether women should choose to stay at home or pursue a career, several factors are considered; hence, attitudes toward gender roles have shifted dramatically in the last 30 years (Cislaghi & Heise, 2019).

According to gendered race theory, both race and biological sex contribute to the assessment of an individual's femininity or masculinity. This factor determines one's perceived fit and recruitment potential for jobs that are perceived as feminine or masculine (Hofstede, 2000). As an illustration, in professions such as nursing and teaching, which have traditionally been associated with "women's jobs" workers may experience physical strain due to prolonged standing, lifting patients, and repetitive motions. Occupations that are predominantly held by men, such as high-pressure managerial roles, can subject workers to psychological stress. This is primarily due to the responsibility of making critical decisions and managing challenging situations. Similarly, roles that are predominantly chosen by women, such as social work or customer service, can also pose emotional stress due to the need to handle challenging situations and exhibit empathy towards clients. Further, certain industries, such as manufacturing, have historically had a higher proportion of male workers and may subject them to dangerous chemicals and toxins, resulting in potential long-term health problems. By contrast, sectors such as healthcare and education, where women often dominate, may have a different set of chemical exposure risks. For example, women in healthcare may be exposed to cleaning chemicals in hospitals, while women in education may be exposed to art supplies in educational settings. Eventually, all sectors, at different levels of responsibility, could be stressful and anxious for both genders (Hall, Messing & Punnett, as cited in Bond et al., 2004).

1.4 Gender Stereotype Dynamics

Stereotype, as a concept, was initially introduced to social science in 1922. It describes the 'cognitive image' that comes to mind when thinking about a particular social category (Stewart et al., 2021). In reality, stereotypes are overarching perceptions regarding the attributes of boys and girls, or males and females that are fundamentally shaped within a specific societal context. Gender stereotype, which is embedded from a young age, persists over time and it is generationally transferred. It is assumed to be an accurate perception and an integral part of cultural and social norms, with the consequence that individuals who do not conform to traditional gender roles may face ostracism. As per Pilcher and Whelehan (2004), there is a common stereotype that women are emotional, sensitive, impulsive, and bad drivers. On the other hand, men are often perceived as rational, instrumental, bad at housework, and have a preference for sports. Gender stereotypes, as posited by social role theory, arise from the imbalanced allocation of men and women to societal roles within the domestic and professional spheres (Eagly, Koenig, & Eagly, as cited in Hentschel, Heilman, & Peus, 2019). Stereotypes can be perceived negatively when they impair women and men from developing their skills and making autonomous decisions regarding their lives. Subsequently, gender stereotypes exert an influence on people's subconscious assumptions regarding the traits, priorities, and needs of individuals based on their gender. These aforesaid may also shape the criteria by which we evaluate individuals across various domains.

Men and women are both subjected to descriptive and prescriptive stereotypes, which serve to reveal how societies perceive and expect them to behave. When individuals face criticism for deviating from conventional gender norms within particular contexts or professional environments, we respond to the descriptive prejudice of such criticism. Prescriptive bias, on the other hand, becomes evident when individuals encounter adverse responses due to their exhibition of counter-stereotypical behaviours. To illustrate, the categorization of "androgynous" can be attributed to female or male individuals who display non-traditional behaviours that do not conform to the conventions of society (Veg-Sala, 2017). Hence, gender stereotypes impair the attempts to achieve gender equality within society and yield detrimental consequences for both the individuals they target and the gender groups they are associated with. These misconceptions have the potential to restrict individuals' potential and impose unnecessary limitations on their choices and behaviours. Nevertheless, statistical difference in performance between girls and boys can only serve as a suggestive measure rather than a definitive proof of superiority or inferiority (Bouzida & Yassine, 2023).

2. Methodology

2.1 Context

In this study, data were collected from a sample of fifty-five participants who were concurrently enrolled in bachelor's and master's degree programs at the University of Ibn Khaldoun, Tiaret. The objective of this research was to investigate how gender roles are changing and how society is beginning to value traits or actions that are traditionally associated with men and women; hence, the students' perspectives are important to see how they perceive gender in the digital realm. A mixed-methods approach was applied, which involved the implementation of both an online survey and an observation. The survey provided insights into the participants' attitudes and beliefs concerning the changing paradigm of gender. Additionally, the researcher assumed the role of an observer within an educational environment and carried out a naturalistic observation. Within the cohort of female participants under observation, instances of cross-dressing were observed; these instances involved female students who typically dressed in a manner traditionally associated with males, coupled with a

simultaneous commitment to achieving academic excellence and advancing in their careers, in addition to their continuously growing numbers, surpassing that of male students in the faculty.

3. Results

The participants in this study were comprised of 75% female and 25% male respondents. Gender distribution played a crucial role in facilitating a comprehensive examination of the diverse viewpoints associated with changes in gender roles among undergraduate and graduate students in universities. According to the research findings, 40% of the sample have chosen to further their education by pursuing a master's degree. This could reflect their dedication to acquiring knowledge and improving their expertise in their respective fields, while 60% of participants are currently enrolled in a bachelor's degree. It is worth noting that the pursuit of a master's degree reflects a desire to develop the skills that can promote career prospects and open doors to higher-level positions. While those engaged in a bachelor's degree program are focused on acquiring fundamental knowledge and building a strong academic foundation. It is worth mentioning that some of the participants, approximately 15%, have already obtained Master's degrees in other disciplines (mainly in scientific majors), and they have eventually transitioned into the workforce.

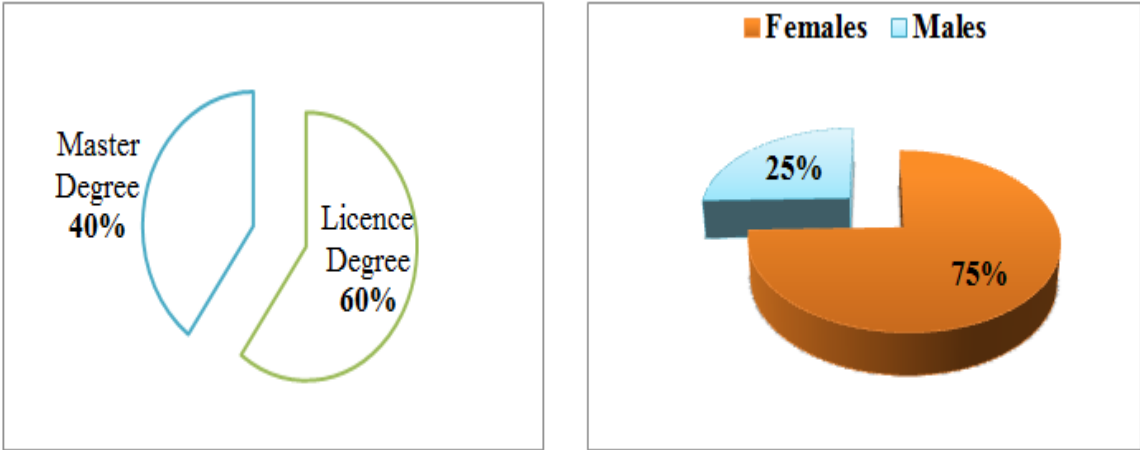


Figure 1: Participants' Gender and Educational Level

Question 01: Which gender (of teachers) is hard working in foreign language teaching?

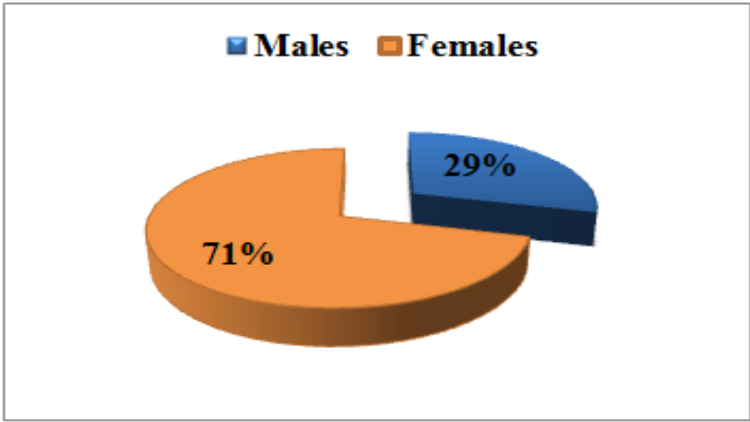


Figure 2: Exploring Efforts in Teaching Foreign Languages

Evaluating the level of hard work and perseverance among teachers of different genders in the field of foreign language education necessitates the collection and analysis of specific data and research. It is crucial to acknowledge that the assessment of work ethic and diligence should not be made in a generalized manner solely based on gender. These attributes exhibit significant variation among individuals and can be influenced by various factors, including personal motivation, prior experience, training, and the work environment. According to the survey results, the majority of respondents (71%) hold the belief that female teachers demonstrate hard work and commitment in teaching foreign languages in comparison to male teachers, whereas a smaller percentage (29%) attribute the same level of hard work to male educators. It is important to note that these percentages represent only the points of view of the sample. Yet, the perspectives regarding work ethics can be influenced by cultural stereotypes and personal experiences; this can potentially lead to a false portrayal of the true attributes that foreign language teachers possess.

Question 02: Which gender is more productive in business organizations?

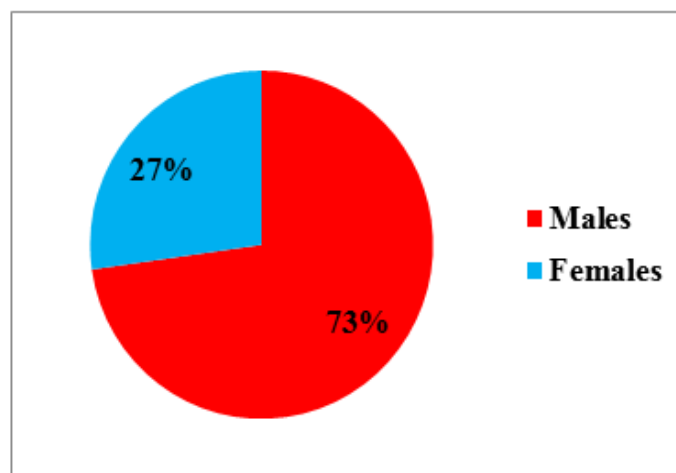


Figure 3: Productivity in Business Organizations

Analysing the productivity of a specific gender within business organizations requires a comprehensive assessment that considers many variables. It is not academically appropriate to make indecisive assumptions about genders' productivity. Many elements can impact productivity in business organizations, such as work ethics, motivation, experiences, credentials, and the special requirements of the workplace. It's crucial to remember that both sexes are capable of exhibiting extraordinary productivity in professional settings. However, the productivity of an individual is not only determined by their gender but also by his or her abilities, commitment, and work habits. Efforts to promote workplace gender equality aim to provide equal opportunities and help individuals excel and make meaningful contributions. To accurately evaluate productivity in such organizations, it is essential to consider objective measures such as performance evaluations, project outcomes, team contributions, and overall organizational success; these factors help in evaluating females' and males' performances. Accordingly, 73% of respondents perceive males as more productive in business, while 27% believe that females are more prolific. Even though business and entrepreneurship have always been monopolized by males to the extent that it is believed that their performance in business is better, females express their interest in being businesswomen because they are empowered and motivated by successful women in the same field.

Question 03: In your opinion, why certain jobs became gendered? (Females working in males' jobs)

The aim of this question is to examine students' perceptions regarding the changing dynamics of gender roles within our society. The responses of individuals vary based on their social backgrounds. Some argue that the inclination to engage in work and pursue specific occupations can vary among individuals, irrespective of their gender. Some women may opt for professions that have traditionally been dominated by men, motivated by their personal interests and passions, particularly in the fields of science, business, and entrepreneurship. Both genders possess the necessary skills that compel them to attain financial stability and be protected against poverty, thereby rendering work a mechanism for meeting fundamental needs. Additionally, it has been acknowledged that emotional intelligence may play a role in the success of women in specific professional fields. Individual abilities and skills are of utmost importance as they serve as key factors in facilitating one's exceptional performance in their respective majors. Certain occupations may exhibit gendered characteristics as a result of specific prerequisites, including physical prowess, childcare responsibilities, and a willingness to prioritize professional commitments over personal time. Consequently, these factors contribute to the dominance of a particular gender within certain professions. Achieving gender equality in the workplace is of paramount importance to guarantee equitable access to rewards and opportunities for all individuals. The significant presence of women in the labour force, along with their varied requirements, plays a crucial role in promoting job diversification. Both genders exhibit a common desire for freedom and self-expression, with aspirations to validate their abilities and openly communicate their ideas. In fact, the change of societal norms has facilitated the empowerment of both men and women, enabling them to strive for success and achieve financial independence, thereby surpassing conventional gender roles. In this regard, the perpetuation of gendered job divisions can be attributed to the limited availability of job opportunities, and this latter, according to our sample's responses, is in favour of women.

