

TAYR Quarterly Journal
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31561/2014tq>

TAYR

Quarterly

DOI: 10.31561/2014tq

Volume 6, Issue 4
December 2019

Journal of the
Tunisian Association of Young Researchers
(TAYR)



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The impact of Extroversion- Introversion on EFL oral performance in the Tunisian context

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Abstract:

In recent years, researchers in Second Language Acquisition have been interested in the relationship between personality types and second language learning (L2). Personality types have been studied in terms of their influence on second language learning, especially, language skills such as speaking, writing, reading and listening. The personality trait Extroversion-Introversion has received considerable attention. Some researchers found that this type of personality has no correlation with oral performance of second language learners. Others have stated that Extroversion-Introversion correlates significantly with oral performance especially in terms of fluency, accuracy, pronunciation and global impression. In the light of these contradictory findings, this paper aims to add evidence to one side or the other by reinvestigating the correlation between Extroversion-Introversion and oral performance of L2 learners. Specifically, three speech variables were examined namely mean Length of utterance (MLU), self-correction and filled pauses. The research study was carried out in 2 March secondary school 1934, situated in Sidi Bouzid East. The participants were 2nd year Arts students. They were administered The Eysenck Personality Questionnaire and three oral tasks. The participants were assessed via two main scales: Global and Teacher Observation scales. In the analysis, the participants have scores for their tendencies towards either extroversion or introversion. The results show that there is no significant correlation between extroversion- introversion and L2 oral performance. These findings are discussed with respect to the previous findings in the same research field.

Key terms: Extroversion/Introversion, EFL, Oral performance.

Introduction

One of the main tasks in SLA research is to explain why great individual variability among L2 learners occurs. Deale (2005) maintains that inter- individual variation can be accounted for by learner- internal factors. In addition, Johnson (2001) distinguishes between three types of learner- internal factors: cognitive, affective and personality factors. Cognitive factors include various forms of mental processing information (Ellis, 1994), affective factors involve motivation, self- efficacy, inhibition and anxiety (Ehrman, et al 2003) and personality variables are mostly associated with personality traits such as conscientiousness, agreeableness and neuroticism. The personality attribute that has received most attention in SLA research is extroversion-introversion. It stems from Trait Theory of personality that was developed in psychology

A considerable amount of research has been conducted to explain the effects of the personality trait Extroversion- Introversion on second language learning. Some studies have shown a clear correlation between extroversion and success in second language. Other studies have failed to demonstrate any substantial connection between an extroverted- introverted personality and second language learning. Still other studies have reached the opposite conclusion that there is a negative correlation between the two. Due to these contradictory findings, a research investigation of the learners' personality trait extroversion- introversion with respect to their oral performance of English as a foreign language was conducted in order to add evidence to one side or to the other because personality types are hypothesised to play a role in L2 learning process and outcome.

The purpose of the present study is to explore the relationship between EFL oral performance and their personality types in terms of extroversion- introversion in order to clarify the correlation between extroversion- introversion and students' oral performance. The results of the current study may be beneficial for both students and teachers. Students may gain insight into possible contributing factors to their oral performance in English language and therefore make better decisions on how to enhance their EFL performance. In addition, EFL teachers may decide to implement their teaching goals in accordance with students' varying levels in EFL and their personality types, hence, enhancing differentiation instruction in EFL Tunisian classrooms. Four objectives are set for the present research study. They are presented as follows:

1. Identify the prevalent personality type in terms of extroversion-introversion among the sampled male and female students
2. Explore the effect of the personality construct extroversion/ introversion on the participants' speech variable MLU
3. Explore the effect of the personality construct extroversion-introversion on the participants' speech. Variable self-correction
4. Investigate the effect of the personality construct extroversion-introversion on the participants' speech variable filled pauses

The current study is designed to answer three research questions:

1. What is the distribution of extroversion- introversion personality types among Sidi Bouzid 2 March Secondary School participants?
2. Are there any significant differences observed between extroverted and introverted participants' L2 oral performance?
3. How does either extroversion or introversion affect the speech variables MLU, self-correction and filled pauses in L2 oral performance of the research sample?

Extroversion/ Introversion in theory and research

Extroversion- Introversion as the basis of "Big Three" and "Big Five" dimensions

Trait theory of personality is largely concerned with individual differences in personality. The foundation for trait psychology was laid by three investigators whose work is of particular significance. They are Gordon Allport, Raymond B. Cattell and Hans Eysenck (Devaele & Furnham, 1999). Trait Personality theorists call for a new approach to the study of personality, one whose measures of psychological attributes are as objective and reliable as those found in the physical sciences. They emphasize that a central feature of science is measurement. They also believe that personality can be understood by positing that all people have certain traits or ways of behaving. Personality traits are defined as dimensions or scales on the basis of which a personality is described (Allport, 1962, cited in Abali, 1994). An example of trait is extroversion/-introversion. Extroversion is manifested in an outgoing, talkative and energetic behaviour whereas introversion is manifested in a more and solitary behaviour. Psychologists who are working in the area of trait theory are concerned with

determining the basic traits that provide a meaningful description of personality and finding some ways to measure them (Dewaele & Furnham, 1999)

Indeed, one of the most basic assumptions shared by trait theorists is that people possess broad predispositions called traits to respond in particular ways. This means that personality can be characterized in terms of an individual consistent possibility of behaving, feeling or thinking in a particular way (Maddi, 1996). A related assumption is that there is a direct correspondence between the person's performances of actions and his or her possession of the corresponding trait.

In other terms, if someone reports a low amount of trait related behaviour on a test of personality trait, then, he is thought to possess low amounts of the given trait. (Maddi, 1996). Another shared assumption is that human behaviour and personality can be organized in a hierarchy. To sum up, trait theorists suggest that people display broad predispositions to respond in certain ways, that those predispositions are organized in a hierarchical manner and that the trait concept can be a foundation of a scientific theory of personality.

One of the most influential models often used in linguistic research is a model that stems from the work of the German psychologist Hans Eysenck (Deale, 2005). Eysenck used factor analysis on data collected from self- evaluation questionnaires to identify a set of temperament dimensions. Based on these dimensions, he developed first, the Eysenck Personality Inventory (EPI) and then the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) to operationalize the construct of personality (Eysenck & Eysenck 1964, Eysenck 1975, Eysenck, Eysenck & Barrett 1985). EPQ has been repeatedly re-evaluated and adjusted over the years and it measures the following super-traits:

- Psychoticism (P): Individuals who score high in this dimension tend to be more aggressive, assertive, egocentric, unsympathetic, manipulative, achievement-oriented, dogmatic, and masculine and tough- minded than individuals with low scores in this dimension.
- Extroversion (E): Extroverted people are predisposed to be sociable, irresponsible, dominant. They lack reflection and are more sensation- seeking, impulsive, risk-taking, expressive and active than introverts are.
- Neuroticism (N): an inclination towards neuroticism relates positively with anxiousness, depression, guilt feelings, low self-esteem, tension, mood swings and obsessiveness (Eysenck, 1984).

The basic dimensions of extroversion- introversion and neuroticism- emotional stability that were developed by H. J. Eysenck have been integrated into a model that at present encompasses five dimensions which are labelled as “the Big Five model” (Costa & MacCrae,1995). Different researchers conclude that personality traits can be described by using these five factors. The significance of some factors is still discussed but researchers agree that one basic factor is extroversion- introversion: “There is a general agreement that dimension I is Eysenck’s (1947) extroversion- introversion” (Dewaele, 1999).

Eysenck (1967) also believes that the three super factors, Psychoticism, Extroversion and Neuroticism are related to various neurobiological mechanisms. One of which is Eysenck’s Arousal Theory. Eysenck’s personality theory reached its peak in the seventies and the eighties; nevertheless, it is still intriguing in the field of personality psychology. Eysenck’s Theory has its roots in rigorous empirical results from factor analysis of various personality traits’ indicators and measure instruments. Eysenck’s theory is based on the claim that personality traits actually reflect individual differences in the way that people nervous systems operate. The great contribution is in the possibility of detecting genetic factors and of determining the universality and the stability of personality dimensions (Delae, 2005). Eysenck (1984) contented that the basic difference between extroverts and introverts is biological. Introverts are claimed to possess a higher level of arousal in the autonomous nervous system and in the cortex (Eysenck, 1981).

In the same line, Dewaele and Furnham (1999) claim that any individual operates ideally with a moderate level of cortical arousal. Consequently, the more extroverted people will be inclined to look for external stimulation to reach an optimal level because they are under- aroused whereas the more introverted people do not need this stimulation since they are over-aroused. An extrovert person will rather try to avoid over-arousing situations. This means that certain stimuli from the outside world as well as from the inside organism will evoke strong responses within the introverts (Dewaele & Furnham, 1999). Numerous studies have shown the link between the degree of extroversion and the tolerance of strong light or loud noise. Introverts’ tolerance level is much faster when exposed to these stimuli; they will blink with their eyes sooner and turn the volume down sooner (M. W. Eysenck, 1984). Furnham and Dewaele (1999) found that pop music had a more distracting effect on introverts’ performance of various cognitive tasks than on extroverts’ performance. Accordingly, Extroversion-

Introversion is “a truly psychological concept slotting between phenomena at the biological and social levels and providing an explanatory link between them” (Deale, 2005 p.519). The Cognitive and social differences between extroverts and introverts are presented in the next part.

Cognitive and Social Differences between Extroverts and Introverts

The difference in the arousal level can explain the varying cognitive and social behaviour of extroverts and introverts. Eysenck and Eysenck (1984) presented the following descriptions of a highly extroverted and a highly introverted personality:

The typical extrovert is sociable, likes parties, has many friends, needs to have people to talk to and does not like reading or studying by him. He craves excitement, takes chances, often sticks his neck out, acts on the spur of the moment and is generally an impulsive individual. He is fond of practical jokes, always has a ready answer. He is carefree, easy going, optimistic and likes to laugh and be merry. He prefers to keep moving and doing things. He tends to be aggressive and lose his temper quickly, altogether, his feeling is not kept under tight control and he is not always a reliable person (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1984, p 64).

The typical introvert is a quiet retiring sort of person, introspective, fond of books rather than people. He is reserved and distant except to intimate friends. He tends to plan ahead, “looks before he leaps”, and distrusts the impulse of the moment. He does not like excitement, takes matters of everyday life with proper seriousness and likes a well-ordered mode of life. He keeps his feeling under close control, seldom behaves in an aggressive manner and does not lose his temper easily. He is reliable, somewhat pessimistic and places great values on ethical standards (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1984, p 64).

In addition, it is assumed that cortical arousal level affects variables that are of interest to applied linguistics (Dewaele & Furnham, 1999). Wilson (1977) described the link between biology and behaviour as follows: “A causal chain which runs all the way from genetics, through anatomic structures and physiological processes such as the retrieval formation and cortical arousal to variation in extroversion measured in laboratory tests and questionnaires, hence to a wide range of behavioural domains” (p. 213).

Besides, Wilson proposed that verbal behaviour clearly fits into the chain. He claimed that Findings in the area of verbal learning and memory provide particularly

striking support for Eysenck's arousal theory (p. 213). Thus, in speech production, both long-term memory and short-term memory are involved. Several psychological studies have shown that extroverts are superior to introverts in verbal learning tasks. Klein smith and Kaplan (1963, cited in Deale, 2005) found that introverts were superior to extraverts on long-term recall but inferior on immediate recall. Hawarth and H. J. Eysenck who used recall intervals varying from immediate testing to 24 hr. delay confirmed these findings. In addition, W. M. Eysenck (1984) found that introverts need longer time than extroverts do to retrieve information from long term or permanent storage (p. 204). This difference, according to M. W. Eysenck (1984) is due to the over-arousal of the introverts, which would affect their parallel processing. Therefore, introverts would be a "at a disadvantage at any task (...) involving the processing of several different items of information" (p. 203).

To confirm earlier findings on the extroverts' superior short-term memory, Matthews (1992) used free recall experiment. The results provided "fairly direct evidence for extraverts storing more information in the verbal input register" (Matthews & Dorn, 1998, p. 383). Matthews (1998) suggested that the extroverts' superior verbal processing functions might help them in conversation with others. Further, Matthews and Deary (1998) pointed out that the extraverts' superior short memory and the resulting advantage in conversation can be enforced by two other factors, namely, their better physiological stress resistance and their lower level of anxiety.

In addition, M. W. Eysenck (1984) studied the effect of stress and time pressure on fluency in oral tasks. He found that extroverts produced utterances more fluently despite equivalence in vocabularies. High activation appeared to enhance performance for extroverts but reduced it for introverts. Wilson (1977) concluded that M. W. Eysenck's (1984) study "supports the idea that introverts tend toward over-arousal for the optimum performance of certain tasks while extraverts are inclined to be under aroused" (p. 193). Helode (1995) later confirmed this and Rawling and Carnie (1994) who found that extroverts were superior on a verbal processing test only under conditions of time pressure. Further researches showed that extroverts tend toward fast and less accurate performance in complex cognitive tasks whereas the introverts tend to be slow and more accurate (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1985). In addition, the type of the task seemed to determine performance: Extroverts performed faster under relatively arousing conditions for example intrinsically interesting or short tasks. However,

introverts were found to be faster in long and monotonous tasks (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1985).

Matthews (1995), also, suggested that it is the introverts' fear of punishment that may make them behave in a cautious manner. Earlier research showed that introverts tend to be more socially anxious (Dewaele & Furnham, 1999) and that high anxiety leads to intentional selectivity and reduced intentional capacity (H. J. Eysenck, 1985). Besides, Eysenck and Eysenck (1985) argued that the high anxiety of introverts could further reduce the available processing capacity of working memory: "This would explain why introverts take longer to access information... from long-term or permanent storage" (p.203). H. J. Eysenck (1985) redefined anxiety in terms of cognitive interference. He suggested that anxious person divides his/her attention between task- related cognition and self-related cognition making performance less efficient. H. J. Eysenck (1985) claimed that the anxious person tries to compensate for the reduced efficiency by increased effort. This could have important linguistic consequences. Macintyre and Gardner (1994) pointed out that Eysenck' (1979) Theory "is able to explain the negative effects observed for language anxiety (p. 285). They assumed that language anxiety "tends to correlate with measures of performance in the second language but not in the native language" (p. 301). The authors concluded, "The potential effects of language anxiety on cognitive processing in the second language may be pervasive and may be quiet subtle" (p. 301).

Methodology

The research study was conducted in 2 March secondary school 1934, which is located in Sidi Bouzid East. The participants were 2nd year Arts students both males and females. Their average age is 16. The respondents take five hour-English course per-week. Generally, research in the field of education is characterized by the use of quantitative methods. However, in situation where the focus is to explore the state of practice of the human aspects of education as the case for the present study, both qualitative and quantitative techniques were employed to collect data:

- Eysenck' s Personality Questionnaire- Revised Short Scale (EPQ-RS)
- Classroom observation

In order to compile a complete picture of the participants' personality types in terms of extroversion- introversion Eysenck's Extroversion-Introversion scale has been used in the current study. It is a self-report questionnaire originally used in a study by

Eysenck, and Barrett (1984) and has been subject to extensive testing by a number of researchers. The questionnaire consists of 23 items requiring participants to answer 'YES' or 'NO'. However, in the present study, the result of the questionnaire is not the only decisive element for the understanding of the participants' personality, the researcher also considers teachers and fellow students 'observations and subject own judgement of personality type for the final judgement of the subject personality in terms of introversion- introversion (appendix 1).

The participants were assigned three oral tasks. The first one consisted of a description of picture for about 5 minutes. The second one was a role-play and it lasted approximately 5 minutes. Finally, the third task was a presentation, time of which approximates 5 minutes. The participants' performance data were recorded and analysed in terms of the utterance length, filled pauses and self-correction.

Data Analysis

Identification of the participants' personality

The personality questionnaire started with a personal- information part in which the participants identified themselves with introvert, extroverts or introvert-extroverts. They also stated their opinion about the influence of their personality on oral English learning. In addition, they revealed their name and age.

Table 1: Self-evaluation and questionnaire's identification of subjects' personality type.

	Self-evaluation	Questionnaire
<i>Introverts</i>	7	12
<i>Extroverts</i>	10	15
<i>Introvert-extroverts</i>	39	29
Total number	56	56

The impact of the trait extroversion/introversion on the oral performance of the participants:

To investigate the correlation between the students' level of extroversion-introversion and their oral English performance, three oral tasks were administered in three different testing periods. In the first oral English test, the participants were asked to describe a visual presented without any written or auditory information. The second task consisted of a role play in which two participants were recommended to express their attitude about two issues "child labour and working mothers". They were also expected to express their agreement or disagreement with one another. The third oral

English task required every participant to present a leaflet about two important Tunisian sites in Tunisia.

