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The *Athens Journal of Philology* (AJP) is an Open Access quarterly double-blind peer reviewed journal and considers papers from all areas of sports and related sciences. Many of the papers in this journal have been presented at the various conferences sponsored by the Languages & Linguistics Unit and the Literature Unit of the Athens Institute for Education and Research (ATINER). All papers are subject to ATINER's Publication Ethical Policy and Statement.

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Aristotle and Searle on Desirable Action: Two Contrasting Analysis

By Manik Konch[*] & Ranjan Kumar Panda[±]

The paper delves into the conditions under which an action can be deemed desirable, focusing on two contrasting models proposed by Aristotle and John Searle. While Aristotle emphasizes reason and virtue as central to the desirability of action, his framework ultimately remains desire-centric. In contrast, Searle advances a model of desire-independent action, arguing that the Aristotelian view renders actions susceptible to incontinence. Building on this debate, we contend that continent actions are desirable not merely because they are desire-independent, but also due to their normative grounding. We further argue that the normativity of action should be conceived as an imperative, rather than being reducible to mere rationality of action.

Keywords: *desirability, akrasia, desire independent, power of will, desirable action, moral psychology*

Introduction

Aristotle considers desire as the wellspring of human action, asserting that desire is responsible for both voluntary and akratic actions. The *akratic* actions are caused by *akrasia* – the *weakness of will* which lacks normative element in order to be virtuous or desirable action. The performance of *desirable* action presupposes rational deliberation. The *desirability* condition of action, for Aristotle, considers use of reason and virtues. John Searle, on the contrary, argues that actions are basically intentional. The intentional actions are *desire-independent* which are grounded on reason. *Desirable action* is action with *desire-independent reason*. Searle clearly rejects the Aristotelian model under the large scheme of classical theory of action. Searle concedes that action originates from desire which characterizes action as *desire-dependent* action. These desire-dependent actions are vulnerable to *akrasia*. However, Searle's challenge is mainly in the line of naturalisation of the *deontic power* of human intentionality that maintains: *all desires to do something are rational desires*. Following this dictum, Searle questions the very possibility of normative action based on desire. In this paper, we intend to study the desirable condition of action focusing on the two different models of *desirable action* proposed by Aristotle and John Searle respectively.

Following this debate on the desirable action from the standpoint of Aristotle and John Searle, we try to hold that continent actions are desirable not only because they are *desire-independent* but also due to their normative grounding. An attempt is also made in this paper to analyze the Searlean criticism of Aristotle's theory of action and

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also show that Aristotle's theorization of action has a contemporary relevance and to the study of philosophical moral psychology. It is in this context that Donald Davidson (2002) and David Charles' (1984) analyses of desire and *akrasia* have been principally considered while responding to Searle's criticism of Aristotle.

To understand the intricacy of *desirable action*, the paper is divided into five sections, excluding the introduction and conclusion, beginning with the first section, which provides a general account of Aristotle's theoretical classification of action, referring to *Nichomachean Ethics.* A discussion on desire and *akrasia* with reference to Aristotle's *De Anima* and other texts is made in the second section. In the third and fourth sections, we try to analyse the notion of desire and *akrasia vis-à-vis* the notion of *reason*. The incontinent or *akratic* action, unlike any other action, originates from desire and propels rational deliberation. As Searle concedes, *akrasia* is 'something common in *human* life.' It could also, therefore, be held that, if not all, some actions do originate from desire, whose intent could be deliberated upon in order to perform a *desire-independent action,* and that we need not necessarily treat reason as an isolated faculty for decision-making. In the final (fifth) section of the paper argues that if one fails to deliberate and does not *contemplate* pursuing *desirable action,* then *incontinent* action may occur as an expression of *intense desire* by eluciding Donald Davidson (2002) and David Charles' (1984) views on desire and *akrasia* which have been principally considered while responding to Searle's criticism of Aristotle. The paper concludes by suggesting that moral failure is an outcome of excessive *self-indulgence* that weakens the normative attitude of a person. There is an urge that the agent needs to be practically wise and *the will* ought to be morally strong in order to perform a desirable action.