The pursuit of achievement, the promotion of gender equality, and the decay of socio-cultural barriers have resulted in women entering professions that were traditionally dominated by men. Therefore, females' discipline, perseverance, and ambition could positively influence productivity within the workplace. Some respondents have highlighted the possibility that men might face limited opportunities and many challenges within their respective majors, which prompt them to pursue alternative occupations. As a result, this phenomenon may contribute to the perpetuation of gender-based divisions.

Question 04: What do you think of women who are recruited with high numbers in different fields?

Our sample responses share a wide array of viewpoints concerning the high ratio of women being recruited across various professional domains. Some students perceive this as a favourable advancement, indicative of strides made towards achieving gender equality and foregrounding the skills and capabilities of women. They present the argument that women exert significant effort and are entitled to equal opportunities across diverse professional fields. Some individuals perceive it as a detrimental factor, voicing apprehensions regarding possible unemployment among men, imbalanced societal dynamics, and the encroachment of women into traditionally male-dominated positions. Numerous respondents posit that the growing inclusion of women in the workforce can be attributed to their elevated levels of educational achievement and unwavering commitment to their professional endeavours. It has been argued that women contribute to productivity in various fields and exhibit higher levels of maturity, courage, and seriousness in their professional careers compared to men. Nevertheless, certain participants expressed their concerns regarding societal expectations and their influence on the

perception of responsibility and self-esteem among men, leading to what is referred to as 'masculinity crisis'. In this vein, we are witnessing an evolutionary trend of men and women with new perspectives and prospects, and this is what our sample consistently mentioned regarding the pursuit of the 'strong independent woman' trend.

Question 05: Which fields are females oriented to? Explain why?

The responses of participants offer a spectrum of viewpoints regarding the influx of females being recruited across various fields. The following analysis aims to deconstruct and examine the primary themes provided throughout the participants' responses. One of the prominent themes identified is *gender equality and progress*. It is noteworthy to mention that a considerable number of respondents see the growing presence of women in the workforce as favourable progress. They perceive it as a positive measure in the pursuit of gender equality and diversity. Some respondents expressed admiration for the diligence exhibited by women across various domains, acknowledging their ability to offer valuable contributions to society. Some answers reflected that traditional societal norms and expectations have a negative effect on the formation of gender dynamics. Some respondents have raised concerns regarding the recruitment of women in positions that have traditionally been dominated by men, while others maintain that women should be given equal opportunities. Cultural and religious perspectives are mentioned too in which some respondents hold the perception that the concept of gender equality contradicts our cultural norms and doctrines, whereas others contend that religion advocates for gender equality, disregarding the difference between equity and equality. Moreover, several responses include statistical observations or demographic data to emphasize the disproportionate representation of women in comparison to men within society. They perceive it as an inherent phenomenon rather than a reason for concern. Our sample highlights the capabilities and diligence of women, implying that these attributes play a significant role in their achievements across diverse domains. Conversely, some respondents were concerned regarding the negative consequences associated with the issue, highlighting the possibility of increased unemployment among men and the potential for an imbalance of opportunities between genders, besides the gender gap that is in constant progress. The following graph illustrates the choices provided for each field according to their socio-cultural background.

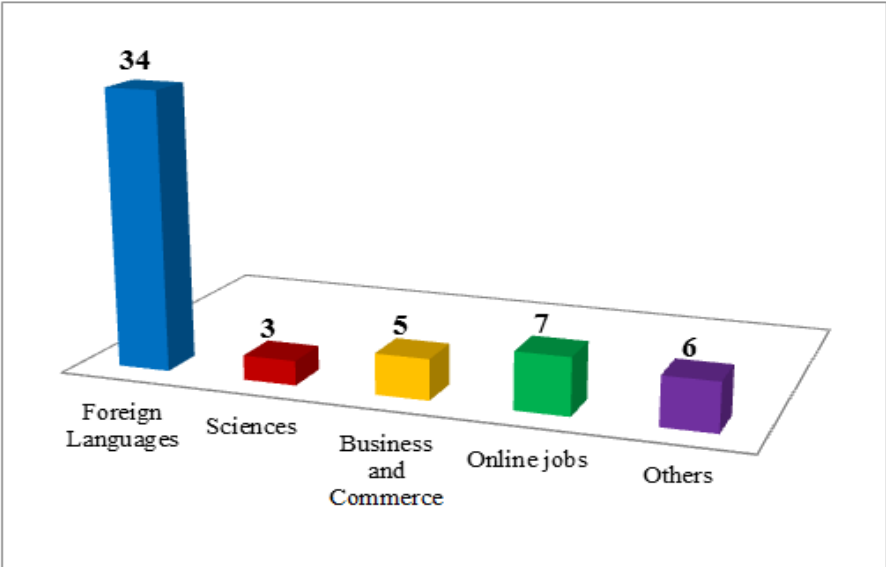


Figure 4: Females' Occupational Orientation

Question 06: Recently, a form of 'androgyny' has been observed, it is prominently revealed through social media. In your opinion, what are the reasons behind this phenomenon?

The responses obtained from our sample population demonstrate a set of perspectives regarding the presence of androgyny within societies. One of the key themes that emerge is the impact of environmental and cultural factors on the emergence of androgyny. Many of the responses emphasize how the environment, culture, and mindsets shape individuals' understanding and expression of androgyny. The presence of various gender roles and norms, along with the influence of Western cultures and social media, are cited as influential factors. Genetic and hormonal influences have been mentioned by certain individuals as potential biological factors that can impact gender identity perception. In fact, the adoption of an androgynous appearance by individuals is often motivated by personal preferences and the desire for self-expression. While several responses indicate that the concept of androgyny may be influenced by psychological factors, mental health conditions, or an individual's quest for self-identity and validation, besides the decline in religious beliefs and convictions, several responses have identified gender inequality as a potential factor, while others maintain that societal norms and the embrace of gender diversity contribute to the issue. Apparently, there is no clear justification for such a phenomenon, but a number of possible reasons are highlighted. Their answers detect their consciousness vis-à-vis the topic, claiming that the situation is step by step naturalized and the shift of genders in their attitudes became apparent. Cross-dressing is observed in this context; however, it may reflect personal preferences and is not necessarily a form of androgyny. Nevertheless, the impact of digital technology on this phenomenon remains indisputable.

4. Discussion

Acknowledging that detraditionalization has many implications is essential. Initially, it has contributed to greater gender equality by discarding stereotypical gender roles. This has led to the creation of new opportunities for personal and professional growth, empowering individuals to pursue their aspirations unrestricted by social constraints. Further, de-traditionalization has had a significant effect on families and relationships. In households, gender roles are being re-evaluated, and both partners are sharing responsibilities. In response to this change, there are now more equal relationships where the division of labour is determined by individual preferences and skills rather than gender stereotypes. In other words, both positive and negative effects can be attributed to the de-traditionalization of gender roles. There are positive changes as well as challenges associated with them. It may be difficult for some people to adapt to this change since traditional gender boundaries are blurring.

Based on the researcher's naturalistic observation, a discernible gender disparity is revealed not only in social interactions and behaviour, but it extends to educational and professional domains. Notably, a noticeable gender gap exists within universities and workplaces. Within the context of higher education, a growing number of females are enrolling in and actively participating in universities and colleges. This trend is reflected in the higher representation of females in various academic fields, previously dominated by males. By contrast, some fields still exhibit disparities in gender distribution, but the overall trajectory suggests a closing gap. Similarly, in the professional domain, the gender gap is undergoing transformation. Females are increasingly occupying positions and roles traditionally held by males. In various sectors, a significant pattern emerges: the rise of women in influential leadership roles, notably within the education sector. Nevertheless, certain sectors persist in facing gender disparities, particularly at senior levels. It is crucial to acknowledge that females are making remarkable progress in the workplace; however, challenges still exist (Ouadah-

Bedidi, 2018; Ratoul & Boudjelal, 2020). Some disciplines may exhibit unequal representation, and gender-based stereotypes can persist in subtle ways. The evolving landscape, however, illustrates a promising movement towards greater gender equity and inclusivity, which collaborate in redefining societal expectations and norms. Yet the outcomes of the shift in gender roles cannot be predicted.

Some respondents express support for gender equality and the right of women to make career choices. Still, there are individuals who hold the belief that certain fields necessitate male leadership or may be more suitable for men based on specific job prerequisites. The responses provided in this study shed light on the intricate dynamics between societal norms, education, cultural biases, and personal attributes, all of which contribute to the patterns observed in the recruitment of women. The points of view presented put emphasis on the importance of creating an inclusive workforce wherein individuals are acknowledged for their knowledge, diligence, and expertise irrespective of their gender.

This work introduces androgyny as a prevailing trend within Western societies. The complexity of androgyny is associated with a number of factors, including individual, biological, social, cultural, and psychological dimensions. The impact of external factors, such as media and globalization, is also underscored in shaping attitudes and expressions of gender. Hence, it is imperative to acknowledge that the perceptions and experiences of individuals differ, resulting in a wide range of opinions on this phenomenon. While this phenomenon is not largely viewed in the Algerian society, we attempted to detect how our participants perceive it since they are addicted to virtual and digital platforms and this phenomenon is exposed throughout these platforms. Moreover, cross-dressing exists in the Algerian context, though it is not a reflective form of androgyny, it requires explanations regarding the expression of feminine and masculine traits. We cannot disregard that there is a strong correlation between religious commitment and personal self-development (Abood & Idri, 2020); individuals who are committed to religious practices tend to reflect this special diligence to their social life aspects, including their understanding of individuality.

While it is widely acknowledged that females possess the ability to excel in diverse fields and may even surpass males in certain instances, it is important to recognize that the impact of religion and culture still play a prerequisite role in shaping the gendering of occupations. Societal stereotypes and expectations can intensify the gendered perception and representation of specific majors, thereby impeding the achievement of genuine gender equity. As educational opportunities continue to advance and societal aspirations evolve, there is a growing trend of women being attracted to a wide range of professional fields. This shift is naturally portrayed in their attitudes and behaviours, all forms of conviction imposed by society are re-evaluated with the aim of breaking the limitations of patriarchy and embracing freedom and equity. Therefore, the de-traditionalized world is expected to bring forth many challenges for genders at all levels, especially when it comes to their masculine and feminine energies; in this vein, their non-conforming societal roles could possibly influence their individual choices in life, especially women.

5. Conclusion

When individuals diverge from the norms and expectations of a traditional society, it can lead to a reversal of gender roles. The abolition of gender stereotypes in society uncovers the transformation in social perspectives. To show their distinct qualities, women in particular may decide to take on characteristics more often associated with the other gender to express individuality. Women are now pursuing different occupations since they have greater access to employment opportunities in fields that were traditionally dominated by men. In addition,

changing social norms and an increasing call for gender equality have inspired women to fight against stereotypes and prosper in traditionally male-dominated sectors. In a nutshell, the interconnected phenomena of cross-dressing, gender reversal, and the increasing inclusion of females in many fields reflect broader societal changes in gender equality. These changes mirror a progressive society that challenges traditional gender stereotypes and embraces a step to sustain inclusive and tolerant cultures.

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THE AMBIGUOUS REPRESENTATION OF PINTER'S WOMEN IN "THE HOMECOMING"

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Abstract

This paper aims to analyze the linguistic tools employed by Harold Pinter in depicting women in the context of the twentieth century. A close reading of the play exhibits a particular reference to the ideological representation of gender, articulated mostly through the cultural codes of language and the attributes of the patriarchal society. As the argument goes, *The Homecoming* identifies the source of a series of ambiguous instances that resonate in Ruth's and the male characters' behaviours throughout the play. This paper reacts to the articulation of cultural power through the linguistic exchange between Ruth and the male members of the family. Language is, indeed, a tool used to gain control over the other. The fragmented discourse of Max at the end of the play proves that it's Ruth who is manipulating the male characters and it is not the opposite case. To conclude, this paper expands on a thematic study to demystify the representation of women in the new era. The play produces its own form of cultural power through a disruptive linguistic discourse.