Three variables of speech production are selected for study: MLU, filled pauses and self-correction. Filled pauses are sounds that are produced during spontaneous speech. They are pauses filled with vocalisations and hesitation phenomenon, which occur while the speaker is thinking or planning his utterance (Hassan, 2001). They can occur at any place in the speech. Self-correction is a speech variable that functions as a discourse repair in speech (Hassan, 2001) and MLU is a measure of linguistic productivity in speech (Ellis, 1994).

Findings

The effect of Personality trait extroversion- introversion on the participants' oral performance of English language

- Length of utterance

According to Ellis (1994), Mean Length of utterance (MLU) is a measure of linguistic productivity in speech, and it is calculated adding the number of the words produced and dividing it on the number of turns a participant has. While computing MLU of the subjects, compound words, proper nouns were counted as single words, fillers and exclamations were eliminated during the calculation of MLU. Table1 reveals the total MLU that extrovert and introvert participants had in the study.

Transcript 1: (an extrovert subject)

Parents never lets let their children down when they get into trouble. They support me when I get into trouble and they worry about me when I get confused Also, ehh my parents are always ready to guide us to to the right path. So eh I I can't can't imagine my life without my parents.

Transcript 2: (introvert subject)

Millions of poor children are .exploited by their bosses who make them work long hours and give them little money as a result their physical and (silence) mental development is hindered.

During the transcription of the verbal output of the subjects, the length of the utterances produced by extroverts and introverts seemed to be different from each other. Therefore, length of the utterance as a variable of speech production is explored to see if the observation would be confirmed by the results of the data analysis. Taking

the mean length of utterances (MLU) and comparing them might provide insight in the learners' capacity to build longer utterances.

Table 2: Average MLU of extroverts and introverts.

	<i>Extroverts</i>	<i>Introverts</i>
<i>Average MLU</i>	14.6	13.8

As indicated in table 1, there is no significant distinction in the MLU profiles of introverted and extroverted subjects. MLU is used as a measure that indicates the level of language productivity and reflects language complexity as well. Ellis (1994) regards MLU as a measure that gives indication of “general syntactic complexity”. Martin et al. (1989) also consider high MLU scores as “indicators of fluency” and low MLU scores as “indicators of syntactic breakdown”. Under these assumptions, the average amount of verbal output of the subjects is hypothesized to be reflecting their ability and willingness to produce longer and more complex sentences. Considering the results of the present study, it is found that extroverted learners have a tendency to produce longer utterances during their production although the difference between the two types is not quite significant.

- Filled Pauses

Filled pauses are sounds produced during spontaneous speech. They are pauses filled with vocalization, hesitation phenomena which occur while the speaker is thinking (Hassan, 2001). They do not add any new information to the conversation, but indicate that the speaker is planning his utterance. They can occur at any place in the speech (Abali, 2006). A speaker might be employing a filled pause during the speech

Because of a trouble or a hesitation on a discourse level, the speaker tries to figure out what to say and how to react. On a cognitive level, the speaker may experience trouble and might need additional time during the speech for the retrieval of any kind of information which can be grammatical or lexical (Hassan, 2001). The findings of the study conducted by Deweale and Furnham (1999) suggests that introverts have a tendency to hesitate more in formal settings. The transcriptions below provide examples in which the participants employed filled pauses.

Transcript 3: (extrovert subject)

Tunisia is **er** a hospitable land of color and **er** contrast. It invites you to enjoy **er** the natural beauty, natural cities and **er** warm friendliness of its people. Its impressive **er** infrastructure of hotels, restaurants added comfort and **er** pleasure to its guests.

Transcript 4: (an introvert subject)

You will enjoy the cultural activities **eh** typical of that area such **eh** weaving blankets and making pottery objects. You can also enjoy uh traditional food. In short there is no better place for holidays than Jerba where you can have fun, relaxation and **eh** enjoy authentic culture at the same time.

In the present study, the number of the filled pauses “er” “eh” were counted taking the five minutes of the third oral test (integrated oral task) as a basis in order to see whether extroverts and introverts would employ different numbers of filled pauses in their speech.

Table 3: total number of filled pauses of extroverts and introverts participants

<i>Total number of filled pauses</i>	<i>184</i>
<i>Filled pauses produced by extroverts</i>	<i>116</i>
<i>Filled pauses produced by introverts</i>	<i>68</i>

The study reveals that the extrovert participants produced more filled pauses than their introvert counterparts. The extroverted subjects of the study tend to use more filled pauses in their oral production which can be explained as follows: extroverts might have experienced some difficulties while producing their long utterances. They might have needed time while shaping what to say and they might have employed filled pauses during the decision making process. In addition, the use of filled pauses in speech can be a hesitation phenomenon. Hesitation has been considered to be in relation to unplanned discourse.

- Self-correction

The last speech variable observed in the existing data was a set of self-corrected utterances that functioned as discourse repair in speech. The data provides examples in which an utterance was produced and corrected immediately after the speaker realized

the ill-structured utterance. Self-correction can be interpreted as “an attempt to reformulate an utterance after realizing that it is not well-formed enough to convey the intended meaning to the listener”. Foster et al. (cited in Ellis, 2000, p.148) defines self-correction as a process in which “the speaker identifies an error either during or immediately following the production and stops and reformulates the speech” Ellis reported that these repairs are most often employed in non- native discourse. Self-corrected utterances were observed and analysed in the existing data. The transcription below provide examples self-corrected utterances.

Transcript 5: (an extrovert)

For me, the book is important if you really want to understand things in **deep/in depth**, you have to turn to books because the **much/more** you read the more you know and the more **enlighten/enlightened** you become.

Transcript 6 (an introvert)

Personally, I think that books should be valuable at any time because books not only **broaden/expand** our knowledge of the world but also help us improve our skills.

The underlined utterances represent words or phrases that the speaker attempted to repair during the discourse. The number of the utterances corrected by the speaker himself were counted. The data analysis reveals that eight extrovert participants produced 24 self- corrected-utterances while 15 introvert participants produced 12 self-corrected utterances. The results revealed that extroverted subjects tended to employ self-correction more often than their counterparts did. In other words, extroverts are likely to monitor their output and “pay more attention to specific elements of the utterances in order to correct and improve them. (Ellis, 1994, p.131).

Ellis (2000) defines self- monitoring as correcting ones’s speech for accuracy in pronunciation, grammar. However Ellis (2000) does not regard self-monitoring as a measure of accuracy and emphasizes that it is simply the degree to which a learner is “oriented towards accuracy” (Ellis, 2000, p.150). In addition, Furnham (1999) regards self-monitoring as a process that involves “careful regulations of one’s self-presentation to fit a behaviour pattern which is perceived appropriate and desirable” (p. 96). Furthermore, Furnham (1999) states that self- monitoring is an interpersonal orientation that correlates with extroversion.

The main factor, which seems to differentiate extroverts from introverts in the existing data, is the choice of planning the discourse either before or during the speech.

This difference in their style of planning results in differences in number of hesitation expressions and self- corrected utterances.

Discussion

As mentioned before, the present study attempts to investigate the effects of personality trait extroversion- introversion on the L2 oral performance of the sample under investigation. Two components of EFL oral performance were investigated: fluency and accuracy. It is found that extroverts tend towards faster and less accurate performance in short tasks whereas introverts tend to be slower but more accurate in both short and complex tasks. It was found also that the type of the task can determine the level of performance of both extroverts and introverts. Thus, extroverts perform faster when the oral task is short or intrinsically arousing while introverts were found to be more accurate in long and monotonous tasks. These findings are compatible with Dewaele and Furnham's contention (2002) that speech production involves both short-term and long-term memory and that extrovert L2 learners tend to be more fluent in short tasks while introverts tend to be more accurate in complex, cognitive tasks. Semantic errors were found to correlate significantly with extroversion trait. This may suggest that extrovert learners may take the risk in oral performance and therefore commit more semantic errors than their introvert counterparts commit.

Additionally, it is revealed that both introverts and extroverts use different language learning strategies to perform different oral tasks. Introverts tend to use meta-cognitive strategies to prepare themselves before the learning process occurs. This strategy is used in planning the learning process that is going to be experienced by learners. On the one hand, learners who experience anxiety in L2 learning process, which leads them to have a perfect plan and preparation before learning or doing something, use Meta-cognitive strategies usually. On the other hand, if learners do not feel any anxiety, they will not prepare anything and tend to underestimate the learning process they are going to face. It is the case for extrovert learners who tend to leave the meta-cognitive strategy because they like to do things directly and quickly without any planning. Introverts, however, are likely, to delay the production in order to use appropriate meta-cognitive strategies to produce good results. Extrovert learners prefer directness rather than using meta-cognitive strategies because they seldom worry about the risks they will get from what they perform.

To clarify, Extrovert participants tend to do the same mistakes resulting from the same factors. However, these repeated mistakes will hardly make sense for them because risk has been viewed by extroverts as something that challenges them and makes them interested, not a frightening thing that should be avoided as the introvert people do (Ehrman & Oxford, 1995). Meta-cognitive strategies can be a form of advance: organizing the previous concept in the learners' mind, directing the attention to the material that will be learned, selecting the attention, self-management, self-monitoring and delayed production and self-evaluation. All of those strategies are actually important because a proper meta-cognitive strategy will result in a better achievement for second language learners. (Ehrman & Oxford 1990).

Conversely, the current findings are not in line with Abali (2006) who revealed that extroverted students were producing longer sentences and introducing new topic to the speech. These studies suggest that extroverts may outperform their counterpart introverts in oral L2 production tasks. However, Dewaele and Furnham (1999) noticed that extroversion scores are hardly correlated with written language data, but significant correlations between extroversion and oral performance material were found. They stated that those who analyse the link between extroversion and language learning expect extroverts to be better language learners because they are linguistically more active outside the classroom than introverts are. Thus increasing the amount of input and comprehensible language output allows them to test a great number of hypotheses about the target language and thereby acquire the language more rapidly than introverts. Nevertheless, Deale (2005) reported that the research findings of the limited number of studies that looked at the effect of extroversion on various dimensions of second language learning remain tentative and cannot be generalized. He explained that the elicitation tasks and the conditions in which the learners were participating might not be proper enough in terms of oral tasks, time pressure and formality. Thus, the results of the study might be affected by these types of methodological issues.

Likewise, the present study reveals that introverts tend to use more meta-cognitive strategies than extroverts in solving problems while extroverts resort to compensatory strategy as first aid devices to deal with problems or breakdowns in communication. According to Smaoui (2015), these devices are used to steer the conversation away from problematic areas to express meaning in creative ways. They include facial expressions

and gestures. They also include conversational strategies such as asking for help, seeking clarification switching to the mother tongue, self- correction, using synonyms and using fillers along with other hesitation devices such as word repetition.

To wrap up, the study reveals that there is no significant correlation between extroversion- introversion and the oral performance of ELL, which is compatible with Deweale's (1996) claim that extroversion had no significant effect on the fluency of oral speech production and Manolo and Greenwwod (2004), who found that extroversion does not correlate significantly with participants' L2 oral production. Besides, the present finding contradicts Vogel and Vogel's (1986), who noticed that extroverted students display greater fluency in oral production tasks compared to introverts. It also contradicts Abali's (2006) claim that extroverted students can introduce new topics to the speech, which suggests that extroverts might outperform introverts in oral L2 production tasks.

Implications for research and practice:

Two main approaches were adopted in the present case study. First, the effect of the trait extroversion- introversion on the performance of EFL participants in different oral tasks was investigated through the global scale. Second, three specific variables of the participants' oral production were explored with regard to the trait extroversion- introversion via the analytical scaling. These speech variables are Mean Length Utterances, Filled Pauses and Self- correction. Both approaches did not reveal any significant relationship between the trait extroversion- introversion and L2 oral performance of the sample under investigation. Therefore, the present findings are compatible with Deweale and Furnham's (1996) study and contradictory to Abali's (2006). The main findings obtained from the present study in terms of the three research questions are summarized as follows:

- Finding one: EFL participants' personality types are normally distributed in terms of extroversion- introversion scales.
- Finding two: Extrovert participants tend to be more fluent than introvert participants in short tasks.
- Finding three: introvert subjects tend to be more accurate than extrovert subjects in complex cognitive tasks are.
- Finding four: Both introverts and extroverts tend to use different language learning strategies to perform different oral tasks.

As numerous studies conducted on the correlation between extroversion-introversion and English language learning, the present study failed to come up with a statistically significant distinction between how well extroverts and introverts perform oral tasks. Introverts and extroverts may prefer different language practice techniques, but ultimately there is no evidence that one set of techniques is more effective than another one. Thus, learning a second language is highly a personal experience and people learn best in different ways. In the end, both personalities have equal ability to be fluent in a new language although there are generalized differences how introverts and extroverts experience a second language.

The results of the present study indicate that learners of one personality type are not necessarily more successful at foreign language learning specifically oral performance, than learners of another type, which is supported by Ellis (1994). The study shows that personality types may not be a decisive factor for the success of oral English learning. Therefore, it can be suggested that students with different personality types may employ different strategies because personality traits make a difference in how people learn (Ehrman & Oxford, 1995). In other words, extroversion may be a factor that helps learners have more practice and input from oral communication; nevertheless, there are varieties of ways that students can resort to help improve oral English proficiency. Hence, Exploring personality types of L2 learners' helps student gain insight into possible contributing factors to their oral performance in English language and therefore make better decisions on how to enhance their EFL performance. In addition, EFL teachers may decide to implement their teaching goals in accordance with students' different personality types.

In other terms, it is important for EFL teachers to become aware that "some strategies may be more suitable to some learners than to others" (Ehrman & Oxford, 1995, p.33). On the one hand, introverts tend to use meta-cognitive strategies to prepare themselves before the learning process occurs. Meta-cognitive strategies can be a form of advance used in planning the learning process and organizing the previous concept in the learners' mind. Even though the use of meta-cognitive strategies may cause the delay of oral production, these strategies are actually important because a proper meta-cognitive strategy will result in a better achievement for second language learners (Ehrman & Oxford 1990). On the other hand, extroverts resort to compensatory strategy as first aid devices to deal with problems or breakdowns in communication. These devices include conversational strategies such as asking for help, seeking clarification,

self- correction, using synonyms and using fillers along with other hesitation devices such as word repetition (Smaoui, 2015) .These strategies are used to steer the conversation away from problematic areas. In a word, the more the teacher knows about personality and cognitive factors, the more he can help students with their English learning. Eventually, EFL teachers should discover the specific learning strategies, which appeal to extroverts and introverts respectively, so that they can help a broader range of EFL language learners.

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Appendix 1: Revised Eysenck Personality Questionnaire EPQR (Eysenck & Barrett 1984)

Name : **Age :** **Personality type :** extrovert introvert
 extrovert-introvert

<i>Statements</i>	Yes	No
<i>1- I have many different hobbies.</i>	1	0
<i>2- I am a talkative person.</i>	1	0
<i>3- I'm rather lively.</i>	1	0
<i>4- I can usually let myself go and enjoy myself at a lively part.</i>	1	0
<i>5- I enjoy meeting new people.</i>	1	0
<i>6- I like going out a lot.</i>	1	0
<i>7- I prefer reading to meeting people.</i>	0	1
<i>8- I tend to keep in the background on the social occasions.</i>	0	1
<i>9- I have many friends.</i>	1	0
<i>10- I call myself happy- go- lucky</i>	0	0
<i>11- I usually take the initiative in making new friends</i>	1	0
<i>12- I'm mostly quiet when I 'm with other people.</i>	0	1
<i>13- I like telling jokes and funny stores to my friends.</i>	1	0
<i>14- I can easily get some life into a rather dull party.</i>	1	0
<i>15- I like mixing with people.</i>	1	0
<i>16- Sometimes people say that I act too rashly.</i>	1	0
<i>17- I like doing things on which to act quickly.</i>	1	0
<i>18- I often make decision on the spur of the moment.</i>	1	0
<i>19- I nearly have a ready answer when people talk to me.</i>	1	0
<i>20- I often take on more activities than I have time for.</i>	1	0
<i>21- I can get a party going.</i>	1	0

<i>22- I like plenty of bustle and excitement around myself..</i>	1	0
<i>23- Other people think of me as being very lively.</i>	1	0

Tunisian students` attitudes towards the use of first language in teaching English as a second or foreign language

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Abstract

This study, broadly, aims at examining Tunisian students` attitudes towards their teachers` use of mother tongue language in teaching English as a second language. More specifically, it strives to investigate the reasons why and why not students prefer the use of the mother tongue in the English classroom. Being a case study, this paper relies on a sample of ninety-two first year secondary school Tunisian students, who study at the same school. Their attitude towards the use of L1 is assessed via a questionnaire that, regarding its design, yields to both quantitative and qualitative analysis of replies. Both analyses have revealed that, approximately, all the students have a positive attitude towards their teachers` use of L1 in teaching English and that such use allows them to understand the target language more effectively and, consequently, it plays an elemental role in improving their level at English. Those findings challenge ELT inspectors and educators` strongly held monolingual approach in teaching L2 and the assumption that L1 interference hinders L2 acquisition. The findings may, also, draw more thorough academic interest on how ELT teachers can strategically and pedagogically use L1 to enhance L2 acquisition.