I

In the book III of *Nicomachean Ethics (NE),* Aristotle classifies action into two kinds: *hekousion* and *akousion*, which have been variously translated as voluntary, and involuntary (Ross 1999), willingly and unwillingly (Hauges 2001), and intentional and non-intentional (Charles 1984). In this paper, we would like to retain the sense of *voluntary* and *involuntary*. According to Aristotle, the *voluntary* action is not just simply opposed to *involuntary* action, rather it is also different from *non-voluntary* action. We can represent Aristotle's classification of theory of action in two groups: *voluntary* and *not-voluntary*. An action is considered voluntary if the action is performed *knowingly* by the agent. That is to say, the agent knows what s/he is doing. The voluntary actions, according to Aristotle, are *hekousions.* But if the same action is performed *in* ignorance or the agent is *forced* to perform the action, then the action will be characterized as an *involuntary action*. In the words of Aristotle, "if a wind carried someone away, we could say that what happened was forced and, in consequence, it was not voluntary" (Aristotle *NE,* 1110a35-5). The agent being carried out by wind is something caused by the external force of the wind; it was not desired by the agent. Similarly, if the agent is suffering from the sleep-walk syndrome, his/her movement in sleep is caused by the syndrome which is not known to him/her; rather the agent is *ignorant* of the fact that s/he is moving. In the case of movement caused by the *force* of the wind, the agent though *knows* that s/he is moving; still, their movement has no *self-control*. The movement is due to the greater *force* of the wind over the mass of the agent's body as well as against their desire. In these cases, ignorance and force are treated *external* to the agent and hence are characterized as an involuntary action– *akousion*.

Apart from voluntary and involuntary actions, Aristotle also talks about *non-voluntary* action. The notion of non-voluntary action pertains to both voluntary as well as involuntary action. The cause of action is not *always* external or may not be external to the agent. Rather the cause of action is internal. For example, if the agent *knows* that smoking is injurious to health, but continues to smoke because of their addiction. In this case, the agent's addiction shows *intense desire* for smoking acts as an *internal cause* or *force* that compels the agent to smoke. The agent knows that the *consequence* of the action will be harmful or would have adverse effect on their health, still,s/he is *helpless* and their *will* succumbs to the *intense desire* of smoking. This is a *non-voluntary action* that exhibits *weakness of will.*

Aristotle further maintains that action done *in ignorance* is different from action done *by ignorance*. When an agent does not know, what s/he is doing and what the consequence will be if the action is undertaken, then it will be an action done *in ignorance*. In this context, the agent ignores the particulars which the action is concerned with. For instance, when a thirsty person drinks something assuming that 'it is water' to quench his/her thirst, but in actuality, the liquid that s/he happened to drink was not water but 'it was wine.' In this situation, s/he actually did *not desire* to drink wine. S/he only desired to quench his/her thirst. Here, the agent's action is done *in ignorance.* This kind of action is considered *involuntary* because the agent did not *desire* to drink wine. Rather the agent's desire was to drink water and quench his/her thirst.

However, in Aristotle, ignorance is the cause of vice (Aristotle *NE,* 1110b 25) as it happened in the case of the agent who unknowingly drank wine and also the agent who performed action with the *weakness of will.* The agent's action belongs to these categories and involves ignorance. An action done *in ignorance* is shown as/inexample of 'drinking wine unknowingly', whereas action done *by ignorance* is discussed in connection with the example of 'addictive smoking. 'Thus, the action done *in ignorance* and *by ignorance* is respectively of two types namely: involuntary and non-voluntary action; these two kinds of action belong to the category of not voluntary action.

Based on these classifications we can figure out two satisfactory conditions of Aristotle's theory of action:(1) An action is considered voluntary when its cause originates within the agent—that is, the agent is the sole source of the action. (2) For an action to be truly voluntary, the agent must also possess knowledge of the particular circumstances involved in the action and be aware of what the action entails. This notion of voluntariness of action is called *praxis*. If one of these conditions is not satisfied then the action will be considered *not voluntary*. The explanation of not voluntary action exhibits an *episode of production* which is described in various ways citing the examples, 'force of the wind', 'walking in sleep syndrome', 'drinking wine as water' and 'addictive smoking'. In all these cases, the agents play their respective roles to *produce* not voluntary action. The action concerned with respective episodes of *production*, for Aristotle, is called *poiesis*.