Keywords: Ambiguity; Cultural Power; Female Representation; Fragmentation.

1. Introduction

Harold Pinter, known for his unique theatrical style and enigmatic discourse, often presents an ambiguous and complex representation of women in his works. Critics have engaged in extensive analysis of Pinter's plays. They often delve into the complexities of female characters and their roles within the broader thematic context. The female figures in Pinter's plays, such as the characters in "The Homecoming" or "The Birthday Party", are frequently depicted with a sense of mystery, their motivations, inner thoughts as well as their social lives are shrouded in ambiguity. Many critics argue that Pinter's treatment of women reflects societal restrictions and power dynamics, while others explore the psychological and emotional complexities embedded in his portrayals. For instance, Carolyn A. Brown, in her book "Chance and Circumstance: Twenty Years with Cage and Cunningham" (2007), analyses Pinter's works, and examines the ways in which he addresses and reflects upon societal rules and power structures, particularly concerning the portrayal of women in his plays. Critics like Brown explain how Pinter's characters, especially women, steer and challenge the constraints imposed by societal expectations, highlighting the broader socio-cultural context within the playwright's body of work.

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2. Literature Review

The playwright's use of language and silence further adds layers of interpretation, leaving room for speculation about the true nature of the female characters' agency and autonomy. Pinter's elusive approach to female characters has sparked discussions on gender roles, identity, and the representation of women in literature, making his works an intriguing subject for scholarly exploration. Pinter's play "The Homecoming" draws upon a newly formed dramatic construct. His dramatic style has been given a particular label which goes hand in hand with the display of a critical situation the modern world goes through. There is no doubt that Pinter's style stirs up the reaction of the reviewers, in different ways, the various Pinteresque aspects of the play confirm Pinter's dramatic gift. "Although the critical reactions to the play *The Homecoming* were not in fact wholly favourable, and the majority of the reviews express reservations, the reviewers nevertheless acknowledge and accept Pinter's dramatic talent" (Raby, 2001, p. 217).

In fact, this paper handles two essential issues; the ambiguity of the world and how Pinter adapted to that ambiguity and reflects it in his dealing with the female presence in the play. In the second part, he constructs the image of a free woman, a woman who quits the social restrictions to face manly aggression. By the time when the play was written, an intense controversy revolving around the representation of women had emerged. Reviewers estimated that Pinter's use of a quite unfamiliar linguistic style can be perceived as a direct reaction to the intense expression of an unfathomable reality. As an attempt to challenge the patriarchal constructed image of women, Pinter seems to contribute to another image that emanates from an enigmatic sense of being. By examining the play; "it becomes clear that Pinter's female representation undergoes a shift within this [ambiguous] milieu" (p.233). Faithful to his old conviction that the writer's language should never be isolated from the situation of the world he or she lives in, he insisted on an elusive representation of women. The world is heading blindly towards meaninglessness and confusion; consequently, the role of women undergoes a shift.

To many readers, it appears that Harold Pinter expresses a biased and sexist vision in the play. The forged image of "the mother" and "the whore," cultivated by patriarchal society, often misleads critics into regarding Harold Pinter as a misogynistic writer. A profound analysis of the play, however, suggests that Ruth's character refrains from any such patriarchal scrutiny. Actually, Pinter "seems to have realized the limitations of a totally masculine standpoint and to have set out to forge a new image of a woman. Every new creation shows the artist attaching fresh attributes to various aspects of the feminine" (Sakellaridou, 1988, p. 11). Ruth, the most enigmatic of all the play's characters, holds a powerful presence over the hostile male figures. In the terms of Harold Pinter, Ruth is "in a kind of despair that gives her a kind of freedom. Certain facts like marriage and family have clearly ceased to have meaning" (Raby, 2001, p. 222). Ruth is the sole female figure who appears on stage, and she is the most perplexing character.

In the play, Max talks about another female figure, Jessie, the mother. He says to Ruth, 'Listen, I'll tell you something. Since poor Jessie died, eh, Sam? We haven't had a woman in the house. Not one, inside this house. And I'll tell you why. Because their mother's image was so dear any other woman would have...tarnished it. But you...Ruth...You're not only lovely and beautiful, but you're kin. You're kith. You belong here" (Pinter, 2001, p. 61). Jessie, the mother, does not appear on stage and it is Ruth who replaces her. The most elusive thing about women in the play is their contradictory descriptions. On one hand, Jessie is portrayed as "not such a bad woman, a charming woman [...] who taught the boys everything they know, taught them all the morality they know." She is described as "the backbone of the family with a will of iron,

a heart of gold, and a mind" (p. 75). On the other hand, she is depicted as a filthy creature. Max expresses, "It made me sick just to look at her face," and he refers to her as "a slut bitch of a wife" (p. 15). Harold Pinter does often use contradictory descriptions which place the reader in front of contradictory interpretations. Indeed, he perceives the world we live in as an absurd wasteland, where confusion constitutes its essential creed. In other words, he adapts his dramatic style to the worldly confusion we experience.

3. Methodology

In this analysis, opting for a thematic study provides a thorough and comprehensive lens through which to analyse the complex portrayal of female characters. By highlighting important themes such as power dynamics and familial relationships, a thematic approach allows for a significant analysis of how these elements coincide and shape the representation of women in the play. Uncovering the various threads that connect various scenes and character conversations, a thematic study ensures the identification of patterns and contradictions, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the women's roles within the domestic sphere. Through this analytical framework, readers can gain insights into the intricacies of gender interplay "The Homecoming," going beyond individual character examination to unveil broader social representations incorporated within the play.

4. Discussion

At the play's outset, Pinter depicts Ruth as being the sole character in the play who unchains herself from any moral restriction and reduces any possibility of falling into the abyss of linguistic misinterpretations. Max and his sons, in contrast, "have become lost in their personal level of being and confuse the contents of their minds with an assumed concrete reality" (Haney, 1998, p.122). The dissonance between male and female characters in the play expands on Pinter's notion of language as a tool to exploit the gender conflict. To investigate this assumption about language and cultural power, Gordon argues that "Sex, gender and the construction of identity: focus on how the performance of gender is formative in the construction of identity, and how sexuality manifests itself through, between and across gendered identities, manifesting its force in language and behaviour." (2). Ruth assumes the conventional roles of wife and mother, a characterization reinforced by her husband Teddy, who extols her virtues as a supportive partner. Teddy praises Ruth's qualities, declaring her a "wonderful wife and mother" and describing their life together as idyllic, complete with a lovely house and all they desire (p.12).

However, when the spotlight turns on Ruth, her responses are marked by deliberate silences and pauses, creating an air of mystery. This verbal reticence becomes a source of dominance for Ruth, as exemplified in a pivotal scene with Lenny, known as "the glass scene." Despite her brevity, Ruth manipulates Lenny's thoughts, employing short sentences and strategic pauses to assert control. As Knowles (1995) notes, the male characters attempt to confine Ruth within predefined roles, yet their efforts prove futile. Ruth's enigmatic presence and linguistic prowess challenge societal expectations, casting her as a compelling and elusive figure within the play's intricate dynamics (p. 493). She is not only a mother, she is not only a wife, she is not only a whore; in fact, she is a combination of all of that at once. Whenever a man attempts to impose a singular role on her or simplify her into just one defined character, she defeats him, transcending limits and skillfully manipulating the situation. She embodies freedom, and any attempt to confine her within limits proves futile.

Indeed, Lenny “can’t intimidate her, Joey can’t go whole hog with her; Teddy can’t make her leave, Max is left begging her for a kiss at the end of the play, and while they may think they have convinced her to do what they want, it certainly appears as though she has the upper hand” (Coe, 1977, p. 422). It is crucial to highlight that, in the power dynamics between Ruth and the male characters, Harold Pinter employs language as a formidable tool, “a weapon with which each character tries to impose his rules on the other” (Almansi & Henderson, 1983, p. 61). The brevity of Ruth's sentences not only reflects her self-confidence but also underscores the formidable position she holds over the other characters. In the linguistic confrontation with Lenny, Ruth effectively wields her language to assert dominance, defeating him in the process. Even the enigmatic silences woven into her speech carry an unparalleled charm. This dynamic is particularly evident in the following passage, where Ruth's linguistic prowess not only establishes her authority but also adds an intriguing layer to her character.

Lenny: My name’s Lenny. What’s yours?

Ruth: Ruth.

She sits and puts her coat collar around her.

Lenny: Cold?

Ruth: No.Pause.

Lenny: It’s been a wonderful summer, hasn’t it? Remarkable.

Lenny: Would you like something? Refreshment of some kind? An aperitif, anything like that?

Ruth: No. Thanks.

Pause. (Pinter, 2001, p. 42-43).

An imminent perlustration of this conversation is evocative of the dominance of Ruth’s verbal force. With few words she is able to draw the attention of the male ‘other’. According to Leslie Kane in her book *The Language of Silence on the Spoken and the Unspeakable in Modern Drama*, the language of the play “heralds to the nature of the characters. Characters stand outside their non-participation in the speech act. [It] symbolizes their withdrawal from temporal, spatial, or social reality” (p.19). In this respect, Ruth’s withdrawal from long speech acts alludes to her withdrawal from any social abides. She is too strong to be limited by social restrictions.

In an interview with De Mel Gussow for the *New York Magazine* in December 1971, Harold Pinter argues that “the Pause is a pause because of what has just happened in the minds and guts of the characters. They spring out of the text” (Gauthier, 2003, p. 102). The use of pauses often adapts to the inner thoughts of the characters. When they speak with Ruth; the male characters resort frequently to hesitations and long pauses. When their language fails them, they try silence but, in both cases, they fail. Ruth is too strong to be manipulated. Indeed, in the play, the female character is “seen and heard against a silence” (Knowles, 1995, p. 42). The unsayable and the unspeakable endow her with a great power. Her power is one of experience and not of words and the greater her power is the more difficult is its articulation with words. The play centres on the character of Ruth as the representative of women. In Pinter’s dramatic world, “women continually play the double role of [...] the lover, the role of wife and mistress [...] and in the *Homecoming* Ruth sends her respectable professor husband back to their three children in America while she remains with all-male family in England in the combined role of mother, wife and whore” (Burkman, 2001, p. 92). No matter how shocking Ruth's attitude is in the play, Harold Pinter embraces the condensed violence of the

world and mirrors it in the new portrayal of women. Women start to challenge patriarchal limits by rejecting singular role statuses. In brief, "The Homecoming" delves into themes of both "love and lack of love," to encapsulate the prevailing mood of the twentieth century. In an attempt to escape the surrounding ugliness, people turn to pipe dreams, with women, in particular, resorting to their sexuality as a means to assert their power.

According to Katherine H. Burkman, "Pinter's own treatment of the eternally traitorous wife is often deeply sympathetic, although the focus in his plays varies, sometimes lighting on the suffering husband" (p.96). In "The Homecoming," Ruth remains in the company of the male members of the family with the approval of her husband, a situation that proves to be quite shocking. Indeed, the play serves as an "overstatement of Pinter's recurrent identification of woman as mother and whore" (96). Ruth the wife appears at first with all eminence, then she gradually counts up on the whore status. The whore "by definition, lacks definition". According to Walter Kerr; "existentially speaking; we are life's whores to the degree that we are in motion and have not arbitrarily codified and thereby stilled ourselves" (Burkman, 2001, p.103). Harold Pinter concentrates on the whore figure just to adjust and adapt to the fragmented sense of reality. One of the charms of the play is the sophisticated mechanism with which Harold Pinter was able to establish the conception of a character "as potential rather than as something fixed [which] suggests that the playwright's recurrent use of the whore image in his plays is his way of [adapting] to the fluidity of identity" (Free, 1969, p.103). In a highly fragmented world, identity is no longer a fixed whole. The gradual change in the character of Ruth conveys the reality of the modern world, a torn world where "the wholeness is replaced by its fragments" (p.103).