Keywords: first language (L1), second language (L2), exclusion of L1, affective filter, students` attitudes.

1. Introduction

Littlewood and Yu (2009), Yafuz (2012) and Madrinan (2014), along with several others, argue that the use of the mother tongue language in teaching a foreign language, particularly English, has always been a contentious issue. They, also, state that this dispute on the use of L1 is, mainly, due to the language inspectors' strict one-language-policy rule which demands teachers to use the target language solely and exclusively. A policy or a rule that, according to multiple studies, "is rarely encountered in any learning context apart from classrooms with mixed L1 learners" (Macaro, 1997, cited in Littlewood and Yu, 2009, p. 67).

Several researchers do support Macaro (1997)'s claim. Cummins (2000), Ferguson (2003) and, particularly, Littlewood and Yu (2009) who argue that there is substantial evidence, from a variety of foreign language classrooms across the world, that highlights this discrepancy between educational policy and instructions and the classroom realities and practices. The two researchers have, mainly, reported studies about the discourse of teachers of French, Korean, German and English in different countries, and they have concluded that the use of L1 in teaching a foreign language is unavoidable and, almost, inevitable.

Despite the evidence which demonstrates that teachers of foreign languages, particularly English, use L1 in teaching, the use of L1 is still a taboo and is still prohibited by most educationists, inspectors and researchers who affirm that "a new language should be taught and learned monolingually, without reference to or use of the learner's own language in the classroom" (Hall and Cook, 2013, p. 8). On the other hand, multiple researchers support and advocate the use of L1. They highlight its utility, efficiency and explain how a full exclusion of L1 can impede L2 acquisition. Such researchers include: Cummins (2000), Cook (2001), Spivey and Marian (2003), Gunn (2003), Macaro (2005), Liao (2006), Butzkamm (2008) and Littlewood and Yu (2009).

2. The one-language policy and exclusion of L1

Ellis (1994), Spivey and Marian (2003) Butzkamm (2008), Littlewood and Yu (2009) and Madrinan (2014), they all agree that educators and inspectors of foreign languages have established the rigid rule of not using L1 in teaching a second language. Those inspectors and educators, as the studies mentioned above state, justify their attitude by advocating the traditional assumption that involving L1, in teaching a second language, has a negative impact on the learning process: it can impede learning. The basic

rationales for this one-language policy, as Krashen (1985) - one of the main advocates of the monolingual and natural approaches in teaching L2- argues is to maximize the intake of L2 and to push the students to think in the target language, and not the first one.

Littlewood and Yu (2009), however, propose that there is another rationale for the ban of L1 in second language teaching classrooms. They argue that the classroom is the only space where students are exposed to the language and that the teacher is the only channel or means for that exposure. Thus, it is crucial and imperative ``to maximize the learners` exposure in the limited class time available`` (Littlewood and Yu, 2009, p. 66). This, they report, according to the advocates of the non-use of L1, would stimulate students to speak and to communicate in the target language; a goal that would be impeded by the interference of L1. This rationale, however, as many would argue, is outdated and does not add up to this tech-savvy age where exposure to the English language is almost omnipresent and never restricted to the classroom and the teacher.

Cook (2001), who, also, opposes the absolute exclusion of L1 in teaching foreign languages, particularly English, argues that the monolingual approach is built around three fundamental tenets. First, the learning of the foreign or target language should simulate the acquisition of L1, and that can only be attained through maximum exposure to L2. Second, the effective acquisition of L2 requires setting a barrier or a block between L1 and L2: the exclusion of L1 from the teaching process. The last tenet of this approach, according to Cook (2001), is that students should continuously and repeatedly use L2 to accentuate its importance in the classroom.

This monolingual approach has been supported by several renowned researchers. Krashen (1981; 1985), in his theory of second language acquisition and his input hypothesis, argues that learning a foreign language is very similar to learning the mother tongue language. He strongly claims that the natural course of learning a foreign language should involve as much interference of another language as much as any other language interfere in acquiring the mother tongue; that is non-interference at all. Brown (1994) fully supports Krashen (1981; 1985)`s assumptions. He states that the acquisition of a second language is a cognitive process in which ``you struggle to reach beyond the confines of your first language and into a new language, a new culture, a new way of thinking, feeling, and acting`` (Brown, 1994, p. 1). This process, he affirms, can be accomplished only through maximizing exposure and interaction by L2 and exclusion of L1. Another rationale for excluding L2 is proposed by Lado (1957). This rationale is derived from the transfer theories, like contrastive analysis, and it argues that the

differences between the second target language, which students may associate or disassociate with L1 if it is used in class, and the first language can confuse the learners, make learning the new language more challenging and, thus, can encumber L2 acquisition (Lado, 1957).

Although most inspectors and educationists still insist on this monolingual approach in teaching L2, and some researchers keep on providing support for them, this approach has been criticized by even more researchers, which has caused it to lose much of its appeal and applicability in the field of second language teaching. Some of those researchers include: Medgyes (1994), Cummins (2000), Cook (2001), Spivey and Marian (2003), Gunn (2003), Macaro (2005), Liao (2006), Butzkamm (2008) and Littlewood and Yu (2009).

3. The use of L1 in teaching L2

It has been stated earlier that several researchers in the field of psycholinguistics have criticized the monolingual orthodoxy to second language teaching. Medgyes (1994, p. 66), for instance, states that this approach is "untenable on any grounds, be they psychological, linguistics or pedagogical". This argument is supported by several other researchers like: Auerbach (1993), Cook (2001), Macaro (2005), Littlewood and Yu (2009), Kelleher (2013) and several others. They all argue that there are no definite findings, in foreign or second language teaching research, that can prove that a strictly L2 classroom has a more positive impact on the learning process than the relative participation of L1. Oppositely, they affirm that there is an extensive scientific evidence that supports and advocates the use of L1 in teaching foreign languages, English in particular.

In response to the advocates of the ban of L1 and the exclusive use of L2 so as to push students to think in L2, Kelleher (2013) concludes, in one of his studies, that "it is unlikely that the majority of learners often think in the target language" (p. 2083). This study is carried on 162 adult EFL students in Foreign Languages University in Seoul, South Korea. The students were given a questionnaire assessing their attitudes towards the use of their native language in learning English. The analysis of their response showed that: 73% of students use first language, 64% think that it has a positive impact on their learning, 46% think it is useful in learning vocabulary and 30% in learning grammar. Those findings, according to Kelleher (2013), strongly suggest that education policies that ban the use of L1 do not correspond nor fit into the classroom realities because it is impossible to enforce it as a rule in a class where both students and

teachers will, eventually, use it. Even if enforced, students ``will often be thinking in L1 if not speaking in their first language`` (Kelleher, 2013, p. 2041)

Another study, carried by Liao (2006), on 351 Taiwanese students of different majors about their attitudes and their use of translation to learn English, has similar findings as that of Kelleher (2013). The results of the study reveal that most students ``expressed the inevitability of translation use at their present phase of learning, and considered translation as a positive learning source for them to comprehend, memorize and produce better English, to acquire English skills, and to complete various English tasks`` (Liao, 2006, p. 209). This finding does not just highlight the positive role that L1 plays in acquiring L2, but, also, accentuates that the ban of L1 in class, by educational policies, is non-realistic and non-effective on students.

In another study, Swain and Lapkin (2000) examine the use of L1 by 44 grade 8 immersion students, doing dictogloss and jigsaw tasks. After investigating students` performance in those tasks, they have concluded that the use of L1 among students has significantly helped them to perform more effectively. They even assume that without the use and interference of L1, students wouldn`t be able to do it. In other words, by using L1, students are more able to communicate more successfully by the end of the task: they negotiate in L1 and produce in L2 (Swain and Lapkin, 2000).

Several other studies support the findings and the claims of the above mentioned studies. Hsieh (2000), Cook (2001), Gunn (2003), Macaro (2005), Littlewood and Yu (2009) and Madrinan (2014), they all agree that the strategic use of L1, actually, has a positive impact on L2 acquisition and that it does not, as many others assume, hinder it. Conversely, they maintain that it is the exclusion of L1, in classrooms, that can hinder the acquisition of L2; an exclusion that has proven, in all cases, to be inapplicable and ineffective in most foreign languages classrooms, particularly English.

3.1. The positive effects of L1 on L2 acquisition

Cook (2001), Liao (2006), Littlewood and Yu (2009), Kelleher (2013) and Madrinan (2014), they all agree on the assumption that the strategic use of L1 in teaching a foreign language does have an affective and an interpersonal role. They argue that the use of L1, particularly at early stages of learning, has a positive effect on the affective factor in students. It has a ``reassuring role`` (Littlewood and Yu, 2009, p. 72) as it makes students more comfortable and at ease, which makes them more likely to open to the new language, be motivated and invest serious effort in acquiring it (Littlewood and Yun, 2009; Kelleher, 2013). Contrarily, however, the total exclusion of L1 in teaching a

second language, according to Auerbach (1993) and Littlewood and Yu (2009), can negatively backfire on the students' affective factor and, thus, on L2 acquisition. The students may feel alienated from their own language and culture, which might lead them into developing a negative attitude towards the new language and, thus, into investing a very little effort in acquiring it (Auerbach, 1993; Littlewood and Yu, 2009).

Littlewood and Yu (2009), also, highlight that the "unpredictable" and "complex nature" of the classroom and its happenings can force the teacher to use L1 out of the precise teaching context (p. 72). The use of L1, here, as Littlewood and Yu (2009) suggest, takes another role: an interpersonal role. For instance, the teacher might find himself using L1 to talk to a student about his/her personal problem or about a pleasant or an unpleasant event that happened to one of the students at school or even at home (Littlewood and Yu, 2009). Such talks help initiate and create a more or less close social relationship with the students; a relationship that has a crucial role in lowering and minimizing the affective blocks and, consequently, in boosting their motivation and confidence towards the target language (Cook, 2001; Littlewood and Yu, 2009; Kelleher, 2013; Madrinan, 2014)

Still within the positive roles of L1 in L2 acquisition, Auton and Dicamilla (1998) condone that the initial pedagogical rationale for using L1 is that it can play a scaffolding role. This scaffolding role, as they explain, is performed when L1 is used to facilitate tasks by guiding students gradually through them; a process that, according to them, increases the levels of understanding and performance of students. Crook (2001), Littlewood and Yu (2009) Kelleher (2013), Madrinan (2014) and several other researchers, also, acknowledge this scaffolding role of L1. Littlewood and Yu (2009), for instance, affirm that L1 can be used for educational/information or learning transfer purposes. That is it can be used to explain and communicate difficult lexis and grammar rules so as to guarantee that understanding and, thus, learning is happening (Littlewood and Yu, 2009). This scaffolding technique, as Littlewood and Yu (2009), also, suggest, is time and effort-saving for the teacher. For Kelleher (2013) and Madrinan (2014), scaffolding is used for the same purposes as well, and they, both, affirm that it improves understanding and expedites the L2 acquisition.

Another simple role, suggested by Littlewood and Yu (2009), that L1 plays in an L2 classroom is that of classroom management. Within this context, most teachers use L1 to establish discipline and to maintain appropriate management and control over the classroom (Littlewood and Yu, 2009).

To conclude, Cook (2001), Macaro (2001) and Kelleher (2013) maintain that there is no definite proof that the ban of L1 has, actually, promoted L2 learning. On the other hand, they, among several other researchers, share the assumption that L1 can be effective and operating as a scaffolding and supporting system for L2 acquisition. Actually, L1's role in L2 acquisition is so crucial that most teachers use it in teaching "even when teachers are native speakers of the TL"; that is, native English teachers often resort to their students' native language in explaining lexis and grammar (Littlewood and Yu, 2009, p. 64).

It is imperative to note, here, as emphasized by Butzkamm (2008), that the use of L1, in a foreign language classroom, must be pre-planned, purposeful, specific and varying according to the level and age of the students. Besides, the use of L1 should be very limited in content and duration so as to maximize the use of L2; otherwise, it would turn into a serious obstacle for acquiring the second language (Butzkamm, 2008). Furthermore, as Butzkamm (2008) and Littlewood and Yu (2009) affirm, it is only the teacher who decides how, when and for what specific purposes to use L1. He/she decides how to strategically use it because there is still no official specific rules and instructions on how to use L1; the research on this issue is not that cumulative yet so as to generate specific policies and instructions (Butzkamm, 2008; Littlewood and Yu, 2009).

3.2. L1 and L2 associations

Madrinan (2014) states that it is vital to use the mother tongue in teaching second language to very young learners or pupils. She argues that those young kids have no second language background to start with or refer to in their learning of that language. This second language background, as she argues, is built in the classroom "using the first language as a bridge between previous and new knowledge" (p. 57). The same assumption is held by Spivey and Marian (2003) who postulate that the process of second language acquisition, no matter how proficient the learner is, will automatically set off and trigger first language bridges or associations. In other words, while learning a second language, students will continue to make links and associations in their minds to their first language, despite the strict yet futile prohibition of L1 use by the teacher (Spivey and Marian, 2003; Madrinan, 2014). Spivey and Marian (2003) and Madrinan (2014), also, suggest that those associations to first language function to enrich context and promote learning.

Within the same vein, Cummins (2000) argues that first language needs to be

sufficiently developed before any serious school attempts to teach a second language. He states that proficiency in first language inevitably benefits the second language process because languages might be acoustically and visually different, but they have similar processing systems. Madrinan (2014) strongly supports this assumption when she concludes, in her study, that students who are more proficient in L1 are better and faster in acquiring L2: they know more about the concepts and the grammar of their first language which positively impacts L2 acquisition. Besides, "in all learning situations, previous knowledge is a starting point for acquiring new knowledge", and the same, evidently, applies for acquiring a new language (Madrinan, 2014, p. 63).

An important note, here, is that L1 and mother tongue are used interchangeably in this study, as well as second language (L2), foreign language (FL) and target language (TL). The researcher does acknowledge that they are different, yet those differences are of no considerable or direct pertinence to the main issue examined in this study.

4. Methodology

This section, initially, explains the sampling techniques used in selecting the participants in this study and, then, it elaborates on the data collection method or instrument used in collecting data from the participants.

4.1. Sampling

The sample of this study is made up of one hundred and twelve first year secondary school Tunisian students. Given the fact that the researcher is, also, an English teacher, convenience sampling was decided to be the most pragmatic and suitable choice for this study. This sampling technique, as Patton (1990, p. 180) argues, "is probably the most common sampling strategy" because it evolves around the premise of "doing what's fast and convenient" to the researcher and the study. That is why it is, also, known as haphazard sampling or accidental sampling: the chosen sample happens to match some "practical criteria" as such as "to be situated, spatially or administratively, near to where the researcher is conducting the data collection" (Etikan, et al., 2016, p. 2). Another rationale for the use of convenience sampling, stated by Etikan et al., (2016), is the challenges encountered and the impossibility of carrying randomization to a population that "is almost infinite" (p. 2).

Those premises and rationales for using convenience sampling have solid grounds in this study. First, a considerable sample of first year secondary school students is approximate and available to the researcher: Taher Haddad Secondary

School - his workplace- contains nine first form classes of more than two hundred and fifty students. This makes the participants, needed to this study, easily and conveniently accessible to the researcher. Second, the population of this study, first year secondary school students, is too large and very challenging to carry randomization on it. Those are, basically, the two rationales for selecting convenience sampling for this study; it is almost selected by default.

It should be noted, however, that although convenience sampling is very frequently used among researchers, it has a serious shortcoming. This methodological shortcoming or downfall is that, in most cases, the sample ``is too small to permit generalizations`` (Patton, 1990, p. 180). This shortcoming, however, as it would be explained shortly, is outweighed in this study.

The following procedures are taken in applying convenience sampling in this study. Of the nine first form classes in Taher Haddad Secondary school, four classes are selected. Two of those classes are being taught by the researcher. The other two classes are randomly selected from the other seven classes. All in all, from more than two hundred and fifty students, one hundred and twelve are selected in this study: the total number of the students of the four selected classes. Such sample, the researcher assumes, is significant and substantive enough to allow for generalizations.

4.2. Data collection procedures

The instrument used for collecting data, from the one hundred and twelve students, is questionnaire survey. This instrument of data collection is defined as a ``means for gathering information about the characteristics, actions, or opinions of a large group of people`` (Pinsonneault and Kraemer, 1993, p. 77). It is, also, recognized by so many researchers as the primary and most frequent form of collecting data from participants (Creswell, 2003; Zohrabi, 2013). What makes questionnaires most effective and capable of obtaining data from participants is, first, its transmissibility: it can be transmitted or transferred to a large sample of people (Pinsonneault and Kraemer, 1993; Creswell, 2003; Zohrabi, 2013). Second, it is an easy - to build and analyse- and ``a time efficient way of collecting data`` (Zohrabi, 2013). Another important feature of a questionnaire is that its respondents can choose to be anonymous, and this anonymity makes them more at ease and comfortable while answering the questionnaire (Pinsonneault and Kraemer, 1993; Creswell, 2003; Zohrabi, 2013).