The notion of non-voluntary action sometimes does involve cases that express irrational feelings like *impulsive* or *appetitive* ways of behaving. For instance, the addictive smoker while seeing another smoker gets the feeling to light a cigarette for him-/herself. A person with a sweet tooth, while passing by a sweets shop, feels the urge to eat some sweets. Similarly, children are so fond of chocolates that they seldom lack an appetite for chocolate. According to Aristotle, 'we should say that neither animals nor children do voluntary actions, given that the actions performed by them are caused by non-rational feelings' (Aristotle *NE,* 1111a25-35). The smoker, sweets lover and children, possess *intense desire* to submit easily to their respective likings, but their actions are not voluntary. Animals and children do not perform any voluntary action because they do not deliberate on what they are supposed to do. Deliberation involves the agent's *will* and it is essential in order to make a choice. Although Aristotle did not theorize the notion of *will.* It is implicitly involved in the discussion of the concepts 'voluntariness, intentionality and rationality' (Kenny 1979). The notion of *voluntariness* reflects the '*power of to do* and not to do the act.' Aristotle mentions "When the origin of action is in him, it is also up to him to do them" (*NE*, III, 1110a15-20). The will here represents the notion of *ability* or *power*. Similarly, 'the *intentionality* refers to the purposive attitude that is concerned with the goal of action and *rationality* that unfolds the relationship between practical belief and action' (Kenny 1979). In this regard, choice or decision is not only a voluntary action that reflects one's rational and intentional attitudes; rather, it shows a purposive performance of the agent.

Making a choice is an important aspect of the performance of voluntary action. As Bardie puts it "All actions are chosen… choice is a rational desire or desiderative reason. Hence, those incapable of reasoning are incapable of choosing" (1974). Children lack the power of deliberation when they choose to eat chocolate. Choice is very thoughtfully made by any rational agent. If voluntary actions are performed knowingly and deliberately, then what about actions that are brought out emotionally or done out of the *mere* expression of desire. One might argue that all cases of knowledge of action and deliberation on the consequences of action do not entail voluntariness. For instance, in the case of 'being kind' to someone is an expression of desire and emotion where one does not deliberate on the fact that s/he has to be kind. Rather, one exhibits kindness towards someone. One may also say that kindness expressed by the agent presupposes some reason. That is why one has to be kind. But there are also occasions where we act with kindness without having a proper reason – why we need to be kind. Being kind is thus a virtue. A virtuous person might sincerely express this as a part of his/her habitual action. But what happens when someone does not either deliberate or just rush to act. For Aristotle, it is essential that an agent acts in accordance with practical knowledge. Aristotle cites the cases of individuals who do not act in accordance with their conscious mind or *the will*– i.e., judgments taken after deliberation. Rather, these agents' expression of their emotional inclination is directed towards something else. This is an expression of *mere* desire that shows the weakness of will – *akrasia*.

II

Akrasia is a case of self-indulgence. While doing the action, a self-indulgent person fails to *think* about the consequence of action. Rather s/he just *does* as s/he strongly *desires* to do it. As Aristotle believes, desire is the source of action; it has the power of motivating the agent to act in a particular manner. This power is connected with the nature of the soul, which initiates the movement to act. No movement is possible in the absence of desire.

The Aristotelian notion of the soul has three basic parts: nutritive, sensitive and rational. The possession of a sensitive soul is a necessary and sufficient condition for the capacity of desire; here perception is not distinct from desire. Aristotle classifies three forms of desire like appetite, spirit and wish (Aristotle *De Anima,* 2.3.1). Appetitive desire involves inclination for 'pleasure and pain' (Aristotle *NE,* 111b16-17). The spirited desire is associated with complex emotions such as confidence, honour, anger and envy (Aristotle *NE,* 1105b21-4). And the wishful desire is related to the selection of ends which belongs to the rational part of the soul (Aristotle *NE,*1110 b 20-30). Considering the three divisions of the soul and its association with desire, Aristotle's classification of the sources of action is either cognitive, desiderative, or both.