A woman is no longer a fixed thing. A woman is neither an eternal mother nor an eternal whore. She is set in "a modern sophisticated world with which a character can hardly cope" (p.107); thereby she unveils her different hidden sides to challenge the world's fragmentation. Despite her power, this has left her with a kind of psychological trauma. In fact, "on a realistic plane, Ruth's behaviour in the play is both shocking and bizarre" (107). She left her comfortable life in America to face the hardship of a torturing male house in England. She is going to play the role of a prostitute with each one of them. Indeed, she dances with her husband's brother Lenny and kisses him, rolls on the couch with his brother Joey, and contracts to stay on with her father-in-law Max as a general housekeeper, prostitute, and mother- all before her husband's eyes and finally with his consent, realistically speaking, such macabre behaviour is only comprehensible if Ruth is regarded as a nymphomaniac whom her husband willingly unloads. (Burkman, 2001, p.108) Ruth is supposed to be a female whose sexuality is shockingly high, but in this context of a hostile world, she uses her sexuality on purpose to defy the male characters. In the play, Max does often "greet Ruth as a slut who will replace his wife" (p.108). This is obvious in the following excerpt:

Max: I haven't seen the bitch for six years, he comes home without a word, he brings a filthy scrubber off the street, and he shacks up in my house!

Teddy: She's my wife! We're married!

Pause.

Max: I've never had a whore under this roof before, ever since your mother died. They come back from America; they bring the slop bucket with them. They bring the bedpan with them. (To Teddy): Take that disease away from me. Get her away from me" (Pinter, 2001, p.32).

Despite Max's insults, Ruth maintains full control of the situation. She has perfectly demonstrated her power over him, culminating in his plea for a kiss at the play's final blow. She emerges as a symbol of the fertility Goddess within the narrative. Notably, Jessie is portrayed by Max as both an angel and a betrayer, labelled alternately as a bitch and a whore; Ruth, in turn, is more willing to embrace the dual role accurately assigned to her by Max (Knowles, 1995, p.109). In this regard, Ruth is the selected character to embody this dual role for the male figures. Harold Pinter is keen on presenting life-like characters that capture scenes of real life. His dramatic technique which reflects the enigma of the world puts the nail on the fragmented identity of women. Harold Pinter is projecting the image of a woman who succeeds in asserting her superiority despite the aggressive nature of those who surround her.

In many instances throughout the play, she was able to defend herself and gain her freedom. In this respect, Pinter argues that despite the male characters' attacks, Ruth overweighs their verbal battles and wins the game. Despite the initial impression that a woman possesses an immoral presence due to her sexual nature, it becomes evident throughout the play that Harold Pinter invests her with significant power over the household once her sexual desires are unleashed. It is noteworthy to mention that "The Homecoming" stands as the first play by Pinter to depict a woman initially portrayed as subservient, facing attacks from all sides, ultimately transforming into a dominant figure who successfully attains something positive – her freedom (p.110). He says that “she misinterpreted deliberately and used by this family. But eventually she comes back at them with a whip: she says ‘if you want to play this game, I can play it as well as you’” (Hewes, 2005, p.57).

Representative of the patriarchal society in the twentieth century, this family reflects social norms that unfairly condemn women while overlooking men's actions. In line with this, Teddy's family contradictorily judges Ruth without evidence, labelling her as a whore, while simultaneously accepting Lenny as a pimp. This family's distorted perspective transforms a wife into a mere prostitute by reducing the significance of the term "wife" to a mere identifier, subverting the integrity of marriage. This becomes evident in the following quote: Teddy's family ironically condemns Ruth without evidence for her guilt as a whore or as a slut, whereas accepts Lenny as a Pimp.

Thereby, this family converts a wife to a mere prostitute, by regarding the word wife, as a mere label and to make marriage be off of any bounds. This is clear as Sam exclaims against the family's proposal to keep Ruth, ‘but she's his wife’” (p. 68). In this context, Ruth's behaviour is just an attempt to protect herself from the males' behaviour. Teddy is neither able to protect Ruth nor to keep the bond of their marriage. She is not immoral but being a whore is her only alternative to defeat the males of the house and protect herself. Ruth thinks that “if she has to be a whore, she will be a whore in her way and style and not theirs” (p.68). She is the sole character in the play who can decide on her own without the interference of the others. She is free. Besides, “She is not a nymphomaniac” (Penelope, 2013, p.127) or as Austin Quigley estimates that “when she comes with Teddy, Ruth is indeed coming to her home to her former self” (Quigley, 1975, p.205). Her husband ceases to show her respect and he becomes a kind of damage to her.

It is noteworthy to mention that it is Teddy who first talked with Ruth about his family's proposal, “Ruth...The family has invited you to stay, for a little while longer. As... as a kind of guest” (Pinter, 2001, p.75). In these terms, Teddy acknowledges his disrespect and filthiness towards his wife. Indeed “it is with his behaviour that Ruth decides to go on her struggle to gain freedom. From that point on, Ruth turns against Teddy to gain power over the whole family by attaching to their proposal a series of conditional demands for clothing, rooms and personal maid” (Hewes, 2005, p.134). Needless to say, Harold Pinter reflects the situation of many women who are suffering from the despair evoked by the patriarchal society. It is out of this

kind of oppression that many women start to strive for their freedom and prove their strength. This situation “deepens the [female] character and breaks up the differences between the characters. Hence the end of the play serves Ruth in that it presents her as equal to other characters” (p.134). Ruth proves to be the equal of the male characters and she shows great capabilities in manipulating the game.

Ironically, in the play, Teddy the philosopher, “the lover of the truth, claims that Ruth is unwell and that he offers the family a model of virtue, by claiming that superiority is the intellect and not emotion. His inability to face himself of his own faults and desires makes him lose his wife” (Hewes, 2005, p.57). Teddy tries to prove that he is more respectful than others and hence, “his inability to face his own faults and desires makes him lose his wife. In his attempt to prove that he is better than the others, Teddy loses the battle for he tries to get respect by taking it from others” (Ganz, 1969, p.185). To phrase it another way, the philosopher symbol in the play, ironically, neglects the concept of the truth and he attempts to gain respect over the supremacy of freedom. However, for Ruth, “the truth is essential. It is obvious that she quits any restriction and becomes free “(Almaarroof, 2013, p.1).

In brief, Ruth is the sole free character. She does what she wants in a way that asserts her freedom. Indeed, “at the end of the play, she is in possession of a certain kind of freedom. She can do what she wants, and it is not at all certain she will go off to Greek street” (Ganz, 1969, p.185). In other words, the Homecoming is a play about “the triumph of a woman who keeps doing what she wants to do, that she is in spite of the terrible injustice, her husband, Teddy brings about by taking a lead in the family’s plan against her, and she keeps open the door of the relation and even the possibility of love” (p.1).

5. Conclusion

To conclude, Pinter adapts his play to the situation of women in the twentieth century. He adapts to the enigma of the modern world and he uses a dramatic construct that suits the fragmentation of the era’s great values such as love, truth and freedom. This fragmentation has a direct impact on the situation of women. He demonstrates that a woman is strong and free when she breaks free from social restrictions and begins to make decisions independently; in other words, she does as she pleases. Whether choosing to be a nonconformist or a traditional wife, a woman remains free as long as she is not coerced into actions she dislikes. In this context, Elizabeth Sakellaridou, in her book "Pinter’s Female Portraits: A Study of the Female Characters in the Plays of Harold Pinter" (1988), contends that in "The Homecoming," Harold Pinter is "preoccupied with many thoughts such as fascination with the unknown and love of philosophical contemplation, presentation of strong male friendship, prevalence of male thoughts, isolation of the woman, and ambiguity of feelings towards her" (p.17). This paper posits that Pinter adeptly adapts to the challenges of the modern world to portray the emergence of a new woman—a character endowed with strength and contending with the enigmatic aggression of patriarchal society.

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GREETING OTHERS: HERMENEUTICS OF THE GREETING RITUAL IN THE ESAN AND ÀLAGO COMMUNITIES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study analyses the ritual of greetings in two Nigerian linguistic communities: the Esan and the Alágo. Based on in situ observation of greeting rituals and their contexts of application, we have come to the conclusion that the functioning of this social practice stems from politeness and social organisation marked by precise choices and appropriate gestures. The analysis shows that an act of language such as greeting, through discursive and communicative movements, reveals the social relationships existing between the different people involved in this interaction. Thus, we can see that through the use of greetings in these linguistic communities, men and women demonstrate a particular linguistic behaviour with the use of distinct lexical forms. On one hand, each greeting is closely correlated with the gender of the person using it and, on the other hand, it is also indicative of their marital status. Formulas that facilitate expression: *aيسان* and *doejie* among the Esan on one hand, and *onogha* and *ajiga* on the other, are used respectively by men and women respectively regardless of their age but in connection with the marital status of the person being greeted. Among the Alágo, on the other hand, we have identified a single generic greeting - *nmaje* exclusively used by young single men and women. Marital status is a significant factor in the use and choice of the two categories of greeting in this language community. An analysis of the choices made in line with the different categories of greeting reveals their correlation with gestures that are just as differentiated between men and women.

Keywords: Greeting, diagenetic variation, Esan, Àlágó, Nigeria.

1. Introduction

Social and cultural practices vary from one society to another and give rise to verbal rituals and gestures that differ according to some specific variables. Among these social practices are greeting rituals. Greetings are used in specific social situations such as commemorating a birth, a death, celebrating a success, congratulating newlyweds, greeting someone returning from a trip, etc. In Africa, greeting is an expression of politeness towards the person being greeted. The expression of this politeness involves combining appropriate verbal formulas, which are adapted to the person being addressed, with appropriate and highly

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codified gestures, hence the term "greeting ritual". For example, to greet someone in the Yorùbá community, prostration must be followed by a formula that is often fixed, *káàrò*, while other communities simply shake hands or embrace. It is clear, then, that no human relationship is either singularly verbal or exclusively non-verbal. The greeting rituals analysed are between a person greeting and a person being greeted, whose social position and, above all, gender and marital status - in the case of the linguistic communities involved - influence the choice of formula and the gestures (marital gesture for men and genuflection for women) that accompany it.

Furthermore, what is interesting among the Esan of Ekpoma, who speak the Esan language, and Alágo - who speak the Alágo language - both patriarchal linguistic communities in Edo and Nasarawa States respectively in the Federal Republic of Nigeria, far from the use of a fixed formula for men and women, the choice of the greeting formula is essentially determined by two variables: the gender and the marital status of the greeters and those being greeted. The correlation or interconnexion of the two, instructs more than a simple socio-cultural act and requires social scientists to dig out from insightful investigation, the very meanings of such a societal identification.

The following question holds in its own interest, the main purpose which instigates our mind to pose this specific problem of greeting: How are the variables of gender and marital status articulated in the greeting ritual in the two linguistic communities: esan and àlágo? The aim of this article is to analyse how gender and marital status are anchored in the greeting rituals of the two communities in question. In order to provide an appropriate account of the subject, the study is structured in accordance with a tripartite outline: the first part presents the methodology and the constitution of the corpus. The second part looks at the gestures used in the greeting ritual. The third one analyses the anchoring of gender and marital status in the greeting ritual.

2. Methodological Approach and Theoretical Guidelines

This section elucidates the methodological approach adopted and the theoretical indications that underpin the conceptual choice made.

2.1 Methodological approach and constitution of the corpus

This study was prompted by a meeting with two Nigerian Master degree students who were in Benin in 2020, Ms Aidegue and Sr Elizabeth. They respectively belong to the Esan and Àlágo communities. Additional information was gathered through in situ observation by Béal (2000: 17) and through semi-directive surveys and guidelines by Blanchet (2012: 51).

The methodology adopted, which does not escape the framework defined by the 'theory of speech acts', should help us to understand the social functioning of the 'communicative profiles' of Esan and Àlágo, since it is obvious, as Traverso (1996, p. 41) that in many recurrent situations (e.g. greetings, introductions, wishes, requests, requests for information...), we use "ready-made" formulas that are both adapted to the situation, shared by all the members of the society or group, and accepted as such.