According to several researchers, like Pinsonneault and Kraemer (1993), Creswell (2003) and Zohrabi (2013) there are, basically, two types of questionnaires

survey. First, there is close-ended or structured questionnaire and, second, open-ended or unstructured questionnaire. The basic methodological disparity between the two types of questionnaire is that the former provides the researcher with “quantitative or numerical data”, whereas the latter provides “qualitative or text information” (Zohrabi, 2013, p. 254). Another major difference between the two, stated by Fowler (1995) and Zohrabi (2013), is that close-ended questionnaire is viewed as the most efficient and easiest for both the participant and the researcher. Simply, the participant is asked to choose one of the options provided by the researcher, which, in turn, makes the analysis of data simpler for the researcher himself/herself (Fowler, 1995; Zohrabi, 2013).

Conversely, in open-ended questionnaire, as Fowler (1995) and Zohrabi (2013) explain, the participant responds to the questions in a written expressive manner. They use their own words and expressions that is why the collected data is qualitative, which yields to a more profound, yet difficult, analysis of data (Fowler, 1995; Zohrabi, 2013).

It should be noted, here, that several researcher have started to combine or mix elements of the two questionnaires into a single one. This mixture of close-ended and open-ended questionnaires into a single one, Zohrabi (2013) maintains, does have significant outcomes. First, it gives the researcher a simple quantitative analysis of the alternative responses that he/she has first provided (Zohrabi, 2013). Second, it provides the respondent with the opportunity to express himself/herself freely and to interact to the questions, without restricting options, in his own words (Zohrabi, 2013).

This mixture of the two questionnaires is what is used for collecting data in this study. The first close-ended quantitative part is built using the Likert scale psychometric or barometer, which is “one of the most fundamental and frequently used psychometric tools in educational and social sciences research” (Joshi et al., 2015, p. 1). It is, as Joshi et al., (2015) point out, used to quantitatively assess and evaluate what is qualitative: people’s opinions, perceptions and attitudes towards a certain issue. A typical Likert scale questionnaire or survey would give participants a set of sentences; embedding certain propositions, attitudes or opinions, and ask them to rate their level of agreement or disagreement by selecting from alternatives that range from: strongly agree (SA), disagree (D), neutral (N), agree (A) and strongly agree (SA) (Joshi et al., 2015). This is a typical 5-point Likert scale survey. However, other designs of the Likert scale are, also, possible, according to the study and its objectives, as Joshi et al., (2015) affirm.

This study, also, uses a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire, yet a different one. The questionnaire for this study is designed to assess students’ opinions of their teacher’s

frequent use of first language in explaining some of the words or concepts of the lesson. They are asked how often they prefer their teacher to use first language in explaining the lesson, and are required to select an answer that scales from always, often, sometimes, seldom and never. This type of Likert scale aims at finding out whether most of the students, in the sample, prefer their teacher's use of first language in the English lesson, or not.

The second part of the questionnaire is itself made up of two related parts. The first one is a quantitative yes/no question that aims at assessing students' attitudes on the use of L1: whether they like it or not. The second part is the qualitative open-ended aspect of the questionnaire: it asks students to express themselves freely on why they like or don't like their teacher to use L1 in explaining the lesson. They are asked to talk freely and even to use their first language if they can't express what they want properly in English. This is very useful to low achievers who would be able to express what they like and feel, just like any other students. It is, also, very constructive and revealing to the researcher and the study; by listening to the , probably, timid and voiceless low achievers, we may understand how they think or feel about English and the English lesson, what they think is impeding them from acquiring the language and what they think or feel would help them in acquiring it. This is what this study tries, to a certain extent, to unravel. A sample of the questionnaire distributed to the students is provided in appendix 1.

5. Results

The questionnaire, as explained earlier, is distributed to a sample of one hundred and twelve first year secondary school students. However, only ninety two have submitted their responses to the researcher; a sample that is still considered large and substantial.

Table 1

Students' Preferences on the Use of First Language in the English Classroom

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Number of replies	19	15	49	5	4
Statistical distribution	20.65%	16.30%	53.23%	5.43%	4.34%

The table above reflects students' replies to the Likert scale questionnaire; the first part of the two-fold questionnaire adopted in collecting data from the students. It

demonstrates first year secondary form students` different preferences on their teacher`s use of first language in explaining the lesson. First, the table, significantly, shows students` strong acceptance of the use of first language in the English lesson. More than 90% of students prefer the use the first language on, at least, regular basis. More specifically, 20.65% and 16.30% of the participants like the constant and often use of L1 by their teacher. If we put those two categories together, the result would be that approximately 37% of students have a strong approval and inclination towards L1 use in ELT classrooms. The vast majority of students, 53.23%, however, prefer their teacher to use English from time to time. The other approximately 10%, or the other 9 students, prefer rare or total absence of Arabic while receiving English lessons and content from their teacher. In short, table 1 strongly states that the absolute majority of the questioned sample, of first year secondary school students, want and prefer their teachers to use their mother tongue when teaching them English.

The findings shown in table 2 below provide an ample support to the previous findings. Table 2, to explain, is related to the first part of part two of the questionnaire where the researcher asks the students whether they like or don`t like their teacher`s use of Arabic in teaching English, and then to explain why, in both cases. The quantitative and statistical analysis of their replies reflects exactly what is tabulated in table 1.

Table 2

Students` Attitudes on the Teacher`s Use of L1 in Teaching English

	Yes I like the use of Arabic in teaching English	No I don`t like the use of Arabic in teaching English
Frequency	83	9
Statistics	90.21%	09.78%

The analysis of the students` replies to the first part of the question showcases an almost absolute preference and liking to the use of L1 in teaching English. 90.21% of students entertain a positive attitude and welcome the use of L1, whereas the other 09.78% don`t like and don`t think that L1 should interfere in teaching English. The question asked to students, here, aims at assessing their attitudes toward the use of L1 in ELT classroom; however, the first question of the questionnaire is about how often they think English should be used in class: its results are shown on table 1. What is

noticed is that the analysis of the two questions leads to a cogently corresponding result. Approximately 90% of the students prefer at least a regular use of L1 in teaching English, and all of those 90% maintain a positive attitude towards such use. So, students want their teachers to use English, while explaining the lesson, and they have a positive attitude regarding this use.

Moving to the qualitative analysis of participants' replies, on why they like or don't like the use of Arabic in class, a more insightful and a deeper understanding of students' attitudes towards the use of L1 in the English lesson is provided. First, there is a consensus among the 90% of students, who maintain a positive attitude towards the use of L1, that its use is necessary and inevitable in class. They argue that it improves their understanding and, thus, their level of English. They elaborate on this by saying that they can not understand some words and concepts, especially the difficult ones, without the interference of the mother-tongue language in explaining them. Second, it is noticed, in so many of their replies, that the method they prefer in explaining difficult words is translation: providing their equivalents in L1. Some of them state that when their teacher explains a word in Arabic, they will write it down, remember it and will, more likely, not forget it.

However, despite their positive attitudes towards the use of L1 in the English lesson and the essential role, they argue, it plays in facilitating the input and ameliorating their level, so many of the same students share the belief that if the teacher uses Arabic constantly in class, they will not be able to master the target language. In other words and to paraphrase some of their replies, the use of L1 should be restricted to explaining the difficult words that may be challenging to most students, and not words that require a little effort or inference.

What is most revealing, yet, is that even the 10% of students, who prefer a seldom or even a total exclusion of L1 in the English classroom, they share some similar attitudes with the other opposite 90%. To start with the most common attitude, the 10% of students, who are excellent top achievers, that maintain a negative attitude towards the use of L1- they don't like it- those students admit that they sometimes don't understand some difficult words or concepts during the lesson and state that they don't mind the use of Arabic to explain such words and concepts from time to time. They, also, similarly to the other 90%, prefer to understand through translation. Another very interesting, humane and selfless reply detected among those excellent 10% students is that they acknowledge their friends' need for the use of L1 in class. They literally state

that some of the students have difficulties in understanding the new vocabulary in English, that is why the teacher should use L1 in explaining it to them.

Having said that, it can be concluded that all the students, be it low or high achievers, agree on the elemental role that L1 plays in teaching English as a second language. They all believe that L1 is very useful in explaining difficult words and concepts, which results in a better understanding of the language, and, subsequently, in an improvement of their level at English.

It is imperative, also, to state that the obvious difference between the 10% of the top achievers and the other 90% lies in the former's shared and firm belief that the use of L1 in teaching English does not allow them to fully master the target language. This same belief, however, is shared and expressed by some of the 90% students, who prefer the use of L1 during the English lesson; they, also, believe that the constant use of L1 can negatively affect their mastery of English. Another striking difference, however, is expressed by only one student: he strongly calls for a total exclusion of L1 from the English lesson and that the teacher as well as the students be permitted only to speak in English.

One last, but, quite revealing finding, in the analysis of students' qualitative or descriptive replies, is that so many low achievers attribute their weak or low level at English to their previous English teachers' non-use of L1 when they were beginners at English. They even state that the reason they don't like or even hate the language, English, is that their teachers never explain to them in Arabic, which has caused them to be weak and to prematurely develop a negative attitude towards the new language from their early contact with it.

6. Discussion

The findings of this study align with several studies in the field of English language teaching (ELT). In fact, it provides ample support to the studies and the researchers that advocate the use of L1 in teaching English as a second or a foreign language. The first finding of this study, that all the 92 students, except one, prefer and like their teacher's use of L1, indirectly supports earlier assumptions held by Butzkamm (2008), Littlewood and Yu (2009), Kelleher (2013) and several others who argue for the inevitability of using L1 in teaching foreign languages. The first finding, also, supports the same researchers' assumption regarding the bans enforced by inspectors and educational policies, on L1 use in teaching English; bans that has been proven to be unrealistic, non-practical and futile.

The same finding mentioned above along with the ones revealed throughout the qualitative analysis of students' replies represent a challenge to the researchers who affirm the negative impact that the interference of L1 has on the acquisition of the second language. 90% of the questioned students, who prefer and like the use of L1, highlight the positive and important role that L1 plays in their acquisition of L2 or the target language. First, they all agree that the use of the mother tongue facilitates the input for them. Second, they argue that the use of Arabic, particularly translation in explaining words, does improve their understanding and retrieval of information later on. Third, by understanding the difficult words through the L1, students enlarge their vocabulary and lexis which allows them to perform better in such activities as writing. All those arguments support earlier findings and assumptions made by Cook (2001), Macaro (2005), Liao (2006), Littlewood and Yu (2009), Kelleher (2013) and Madrinan (2014). They all, along with this study, affirm that L1 can be used as a scaffolding and a supporting system for second language acquisition, if used strategically and purposefully.

In fact, even the other 10% who do not prefer nor like the use of L1 in teaching English, also, acknowledge the scaffolding role that L1 can play in acquiring English. Most of them believe that L1 is most effective in explaining difficult words and concepts. It is important to note, as well, that most of those students, and some of the other 90%, believe that the over and constant use of L1 while teaching English can have a negative effect on their acquisition of the English language: it can hinder and impede acquisition. That is why all of their approvals to the use of L1 are restricted to its use in explaining difficult words and concepts. This careful and strategic use of L1 in teaching a second language is pointed at by several previous studies: Cook (2001), Macaro (2005), Liao (2006), Littlewood and Yu (2009), Kelleher (2013) and Madrinan (2014).

Another interesting finding that reveals itself in analysing students' replies relates to the total exclusion of L1 in teaching English. Several low-achieving students attribute their weakness in English, and even their hate to the subject, to the fact that their previous teachers never or rarely use English when teaching; by their previous teacher, the students mean their preparatory school teachers when they were just 12 or 15-year old and beginners at English. This bears strong evidence that the total exclusion of L1 has a significant negative impact on the acquisition of English, as second or a foreign language. When the students state that they hate English because their teachers never used Arabic, this suggests that their affective filter or block has been heightened

and elevated by such practices. Besides, those students throughout their answers have emphasized the fact that the use of Arabic help them improve their English, and they feel that they have been deprived of that chance because of their teacher`s practices: his/her total non-use of L1.

By analogy, the same last finding, above, affirms the positive role that L1 plays on the affective and the motivational aspect of the students. First, if the non-use of L1 has such a negative impact on the students and on their attitudes towards the language, then its use and interference in teaching English must have an opposite positive effect. Actually, participants have already stated that they like the use of L1 and that it helps them improve their level of English by facilitating the input and its retrieval, later on, in tests and exams. Besides, this use of L1 in teaching, according to several other studies, Cook (2001), Liao (2006), Littlewood and Yu (2009), Kelleher (2013) and Madrinan (2014), makes students more comfortable while receiving the input and more likely to develop a positive attitude and be more motivated towards learning the new language. Here, L1 does not just play a scaffolding supporting role to the acquisition of the target language, but, also, plays a ``reassuring role``: an interpersonal affective role that basically functions to lower the affective filter or block in students (Littlewood and Yu, 2009, p. 72).

7. Conclusion

This study has proven that the use of L1 is elemental and constructive in teaching English as a second or foreign language. It has shown that Tunisian first year secondary school students prefer and like their teacher`s use of L1 in explaining some points of the lesson, and that they believe such use can help them improve their level in English. Such findings significantly add to the multiple studies that advocate and support the interference of L1 in teaching foreign and second languages. They validate the assumption that L1 can be ``the most important ally a foreign language can have`` when it is used ``systemically, selectively and in judicious doses`` (Butzkamm, 2003, cited in Littlewood and Yun, 2009, p. 75). However, the real significance of this study lies in revealing how the exclusion of L1 is considered, by so many students, as one of the main causes of their weakness, their shunning and their negative attitude towards the English language.

It might be argued, on another aspect, that one of the methodological shortcomings of this study is that it has relied on convenience sampling. All of its student participants are affiliates of the same school: Taher Haddad Secondary School. Yet, its

sample that includes 92 students, the researcher deems, is large enough to allow for generalization to take place. Nonetheless, further research on the issue of the use of L1 in teaching second languages in Tunisian schools is definitely needed and required. It would be interesting to investigate how students of other levels feel about their teachers' use of L1. What would be more interesting and revealing, however, is to examine how English teachers use Arabic in their teaching of English. Such studies would provide a deeper insight on the use of L1 and might culminate in developing a certain official strategy or pedagogy that allows and regulates the use of L1 in teaching English, or any other second or foreign language.

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Appendix

A questionnaire for assessing Tunisian students` attitudes towards the use of Arabic in teaching English as a second language: A case study

Name of the participant: Level: Age:

Average in English: /20

Question 1: How often do you think the English teacher should use Arabic in explaining some of the words/concepts of the lesson? Tick the correct alternative.

Always

Often

Sometimes

Seldom

Never

Question 2: From your personal-school experience, do you like it when English teachers use Arabic in class? And why?

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A case study of primary progressive aphasia and its impact on foreign language proficiency compared to L1

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Abstract

This study was designed to examine the impact of progressive aphasia on the multilingual brain. The main objective was to verify the status of the first acquired language (L1; Tunisian Arabic) against the status of a lately acquired foreign language (L2; English). The study reports on the case of an elderly Tunisian patient presenting with a diagnosis of primary progressive aphasia caused by the onset of the Alzheimer disease. A set of picture-naming tasks was administered to the patient to examine his naming aptitude in L1 and L2 for the semantic categories of : Letters, Numbers, Plants, Animals, Body parts, Colors and Clothes. The case's responses in L1 and L2 were qualitatively analysed and compared. Dissociation in performance was reported within the same linguistic system (L1/L2) as well as between both systems (L1 vs. L2) with L2 being the most affected after the neurodegenerative damage. An account was found in category-specificity of semantic knowledge.

A difference in the grammatical gender of nouns between TA and English was suggested as a possible factor affecting the patient's performance as well. The reported dissociations between L1 and L2 suggested their segregation at a cognitive level. This anatomical segregation could have important implications for the clinical and the teaching fields. Clinically, identifying the most deficient language after brain damage should direct the language pathologist towards treating it with a special care offering a

better prognosis for the weaknesses. Pedagogically, foreign language teaching methods should focus on fortifying the anatomic segregation between languages while enhancing authenticity in the L2 learning environment. This will hopefully reduce the occurrence of negative language transfer from L1 to L2.

Key words: categorical effect of semantic knowledge, multilingual brain, primary progressive aphasia

1. Introduction

Language pathology can be caused by a wide array of circumstances that are mostly split between neurological and psychological. The neurological damage leading to the linguistic defect can be acute or progressive. The progressive aspect of a language trouble is mainly caused by neurodegenerative diseases with Alzheimer being the most known type of these. One leading syndrome of Alzheimer is a language trouble referred to as primary progressive aphasia where language capacities degenerate progressively due to brain damage affecting language areas. The following section is devoted to the explanation of this syndrome.