In book III, chapter 2 of the *NE*, Aristotle explicitly discusses the concept of wish. According to Aristotle, wishful desire is associated with choice, i.e. the "deliberate desire of things in our own power" (Aristotle *NE* 1113b11). Towards this end, he maintains that "wish relates… to the end, choice to what contributes to the end," in the sense that "we wish to be healthy, and we choose those actions which will make us healthy" (Aristotle *NE,* 1111b 26-7). In this regard, wish is in the form of desire associated with reason while choice evokes desire "in accordance with…[rational] deliberation" (Aristotle *NE,*1113a12). Thus it opens up a way to understand the relationship between the choice and desire *vis-à-vis* wish. We can argue, following these points mentioned in *De Anima,* that when a man *desires* to choose, he expresses his wish, not appetite or spirit. This expression is about a *continent* or rational action. Desire as the starting point action; it is a sort of capacity in the soul that initiates motion (Aristotle *DA*, 3.10.4). Ultimately, Aristotle points out that desire is a faculty that acts not in isolation but in coordination with reason (*DA,* 10, 433a17 – 19).

Human desires are by nature egoistic but if we wish to be ethical in our approach then there is a need for cultivating rational action. Aristotle mentions that human desire is not always rationally nurtured. This is to say, desire is not always in coordination with reason. Sometimes desire is such that it goes against the moral principles that are rationally formed; where the agent fails to differentiate between right and wrong. The agent in this situation is mainly concerned with gaining pleasure. Here, the desire as a faculty steer away agent's attention and succeeds in suppressing the rational power of deliberation. Reason fails to be in coordination with desire. Desire only forcefully motivates the agent to act irrationally. Aristotle calls this is a case of *akrasia* – the weakness of will.

The akratic agent fails to think rationally. Being under the influence of strong desire, the agent fails to understand the consequence of his/her action. Nevertheless, Aristotle maintains that there persists some sort of necessary connection between thinking about or *contemplating* (Shields 2008) the best thing to do and doing it. *Contemplation* has a spiritual association with human life. Human behaviour is only intelligible because there is normally a connection between the content of thought and action. How thoughtful is the agent while articulating an action? The agent *ought to* know what the action means to him/her when an action is undertaken. This shows that contemplative thinking on the part of the agent is a necessary condition of forming the right action. For Aristotle, such a mode of thinking is rationally formed. But the problem remains because desire has the potential power of motivation. The 'desires have distinct phenomenology. There can be no action without desire.' This reveals that desire is the underlying source of action, as we have mentioned, but it has to coordinate with reason in order to overcome certain instinctive factors and act with the help of virtues. Reason provides a normative scope to nurture the desire more in the light of virtues. On this, Jonathan Dancy opines that 'If asked what motivates us to act, the answer cannot be 'a desire' unless this is intended in purely trivial sense – that what motivates us to act is our being so motivated' – that is, 'having a motivating reason' – a goal (Dancy 2003). Being motivated to act shows that the content of action is not merely associated with desire; rather, the desire is already being nurtured in the light of practical reason. Therefore desire is only an initiating force for any kind of action where the end of action is being formed in coordination with reason and virtues. Thus the normative condition sets reason and virtue decides whether the actions are continent or incontinent. In this sense, desire is the root cause of both continent and incontinent actions. When the agent is unable to maintain a balance by drawing coordination between desire and reason then it is a failure - i.e., the agent who fails to control his/her *will* shows how the *weakness of will* finds a way out.

III

Aristotle claims that reason as a faculty is significant for correlating desires and beliefs to bring about action in the *right* way. Action performed in the right way is *desirable.* Searle's disagreement with this Aristotelian thesis is basically to show that 'irrational and non-rational actions are caused by desires and beliefs' (2001). Obsessive behaviours are indeed examples of human irrational attitude where the agent acts against his/her own rational decisions, commitments, and ultimately fails to recognize the very intent of their desire. On the contrary, Searle argues that action is caused by intention which is related to desire and belief. Intention, desire and belief are mental states that explain action. A deliberated action shows the intentional relationship between intention, belief and desire that is expressed in the form of *willing*. When the agent intends to choose, it shows that s/he is willing to do something or be engaged in deliberation to make choice, and the outcome, for Searle, is an *intentional action* (Searle 2001). However, Searle cautions us, reiterating that deliberation as a rational act need not be conceived as figuring out *means* to an *end,* which is the case with the desire-centric model proposed by the classical action theory including Aristotle's (2001). He proclaims, 'it is 'absurd' to suggest that *desire* would lead to sound deliberative route' (2001). He further states that "Absurdity is due to ground the reason on certain psychological element of motivational set; it depends on the existence of a desire, broadly construed, then and there; and the absence of that desire that agent has no reason, regardless of all other facts about him and his history" (2001). Searle's disagreement is mainly concerned with desire as the basic ground of the reason of action. He finds it ridiculous as desire by nature is *inconsistent* and *non-detachable* (2001). A person is often easily inclined towards anything that he finds in the world. That intentionality of the desire shows how the world is *intentionally* connected with the mind, which is termed as *world-to-mind* direction of fit.