The methodological achievements, relating to the articulation between the immediate contexts and the circumstances of practice of the concerned greeting ritual, question the notion of authenticity and at the same time imply confronting the interviews with the observations. These considerations allow us to situate our reflections on the relationships between the contexts and variables called upon here and to define the field of reflection in which they mostly fit. The methodology accordingly developed facilitates a holistic approach to the greeting ritual in the two communities, the corpus of which is presented below.

The corpus used for this analysis is made up of a set of photos and linguistic units collected in various contexts and circumstances. The data selection criterion is qualitative. Of all the gestures and formulas selected, only those with features that meet the criteria of the greeting ritual are selected for analysis. Where data appear in different circumstances, they have been retained to give a complete picture of the contexts and circumstances in which the greeting ritual is practised. The following examples summarise the data relating to the corpus constituted.

Glossonyms and ethnonyms	Greetings and other designations	Glose
Esan	<i>aisan</i>	Greeting used by men to say good morning to a man or a woman (singular use by men)
	<i>doejie</i>	Greeting used by women to say good morning to a man or a woman (singular use by women)
	<i>khara</i>	A greeting used by men to say say hello, good evening and thank you (afternoon until nightfall) to a man or a woman (singular use by men).
	<i>aijesan</i>	A greeting used by women to say hello, good evening and thank you (afternoon until nightfall) to a man or a woman (singular use by women).
Àlágo	<i>onogha</i>	Greeting used by men to greet married women (used singularly by men regardless of their marital status).
	<i>ajiga</i>	Greeting used by married women to greet a man and to respond to greetings (singular use by married women)
	<i>nmaje</i>	Generic formula used by men and women who are not yet married

2.2 Theoretical guidelines

Our approach to the variable 'gender', identified as one of the sources of variation in the choice of greeting formulas, is inspired by the Sapirian conception of 'gender' but is nevertheless different from it. It is detached from it insofar as the languages used in the study do not display the same linguistic properties in terms of gender, a grammatical category which could thus refer as much to the symbolic as to the linguistic, and thus maintain a rhetoric of confusion. We focused mainly the opposition between men and women, and therefore to the social category of the variable sex. The scientific debates surrounding the concept of 'gender' could lead us down a cul-de-sac from both the symbolic and linguistic points of view.

The observation of specific modes of language used according to linguistic communities leads to the identification of several variables, sources of variation, including geographical origin, age, gender, social origin and contexts of language use, to name but a few. In the context of this work, gender and marital status are variables that determine the choice of greeting to be used when the person greeting is either a man or a woman. From this point of view, greeting becomes an act of socialisation that creates and maintains contact between two or more people. So, from a relational point of view, this act can be situated on a scale of proximity and social constraint, where the formula chosen corresponds to a specific use in relation to the person being greeted, and the gestures that accompany the formula are the social constraint that imposes it on the greeters and the greeted. The greeting thus becomes a resolutely social attitude, marked by an interest in social cohesion.

Greeting is seen as an act of socialisation of the existence of human beings living in a community governed by rules of life. Initiating an interaction presupposes prior preparation on the part of the interlocutor as to whether or not to accept this act. This seems to be corroborated by Mebiame-Akono (2013, p. 152) when he says:

Greetings are behavioural norms governing the opening and closing of a conversation. If we look at the overall organisation of greeting exchanges, we can see that they make it possible to initiate contact with an addressee, to show the other person a cognitive readiness to initiate a communicative exchange with them, and also to reiterate to their conversational partner [...].

Greeting someone is part of the justification for human beings being different from instinctive animals and defines an ontological relationship that is part of a social and existentialist perspective. Greeting is therefore not an optional act, but an essential one. It is this reflection that I am attempting to endorse on the basis of the hermeneutics of greeting rituals in two linguistic communities in Nigeria.

Several scientific works have proposed well-thought analyses of the greeting ritual in different linguistic communities in the world (Pradelles, 1980; Stojic, 2002; Mebiame-Akono, 2013; Adjera, 2018 and others). With the exception of Adjera (2018), who established a relationship between the greeting ritual and social variables, in this case gender and age as factors underlying the choice of greeting formulas and subsequent gestures, previous work has focused essentially on the ritual as an index of politeness, a social construct, and a cultural expression. Adjera (2018) argues that the politeness index is correlated with age and social construction, and that gender is linked to cultural expression, but these studies have not identified these variables as sources of choice of greeting formulas. Over and above these characteristics linked to greeting rituals, the differentiated choice of greeting formulas according to the gender of the greeter, marital status and gestures underpin this practice in the linguistic communities surveyed. These variables highlight the diversity of the greeting ritual, with its specific formulas and gestures.

3. Gestures in the Greeting Rituals

In most communities around the world, the greeting combines verbal and non-verbal gestures. The non-verbal part is gesture, which varies depending on whether the person greeting is male or female. In the Esan community, genuflecting is characteristic of the gestures that accompany the greeting ritual for women, while men hammer their right foot and stamp it against the ground as in the form of standing at attention. In short, a martial gesture by the men always accompanies their greeting rituals.

However, the symbolism of these gestures appears different. Genuflection is a cultural sign of deference to male human beings. In this community, women devote absolute deference to men, whatever their age. This is a patriarchal community where the man has the social responsibility of protecting children and women, and plays a dominant role within the family. Women are therefore subject to his authority in one way or the other.

Still on the subject of genuflection in the ritual of greeting, we note quite a differentiated practice. The youngest (the girl child) genuflects to the ground in reverence - without exaggeration - to the male protector, a little god on earth; the youngest (young ones) are still at the stage of learning social norms. The transmission of cultural and cultic values by society, from early childhood onwards, is an age-old practice in communities in general and African communities in particular. Society thus becomes a book in which children learn their daily life lessons and discover their cultural and cult references. For women, i.e., adults,

genuflection is not done all the way to the ground. In any case, genuflection is a sign of respect for the man. Unlike women, the martial gesture denotes a certain authority, marking territory and imposing that authority. As a result, men take the full measure of their social responsibility, and through this gesture, they are reminded of it on a daily basis. By analogy, this gesture becomes anaphoric in the sense that it is repeated each time the greeting ritual is performed, reinforcing the man's authority.

While genuflection is practised differently by girls and women, there is no distinction between men and women. Responsibility is passed on to men from an early age and they grow up in this mould until adulthood; a sign that responsibility cannot be improvised but is gradually acquired throughout life. Society gradually passes on to them the social responsibilities they will have to fulfil in the future, and for which they will be held accountable if they fail to meet their obligations to this social authority.



We can therefore understand that genuflection is a noble act that crosses time, societies, human races and religious beliefs. It is an act as old as the world, whose scope varies from one society to another, from one belief to another, from one community to another, with one epicentre: deference. Genuflecting is part of everyday life, and you may reflexively genuflect when talking to a senior on the phone without really paying attention. It's a mark of respect in the presence or absence of the caller. It's proof that showing respect for others is a permanent gesture, not a hypocritical act. This is a perfect illustration of the importance of this gesture, synchronised with the choice of greeting, as can be seen in the image opposite.

4. Esan and Alágo Greeting Rituals

According to Bulot and Blanchet (2013, p. 48), external variation is organised around five main dimensions: diachronic, diatopic, diastratic, diaphasic and diagenic. The dimension that seems to be constitutive of the data analysed in this work is the diagenetic dimension, which concerns the differences in speech noted between men and women. It makes it possible to account, for example, for the fact that men and women do not have the same linguistic practices (a formula may be used by men, but not by women) and therefore that they do not necessarily use the same forms of address in similar social contexts. In the contexts under study, two factors determine the choice of a greeting: gender and marital status.

In fact, the choice of a greeting used between people of the same generation is not subject to any constraints. Furthermore, when two people of different generations and genders have to greet each other, gender factors and the marital status of the person being greeted determine the choice of greeting. From this point of view, it is crystal clear to understand that the primary objective is, in this case, to ensure that the gender factor makes it possible to recognise the gender of the person greeting: a man or a woman.

Diagenetic variation takes a variety of forms in Esan and Alágo. The linguistic marking of the feminine and masculine is far from being reduced to the presence or absence of a morpheme such as -e in French or -a in Spanish, for example. Linguistically, it requires us to take into account the formulas that mark diagenetic variation. The language offers formulas that facilitate expression: *aisan* and *doejie* in Esan, *onogha* and *ajiga*, used respectively by men and women without distinction as to age, but which take account of the

marital status of those being greeted. The uses and recipients remain distinct surely according to the cultural background in question.

Both communities use generic diagenetic formulas to carry out the act of greeting. These formulas can be addressed to both men and women. The difference lies at the diagenetic level among the Esan: *khara* (for the exclusive use of men) and *aijesan* (for the exclusive use of women) are formulas used respectively by men and women to say good evening to a man or a woman at a specific time of day.

Among the Alágo as the case in under study in this research work, we have identified a single generic greeting - *nmaje* - used exclusively by young single men and women. Marital status is the predominant factor in the use and choice of the two categories of greeting in this language community. The analysis of the choices and different categories of greetings is part of the perception of the lifestyles and social organisation of the two communities.

4.1 The Esan greeting ritual

The greeting formulas are dealt with separately because they pose specific problems, on the one hand, in terms of the times at which they are used and, on the other, in terms of the conjugal situation of the speaker greeting. In addition to the times at which they are used and the marital situation, these formulas play a demarcating role between men and women.

4.1.1 Aijesan and doejie, two Esan greetings used exclusively by women

Aijesan and *doejie* are greetings reserved exclusively for women. They are used to greet both men and women. The choice of one or the other is determined by the time of day. When a woman or man is greeted in the morning, the choice is *doejie*. On the other hand, when a woman greets another woman or a man in the afternoon, she uses another form of address, *aijesan*. In this case, gender is not a discriminating factor in the choice of a particular formula. The variation in the choice of formula is based on the weather during the day. So, what's really interesting here is not the variation according to gender, but the use is exclusively female and the choice is made according to the weather and goes beyond the common framework.

Apart from these temporal considerations, this formula has many interesting sociolinguistic aspects. The social convention in both formulas is to recognise the gender of the person greeting (exclusively a woman), who sends her greetings to either a man or a woman at specific times of the day; the person sending the greeting can only be female. When a woman of a younger age (a young girl, for example) sends her greetings to another woman of a higher age (her mother, for example), the formulas remain the same. The birthright does not apply through the choice of formula, but rather through the gestures that accompany the greeting ritual: the complete genuflection in this case. The same principle applies when a woman of a younger age (a daughter, for example) addresses her greetings to a man who is not of the same generation as her (her father, for example).

In addition to its representative function of conveying meaning - greeting the speaker - language has an expressive aspect in that certain variables indicate the personal characteristics of the speaker, namely gender.

4.1.2 Aisan and khara, two greetings used exclusively by Esan men

Men make a different choice of greeting when it comes to greeting a man or a woman at a given time of day. Two formulas are used: *aisan* and *khara*. Greeting a woman is a matter of protocol in certain linguistic communities or religions. In the Western tradition, for

example, in relations between men and women, it is always the woman who decides, unless the man is performing public and official duties or is experienced in the delicate gesture of kissing. But even in this case, there is a subtle initiation of the woman. When there are people of the same sex, it is the older person who takes precedence, and when there is a coincidence of sex and age, it is social position that is the discriminating criterion.

According to some Islamologists, the greeting that men address to women and that women address to men are permitted if there is no risk of seduction. This is why some people distinguish between young and old women, to avoid any pretext which could in one way or the other jeopardize social connection among people of the same communities. Others add conditions relating to age and beauty: if the young woman is beautiful and one fears being seduced by her, then the greeting is no longer obligatory. The relevant argument used by those opposed to greeting women is "fear of seduction". The practice of greeting seems to vary according to community and religion (Adjeran, 2018).

Among the Esan, gender is a relevant factor in the practice of greetings between men and women unlike some communities with other kinds of religion. Within such communities, the greeting between a woman and a man is highly influenced by the questions of age and gender which in their turn determine the rhythm of the greeting ritual. Consequently, total genuflection for young girls, partial genuflection for women and the martial gesture for men of all ages - only the time of day help as guidelines to the choice of formula to be used by the person who is greeting.

Basically, Esan men show no deference to women. This is reflected in their gestures, which are characterised by a martial gesture rather than prostration, as might be the case in other linguistic communities. The linguistic code that men use to greet women is never, or never should be, accompanied by the bending of the knee as is customary among the Yorùbá, for example, where the opposite is interpreted as a sign of lack of respect or consideration for the woman. Esan men consider women to be submissive to men, who protect them and to whom they owe respect and consideration.