1.1. Primary progressive aphasia

Primary progressive aphasia (PPA) is defined as “a neurodegenerative disorder with language impairment as the primary feature” (Rohrer et al., 2012, p. 744). Thus, opposed to other types of aphasias mainly emanating from acute and focal brain damage, primary progressive aphasia is caused by a progressive neurodegenerative type of damage which is rather diffuse. While the acute types of aphasias may have a good prognostic over a long period of time, progressive aphasia is rather evolving towards a more devastating state of a linguistic defect with usually no hope for a positive reversal. However, language rehabilitation still can play a great role in supporting patients with several compensatory strategies to help them cope with the daily linguistic struggle in the communication task. Zanini et al. (2011) described PPA to be “a clinical syndrome characterized by progressive language loss without significant general cognitive or motor decline for at least 2 years after the appearance of linguistic impairment” (p. 535). It is generally accepted that PPA has three subtypes: “progressive nonfluent aphasia (PNFA), semantic dementia (SD) and logopenic/phonological aphasia (LPA)” (Rohrer et al., 2012, p. 744). Of the previously mentioned subtypes, LPA is “most commonly associated with Alzheimer's disease (AD) pathology” (Rohrer et al., 2012, p. 744).

The PPA is a clinical condition which could affect a monolingual brain as well as a bilingual or a multilingual one. Though, the incidence and prevalence of the PPA affecting a multilingual brain have been increasing in response to societal changes. Addressing aphasia in the context of the multilingual brain is not without merit as will be explained in the following.

1.2. Aphasia and the multilingual brain

In the recent decades, learning different languages is more and more appealing to the curriculum designers since the world is constantly growing into a compacted space. In response to the worldwide urge to learn languages to be well connected and well integrated, “language impairment in multilingual persons is likely to become a frequent clinical challenge” (Lekoubou et al., 2015, p. 1). In point of fact, “since most people in the world know more than one language, bilingual aphasia is an important line of research in clinical and theoretical neurolinguistics” (Fabbro, 2001, p. 201). Indeed, multilingualism opens new horizons for the understanding of the relationship between brain and language. Lekoubou et al. (2015) affirm that “multilingual patients with acquired speech problems may present clinical nuances that underscore the relationship between anatomical lesions and subtypes of language deficits, both in the first as well as in their second languages” (p. 1).

It is accepted that bilingual aphasia “generally affects both languages”¹(Tschirren et al., 2011, p. 238). Interestingly, several researches focused on which language is the most defective in case of multilingual brain damage affecting language areas (e.g. Fabbro, 2001; Tschirren et al., 2011). Research on this issue presented controversial results that emerged even within the same group of study (e.g. Fabbro, 2001). Fabbro

¹ First and second languages

(2001) investigated language recovery of 20 bilingual Friulian-Italian aphasics and found that “thirteen patients (65%) showed a similar impairment in both languages (parallel recovery), four patients (20%) showed a greater impairment of L2, while three patients (15%) showed a greater impairment of L1” (p. 201). Comparing the effect of neurodegenerative damage on L1 and L2 could also allow verifying hypotheses about the neural representation of languages in the bilingual brain.

1.3. The current study

In the current study, a set of denomination tasks is applied to an individual case with progressive aphasia to draw inferences regarding the effect of language impairment on L1 and L2. Data was collected through one extended session of testing where breaks were offered when the patient needed. The type and prevalence of errors were analysed comparing L1 and L2 across the patient’s response to the tested items belonging to several semantic categories. The objective was to understand whether errors manifest differently in the separate language systems.

Another aim was to explore whether specific errors are typical to one specific language in order to determine whether production is constrained by a typically organized lexico-semantic processing system that distinguished between L1 and L2 thus reflecting some language-specific cognitive processes. In the following, the methodology which was used will be thoroughly explained.

2. Methods

2.1. Description of the case study

The case of study, GT, is an elderly right-handed Tunisian man, aged 73 years, and diagnosed with Alzheimer at the age of 72. He retired from a high qualified post at the Ministry of agriculture, 10 years ago. He was an out-patient of the CHU Razi (Mannouba hospital, Tunisia) and was mainly suffering from amnesia that affected more specifically his episodic memory. His medical records indicated several ancient right ischemic lesions as

well as recent lesions at the level of the left hippocampus confirmed by MRI². His MMS³ score downgraded from 26/30 the day of admission to 22/30 within a short period suggesting a fast decay of memory. When examined by a language pathologist, deficient access to the lexical system was revealed. His spatial awareness was reserved while his temporal awareness was seriously altered. GT used to be a good English speaker since he lived several years in America. His premorbid English proficiency was confirmed by his wife. Oral consent was obtained from the patient and his wife before the testing session.

The study was applied in 2014 during a training period at the Razi hospital which aimed at getting acquainted with language pathology matters and more particularly at how aphasia could affect the linguistic aptitude of brain damaged patients. The patient was selected after an ergo therapeutic session where the researcher was present and noted GT's spontaneous use of English at several occasions to communicate with other patients or to respond to the ergo therapeutic specialist. In the following, the tasks will be detailed.

2.2. Tasks

The premorbid proficiency at the English language made of GT a good candidate for examination. Nonetheless, adopting a thorough comprehensive neuropsychological battery to examine the linguistic decay of the patient emanating from PPA was not possible due to practical concerns (mainly evolving around the patient's availability). Thus, GT's access to the lexical semantic system of the two languages (TA vs. English) was tested through a set of picture-naming tasks for which output was required first in TA and then in English. Different semantic categories were set for the testing: Letters (the entire alphabet), Numbers (1-10), Plants (flower, peas, cabbage, potato, onion), Animals (cat, dog, cow, horse, bird, grasshopper, tiger), Body parts (hair, ear, tooth, mouth, nose, hand), Colors (blue, green, red, yellow, orange), Clothes (shoe, dress, trousers).

² MRI : Magnetic resonance imaging

³ MMS: Mini-Mental State (a cognitive test)

The tasks were not time-limited. The patient was free to take the time he needed to reflect before giving his final answer. While not restricting the patient to an exact interval of time we a) avoided stressing him out and b) provided more time to get the target accurate answers. Although the task requirements were not complicated, varied objects (spoon, phone, table, book, car, tractor, house, man) were first administered to the patient to make sure he understood the procedure before getting into the actual target items. The results will be detailed and discussed in the following.

3. *Results and discussion*

The patient answered accurately in the TA Letter naming task with remarkable ease. The same was true in the English Letter naming task with the exception of the vowel 'u' for which more time was needed and the response was clearly doubtful. Concerning the naming of Numbers, TG performed well in both languages. His confidence was beyond questioning. As for the colors, the performance of GT was clearly deficient when compared to the first two categories. He was successful in both languages in one instance only (i.e. blue color). Naming Colors in TA was possible for orange, green, and yellow. For the red color, GT could only find the English name and failed to generate the TA counterpart.

The following task administered to the patient targeted objects belonging to different semantic categories (Body parts, Clothes, Plants, Animals). Despite the fact that the patient was first required to name the thing in the picture in Arabic and then in English, certain answers were uttered spontaneously in English first suggesting the item was first accessed and retrieved from the English lexical store of the patient.

In general terms, producing paraphasias was rare in GT's production. One exception occurred with the 'tooth' picture where he responded using unrelated verbal paraphasia

[toffɜ:h; English: 'apple']. However, it should be noted that the first letter [t] in the TA word is the first letter of the target word in English. Still the number of the shared letters did not confirm to Nickels' (2001) criteria of relatedness which states that at least 50 % of the letters should be shared between the target word and the produced one so it could be considered a phonemic paraphasia. This may be the only instance where the two lexical systems seemed to be co-activated causing a probable overlapping. The actual "overlapping brain activation" of L1 and L2 was evidenced by Mouthon et al., (2013, p. 268). Another rare example of paraphasia occurring in the data was a semantic paraphasia where the nose was named in TA

as [wõm] (English: 'ear'). In the latter instance, GT faced a problem finding the TA name of the nose and he was not able to produce the English name either. It should be noted that circumlocutions were rarely used to help the patient cope with word finding difficulties. The only instance of use occurred with the man picture where GT said during his search for the target name "maybe he is a student" then said [ra:zɪl] (English: 'man'). Afterwards, when the examiner requested the word in English, GT directly responded "he is a man". That was the only instance where a circumlocution in English was produced before the patient could utter the right TA name and the right English one. In specific items, GT found easily the TA name but could not find the English counterpart even after phonological aid. This occurred with dog, bird, grasshopper, trousers, and cabbage. However, two exceptions to this fact occurred. The first was with the dress picture (though after a long time and a repetitive phonological help in which the two letters of the target English word 'dress' were provided). The second item was the potato picture where TA name was directly uttered while the English name was only possible after phonological aid. TA was the only accessible language in 7 cases while English was the only accessible language in one instance only (Red color). In one instance (tooth picture), an unrelated verbal paraphasia in TA was produced before the target TA was uttered and then the English target word was directly stated. In three instances (dog, bird, and dress), the English name was only found after phonological help while the TA was directly uttered. The scarceness of the produced errors fall short of determining specific constraints based on a typically

organized lexico-semantic processing system that distinguished between L1 and L2, which could not clearly reflect any language-specific cognitive processes in error production.

The results show that both L1 and L2 were “affected to a clinically significant degree” like what found Zanini et al. (2011) in the study of a PPA clinical case. More specifically findings suggested a possible dissociation within each language system as well as between both languages. One possible account for differences between L1 and L2 could lie on a category-specificity account (see Capitani et al. (2003) for a thorough review of category-specific semantic deficits). This account entails that the emerging differences resulted from a relative disproportionate knowledge for specific semantic categories compared to others that was more apparent with L2 than with L1. Probable specific neural processes should stand behind the categorical effect being more pronounced in one language system (i.e. English) than in the other (i.e. TA).

Both languages (TA & English) were almost equally preserved when tested with Letters and Numbers. This echoes the reported fact that “Neurophysiologic and neuroimaging studies evidenced a similar cerebral representation of L1 and L2 lexicons both in early and late bilinguals” (Fabbro, 2001, p. 211). However, the claimed similarity did not hold in all circumstances. In categories other than Letters and Numbers, out of 30 item (the piloted items included), GT responded accurately and directly in both languages in 18 instances only. Thus, a possible account for the differences between L1 and L2 at this level probably lies on the difference between both language systems regarding the grammatical gender of nouns. Indeed, Fabbro (2001) noted that “the representation of grammatical aspects of languages seems to be different between the two languages if L2 is acquired after the age of 7, with automatic processes and correctness being lower than those of the native language” (p. 211).

The current study indirectly dealt with some grammatical aspects of the two languages since naming an object in TA necessitates dealing with its grammatical gender

at some point of the cognitive processing mechanism in concordance with the claimed effect of thought on language perception and use evidenced by Boroditsky (2009; 2011), Boroditsky and Schmidt (2000), and Boroditsky et al. (2003). Findings of this study showed that difference between both languages was pronounced in the categories of objects to which a grammatical gender could be assigned in TA (English is a neuter language regarding the grammatical gender aspect of nouns) and not pronounced with categories like Letters and Numbers for which a grammatical gender effect is irrelevant. This finding, thus, supports the probable effect of gender differences on objects perception in different language systems as found Boroditsky and Schmidt (2000), and Boroditsky et al. (2003). The previous works showed that speakers of languages where objects could be grammatically gendered (e.g. 'hand' in TA is feminine vs. 'dog' in TA is masculine; 'hand' and 'dog' are neuter in English) do perceive these objects as receiving feminine or masculine qualities in correspondence to their grammatical gender. If the speaker is influenced by the way s/he perceives an object X this entails that thinking in TA lead to specific cognitive mechanisms including specific routes of knowledge that would differ from those activated while thinking in English to perceive the same object X. As object perception is one stage in a picture-naming task which probes the visual modality then a possible effect of the grammatical gender of objects may have influenced the answers of GT and differentiated between his perceptions for the same object when thinking in a different linguistic code.

The foreign language (English) for which the patient reached a good level of proficiency after leaving several years in America did not show a particular resistance to damage. The comparatively relative spontaneous flow of the mother tongue (Tunisian Arabic dialect) suggested a probable advantage for L1 over English which runs counter claims about the most vulnerability of the first acquired language in case of acute brain damage (Ribot, 1906). This further delineates the nature of the damage affecting language-related neural areas in acute vs. progressive aphasia as well as the nature itself of the involved areas. It, consequently, distinguishes the progressive aphasia effect on the neural

basis of L1/L2 processing from the acute aphasia's basis. However, the patient's spontaneous use of English (L2) in a few cases downgraded the absolute advantage for L1 over L2 and minimizes the importance of the reported differences elsewhere which require further investigations to build solid interpretations.

In effect, the findings of the present case study allow to verify the convergence hypothesis (Green, 2003) which assumes that "the neural substrates of language representations are shared between the languages of a bilingual speaker", and predicts that "neurodegenerative disease should produce parallel deterioration to lexical and grammatical processing in bilingual aphasia" (Druks & Weekes, 2014, p. 578). The differences reported between TA and English performances suggest L2 to be more vulnerable to neurodegenerative brain damage than L1 as partly found Fabbro (2001) in 20% of the studied bilingual aphasics. The hypothesis of parallel deterioration seemed to be at stake compared to the current findings. However, this assumption is far from being conclusive since the present study did not afford sufficient data to compare the difference in the actual deterioration between L1 and L2 and focuses on one detailed aspect of the linguistic aptitude which only used the visual modality. Differences although clearly existed, were not so pronounced to totally reject a possible "parallel deterioration to lexical and grammatical processing in bilingual aphasia" (Druks & Weekes, 2014, p. 578).

Several limitations could have affected the results of this study. Some of these could not have been prevented due to external factors. One major limitation is not considering different sessions for the TA denomination and English denomination tasks. Administering the sessions in different days would have ensured that no priming effect could have helped the patient answering in the English language and could have probably led the differences between L1 and L2 to be more pronounced. Besides, due to practical reasons the testing of the numbers was reduced to the first 10 digits only which could not be as comprehensive as testing the whole alphabet (i.e. for letter naming) to allow for a

fair comparison between both categories. The same applied to the color and clothe categories as well whose representative items were less than other categories.

A final limitation concerns the nature of the pictorial stimuli which was not selected from a normative data base ensuring careful control of various psychological norms. The testing set of pictures was colored pictures downloaded from several commercial websites believed to be clear. The use of Snodgrass and Vanderwart's (1980) set of standardized pictures would have offered more credible results to build upon. Hence, caution is warranted before drawing conclusions on the basis of this modest work. Future studies taking into consideration all of these variables should be helpful to verify the present findings.

4. Implications

The present study could have two implications. First, diagnosing the most defective language in a bilingual aphasic patient is of a paramount importance for clinical concerns. In effect, Kambanaros and Grohmann (2011) noted the importance of similar studies in guiding the "clinical intervention for the patient" as well as developing "therapy strategies that focus on specific characteristics of one or multiple languages" (2011, p. 513).

Second, the present findings could be taken further to suggest implications for foreign language teaching. The reported dissociation between L1 and L2 reinforces their segregation at the anatomical level. Cognitively speaking, the two languages are not conceived nor processed the same way. However, although segregated, interactions between languages occur. One instance of interaction reported in the foreign language learning setting is the phenomenon of negative language transfer usually experienced by new language learners. The problematic effect of negative transfer could originate from the nature of this anatomical segregation. One could possibly suggest that the more the two languages are anatomically segregated the less negative language transfer could occur.

Possibly what defines the borders between L1 and L2 is the way the second language was first introduced to the learner and how the learner experienced it. Thus,

reinforcing this anatomical segregation could hopefully minimize problematic language transfer. Authenticity in language learning experience could probably strengthen the language traces in the brain which will maximize its cognitive segregation and minimize the chances for language transfer to occur. What essentially marks the Tunisian foreign language curriculum design, more particularly in the primary and secondary schools where the first threads of segregations are being sewed, is the lack of authentic exposure to the target new language. This calls for the necessity to reconsider efficient ways in introducing learners to foreign languages while maximizing their contact with the target language in authentic settings.

4. *Conclusion*

The present study aimed to compare L1 and L2 after brain damage in the first stages of Alzheimer. Findings suggested that both languages were affected to variable degrees and that neither of them was particularly preserved nor particularly affected. Nonetheless, specific instances where access to L1 was possible while access to L2 was not occurred relatively more than instances where the opposite was the case. This fact occurred with specific semantic categories more than with others which suggested a categorical effect of semantic knowledge affecting L2 more than L1. Differences revealed between both languages suggested their segregation at the cognitive level which could have important implications if applied to both clinical and teaching fields.