To understand this intentional fit, it is important to know about the nature of intentionality. For Searle, intentionality is a feature of the mind or the property of mental states, which means directedness (1983). Desire, belief, and intention are mental states possessing directedness, by which they represent things in the world. To have a desire for a good pair of shoes shows the *directedness* of the desire that has reference in the world. Corresponding to this desire, I *believe* that good pairs of shoes are available in the showroom. The desire will be fulfilled *if*I *intend* to visit the showroom and choose a good pair that I wish to have (1983). The intention thus is the proximate cause of action. The choice of purchasing a good pair of shoes not only signifies that choice is an intentional action but also unfolds how choice is formed by undergoing deliberation; where I finally succeeded in fulfilling the desire. This fulfillment unfolds the *direction of fit* that operates in two levels between *the mind to the world* and *theworld to the mind* (1983). To have a desire for a particular variety of shoe is to have the world in certain way. But for Searle, the inconsistency in the choice is very much embedded in the intentional attitude of desiring. Hence if desire is treated as a source of motivation of action, then there is a high probability of volatility in intentional action.

The consistency in intentional action rather presupposes rationality as something indispensable for free and effective action. "There is a need to create desire-independent reason, a reason for doing something regardless of what was in your motivational set when the time comes to do it." (Searle 2001) To form intentional action in the right way, there is a need to maintain consistency in primary and secondary desires. Suppose I have a desire to play hockey and maintain adequate fitness to play the game, they are two different types of desires. My desire to play hockey is the primary desire whereas to be physically fit for the game is a secondary desire. Unless the secondary desire complements the primary desire, inconsistency would result in the process of motivation for playing the game. One has to practically think about possibility of playing the game. The use of practical reason is thus very significant while explaining intentional action. Searle writes, "Practical reasoning is typically about adjudicating between conflicting desires, obligations, commitments, needs, requirements and duties" (2001). The rational deliberation is necessary to resolve conflict and understand the normative condition of the act of desiring. Deliberation is a logical process of unfurling the reasoning of performing action. Suppose that I *promise* to represent hockey in the institute, I must be able to recognize my *commitment* to the team. Over and above, being part of the team is also an *obligation* (Searle 2001). In this way, the agent rationally reconstructs the reason for achieving ends by adopting the right means. Thus rational reformulation of desire shows that deliberation is normatively conditioned in order to form desire-independent action.

Considering the above model of the desire-independent reason for action, Searle points out that if one encounters a case of *akrasia here,* then it is certainly an unusual happening. It occurs due to the lack of sufficient conditions of action. He writes, "It does not matter how you structure the causes of action in the form of antecedent intentional states – beliefs, desires, choices, decisions, intentions – in the case of voluntary actions, the causes still do not set sufficient conditions and this opens up the way for weakness of will" (Searle 2001). Often, causes are structured as antecedent conditions for bringing about action. If the agent is motivated and decided to do something, *akratic* action is still possible. Decisions, intentions, even if rationally grounded, are still not sound enough to completely cease the *akrasia*. The failure to resist temptation or change the decision at a later stage and undertake something else is natural. In other words, decision does not necessarily entail action (Searle 2001). Even if one is rational and has an opportunity to carry out the decision, change still occurs as something natural to human life. The change in the decision occurs due to *the gap* and gives rise to three such types: 'between reason for action and decision, decision and initiation, and initiated action and action towards completion (Searle 2001). To make a choice or decision sufficient is to undertake effort intentionally throughout, from intention of action to till the completion of it. As there are many loose points in everyday life situations, one may not put the reason effectively. Therefore there is a natural *gap* that opens up 'between the process of deliberation and the information of intention, and also between the intended action and actually undertaking the action' (Searle 2001). The Searlean model thus shows intentionality is self-reflective; the agent not only intends to act but also can reflect upon the intentional action.