4.2 The Àlágó greeting ritual

The greeting formulas are dealt with separately because they pose problems specific to the conjugal situation of the woman who uses them. As well as being closely linked to marital status, these formulas play a demarcating role between married and unmarried women on the one hand, and between men and married women on the other. A generic formula is reserved for single men and women.

4.2.1 Ajiga, a greeting for the exclusive use of married women

Ajiga is a greeting exclusively reserved for married women. It is used to greet both men and women, regardless of sex, age or marital status. Its use is determined by the gender and marital status of the speaker. When she responds to greetings addressed to her, or when she sends greetings to either a woman or a man at any time of the day, the traditional greeting is *ajiga*. Next, when an unmarried woman greets another unmarried woman or an unmarried man, she uses another generic greeting, *nmaje*. The variation in the choice of formula is, in this case, based on the marital status of the greeter. What is really interesting here is not the variation over time - common to almost all human communities - but the choice based on gender and marital status, which goes beyond the common framework.

Aside from these marital considerations, this formula has many interesting sociolinguistic aspects. Social convention uses this formula to recognize the gender and marital status of the person responding to a greeting or sending a greeting (a married woman only) as either male or female; the person responding or sending a greeting can therefore only

be female. When a woman of a younger age (a young girl, for example) responds or sends greetings to another woman of a higher age (her mother, for example), the formula remains the same, *ajiga*. The right of birth does not apply to the choice of formula, but rather to the gestures that accompany the greeting ritual: the complete genuflection in this case. The same principle applies when a woman of a younger age (a young girl, for example) responds or sends her greetings to a man who is not of the same generation as her (her father, for example).

This formula has a triple role; in addition to its representative function of conveying meaning - greeting the interlocutor - it has expressive aspects insofar as certain variables indicate the personal characteristics of the speaker, namely his or her gender and marital status (married or single).

4.2.2 *Onogha, a greeting used exclusively by men*

Men make a different choice of greeting when it comes to greeting a man or a woman at a given time of the day. The traditional greeting in this case is *onogha*. In the *Alágo* community, gender and marital status are relevant factors in the greeting ritual between men and women. Unlike the Esan community and others, in the ritual greeting between a man and a woman, the woman's gender and marital status determine the rhythm of the ritual. To respond to the greeting or to greet a married woman, a special formula is used: *onogha*. Yet, to respond to or greet a single woman or man, another generic formula facilitates the ritual in this case: *nmaje*.

Onogha is therefore an exclusively masculine greeting reserved for the ritual greeting between a man, regardless of marital status, and a married woman. This is reflected in the use of this greeting, which is not used for women but is addressed to them when they are married. It has a triple role; in addition to its representative function of conveying meaning - greeting or responding to a married interlocutor - it has expressive aspects insofar as certain variables indicate the personal characteristics of the person being greeted or responded to, namely their gender and marital status (married or single).

5. Conclusion

This study analyses the ritual of greetings in two Nigerian linguistic communities: the Esan and the *Alágo*. Essentially based on in situ observation of the rituals and their contexts of application, we could assume that the functioning of this social practice stems from 'politeness', to use Kerbrat-Orecchioni's term (1997), and from social organisation marked by precise choices and appropriate gestures. The analysis shows that, from an act of language like greeting, through discursive and communicative movements, we discover the social relationships existing between the different people involved in this interaction. Thus, we can see that through the use of greetings in these linguistic communities, men and women show a particular linguistic behaviour, in that they use distinct lexical forms. Besides, each greeting is closely correlated with the gender of the person using it and, on the other, it is also indicative of their marital situation.

Formulas that facilitate expression: *aisan* and *doejie* among the *Esan* on the one hand, and *onogha* and *ajiga* on the other hand, are respectively used by men and women without distinction of age but in relation to the marital status of the people being greeted. Both communities use generic diagenetic formulas in their greeting rituals. These formulas can be addressed to both men and women. The difference lies in the diagenetic level among the *Esan*: *khara* (for use by men only) and *aijesan* (for use by women only) are formulas used to respond to or say goodnight to a man or a woman. Among the *Alágo*, we can identify a single generic formula - *nmaje* - used exclusively by young single men and women. Marital status is

a significant factor in the use and choice of the two categories of greeting in this language community. An analysis of the choices made and the different categories of greeting reveals their correlation with gestures that are just as differentiated between men and women.

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ALLOCATION OF ZAKAT TO DEBTORS IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA: ASSESSING A NEGLECTED CATEGORY OF RECIPIENTS

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Abstract

Zakāt as a social safety net is divinely recommended to relieve different categories of vulnerable members of the society based on their predicament at specific times. These beneficiaries oftentimes, are overshadowed by the *Fuqarāu* (Poor) and the *Masākin* (Needy) such that it is unclear if other asnaf are considered for zakat benefit. On the assumption that Debtors (*Ghārimūn*) are often neglected from zakat benefit during disbursement, this study aimed at determining relevance of debtors as zakat beneficiaries in the contemporary context. The study investigated whether or not debtors are neglected from zakat benefit in Lagos state. It is a descriptive research design with an analytical approach. Both primary and secondary data sourced from zakat reports and literature were analysed. In addition, zakat administrators were interviewed on administrative style and governance policy regarding allocation of zakat to debtors. Findings show that debtors were not neglected as generally believed. It was however, discovered that zakat allocation to debtors was low while debtor beneficiaries were found to be extremely few when compared with other categories of beneficiaries. It was recommended that zakat administrators should embark on upward review of zakat allocation to debtors while still maintaining strict adherence to the provisions of shari'ah in their administration. This research will shape governance policy on zakat administration as it affects allocation to debtors and modulate disposition of potential zakat beneficiaries among debtors.

Keywords: Zakāt Administration, Contemporary society, Beneficiaries, *Ghārimun*, Poverty Alleviation

1. Introduction

Zakāt represents the nucleus of monetary forms of worship in Islam basically because it is a fundamental pillar of the religion which is executed only by wealth possessed. With zakāt in place as a religious duty, those who have enough as stipulated in Islamic law are meant to discharge their responsibility in obedience to Allah by giving out the required portion to those who are designated in the law as enumerated by the Qur'an (Q9: 60). Taking it further, the eligible recipients in any society have become the rightful beneficiaries within the strength of available zakāt resources at specific time. Hence, there should not be an outright denial of a particular group that falls under the eight asnāf identified in the Qur'an. Scholars have

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repeatedly asserted that the eight categories of beneficiaries stated in the Qur'an are the rightful owners of zakāt even in the present time (Nasir & Rahman, 2020: 331).

By common practice, the poor and the needy have been focused in zakāt administration often. This, of course, is because zakāt is regarded as a tool for poverty alleviation, and in most cases debtors, slaves, and stranded travelers are categorized under the poor, (Johari, Mohd. Ali & Ab. Aziz, 2015: 349). Concerning this, these other *asnāf* have not enjoyed the same attention from administrators and managers as in the case of the poor and the needy. It was established that some sets of potential zakat beneficiaries are neglected as a result of identification problems (Rosli, Salamon & Huda, 2018). Despite the assertion above, it is imperative to fact-check the claim that some beneficiaries are neglected, particularly the debtors. If truly they are neglected, will it be that they are not available for consideration as eligible zakat beneficiaries or they are considered as not being relevant in the contemporary age? Taking Lagos state as a case study, this work is meant to answer the questions raised above to address the plight of a segment of society.

Based on the above conjecture, this study will explore the place of the so-called neglected category of recipients. Being the major focus of this study, debt and the place of debtors in Islam as it relates to zakāt administration will be largely examined in the discourse. The practical experience of zakāt administrators will be contextualized into the study to give it the empirical touch that is required for a more reliable analysis and submission.

The study begins by recapitulating the concept of zakāt, its significance, and administration. Then it proceeds to a brief examination of various beneficiaries with emphasis on the relevance of each. Thereafter, the study concentrates on the Islamic worldview of debt and debtors. This is followed by looking at the place of debtors among zakāt beneficiaries in Lagos State. Based on this, research-based recommendations are offered to adjust as appropriate to facilitate a better administration of zakāt. The study will clear the uncertainty surrounding the status of debtors (*gharimun*) in the administration of zakat in Lagos state. Such revelation will equally guide stakeholders in making necessary amendments in terms of the policy governing the zakat administration. The disposition of potential zakat recipients could also be guided by the findings of this study.

2. Zakāt: Concept, Significance, and Administration

Literally, *Zakāt* could mean increase, growth, blessing, purification, or righteousness. Technically, *Zakāt* refers to a specified portion of a defined wealth (*nisab*) given to specific recipients (as defined in Q9: 60) at a particular time (period of a year duration called *haul*) recognized by the Sharī'ah (Salim, 2010). It should however be noted that there exists a relationship between the literal usage and the technical (religious) meaning of *Zakāt*. By the meaning 'increase', it connotes that the wealth from which *Zakāt* is paid increases and grows. By purification and blessing, it cleanses the acts of the payer and causes Allah's blessing on the remaining wealth from which *Zakāt* is paid thereby raising the status of the payer before Almighty Allah. By righteousness, *Zakāt* is a good deed that does not only indicate spiritual submission to Allah but also implies moral commitment to the will of Allah. Hence, *Zakāt* is a righteousness demonstrated by the payer to the recipient. In other words, these interpretations imply that zakat is an act of 'ibadah to the payer for executing the injunction Allah on one hand and for alleviating the suffering of the recipients on the other hand. The meaning and implication of *zakāt* could be deduced from Qura'nic verses as instructed by Allah such as Q9: 103 among others.

Significantly, zakat is a basic fundamental of Islam and the core of the Islamic social welfare programme. It is to this that Chapra (1980) noted that Islamic welfare is meant to; eradicate poverty and create conditions for full employment, promote stability in the real value

of money, maintain law and order, and ensure social and economic justice among others. The obligation of zakat, without doubt, makes everyone realize the responsibility of caring for the less privileged and vulnerable segment of society. In this respect, zakat is unique and different from welfare Programmes in other ideologies which only recommend acts of charity without any obligation authority (Al-Qaradawi, 1999: 8). Further to this, zakat closes the gap between people of different status and establishes a strong bond among them in the same society (Ashafa, 2016: 38). All these are only achieved because the soul of zakat payers would have ordinarily accustomed to the act of giving and as such overcome its nature of greed which is inherent of an average soul. The enlarged scope of zakat recipients logically closes the window of begging since various parameters that could open the way for begging have been legally covered by the widespread *asnaf* categories. Simply put, therefore, wealth redistribution is easiest and most pragmatic through the institution of zakat. The psychological imbalance that may arise from the shackles of debt burden or incapacitation of vulnerability is eliminated by the influence of zakat.

Unlike *salat* which is individually observed in preferable manner, zakat is meant to be administered in a communal arrangement where eligible *muzakki* (zakat payer) is to be identified and guided by established authority (Q9: 103) either formal or informal. This is inferred from the arrangement of the shari'ah which identifies zakat workers as beneficiaries in the distribution of zakat wealth. This implies that zakat collection and distribution are supposed to be handled in such a manner that provides for paid employees (Al-Qaradawi, 1999: 386). In the least, zakat is executed in a participatory form that involves the payer and the recipient. In a clear demonstration of this, Prophet Muhammad and his successors used to appoint certain individuals for zakat collection (Arif, 2017: 58) and the same practice has been sustained to date among Muslim *ummah* (community) across the globe. In the contemporary world, the administration of zakat is becoming more pronounced with an increasing number of organisations emerging to propagate the collective management of zakat. In this regard, these authorities either government or non-governmental have increasingly simplified the process of zakat payment, collection, and distribution for Muslims in various parts of the world. Information on the wealth possession threshold (*nisab*) is now regularly updated and many eligible payers now know what to pay and where to pay to discharge their religious obligation. Despite the absence of the Islamic Caliphate, the zakat administration though instituted voluntarily, has steadily progressed.