Acknowledgment

We should thank all the professional working team at the CHU Razi Hospital (Mannouba, Tunisia). Special thanks go to Pr. Riadh Gouider and Pr. Amina Gargouri. We are much indebted to Mrs Mouna Zgoulli, Mrs Mabrouka haoues, Mrs Sondes Amdouni, Mrs Nabiha Khaloufi, and Mrs Sihem Boujlel for their tremendous help during the internship program.

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Metaphysical Conceits: Recondite and/or Plausible?

Karim Dhouib

Abstract

Dr. Samuel Johnson's view that Metaphysical conceits are outlandish and insipid images unjustifiably yoked together by violence might not be completely untrue. But, for all their peculiarity and weirdness, Metaphysical conceits are a main source of poetic delight for inquisitive readers. It is unfair to judge the metaphysical poets by their ingenuity and intellectualism, and yet an understanding of the oddness of conceits is also essential to a fair critical evaluation. The paper first examines the difference between Metaphysical and non-Metaphysical conceits, and then gives an outline of the critical reception of such unusual imagery. It concludes with a meticulous scrutiny of a number of typical conceits from John Donne's, Andrew Marvell's and George Herbert's poetry.

Key Words

Classicism, decorum, eccentricity, ingenuity, non/Metaphysical conceit, plausibility

Metaphysical conceits have long been taxed as recondite, far-fetched or ingenious. This must have led many readers to wonder where the line should be drawn between a Metaphysical conceit and non-Metaphysical examples of metaphoric language. What is a far-fetched metaphor? At which point does a metaphor grow into a conceit? Is it necessarily a poetic fault to be genuinely inventive? Is a conceit a poor and frigid metaphor? Are conceits dry and abstract or are they plausible and tenable? Why did conceits burgeon in seventeenth-century England? Was Metaphysical poetry a digression from the current literary tradition within which it was produced and received?

The present article sets out to answer some of the afore-mentioned questions. Previous critical studies explored the metaphysical tradition, providing a substantial body of works on the Metaphysical school's main traits, the eminent Metaphysical poets and their major speculative concerns.⁴ It is worth pointing out that the principal target of concern is

⁴ Among the important works which have given particular attention to conceits we cite, for example, Kathleen Lea's "Conceits" (1925); John Boal Doud's "Donne's Technique of Dissonance" (1937); Alice Brandenburg's "The Dynamic Image in

not, in the least instance, to ignore what was said on Metaphysical poetry on the basis that the best part of it was rooted in, or had affinities with, traditional criticism, but rather to fill in some of the gaps left over by Metaphysical poetry previous commentators and critics. More precisely, the paper first looks at what makes a particular conceit metaphysical, that is, the technico-thematic difference/s between the conceits as used by Metaphysicals and the witty imagery of previous poetic modes or schools. It then gives an outline of the critical reception of such atypical imagery, and finally concludes with a copious study of some illustrative examples from Donne, Marvell and Herbert. The methodology is basically analytical as it follows close textual study and comparative as it compares the poets in question and their works.

To start with, it is useful to recall that conceits are in some way no new thing in literature. They go back to classical poetry where countless examples of witty paradox, clever hyperboles and inventive symbolism abound. Elizabethan poetry, for instance, is replete with witty metaphors which stray beyond the immediate point of resemblance and which evince an extravagance of ingeniousness, verbal play and hyperbolic expression.

Sir Philip Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella* is infused with numerous conceited metaphors. Sonnet IX is a typical example of Sidney's wit and verbal dexterity. A perfectly executed sonnet in iambic pentameter, the poem vibrates with witty speculations about the beauty of his beloved:

Queen Virtue's court, which some call Stella's face,
Prepared by Nature's choicest furniture,
Hath his front built of alabaster pure;
Gold is the covering of that stately place.
The door, by which, sometimes, comes forth her grace,
Red porphyry is, which lock of pearl makes sure;
Whose porches rich (which name of 'cheeks' endure)
Marble, mixed red and white, do interlace.
The windows now, through which this heavenly guest
Looks o'er the world, and can find nothing such
Which dare claim from those lights the name of 'best,'
Of touch they are, that without touch doth touch,
Which Cupid's self, from Beauty's mind did draw:

Metaphysical Poetry" (1947); Rosemond Turve's *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery* (1947); Robert Lathrop Sharp's "Observations on Metaphysical Imagery" (1935); Cecil Day Lewis's *The Poetic Image* (1948), and Terence Hawkes's *Metaphor* (1972).

Of touch they are, and poor I am their straw. (9)

In this sonnet, Sidney describes each part of Stella's face in an extended conceit, creating a lively visual picture of Stella's stunning face. Her splendid face is inquisitively compared to a stately palace, namely "Queen Virtue's court," implying that Astrophel sees "virtue" impersonated in his beloved. Each facial feature emblematically or iconically stands for a different part of this fabulous and dignified building.⁵ Stella's white forehead is the finely-grained alabaster *façade*, her blushing cheeks porches of red and white marble, her white teeth a "lock of pearl," and her golden hair the roof. Her fiery red lips serve as a door built from precious porphyry, while her "beamy black" eyes form the windows to her majestic soul. In the final couplet of the sonnet, Astrophel laments the fact that he is a perpetual captive to her face, enslaved to her charming eyes, drawn exquisitely and artfully by Cupid himself using perfect, heavenly beauty as his model.⁶

The imagery in Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* is no less inventive. The following brief excerpt exemplifies Shakespeare's exquisite rhetorical tropes:

O, how her eyes and tears did lend and borrow!
Her eye seen in the tears, tears in her eye;
Both crystals, where they view'd each other's sorrow:
Sorrow that friendly sighs sought still to dry;
But like a stormy day, now wind, now rain,
Sighs dry her cheeks, tears make them wet again. (191)

Venus's eyes and tears, at the sight of Adonis's massacred body, are described as two objects that "borrow" and "lend" their looks to and from one another, both filled with agony and sorrow. Her tear-flooded eyes are two petrified "crystals" mutely mirroring one another, and silently echoing the tremendous pain at her lover's tragic death. The syntactic mirroring created by antimetabole, the repetition of words or clauses in reverse order (line 962), evokes the tremendous grief that has befallen Venus (Meek 48). The last line closes with a curious hyperbole: Venus's tear-floods could never be dried up by her sigh-tempests.

Non-metaphysical conceits, as shown in the above examples, are unique and witty in their own way. But they do not illustrate that vigorous impulse to go beyond the ordinary or trespass the boundaries of common language. A non-metaphysical conceit is a delightful

⁵ Sidney's romantic sonnet exemplifies the traditional Renaissance sonnet with its typical characters, conventional courtly ethos, melodramatic tone and stereotyped images: the helpless star-crossed lover who could not reach his heavenly and pure beloved; his sweet sighs and his tear-flooded eyes at the sight of his unattainable gorgeous lady (with her gleaming eyes, coral-red lips, rosy cheeks, and snow-white skin, among other traditional clichés).

⁶ One final remark should go to the pun in line seven. The adjective "rich" is a sly reference to the assumed real person Stella, Sidney's would-have-been wife Penelope Devereux, subsequently married to the Baron Robert Rich (Hamilton 63).

element of style. It is introduced into the poem for its own sake, not for the sake of the idea or the thought being expressed. “The renaissance-romantic poet adds his conceit to his thought as a bit of decoration; he uses it like a jewel or a coloured ribbon, an ornamental superfluity” (Branham 36). As a matter of fact, a conceit is not metaphysical if it is intended solely to decorate style. It is not metaphysical if it does not heighten the energy of expression and the vigour of verbal ingenuity. The ultimate effect of a non-metaphysical conceit is to enhance the literariness/prettiness of the poem and to make imagery appealing and enlivening.

Unlike the flowery conceit of the Elizabethans, a metaphysical conceit, as shall be explained later, is not used for its own sake. It is used to persuade, to define and to prove a point. Helen Gardener comments that “in a metaphysical poem, the conceits are instruments of definition in an argument or instruments to persuade” (*The Metaphysical Poets* 54).⁷The poem makes a point which the conceit explicates or helps to underpin and forward. The Metaphysicals’ leading purpose is to give an exquisite and delicate emphasis on the emotion/idea being expressed. It is a ready tool to carry the weight of what they have to say. It dynamically supports the thought and is, in fact, the manner in which that thought is put forth. It is precisely here that theirs differ from the classicist usage of conceits. A metaphysical conceit then is distinguished from a non-metaphysical conceit in the following respects: it is more intense, more energetic, and more capable of expressing thought and emotion.

To sum up this part briefly, Elizabethans liked conceited style for its ornamental qualities and for the depth its paradoxes lent to their thought. It pleased them for the wit it infused in the text. Metaphysical poets, on the other hand, were imbued with the excessiveness and fantasy of conceits not for the sake of glamour and exquisiteness but for the sake of transgressing the limits of art and reinforcing poetic effect. Their main object is to arouse and startle the attention and to keep the mind in constant play. Where the Elizabethan sought to excite his readers with sparkling imagery, the Metaphysical exerted himself to surprise his audience, to keep their minds unremittingly energized, and alert.

Before going any further, an overview of the critical reception of the Metaphysical conceit is needed. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to survey all the critical views on Metaphysical conceits, we shall nonetheless go back to Ben Jonson, John Dryden, Sir Samuel Johnson and William Hazlitt, to Eliot’s influential review of Herbert Grierson’s 1912 anthology, to Van Hook’s article “Concupiscence of Witt: The Metaphysical Conceit in Baroque Poetics,” published in 1986. This should illuminate the genesis, significance and reception of Metaphysical conceits.

Ben Jonson once stated that Donne, the chief exemplar of the Metaphysical school, “for not keeping of accent deserves hanging” and “for not being understood would perish”

⁷ Alex Preminger offers a similar definition of conceits. A conceit, he says, is an “intricate or far-fetched metaphor, which functions through arousing feelings of surprise, shock, or amusement [...] The poet compares elements which seem to have little or nothing in common, or juxtaposes images which establish a marked discord in mood. [...] The emotion evoked by a good conceit is [...] a surprised recognition of the ultimate validity of the relationship presented in the conceit, which thus serves not as an ornament but as an instrument of vision” (147–149).

(Williamson 75). He argued that inserting mundane and unpleasant words in the most sublime medium of literary expression was an immaculate breach of *decorum*, and that the use of inelegant vehicles of comparison (such as the pair of compasses, the flea, the parallel lines) for weighty matters as love and death was but a way of asserting one's voice by playing a strikingly different note.⁸ Far-fetched witticism destroys the prettiness and picturesqueness of the poem.

John Dryden, who attaches great importance to style and verbalism, talks about the propriety of words and thoughts. It was he who first used the term "Metaphysical" in speaking of Donne.⁹ "Donne," he says, "affects the metaphysics, not only in his satires but in his amorous verses where nature should reign. He perplexes the minds of the fair sex with nice speculations of philosophy, when he should engage their hearts and entertain them with the softnesses of love" (96). Dryden believes that poetry should be based on two essentials: (1) balance and dignity of expression, and (2) strict conformance to a metrical pattern. He defines wit as follows:

The composition of all poems is, or ought to be, of wit, and wit in the poet, or wit writing, [...] is no other than the faculty of imagination in the writer, which, like a nimble spaniel, beats over and ranges through the field of memory, till it springs the quarry it hunted after; or, without metaphor, which searches over all the memory for the species or ideas which it designs to represent. Wit written is that which is well defined the happy result of thought, or product of that imagination. (97-98)

For Dryden, wit should not be the unhappy result of thought and fancy. It should be seen as the "art of clothing and adorning that thought so found and varied, in apt, significant, and sounding words: the quickness of the imagination is seen in the invention, the fertility in the fancy, and the accuracy in the expression" (98). Excess makes the image metaphor-less. In 1670, Samuel Parker went so far as to advocate an Act of Parliament forbidding the use of "fulsome and luscious" metaphors (qtd. in Hawkes 31).

In his *Lives of the Poets* (1779), Dr. Samuel Johnson also decried the Metaphysicals' violation of decorum. Their poetry, he thought, was rough and unmetrical. Their comparisons were neither "just" nor "natural," and might be considered

⁸ *The Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms* offers the following definition of decorum: "The appropriateness of manner to ideas or situation, defined by the Elizabethan critic Puttenham as 'this good grace of everything in his kinde'. It is primarily associated with the tradition of classical rhetoric and courtly values underlying Renaissance literature" (51). In simpler terms, decorum is literary propriety in terms of form and content and the avoidance of incongruities.

⁹ It should be noted here that the term "metaphysical" was used by Dryden and other earlier critics to pejoratively refer both to Donne's esoteric subject matter and stylistic oddity. Modern critics have continued to use the same term but with a rather positive attitude.

a kind of *discordia concors*; a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike ...the most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together; nature and art are ransacked for illustrations, comparisons, and allusions. In his portraits of nature, the poet must bring out prominent and striking features in order to “recall the original to every mind,” rather than to use images that cause the reader to wonder “by what perverseness of industry they were ever found. (12)

The Metaphysicals, he says, endeavoured to be immoderately singular in their witty conceits and were imprudently careless of their diction. “If wit be well described by Pope as being ‘that which has been often thought but was never before well expressed,’ they certainly never attained nor ever sought it,” Johnson explains (17). He argues that the Metaphysical poets’ use of wit is altogether unsuccessful and abortive because it is neither natural nor pleasing. Johnson states:

their thoughts are often new but seldom natural; they are not obvious but neither are they just, and the reader far from wondering that he missed them, wonders more frequently by what perverseness of industry they were ever found. (18)

Johnson thinks that the highly intellectualised metaphysical style degenerates into the mere pursuit of logical ingenuity for its own sake and that it is therefore needlessly obscure and poetically insipid and frigid. Metaphysical poets take pains in joining or yoking incompatible ideas in order to create startling images without interest or emotion. Ideas are yoked but not united. “Their courtship,” he says, “was void of fondness, and their lamentation of sorrow. Their wish was only to say what they hoped had never been said before” (18). Metaphysical poets exhibit wit by joining incompatible and irreconcilable ideas in order to create startling and wondrous images that had never been said before. Johnson concludes that the reader “commonly thinks this improvement dearly bought, and though he sometimes admires, is seldom pleased” (18). To Johnson, a conceit meant a repellent, clownish and objectionable erudition, and ingenuity was inimical to the truly poetic.¹⁰

¹⁰ In his “Essay on Criticism,” Alexander Pope discusses the rules of taste which should govern poetry and gives Metaphysical poetry a passing mention:

**Expression is the dress of thought, and still
Appears more decent as more suitable.
A vile Conceit in pompous words express’d
Is like a clown in regal purple dress’d
For diff’rent styles with diff’rent subjects sort,
As sev’ral garbs with country, town, and court. (44)**

William Hazlitt, in a similar vein, condemns metaphysical poetry as “dry matter-of-fact, decked out in a robe of glittering conceits, and clogged with the halting shackles of verse” (59). He finds metaphysical conceits fantastically excessive and unluckily dazzling. The scholastic reasoning of the metaphysical, he thinks, dissolves and devitalises the tender and emotive grace of the sentiments expressed. The gentility of emotion wastes away by insipid and vapid scientific or rational thinking. On Donne Hazlitt makes the following oft-quoted comment:

Donne, who was considerably before Cowley, is without his fancy, but was more recondite in his logic [...] to tell disagreeable truths in as disagreeable a way as possible, or to convey a pleasing and affecting thought by the harshest means and with the most painful effort. His muse suffers continual pangs and throes. His thoughts are delivered by the Caesarean operation. The sentiments, profound and tender as they often are, are stifled in the expression, and heaved pantingly forth, are buried quick again under the ruins and rubbish of analytical distinctions. (97)

The making of a metaphysical conceit for Hazlitt is as unnatural, forced and laboured as a Caesarean operation. Both are twisted and strained.

William John Courthope's *History of English Poetry* (1903) offers a reading of Metaphysical poetry and conceits that is not very different from his predecessors. He argues that the emergence of wit is to be explained in terms of “the decay of the scholastic philosophy and of the feudal system” (105). Paradox, hyperbole, and excess of metaphor are for him signs of “the efflorescence of decay” (106).

Courthope posits that the chivalric spirit of medieval literature as expressed in romance and allegory and the verbal adroitness and witticism of the early modern period were gradually substituted by the poets' whimsical efforts “to outdo each other in mere ingenuity” (110). The Metaphysical poets' fondness for excessive imagery is accounted for by “the decay of allegory as a natural mode of poetic expression” (110). In accord with Johnson, Courthope regards wit in the hands of the Metaphysical poets as a means to exercise their imagination and “unrestrained liberty,” not to articulate things of “vital importance” such as “the nature of the unseen world,” (116; 112) as it is with classical poetry. Their prime goal is to surprise by their unexpectedness.¹¹ Courthope echoes Johnson in his conviction of the destructive and perverted force of wit:

For Pope, it is not *what* a poet says that matters as much as *how* he says it. The qualities of good writing include well-proportioned, unified form, emotional restraint, lack of eccentricity, rationality, clarity, technical precision, and balance, among other things. Accordingly, vile and clownish conceits pervert imagery and destroy poetic diction and good taste.