IV

Following the discussions on the Aristotelian and the Searlean notion of desire, desire-independent reason and *akratic* action, three main points can be further analyzed. Firstly, action originates from *desire* but when performed it goes through the trajectory of rational evaluation. Secondly, *akratic* actions are natural but could be treated as irrational actions. And lastly, incontinency arises from the *failure*of rational scrutiny. Considering these three points, we need to further analyze the causal relationship between desire, reason and action. David Charles, a contemporary moral psychologist and Aristotelian, maintains that desire is inextricably psychophysical. As every human being's *desire*, one can locate the notion of desire with reference to human thoughts and attitudes. Desire is not exclusively mental as Aristotle supposes. Charles seems to undermine the Cartesian distinction between the physical and the mental. He argues that if this distinction is presupposed and desire is located in the realm of the mental only, one must ask 'how desire can move the body?' To this question, Charles replies that human desires are located in human beings and not in the soul or the mind. Charles has given an assumption that it is the *agent* who feels hunger and *desires* food. In a sense, the *person* needs food but not his mind (Pakaluk & Pearson 2011: 20). The whole exercise of feeling and expression of hunger or desire for food, for Charles, refers to the 'bodily instrument' - the mechanism or the means through which desire is articulated. This instrument is called *pneuma* in Greek, which refers to '*soul-stuff*'– that which animates the body (Maria 2014). It is this stuff that makes an agent think and *desire* something. When a person desires or pursues the desire – the entire pursuit is called desire (2014). The desire thus belongs to a person. The notion of person is comprised of both the physical and the psychological. In this paper, we are using the term agent and person interchangeably. When the person expresses hunger and desires food, s/he also makes a further attempt to *know* the desirable eatery that is available to satisfy his/her hunger.

In the context of Aristotelian moral psychology, reason plays an important role in the formulation of *desirable action* – moral action. 'Actions originate with desire, but eventually, the intent of the action is being evaluated by reason in order to perform desirable action. One finds that reason over powers the desire through deliberation' (Irwin 1975). In other words, there is a self-reflective thinking that helps in judging the content of motivation or the motivating element of desire, i.e., what the desire stands for. If something is being desired by the agent, then what does it *mean* to him or her? Does the act of desiring go well with the moral condition of action? In this regard, Aristotle's emphasis was on the performance of virtuous action that results from deliberation and contributes to the wellbeing of the person. The virtues act as imperatives for performing desirable action.

Sometimes the agent is forced to choose a course of action; it might appear to others that the agent is directly involved in *doing* the action. But in reality, the agent would know *why*s/he is carrying out the action. The reason of his/her action, ifit involves an external *force* which goes against the *will* of the agent then, it will be considered involuntary. It might also happen that we don't really like to perform an action but we do it because it appears *desirable* in that very moment. Aristotle's example of the sailor's choice of throwing goods overboard in a stormy sea is to save the boat and its people. For Aristotle, it is *desirable* to save the people and the boat rather than the goods. As we find it, for the sailor who encounters this critical situation (Aristotle 1999), throwing goods is involuntary as he is *forced to* throw them. On the other hand, he knows that he is doing this act for the *good* of the boat and other passengers. So the *desirable action* is voluntary. The explanation of the sailor's voluntary action is teleological. And a teleological explanation is necessary for defining choice.

While critiquing Aristotle's teleological perspective of action, John Searle (2001) has advocated *desire-independent* action. We have briefly discussed this alternative account of Searle's notion of action that is based on reason. The central claim in his thesis is that only irrational actions are caused by desires and beliefs. Rational actions, on the other hand, are *desire-independent*. Searle claims that reason functions in a typical way showing *a gap* between intentional states such as desires, belief sand decision that the agent undertakes when s/he performs an action. That is, the agent's actual making of a decision and pre-deliberated thoughts refer to two different states. The agent being the *cause of* action *ought t*o be free from desire. For instance, if someone wants to reduce weight, s/he should cut down on smoking, consuming alcohol and eating too much at parties, etc. If in spite of knowing all these,s/he intends to smoke and drink, then the intention of quitting smoking and drinking gradually weakens. Searle points out, "If that were how the world worked in fact, we would not have to act on our intention; we could so to speak, wait for them to act by themselves. We could sit back and see how things turned out. We can't do that, we always have to act" (Searle 2001). A person might have the desire to smoke, drink and eat excessively while also having the desire to reduce weight. To have these two desires simultaneously is to live in conflict of desires. This conflict shows inconsistency in the motivation to perform desirable action. As a result of this conflict, the agent might commit *akratic* action.