In specific terms, zakat takes different forms in different parts of the world based on the level of awareness or legal framework in respective countries. Looking at Muslim majority nations, for instance, Pakistan operates government control zakat management in which different hierarchy of government coordinates on the basis of pre-defines quota. A similar model is operated in Malaysia except that it is decentralized according to provinces and supervised by a designated institute of the government. Private organisations administer zakat in Indonesia under the coordination of a government-established agency (Arif, 2017: 59). Zakat administration in Nigeria is entirely different due to its multi-religious nature. Many states in the northern part of the country have zakat managed by institutions of government. States like Kano, Jigawa, Zamfara, and Sokoto among others have Committee or Commission in place for Zakat administration (Mustapha, 2020: 195-196). However, the southern part of the country does not experience government-empowered institutions in place. Instead, non-governmental organisations are established by Islamic groups or individuals to administer zakat.

3. Understanding the Relevance of Zakāt Beneficiaries according to the Shari'ah

The Holy Qur'an is explicit about the intended beneficiaries of zakat such that no ambiguity is known around its discourse. The Qur'an identifies beneficiaries of zakat in Q9: 60 to include the poor, the needy, zakat workers, converts, slaves, and debtors, in the way of Allah, and the wayfarer. The concern here is to briefly examine the relevance of these categories to modern times.

The poor and the needy are a set of beneficiaries which the shari'ah highly revered in terms of priority. The subject matter of zakat oftentimes revolves around them. The Qur'an begins by mentioning this group before others and Prophet Muhammad also makes them the arrowhead which should be focused on during execution. This is inferred from his message to Mua'dh bn Jabal regarding zakat management as his representative in Yemen when he said "...inform them that Allah has made it obligatory for them to pay the *sadaqah* (Zakāt) from their properties and it is to be taken from the wealthy among them and given to the poor among them". (Khan, 1994: 349). This sounds as if the poor alone is the beneficiary of zakat but it is not. Some scholars believe that there is no difference between the poor and the needy. Such scholars include Abu Yusuf, a disciple of Imam Abu Hanifah, and Ibn al-Qasim who belong to the school of thought of Imam Malik (Al-Qaradawi, 1999: 363).

We rely on the strength of Allah's injunction to take these two as separate classes of beneficiaries. Similarly, it has been argued by scholars that when these two words (poor and needy) are mentioned together they indicate different meanings (Al-Qaradawi, 1999: 363). Al-Ghazali opines that the poor are those without income and as such cannot fulfill their basic needs except through begging, (Al-Ghazali, 1980: 287). In contrast, the needy according to the Holy Prophet himself, do not have enough to satisfy their basic need yet they do not beg, (Sahih Muslim, p.88). By and large, this explanation points to the fact that both the poor and the needy are deficient in meeting their basic responsibility either partially or completely. Consequently, they both need help and such help is an obligation to be fulfilled by the rich through the institution of zakat to protect the dignity of the beneficiaries (from begging). Based on this fact, many zakat administrators in contemporary society still focus on poverty alleviation by giving preference to the acclaimed poor and needy.

Zakat workers are meant to benefit from zakat wealth as compensation for the responsibilities they render for the *ummah*. They are responsible for identifying zakat payers and collecting and distributing zakat to eligible beneficiaries. They are the instruments through which the institution of zakat is made effective. Their resourcefulness determines the success or otherwise of zakat. As regards relevance, zakat workers being remunerated is not a subject of controversy because it is divinely recommended. Al- Al-Qaradawi (1999) noted that workers will be prevented from temptation if remunerated from zakat proceeds. It has also been established in a previous study that engaging some people as zakat workers provides employment opportunities for a segment that would have been unemployed. It was equally discovered that zakat administrators who engage the service of workers in their management perform effectively better than those without zakat workers. (Ashafa, 2016: 208). In this regard, zakat workers will continue to be relevant as beneficiaries of zakat to sustain the institution in contemporary society.

Converts as beneficiaries of zakat also include those whose hearts are being attracted to Islam due to their soft spore for the religion and at times their kind gesture and good relationship with the Muslims. The choice of language used to describe these people '*muallafat qulubuhum*' implies that they are being enticed to the Muslims or to Islam as a religion. With this implication, it may be difficult to outrightly say that non-Muslims cannot benefit from zakat proceeds. Al-Qaradawi is of the opinion that giving zakat to these people is a way of carrying out the duty of calling to the path of Allah which is a responsibility imposed on Muslims individually and collectively (Al-Qaradawi, 1999: 398). Considering other injunctions of the

shari'ah which command goodness to neighbours and humanity in general (Q4: 36), it becomes more convincing that an act of kindness in terms of attending to the welfare of other people in the community will be commendable and rewarding even if it requires being discharged using zakat wealth. It is apt to also note that Muslims who are indigenes of non-Muslim-dominated regions should be continuously encouraged and strengthened with zakat wealth as a morale booster for their situation. For instance, Muslims of Igbo extract in Nigeria who equally reside in the eastern part of the country where they originated are threatened oftentimes by their indigenous non-Muslim brothers who regard them as bastards for practicing Islam. It is so bad that such Muslims are sometimes disenfranchised from voting in some instances, (Ajah, 2013).

In the case of slaves, zakat is meant to remove the bondage in which they find themselves. Al-Qaradawi (1999: 411) opines that slave and the other beneficiaries mentioned after it (in Q9: 60) are to enjoy zakat not as consumption (source of wealth) but to attain freedom from the status they find themselves, unlike the earlier mentioned beneficiaries who can be enriched from zakat wealth. There is no doubt that zakat is meant for manumission of slaves who are under a contract on an agreed payable fee with their masters as well as for the liberation of other slaves who do not belong to this category (Al-Qaradawi, 412). In the contemporary context, scholars have interpreted the concept of '*ar-riqab*' to encapsulate prisoners of war, victims of colonialism, and victims of oppression by tyrant leaders as well as innocent people who are detained unjustly by the authority of the state, (Ismail, Awang & Muhd Sarif, 2020: 127). Similarly, those who are imprisoned for inability to pay fine or inability to hire a solicitor as required by contemporary practice can also be accommodated under this category on the strength of the argument rendered above.

Debtors are identified by the Qur'an as beneficiaries of zakat basically to pay off their debts. The implication of this is that debt may be incurred regardless of the social status of the debtor based on compelling circumstances. Since debtors are mentioned as beneficiaries separately from the poor and the needy, it may mean that debtors are not necessarily poor in the real sense of it but may require a bailout at the particular time of the maturity of the debt due to incapacitation. These are in tandem with scholars' views on conditions that make debtors eligible for zakat benefits. The said factors are summarized by al-Qaradawi as (i) lack of funds when the debt is due (ii) lawfulness of the purpose for which debt was incurred (iii) maturity of the time for which debt must be refunded (iv) the debt must be another human's due.

Apart from the rationale identified, it is also proven empirically that debt may cause damages to debtors if not rescued in good time. Fitch, Chaplin, Trend, and Collard (2007) found that the inability to pay debt when it is due often leads to critical health challenges like psychiatric disorders and other more complicated health issues. In some instances, the inability to pay the debt has led to depression, self-harm, and suicidal ideation. More so, the effect of individuals' debt has been adversely felt in the performance of Islamic financial institutions such as microfinance banks among others due to inability of individual customers to repay loans (Onakoya & Onakoya, 2013). Considering these severe implications of debt, it would be clear that zakat best serves the purpose of a safety net in these situations. In addition, the shari'ah among other objectives is meant to protect life and human dignity. It is given this that the Qur'an clarifies that "...Allah intends for your ease, and He does not want to make things difficult for you... (Q2: 185). On the specific issue of debt, the Qur'an clearly states that debtors are to be given respite or completely relieved of the debt. This is expressed thus: "And if the debtor is in a hard time (has no money), then grant him time till it is easy for him to repay, but if you remit it by way of charity that is better for you if you did but know. (Q2: 280). Sequel to these facts, there is no doubt that the allocation of zakat to debtors is essentially necessary as conceived by the shari'ah.

Zakat is equally meant to be expended on ‘the path of Allah’ as defined by the Qur’an. It is noted that *Fi-sabiliLlah* which is used in the verse (Q9: 60) sounds abstract, unlike other beneficiaries which clearly indicates that definite individuals are intended by the directive. This expression therefore implies that a wide range of activities that are targeted towards aiding the path of Allah can be covered in this regard (Ashafa, 2016). This, could also mean that individuals who are facilitating such activities can also benefit under this category if they can be hindered due to lack of resources to execute such activities. Al-Qaradawi (1999) opines that activities that are embedded under this category include writing, and speaking which may be educational, economic, social and political in nature as long as they are rendered to make the word of Allah supreme on earth.

Wayfarer comes last in the categories of zakat beneficiaries outlined by the Qur’an. It is simply logical that several factors can render a traveler stranded thereby requiring support to enable such individual to continue the journey. Apart from the superiority of divine wisdom which listed wayfarer as a beneficiary of zakat, contemporary development shows that unforeseen circumstances may frequently compel travelers to need support for a smooth journey. For instance, an increasing crime rate may subject a traveler to a robbery attack which subsequently makes such a traveler become a needy or a beggar. An incessant rate of inflation may equally make resources insufficient for travelers in some other situations. Yet, there can also be a group of travelers who migrate to foreign lands for survival but need to return home at a time when still not buoyant enough to finance themselves. Even though Latief (2017) tags such people (migrants) as unfortunate wayfarers, the fact remains that they need care and support which Islam has graciously provided through the institution of zakat. This type of wayfarer may be empowered in their new abode while they still enjoy zakat benefit as a wayfarer. Such initiative under the contemporary circumstance is what Latief (2017) identified as ‘innovation in interpreting *ibn sabil*’.

4. The Islamic Worldview of Debt and Debtors

Debt has its origin in the Latin word ‘debitum’ which is translated as ‘to be obliged’. It also means ‘due’ and ‘duty’. By this meaning, debt is a moral burden hanging on someone (Douglas, 2016). Debt, in finance, is a sum of money that is owed by one person to another, or by an agency or institution to a creditor, (Encyclopedia Americana, 2006). By nature, scarcity of resources compels man to depend on one another for socio-economic survival in any given society. As a result of this, and coupled with the nature of man to acquire more wealth, those who have in excess sometimes exploit the opportunity, thereby lending out for business purposes through the imposition of additional fee for the loan given. Apart from basic needs of feeding, housing, and clothing, other factors that can necessitate an urgent need to incur debt include education, disaster, robbery, or other utility bills.

In consequence of this necessity, the shari’ah recognizes the inevitability of debt in human endeavor and makes appropriate legislation to regulate its contract. The Qur’an exhorts believers to see giving and taking of loans as a mutual responsibility among them. This is inferred from the injunction which states that “...and help one another in goodness and piety and do not help one another in sin and aggression...” (Qur’an 5: 2). In this divine message, a creditor is helping the debtor in goodness by making the loan available at the time of need. In reciprocating this act of righteousness displayed by the creditor, it is incumbent upon the debtor to relate with this contract in high level of integrity by fulfilling the promise as agreed in the contract of the loan. To establish the lawfulness of this type of contract on one hand, and to regulate it on the other hand, the Qur’an posits thus:

O you who believe! When you deal with each other in contracting a debt for a fixed time, then write it down; and let a scribe write it down between you with fairness; and the scribe

should not refuse to write as Allah as taught him, so he should write; and let him who owes the debt dictate, and he should be careful of (his duty to) Allah, his Lord, and not diminish anything from it... (Qur'an 2: 282)

This divine guideline does not only approve the contract of debt but equally underscores its sensitive status in the socio-economic affairs of the Muslims. The emphasis on documentation through an intermediary, a witness, is a way of cautioning the debtor to realize the weight of the obligation in the contract of incurring debt and its gravity in case he defaults. This also implies that debt is to be taken only when it is exceptionally necessary. To further demonstrate the inevitability of debt when it becomes necessary, some prophetic traditions equally elucidate on debt matters even to the extent that Prophet Muhammad himself was involved in certain circumstances. A tradition of the Prophet was reported thus: "Whoever takes the money of the people with the intention to repay it, Allah will repay it on his behalf, and whoever takes it to spoil it, then Allah will spoil him". (Khan, 1994). In another instance, "Jabir bin Abdullah narrated: I went to the Prophet (SAW) who told me to pray two rak'at. He owed me some debt. He repaid me the debt and gave me an extra amount. (Khan, 1994).