¹¹ In his book *History of English Literature*, Reuben Post Halleck says “John Donne is of interest to the student of literature chiefly because of the influence which he exerted on the poetry of the age. His verse teems with forced comparisons and analogies between things remarkable for their dissimilarity. An obscure likeness and a worthless conceit were as important to him as was the problem of existence to Hamlet” (186). J. E. Crofts, in a similar vein, argues that conceits in Donne's poetry run like acid spilled, producing an effect of corrosion and distortion and speaks of Donne's thought as “a convulvulous growth of intellectual whim-whams” (132). Edwin P. Whipple talks of Herbert's verbal and visual conceits in similar terms: “His poetry is

The essence of Donne's wit is abstraction. His method lies in separating the perceptions of the soul from the entanglements of sense, and after isolating a thought, a passion, or quality in the world of pure ideas, to make it visible to the fancy by means of metaphorical images and scholastic allusions. (160)

From his perspective, isolating thought and feeling undermines the poeticality of the poem and makes imagery abstract and therefore colourless and stale.

All the previous critical views, unsympathetic for the most part, have tried to call attention to the frigidity, insipidity and unwarranted artificiality of Metaphysical conceits. Classicist in spirit, critics from Jonson to Courthope laid focus on such notions as moderation, proportioned beauty, good sense, rule and regulation, high-spirited intellectualism, masculine force, brilliant arrangement of ideas, intellectual play, strength of outline, firm modelling and structuring, clear rationality, and sound coinciding with sense. They explained how Metaphysicals infringed those principles to unexplainable ends. Their conceits are weird and grotesque, "arresting attention by disrupting and enforcing connections across what seem natural divisions" (Mackenzie 54). Stylistically and thematically, they argued, Metaphysical poetry is utter nonsense and anti-poetry, so to speak.

T. S. Eliot is perhaps the first critic to give some justice to Metaphysical poetry as a significant trend in English literature. In his seminal 1921 essay entitled "The Metaphysical Poets," he identifies two main features of the Metaphysical poets. These are (1) the dexterous making of figures of speech, "especially those figures which call for the rapid association of unlike objects" and (2) "the peculiarly close association, if not actual fusion, of feeling and thought, sensuous experience and intelligence, sensation and idea" (282). He underlines Donne's commitment to express the complexity of human experience and his concurrent observance of unity of expression. Donne, Eliot explains, effectively fuses intellect with passion, thought with feeling. Emotion is put forth in an intellectualised way through conceits drawn from different avenues of knowledge.

According to Eliot, the Metaphysical style's core attribute is to bind assumably unrelated experiences into unity (283). The metaphysical poets used this literary device to reproduce through verse a "direct sensuous apprehension of thought" (286) by "forming new wholes" (287). Eliot explains that through the Metaphysical conceit, English poets of the late Renaissance could bridge the gap that had settled in towards the beginning of the modern era between thought and sensibility. He posits that the Metaphysical poets' "mode of feeling was directly and freshly altered by their reading and thoughts" (286). Hence, the poets' learned thoughts, applied to their sensibility, would modify their way of feeling and perceiving. This of course would account for the "heterogeneity of materials" (283) that

the bizarre expression of a deeply religious and intensely thoughtful nature, sincere at heart, but strange, farfetched, and serenely crotchety in utterance. Nothing can be more frigid than the conceits in which he clothes the great majority of his pious ejaculations and heavenly ecstasies" (247).

characterizes the conceit. In the conceit, through this heterogeneity, images springing from the poet's diversified and kaleidoscopic knowledge of astronomy, alchemy, history, or any other domain of learning, would be used in his description of emotional states. The Metaphysicals were "engaged in the task of trying to find the verbal equivalent for states of mind and feeling" from a mosaic and multitudinal store of knowledge and experience (284).

According to Eliot, the connections established between these seemingly unrelated elements in the conceit would be "forced upon it by the poet" (282). Eliot in fact argues that this amalgamation of "disparate experience" (287) confers uniqueness and richness to poetry in the Metaphysical style and makes it the perfect medium for the description of Man's experience which he defines as intrinsically "chaotic, irregular, fragmentary" (287). To Eliot, the Metaphysical conceit encapsulates the essence of what poetry ought to have been in 1921, and should be today, as it was in Donne's day. The poet, says Eliot, "must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning" (289).

Eliot concludes his essay with a note that foreshadows his later depreciation of Metaphysical conceits:

They have been enough praised in terms which are implicit limitations because they are "metaphysical" or "Witty," "quaint" or "obscure," though at their best they have not these attributes more than other serious poets. On the other hand, we must not reject the criticism of Johnson a dangerous person to disagree with without having mastered it, without having assimilated the Johnsonian canons of taste. (290)

Eliot recognizes the heterogeneous variety of materials that characterises the Metaphysical conceit, and at the same time emphasises the poet's successful creation of a sense of unity through his use of the conceit. However, in a later essay entitled "Donne in Our Time," Eliot changed his view somewhat. For the first time he stressed the "manifest fissure between thought and sensibility" that, according to him, characterises the verse of John Donne, "a chasm which in his poetry he bridged in his own way" (8). Donne, says Eliot, falls short to bring together the parts of his disjointed experience. He even goes so far as to state that in Donne's verse, "it is not, as it is with the Elizabethans in their worst excesses, the word, the vocabulary, that is tormented - it is the thought itself" (12).

Grierson, showing great appreciation of Donne's verse, contends that Donne's wit interfered at times with his artistic spontaneity, but the effect though astounding and perplexing was "not entirely fantastic and erudite" (xxi). The inclusion into his poetry of images drawn from theology, scholastic learning, medicine, science, and astrology, often justified by the intensity of the poetic emotion, nevertheless, produced a general effect that was bizarre and harsh, and imposed a limitation that true genius could have avoided (Burke 32). The remoteness of the image harms poetic intensity and creates a sense of what could be termed "metaphoric tension" or uneasiness.

George Williamson, in *The Donne Tradition* (1930), places a similar emphasis upon Donne's intellectuality and intensity in affirming that "Metaphysical poetry springs from the effort to resolve an emotional tension by means of intellectual equivalents which terminate in the senses or possess the quality of sensation" (30). He defines the Metaphysical conceit as a literary device that presents a "rational perception of relations" (31). Williamson explains:

The conceit, playing like a shuttle between his mind and the world, wove the fabric of his thought, and gave the pattern by which he united his most disparate knowledge into an image witty or imaginative, novel or compelling, but always rising from a tough reasonableness and often attaining a startling insight, with moments of breathtaking beauty. (32).

Like Gardner, Williamson highlights the logical and argumentative aspect of the Donnean conceit to translate his thought process through verse:

Donne practices sensuous thinking ... in which the image is the body of the thought rather than a thing of beauty in itself. In this sensuous thinking the images are not merely illustrative; they advance the intellectual progress of the poem. (89-90)

Far from being simply decorative elements of style, conceits are parts of whole not abstracted or uncongenial entities. To borrow the words of C. D. Lewis, Metaphysical conceits are not "major stars in a constellation ordered by laws not their own" (25). They orbit around the central speculative concern/s of the poem. Williamson also stresses the sense of wonder that the conceit achieves, causing readers to reach for a truth that transcends the boundaries of the earthly and physical.

In his article "Observations on Metaphysical Imagery," Robert Lathrop Sharp talks about the sense of wonder/marvel created by Metaphysical conceits. He recognizes the forcefulness of Donne's startling comparisons and explains that the Metaphysicals forced imagery to do more than it usually does in order to "raise the voltage of its suggestive power" (43). Their imagery reached the pinnacle of its suggestive power when, as John Boal Doud points out in his article "Donne's Technique of Dissonance," they succeeded in contrasting "the abstract and the concrete, the physical and the spiritual planes of the imagination" (1054).

In his article "Concupiscence of Wit: The Metaphysical Conceit in Baroque Poetics" (1986), J.W. Van Hook defines the conceit as a figure of speech based on a central metaphor "building around its fundamental image a distinct rhetorical structure with unprecedented poetic and epistemological aims of its own" (24). The conceit provides the reader with a play on hypothetical correspondences. Van Hook explains how metaphors are essentially products of "logical intellect" (28), fusing intellect and imagination. It is "that faculty which

seeks and speculates on the true [...] the power of mind that marvels at whatever is beautiful and efficacious" (28). Van Hook also conceives of the conceit as arising out of seventeenth century psychology, and figurative language as originating primarily from man's ontological attempts to explain the relation between man and what is outside man.

Van Hook explains that this literary device differs considerably from the simpler or "legitimate" metaphor as H. C. Beeching puts it (564). The commonplace metaphor, he argues, directs the reader's attention to a beautiful and appealing image. The conceit, on the other hand, directs his aesthetic response to the intellectual analogy it constructs. The conceit, in fact, "records the *ingegno's* experiment with the categories of judgement" (34). In other words, the conceit differs from a simple metaphor because it does not plainly create correlations between different objects but represents rather the intellect's curious play with hypothetical correspondences or equivalents. The Metaphysical conceit therefore takes the reader one step further than the objects of the simple metaphor and enables him/her to connect with the poet's *ingegno* and to follow the movement of his thought. Van Hook describes the conceit primarily as a literary device that "drive[s] the mind toward a new mode of awareness and vision" (38). It mingles logic, intellect and imagination in a fresh and compelling way.

Modern critics' views on Metaphysical poetry are perhaps less negative and more extensive than the views advanced by earlier critics. The qualities which were once regarded as eccentric and atypical (roughness of meter, dimness of meaning, poverty of diction, obliqueness, intellectualism) are now accepted as manifestations of the poet's immaculate commitment to emotion and to experience and of his ability to draw indiscriminately upon different fields of knowledge for poetic effect.

The Metaphysicals sought to subvert, though not completely, the antique and the "poetic," relying instead on the singular effects created by ordinary words and words which had never seen the light of poetry before. Technical terms from every kind of trade and business, vocations, academic and scientific terminology, the language of text-books, of the universities, of the courtrooms, and of the city streets and markets were all wittingly introduced into the poetic text for particular effects.

The search for novelty and the desire for a more dynamic assimilation of the world were indeed stimulated by the major discoveries and bewildering findings of scientists in the seventeenth century, a century where "the most significant of apples was not Eve's, but Newton's" (Bush 50). It was the threshold of the modern era and the poets could not have remained indifferent to what was going on. Major developments took place in astronomy, chemistry, geography and physiology, among other disciplines. These discoveries caught the antenna of Donne and his contemporaries, and were incorporated into their writings as an echo of the shift in scientific outlook and poetic philosophy.

Conceits were a response to this changing climate and they offered a way out of the tired conventions of the previous modes of poetic writing. Elizabethan imagery, "already completely flowered" and worn out (Sharp 468), seems to have reached a point of saturation. It no longer possessed the power to kindle the imagination, and "a new style was necessary," as James Blair Leishman puts it (162). Traditional metaphors were dispensed

with, and “words consecrated to poetry were avoided” (Bennet 9). Conceited poetry was in a way an attempt to break the monotony that marred imagery at the end of the sixteenth century. It was an outlet to open up “a new planet in the poetical atmosphere,” to quote Gerald Hammond (20). It was “an instrument of discovery and an avenue always to fresh invention” in Harold Bloom’s terms (xvi).

Far from being fantastically excessive and unluckily dazzling, metaphysical conceits are purposeful vehicles of thought, functioning integrally in the poem’s structure and furthering the poetic effect. Attention will be put on the following four texts: Donne’s “A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning,” and “The Flea,” Marvell’s “The Definition of Love” and Herbert’s “Easter Wings.” The conceits in these poems, while in some way startling and esoteric, are exquisitely interlaced incongruities.¹²

The most oft-quoted of all metaphysical conceits is perhaps the comparison of two lovers to a pair of compasses in “A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning.” The geometrical image Donne introduces into the poem makes visible the union-in-absence of two lovers. This feeling of separateness is given expression through intellectual concepts drawn from the impersonal field of science and craftsmanship.

To begin with, the title immediately throws into relief the sense of separateness through the substantive “valediction.” The speaker bids farewell to his beloved, then he tries to persuade her through a series of witty analogies not to mourn at his departure. The thirty six lines that follow the title are a continuous argument enriched with striking figures – some of which are imbued with science – to illustrate the fact proposed. The text, indeed, displays a recognizable pattern of logical reasoning: a situation, a cluster of images and a conclusion.

In the first three stanzas, two analogies are given to support the proposition: “the death of virtuous men” and “the trepidation of the spheres”:

As virtuous men pass mildly away,
And whisper to their souls to go,
Whilst some of their sad friends do say
The breath goes now, and some say, No:

So let us melt, and make no noise,
No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move;
‘Twere profanation of our joys

¹²All Donne quotes are from Gardener’s *The Metaphysical Poets* (London: Penguin, 1957).

To tell the laity our love.

Moving of th' earth brings harms and fears,
Men reckon what it did, and meant;
But trepidation of the spheres,
Though greater far, is innocent. (74)

Our parting, the speaker says, should be as calm and peaceful as death and as the movement of the universe which, though greater than the earthquake, does not cause alarm and passes unnoticed. The death of virtuous men is beautifully calm and almost imperceptible because a good man knows that his reward is eternal life and peace. The trepidation of the spheres is massive and colossal in spatial terms, "greater far" than earthquakes but is "innocent" and almost indiscernible. The lovers' parting should be as quiet and gentle as the passing away of pious men and the movement of the spheres.

Because their love is exalted and glorious, valediction is not dramatic or painful. "Dull sublunary lovers love," on the other hand, cannot admit absence as it has mere sensuality at its core:

Dull sublunary lovers' love
(Whose soul is sense) cannot admit
Absence, because it doth remove
Those things which elemented it. (74)

Such lovers cannot deal with being parted, the speaker affirms, precisely because absence physically removes the love by removing the lovers.

The argument is carried a bit further in stanza five where love is depicted as free from physicality and therefore unaffected by absence of the body, which is metonymically represented through such derivatives as "lips, eyes, hands":

But we by a love so much refined,
That our selves know not what it is,

Inter-assured of the mind,
Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss. (74)

The lovers form a single being, sharing a single unified soul, and their unity is not to be broken up by physical separation.

In stanzas six and seven this logic is pushed to its apex and it is precisely here that the poem and Donne's metaphysical mind take flight. The speaker argues that absence only deepens their love and makes it expand like gold beaten into leaf and like two legs of a pair of compasses. The more gold is beaten, the more it expands. Like a golden leaf which has been beaten into an "airy thinnesse," the lovers will experience an "expansion" not a "breach." Parting is not separation but expansion of souls:

Our two souls therefore, which are one,
Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
Like gold to airy thinness beat. (74)

Perhaps dissatisfied with this materialistic simile after dealing with their relationship in such spiritual terms, Donne finds a far better and more expressive image to finally forbid her mourning:

If they be two, they are two so
As stiff twin compasses are two;
Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if the other do.

And though it in the center sit,
Yet when the other far doth roam,
It leans and hearkens after it,
And grows erect, as that comes home. (74)

The poem could be construed as a celebration of Platonic love, a love that is not stained by externals. It is perhaps the speaker's desire to glorify a perfect love that made him choose the compass as a vehicle of comparison. The compass and the zodiac were both interpreted in Donne's time as emblems of perfection and faultless symmetry, an idea that is well transposed into this love poem to evoke the purity of their relationship. Donne does not equate the lovers with a compass, but rather employs the relationship that unites the two ends of the compass to point up what unites two lovers' souls. Therefore, this Metaphysical conceit does not merely "yoke" by violence unrelated things together, but rather seeks to cogently articulate the pure love that ties the two physically distant lovers.

A second remark can be made with respect to the poetic deixis. The speaker seems to rely almost exclusively on the first person plural deictic (we-us-our) which articulates, among other things, the sense of fusion, union, and conjunction. The "I" and "you" undergo a metonymic process whereby two become one, so to speak. The "I" is completely dissolved into the "you" the way the two legs of the compass are ever subordinate and inseparable. These deictic markers, indeed, force us to construct a fictional universe in which union reigns supreme and in which separateness is perpetually refuted and de-emphasised.

What makes the image even more plausible and more delightful is the weight of emotion that lies behind this intellectual parallel. Donne ingeniously infuses the merely scientific with the emotional, thus redeeming the conceit from abstraction and insipidity. Joseph Addison reflects that "[w]it gives *delight* and *surprise* to the reader ... in order for the Resemblance in the ideas be Wit, it is necessary that the Ideas should not lie too near one another in the Nature of things; for while the Likeness is obvious, it gives no Surprise..." (qtd. in Hammond 42-3). Thus, to compare whiteness to snow or to milk, he comments, is too obvious a comparison that it can never reach a threshold at which it could be called wit, unless there be something more than the metaphor. Hence, a lady's breast might be analogised to snow for its whiteness. But, if the lady's breast is said to be as "cold too," the comparison thence "grows into wit" (Hammond 46). In this example, as in "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," the mere physical similarity is taken a step further where the physical and the emotional or the attitudinal are welded together. The merely scientific and dry in the image of the compass is infused with the emotional. The derivatives "leanes," "hearkens" and "home," which occur immediately after the compass image, confer on the text a certain emotional charge. The elegant consistency of emotional effect which runs throughout the text attests to Donne's poetic ingenuity. This load of emotions will not, indeed, be found in Marvell's "The Definition of Love," as shall be explained later.