In protecting the rights of the creditor, Islam compels the debtor to fulfill his obligation of the contract by ensuring that the loan is refunded no matter the prevailing challenges. This is the reason why it was noted that Prophet Muhammad would not go ahead to perform Janazah rites on a deceased Muslim until it was ascertained that there was no debt still hanging on him or it was paid before the rites were executed, (Bensaid, Grine, Mohd Nor & Mohd Yusoff, 2013). This action of the Prophet in no doubt, indicates the gravity of debt and its implication in the life after death of the debtor.

Sequel to the above, Islam comes to the aid of the debtors who are genuinely incapacitated to redeem their debt by resorting to the zakat resources for fulfilling their debt obligation. In this case, all debts that fall under the acceptable criteria under the shari'ah as earlier identified are to be considered within the available zakat resources. This must take cognizance of the fact that such debtors are truly overwhelmed by the debt. Kasim, Md Noor, and Mohd Kamarudin (2023) emphasized that the concept of 'al-Gharimun' implies debtors who can no longer bear the burden of the debt. By and large, the shari'ah identifies debt as a common and inevitable socio-economic phenomenon among humanity in general and Muslims in particular. Hence, it is acceptable that debtors are beneficiaries of zakat as stated in the Qur'an with the condition that such debts are incurred under the acceptable circumstances recognized by the shari'ah which include that the debtors are confirmed truly bankrupt.

5. Allocation of Zakāt to Debtors (*Al-Ghārimūn*) in Lagos State

Zakāt administration has been established in Lagos state through the activities of non-governmental organisations with significant impacts recorded among practitioners over the years. Studies have proved that many individuals were economically empowered by different Zakāt administrators through the Zakāt fund, (Ashafa, 2016, Yusuf et al., 2021). Some of the organizations notable for Zakāt administration in Lagos State are in the table below:

S/N	Name Of Organisation	Year Established	Address
1	Forum for Islamic Education and Welfare	1995	Syrian Club, Rebadu Road, off Awolowo Road, Ikoyi, Lagos
2	Zakāt and Sadaqat Foundation	2000	Suite 10, Tafawa Balewa Square, East Pavilion, Lagos
3	Muslim Welfare Fund	2002	4, Shanu Street, By Afariogun, off Awolowo Way, Ikeja, Lagos
4	Lekki Muslim Ummah Zakāt and Sadaqat	2011	Lekki Central Mosque, Lekki Scheme 1, Lagos
5	Muslim Zakawat and Sadaqat Foundation	2013	Suite No B7, Amori Shopping Complex, Egbeda, Lagos
6	NASFAT Agency for Zakāt and Sadaqat	2014	9/10 CMD Jubilee Road, Shangisha Magodo, Lagos
7	Fadlullah (Olaoluwa) Islamic Center Zakāt and Sadaqat Foundation	Not Available	6-8 Gafar-Alani Street, Akesan, New Town, Lagos
8	Al-Hayat Relief Foundation	Not Available	Several Branches Available with autonomy
9	The Companion Zakāt and Sadaqat Funds	2013	Suite B, 19, Unique Shopping Mall, Urban and Physical Planning Road, GRA, Ikeja
10	Ansar ud-deen Zakāt Programme	Not Available	Ajao Road, Surulere, Lagos

Among these organisations, those with huge volume of fund for regular disbursement among beneficiaries include Zakāt and Sadaqat Foundation, Muslim Zakawat and Sadaqat Foundation, NASFAT Agency for Zakāt and Sadaqat, and Lekki Muslim Ummah Zakāt and Sadaqat.

5.1 Zakāt and Sadaqat Foundation (ZSF)

This came to existence in the year 2000 to revive Zakat which was observed to have been neglected by the Muslim community. The founders of the organization set out to deliver quality zakat assessment, collection, and distribution, (Ashafa, 2016). In terms of the zakat collection, Zakat and Sadaqat Foundation uses various media to publicise and mobilise resources from eligible zakat payers. They use personal contacts through their paid workers, print fliers, and continuous orientation at mosques and other Islamic centres to aggregate zakat funds. Information on nisab rate is equally disseminated from time to time to enable individuals to

determine their eligibility as appropriate. Similarly, the organization disburses zakat through various categories of needs such as economic empowerment, educational support, and medical support among others.

On the specific question of debtors, categorization adopted by Zakat and Sadaqat Foundation to invite applications and disburse zakat resources does not easily encourage applications from debtors. However, findings revealed that debtors are being considered and given zakat whenever they are established to have been genuinely incapacitated to pay the debt. It is important to note that debtors who apply for zakat are subjected to scrutiny to determine the justification for the debt, prudence, and discipline level of the debtors. Zakat and Sadaqat Foundation does not oblige the application of debtors who are serial debtors. The organization sees debtors as relevant beneficiaries of zakat if the condition surrounding the debt falls within the provisions of the shari’ah (Olagunju, 2023). In the consecutive three years of 2020, 2021 and 2022, the amount of zakat disbursed to debtors is... (N2, 728, 138. 85), and (N2, 655, 000. 00) respectively (Zakat and Sadaqat Foundation Annual Reports). These figures represent minute shares of the entire disbursement of the respective years as shown in the table below:

S/N	Year	Total Disbursement	Disbursement to Debtors	Percentage to Debtors
1.	2020	N168, 806, 468. 00	N4, 881, 000. 00	2. 89%
2.	2021	N182, 737, 418. 00	N2, 728, 138. 85	1. 49%
3.	2022	N206, 642, 880. 45	N2, 655, 000. 00	1. 28%

Obtained from ZSF Annual Reports for 2020, 2021 and 2022

A closer look at the report shows that debtors are not really neglected by Zakāt and Sadaqat Foundation even though stringent conditions are attached to the process of screening available applicants. If it is considered that group of beneficiaries listed in the Qur’an is eight, it may mean that more debtors are given access to Zakāt if they meet the conditions established by the shari’ah.

5.2 Muslim Zakawat and Sadaqat Foundation (MUZASAF):

This was established in the year 2012 for the Zakāt and Sadaqat administrations. The main objective of the organization is to resuscitate the spirit of social responsibility among Muslims in particular. It is a foundation meant to care for the welfare of Muslims without restriction, (www.muzasaf.org). MUZASAF has consistently disbursed zakat to recipients quarterly at the initial stage and later on an annual basis.

Different categories of recipients do benefit from the zakat disbursement of MUZASAF. As it concerns debtors, MUZASAF considers and gives zakat to debtors occasionally. It is important to note that MUZASAF is thorough in scrutinizing the debtor to ascertain the nature and circumstances surrounding the debt involved. With this condition, the allocation of zakat to debtors is not regular. Based on the available data, disbursement in the consecutive three years show that 7.5% was allocated to debtors in the year 2020 while there was no zakat allocation to debtors in 2021 and only 0.9% of zakat disbursement was allocated to debtors in 2022 (Abdulazeez, 2023).

5.3 *Nasrul-Lahi-li Fathi Agency for Zakāt and Sadaqat (NAZAS)*

This agency was established in the year 2014 to alleviate poverty among the masses in general and Muslims in particular. Since its inception, the agency has been consistent in collecting and disbursing zakat to eligible recipients with improvement yearly. It is particularly interesting to that NAZAS considers all categories of zakat stated in the Qur'an at each disbursement programme (Adeyemo, 2023). It is noted that this agency disburses zakat to beneficiaries twice in each year (Muharram and Ramadan).

Regarding allocation to debtors, NAZAS specifically allocates ten percent (10%) of zakat disbursement to debtors. In doing this, shari'ah stipulated conditions on zakat to debtors are strictly observed in the process of allocating zakat to them. NAZAS does not approve the allocation of zakat to debtors whose debts were incurred through interest (ribā) of any form. For the years 2019, 2020 and 2021, total disbursements by NAZAS were (N48, 966, 234. 00), (N54, 012, 231. 00), and (N85, 106, 224. 00) respectively with 10% to debtors on each occasion (Adeyemo, 2023).

5.4 *Lekki Muslim Ummah Zakāt and Sadaqat (LEMU)*

The Muslim Community in Lekki established the Zakat and Sadaqat administration in the year 2011 basically to control begging which was prevalent then. Members of the community are committed to discharging their religious obligation of remitting their zakat through the established platform regularly (Ashafa, 2016). LEMU has been committed to allocating zakat to debtors since the inception of the programme. It was discovered that LEMU generally allocates about 5% of zakat funds to debtors when they are available. In recent years, the record shows that the agency disbursed N70 million, N60 million, and N55 million for 2020, 2021, and 2022 respectively out of which few debtors were given zakat for debt relief.

6. **Appraisal of Zakāt Allocation to Debtors in Lagos State**

From the foregoing reports, it has been unveiled that the zakat administration in Lagos state is prominent with significant improvement among practitioners. NAZAS for instance, confirms that over N450 million zakat funds have been disbursed through the regular payment of zakat by continuously expanding payers (www.guardian.ng). It is generally observed that administrators in the state take cognizance of shari'ah provisions on most issues that border around the governance of zakat. For instance, it has been proved that many organizations in charge of zakat consciously apply the principle of localization which is an emphatic practice since the early days of Islam for effective alleviation of poverty, (Ashafa, 2021). Other issues such as the rate of *nisab*, engagement of zakat workers for effectiveness, and regular sensitization of the Muslim Ummah on the significance of zakat are all handled professionally by many zakat administrators in Lagos state.

Similarly, findings reveal that these organizations recognize the need to satisfy all categories of recipients as stated in the Qur'an. This fact is established by the organizations used as samples in this study. On zakat allocation to debtors, there is no doubt that debtors are not neglected by zakat managers as it is generally believed. All the zakat agencies concurred with the fact that zakat is relevant and should be considered while disbursing zakat to eligible recipients. However, many of the administrators engage debtors with strict measures as laid down in the shari'ah. To buttress this, ZSF would consider issues like the income of a debtor with the extant debt at the time, reasons for debt (if it was incurred for a lawful purpose or not), and the size of the applicant's family. In the same vein, NAZAS would not attend to any debt which has to do with interest (ribā).

It is noteworthy to mention that zakat allocation to debtors is generally low compared to other beneficiaries across agencies examined in this study. *Exempli gratia*, LEMU is noted to have allocated zakat to only four (4) beneficiaries out of over 200 beneficiaries in each zakat year (see www.independent.ng as referenced). In like manner, ZSF consistently allocated a mere 2% or less to debtors in their zakat disbursement (see ZSF Annual Reports for 2020-2022). Others are either operating similar ratio or less except NAZAS which allocates about 10% to debtors.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study assumed that certain categories of zakat recipients are neglected by stakeholders, particularly zakat administrators. With this assumption, it is believed that debtors who are mentioned in the Qur'an (Q9: 60) as beneficiaries of zakat have not been enjoying zakat like the poor and the needy. The study therefore sought to examine the veracity of the conjecture to guide stakeholders to improve on zakat administration in Lagos state. In the course of this investigation, necessary justification for each of the eight sets of beneficiaries was emphasised based on the shari'ah position. The philosophy behind the legislation of each group of recipients as expounded by al-Qaradawi was contextualized in the contemporary realities and experiences. It was noted that debtors could always be considered for zakat benefit if the circumstances meet the projection of the shari'ah. More importantly, it was proved that debt has severe consequences for both the spiritual and psychological well-being on the debtors which is necessary to offer an intervention as provided in the zakat option.

Regarding the allocation of zakat to debtors in Lagos state, the survey conducted in this study considered ten zakat agencies out of which four (4) were examined as samples for the research problem. Those examined were Zakat and Sadaqat Foundation (ZSF), NASFAT Agency for Zakat and Sadaqat (NAZAS), Muslim Zakawat and Sadaqat Foundation (MUZASAF) and Lekki Muslim Ummah Zakat and Sadaqat (LEMU). Zakat agencies believe that debtors are relevant as beneficiaries and treat them as such during zakat disbursement. By this, debtors are not neglected as erroneously perceived and believed. In compliance with certain provisions established as pre-conditions for allocating zakat to debtors, zakat beneficiaries among debtors are few across agencies when compared with other categories of beneficiaries. With these findings, it is hereby recommended that zakat administrators should embark on an upward review of zakat allocation to debtors without unduly relaxing the necessary principles attached to debt and debtors as preconditions for zakat benefit.

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