The compass image, though drawn from a field foreign to poetry, is in keeping with the fervent feelings the poet is expressing. The compass conceit does not strike us as toilsome and frigid. It shows how readily and naturally it fits within the overall structure of the poem. It embodies Donne's extraordinary capacity at finding, through those seemingly forced comparisons and equivalents, the very essence of the experience he seeks to describe. A. S. Brandenburg comments that:

The images carry the thought of the poem. The conceits here are functional not decorative, and their function is to make psychological action clear by expressing it in terms of physical action. (1041)

Cleanth Brooks gives a similar evaluation of the compass conceit:

In Donne's famous comparison of the lovers to a pair of compasses, the compasses are poetic in the only sense in which objects can ever be legitimately poetic – they function integrally in the poem. The matter of importance is not whether or not a pair of compasses possess an “independent power to please” the reader. Presumably, a pair of compasses is about as prosaic as any object can be. But the pair of compasses in *A Valediction: Forbidding Morning* is necessary and integral to the total effect of the poem. (12)

The compass conceit could be construed as “unpoetic” if it is viewed by itself. But in this very poem, the conceit sums up precisely the way the souls of the two lovers interact in Donne's *ingegno*. Donne skilfully brings the reader to embrace his point of view as each line flows gracefully into the other, creating a strong sense of lucidity, unity and emotion.

Like “*A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning*,” Marvell's “*The Definition of Love*” takes an illustrative frame. The whole effect of the poem depends on the witty precision and concision of the images proposed:

And therefore her Decrees of Steel
Us as the distant Poles have plac'd,
(Though Love's whole World on us doth wheel)
Not by themselves to be embrac'd
.....
As Lines so Loves oblique may well
Themselves in every Angle greet :
But ours so truly Paralel ,
Though infinite can never meet. (253)

The lovers are as far apart as the two distant poles and are fated to never meet (physically). Yet paradoxically, the whole world of love depends on them. The perfection of their love (as flawless as parallel lines) brings about their separation. Marvell's lovers, like Donne's in "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" could never meet physically. Their union is one of minds not bodies. They have become a figure of harmony, but of impossible fulfilment. The pure spirits of lovers soared to a special celestial sphere of love. Because their love is so perfect, they can never meet. Other imperfect lovers, by contrast, have the chance to meet because their love is oblique.

Both images, indeed, reveal the width of human intellectual exploration. Yet, there is one basic difference between the two poets. While Donne welds the scientific with the emotional, Marvell seems to be interested in the mere abstraction. Donald Mackenzie comments that "Marvell presses his logical abstraction so hard that the feeling which justifies it seems to refine away to nothing. Marvell's conclusion about the abstract refinement of their love— "the Conjunction of the Mind"—is borne out by the steady abstraction. The poet, presumably, meant something of this kind when he called it "The Definition of Love" (115). His stake in the thing seems principally "craftsmanly" (Mackenzie 115). What could have redeemed Marvell's conceit from abstraction would have been infusing it with some emotional content and passion.

Donne's "The Flea" remains, probably, the best instance of conceited poetry. Donne exercises his wit by putting forth weighty matters in playful terms. The poem is not about sexual union and fornication. Nor is it about marriage. It is an exercise of wit, a deliberate display of how remote elements could be mingled together through a mental logical equation. In fact, the twenty-seven-line poem is a continuous argument that exclusively hinges upon a fairly startling vehicle of comparison (a flea). What possible meanings could a minute insect as the flea intimate to the poem?

In this poem, an eager lover uses the flea as a device to help him in the arguments to win his coy mistress. The meaning of the poem centres on the implications turning around the flea conceit and the consistent and sustained compression of the argument. Donne "was like a lawyer choosing the fittest arguments for a case in hand," says Mario Paz (68). In the beginning of the argument, the conceit gives rise to a general overtone of smallness and triviality:

Mark but this flea, and mark in this,
How little that which thou deniest me is;
It sucked me first, and now sucks thee,
And in this flea our two bloods mingled be;
Thou know'st that this cannot be said

A sin, nor shame, nor loss of maidenhead,
Yet this enjoys before it woo,
And pampered swells with one blood made of two,
And this, alas, is more than we would do. (57)

The idea of littleness or smallness is meant to underplay the stress that the maiden places on her virginity and to taunt and discredit the idea of sinning as related to sex out of wedlock. The loss of maidenhood is nothing more than a tiny fleabite. “Woo-ing,” effusive preliminaries and loving speeches, gifts and supplications of legendary courtly lovers are not an option for the lover in “The Flea.”

In the second stanza, the wooing imagery progresses into marriage imagery and the idea of the unimportance of sin is now transformed into religious images evoked in such terms as “temple,” “cloyseterd,” and “killing three (trinity)”:

Oh stay, three lives in one flea spare,
Where we almost, nay more than married are.
This flea is you and I, and this
Our marriage bed, and marriage temple is;
Though parents grudge, and you, w’are met,
And cloistered in these living walls of jet.
Though use make you apt to kill me,
Let not to that, self-murder added be,
And sacrilege, three sins in killing three. (57)

The pervasive idea of smallness in stanza one shifts to its opposite in stanza two. The emblematic relationship in the flea is now being explained in terms of marriage (repeated three times). Such terms as “living walls,” “marriage temple,” “This flea is you and I” aptly evoke a sense of amplitude and bigness.

In the final stanza this sense of bigness collapses after the beloved crushes the little flea with her nail:

Cruel and sudden, hast thou since

Purpled thy nail, in blood of innocence?
Wherein could this flea guilty be,
Except in that drop which it sucked from thee?
Yet thou triumph'st, and say'st that thou
Find'st not thy self, nor me the weaker now;
'Tis true; then learn how false, fears be:
Just so much honor, when thou yield'st to me,
Will waste, as this flea's death took life from thee. (57)

The sense of smallness surfaces again to underpin the argument of the lover that what he is asking for is really a tiny thing and that his mistress's fears are completely false.

The poet has shored up something meaningful out of this absorbing conceit. He has excelled in approximating the remote and making full use of the negligible. Leishman states in *The Monarch of Wit* that "Donne had been able to write three stanzas, twenty-seven lines, of close-knit and consecutive argument on such an apparently unpromising subject as a flea-bite, and to extract from it such an ingenious and elaborate simile as that about the flea" (164). He adds that "Donne made a fire without sticks, built a house without bricks, created something out of nothing" (165). Donne's miraculous poetic power has turned the "flea" to an ideal vehicle that lends itself economically to the parallel. The figure and the thought it conveys are so intimately correlated that substitution of some other symbol or image would result in the complete collapse of the idea. The flea conceit, then, is not empty verbal play but a serious means of persuasion and illustration. It persuasively works with the other images of the poem and produces a complex and dynamic unity.

As noted earlier, one distinctive feature of Metaphysical poetry is that adornment is not the central function of its imagery. "Like Donne," Williamson says, "the Metaphysical poets do not keep their images on one side and their meanings on another, but subordinate their images to their meanings; in other words, they make their images say what they mean" (89). The poem makes a point which the conceit expounds or helps to underscore. Imagery vigorously supports or enhances the thought and is, in fact, the manner in which that thought is hammered home. This, in fact, is as true of Donne, Marvell and Herbert as it is of other Metaphysical poets.

On the other hand, where Donne and Marvell turn most readily to "learning and science, to the mechanical and technical, and to the esoteric and the inobvious" for their imagery (Rugoff 239), Herbert works with imagery that is comparatively understated and plain. One explanation is that he does not want his imagery to sidetrack the reader from the pervasively devotional purpose of his poems. Verbal plainness is "the vehicle of sincerity and sharpness of expression" (Rickey 173). It serves to make intelligible God's divine plan.

His poetry is literally *Metaphysical* in the sense that it thematises questions of metaphysics, theology and such conceptual and philosophical concerns as body-soul dualism, divine providence, resurrection, among other things. Focus here is ultimately not so much on the theological ramifications of these ideas as on the way they are poetically put forth. Particular attention will be placed on the visual conceit in “Easter Wings,” where the typographical effect is important in conveying meaning.

Pattern poetry has been judged by many critics as being indecorous.¹³ Michel de Montaigne attacked pattern poems as “frivolous and vain” (Higgins 13). Ben Jonson ridiculed them as “a pair of scissors and a comb in verse” (206), and Dryden attacked the tradition in his satiric poem “Mac Flecknoe,” mocking fellow poet Thomas Shadwell:

Thy genius calls thee not to purchase fame
In keen iambics, but mild anagram.
Leave writing plays, and choose for thy command
Some peaceful province in acrostic land.
There thou may'st wings display and altars raise,
And torture one poor word ten thousand ways. (203-08)

Visual conceits for Dryden are tortuous to poetic discourse and all together far-fetched. They are needlessly difficult and extravagantly witty. The argument again is that such weird extra-linguistic devices are simply unpoetic. They break decorum and violate good taste. The “wings” and “altars” here might be a direct reference to Herbert’s “Easter Wings” and “The Altar” as instances of triviality and overingenuity.

The very shape of “Easter Wings” is an extended Metaphysical conceit visually encoding a profound theological argument.¹⁴ It expresses Herbert’s “skilful tact in fitting his phrasing inside the form he has chosen” (Reid 132). Robert Halli argues that the image in “Easter-wings” makes a “triple hieroglyph” of crosses, wings, and hourglasses (265-66):

¹³ Berta Cano-Echevarria gives the following succinct definition of pattern poetry: “[It] is a relatively experimental composition defined by the distribution of its verses arranged so as to portray a physical object, reproducing forms with simple shapes such as an egg or more complicated ones such as stars or serpents. The composition of pattern poetry across Europe was especially fashionable during the Renaissance when some countries, like Spain and Germany, produced a considerable body of this type of poetry, experimenting with the possibilities of blending word and image in ingenious and surprising ways” (2).

¹⁴ The calligraphic form of the poem is part and parcel of the overall meaning. The visual quality of the poem contributes to the referential linguistic code. It is part of its signifying system. As with a sculpture, every aspect of the work is considered with respect to its contribution to the overall design of the work. Every single element of the sculpture is considered as part of the artistic whole and is meant to be read as constitutive of the general meaning. The visual poem requires the same sort of attention to detail and awareness of construction and interpretive possibility.

Lord, who createdst man in wealth and store,
 Though foolishly he lost the same,
 Decaying more and more,
 Till he became
 Most poore:
 With thee
 O let me rise
 As larks, harmoniously,
 And sing this day thy victories:
Then shall the fall further the flight in me.

My tender age in sorrow did beginne
 And still with sicknesses and shame.
 Thou didst so punish sinne,
 That I became
 Most thinne.
 With thee
 Let me combine,
 And feel thy victorie:
 For, if I imp my wing on thine,
Affliction shall advance the flight in me. (121)

Each of these perceptible images (the crosses, the wings and the hourglasses) communicates theologically complex principles. The cross on which these stanzas are set defines the speaker's yearning for redemption. The wings give visible shape to the lark and evoke flight and a movement upward. The image of the hourglass displays the downward fall of sand to measure time and serves as a reminder of the ultimate return to dust.

Christian theology professes that Jesus overcomes death on Easter and, like the Phoenix of mythology, rises on metaphorical wings from its very dust.

The poem's calligraphic form reinforces the main ideas expressed. It is a means to an end, and not just an ornamental device. The belief that man is made in God's image, fallen, and then restored seems to be at the heart of the formal logic here. The contraction and expansion of lines is aimed to express the speaker's closeness to or distance from God. The farther man gets from God, the shorter the lines get. The more he repents his sins, the thinner the lines get. "With thee," which is visually the pivot upon which the symmetrical structure of the poem turns, signals in both stanzas man's longing to rise and regain the paradise he "foolishly" lost (Poch 486).

The first stanza begins with a direct address to the "Lord" and ends with the pronoun "me." Both are syntactically connected by the one stretched run-on sentence of the stanza. The extended syntax creates a unity between the Lord and the anxious speaker. The Lord creates "man" in the first and longest line "in wealth and store." The second line, shorter by a metrical foot, graphically illustrates the loss of bliss. The second line features the word "lost," the third "decaying," and the fourth and shortest line "Most poore," signalling man's spiritual ruin or diminishment when distanced from the Lord. The variation in line-length is accordingly in perfect harmony with the ideas of falling and rising, grief and hope.

For the speaker, Easter is much more than a celebration of the resurrection of Christ. He wishes for himself the vigour of the Easter experience. He prays for a personal Easter event to "sing this day" and to "feel this day." He wants to stay away from moral decay and spiritual poverty by flying up and combining with Christ. Only then could he feel the Lord's victory. To "imp" in the penultimate line "comes from the idiom of falconry. To imp means to graft new feathers (from another bird) onto the wing of a trained falcon or hawk in order to repair damage and/or increase flying capacity" (Poch 485).¹⁵ The connection, the grafting or communion with the Lord is the way to fly upward and enjoy recovery. The alliteration in "Then shall the fall further the flight in me" underlines the speaker's craving to vanquish his affliction and fly back to his lost paradise. The alliteration in "fall-further-flight" is also onomatopoeic: we almost hear the bird fluttering its wings as it takes flight (Mansouri 124). As we hear this flight we also see the wings of the bird spread on the page.

The poem's very shape acts as an imagistic conceit enhancing its speculative impetus. The pictorial design fits exactly the themes of life and death, rise and fall, joy and grief, redemption and loss. The wings of the lark emblematically evoke man's capability of rising up and regaining paradise. Herbert delicately links form to content with an exceptional synchronisation and harmony between expression and thought. The calligraphic outline of the poem chimes in perfectly with the themes articulated, bringing about a cogent unity of form and content.

¹⁵ "The plumage or "imping" of the soul is fostered and increased by beauty, wisdom, virtue, and the like, and destroyed by deformity and vice" (Brown 134). The soul in Platonic and Christian terms can grow wings when the body stays away from earthly evanescent pleasures. Spiritual growth and redemptive arising are possible. Metaphors of engrafting are not uncommon as illustrations of grace: Milton's God tells the Son that man shall "live in thee transplanted, and from thee / Receive new life" (*Paradise Lost* III. 293-294).

Metaphysical conceits, be they verbal or visual, are not rhetorical niceties to adorn poetic discourse but functional textual components. They heighten the vigour of expression and reinforce poetic effect. They have been deemed indecorous, metaphor-less, poetically incorrect or illegitimate, recondite, yoked by violence, creating unnecessary metaphoric tension and devitalising the grace of the feelings or ideas expressed. They were construed as inelegant and graceless vehicles of comparison, analogizing discordant or incontrovertibly opposed elements. The conceits considered in this paper, while reasonably cryptic and abstruse, are deftly interlocked equivalents. They verbalise “a direct sensuous apprehension of thought,” to quote Eliot again (*Selected Essays* 286). Emotion is reproduced in an intellectualised way through conceits drawn from different scopes of knowledge. These conceits tone in with the ideas expressed and reinforce meaning. The compass conceit lucidly vocalises the pure love that ties the two physically distant lovers. It sums up accurately the way the souls of the two lovers intermingle in Donne’s mind. The scientificity of the image is redeemed by the emotional charge that is infused in the poem. Marvell’s parallel lines conceit also hammers home the idea of perfect love but remains a stroke of wit. The flea conceit is not empty verbosity but an earnest argument in the speaker’s pleading to his coy mistress. The fleabite is the core of Donne’s *carpe diem* poem. Finally, Herbert’s visual conceit in the wing-shaped “Easter Wings” is in keeping with the poem’s focus on resurrection, salvation and communion with God.

It would be unjust to judge the Metaphysical poets by their ingenuity and intellectualism; yet an awareness of the peculiarity of conceits is essential to a fair evaluation. Johnson’s view that conceits are remote and dry matter-of-fact images inexcusably yoked together by violence might not be utterly incorrect. But, for all their oddity and eccentricity, Metaphysical conceits are a main source of poetic delight for curious readers. They keep the readers’ *ingegno* wide awake and alert. The Metaphysicals’ prime concern is to astonish with their dexterity, to overwhelm with the height and reach of their vibrant rhetorical and imagistic conceptions, to evoke likeness in unlikeness, similarity in dissimilarity, congruity in incongruity, and concord in discord.

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Quarterly

DOI: 10.31561/2014tq

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Volume 7, Issue 1

March 2020

Journal of the
Tunisian Association of Young Researchers
(TAYR)