To overcome the *akratic* motivation, there is a normative demand that merely intending or *willing* is not enough but also needs *contemplation* – that is, constant deliberation is necessary to strengthen the will. Hence a rational person must deliberate – think reasonably about what *ought* to be done. Being engaged in deliberation, one intends to remain free from the clutches of desires and beliefs. The freedom from desire and belief shows how the agent acts with *free will* (2001). Thus does Searle trace out the notion of *free will* while mentioning the *gap* between the intentional states like desire and belief, and the act of making a decision? The notion of *freedom* is integral to the agent and part of the process of decision making.

However, in the case of *akratic* action, the agent fails to take a right decision due to his/her appetitive attitude where the agent is found to over indulge in gratifying his/her desire. The strong presence of desire and passionate involvement entails loss of self-control, which leads one to commit *akratic* action. In this situation, the agent fails to use *reason* freely; in fact, the *free will* seems to succumb to the pressure of *desire*. Such failures, for Aristotle, are not necessarily due to the lack of obligation and commitment but rather to the proper cultivation of reason and virtue. On the contrary, the case of Searle's narration of *akratic* action shows that a lack of commitment and obligation is traditionally conceptualized by Socrates. For Socrates, *akrasia* is a case of *moral failure* (Brickhouse and Smith). The doctrine of moral failure in human action is not to be explained with reference to the agent's appetites or passions; rather, it is to be defined with reference to *cognitive failure*. Thus, the moral psychological study of Socrates would claim that the incontinent action – *akratic action* is impossible. This doctrine is clearly attributed to Socrates by Aristotle.

Moral psychology construes the notion of *cognitive failure* for two reasons; i) the agent's adherence to *false assumption*, (Brickhouse and Smith 2010).and ii) for *miscalculation* (Shields 2008). The notion of *false assumption*, as pointed out by Brickhouse and Smith, refers to a supposition of *false beliefs*. To believe something without knowing its truth value is not in accordance with the desire for action. If beliefs are false, then the execution of desire might lead to the failure of obtaining the desired end. Hence if someone desires to perform a good action, it is essential to reflect on the set of assumed beliefs. Every good action demands that the intent of the desire as a source of initiation of action should also be examined with regards to a set of genuine beliefs. Christopher Shields, on the other hand, puts forward suggestively that *miscalculation* in Socratic moral psychology must reflect upon analysing the consequences. If the agent *knows* what his desired action leads to, but he is incapable of executing knowledge at the right hour, then the agent shows lack of *contemplative* thinking. To make a calculation is 'to understand what the agent is doing - being able to follow what he is doing'[1] (Rhees 1998). If the agent is not careful enough to attend to his/her own engagement, it would lead to *moral* or *cognitive failure*. The Searlean thesis of *desire-independent action* would certainly consider that this Socratic

[1]Rush Rhees illustrates the *grammar* of calculation referring to language and understanding language.

approach represents a lacuna on the part of the agent and therefore he would construe it as *cognitive or moral failure.*

Furthermore, the good action is *desirable* action where the agent's sincere effort is to make out the very intent of its *desirability*. That is, to reflect on whether the *motivating desire* of an action is good at all! The intentional deontic element of desire thus becomes the 'motivating force for an action that directs the agent to evaluate the motivating reason *inter alia* is called desiring' – 'a desire is a motivating reason.' (Dancy 2000) For Searle, the intentionality is intrinsic to mental states such as desire and belief, which essentially characterizes intentional action. The *intentionality of desire* and the *intentionality of intention* seem to be qualitatively different as in the case of intentional action where in the content of desire is already being evaluated and further obtains a level of intentionality of intention that bears a rational content. Intentional actions are rational, which justifies why the agent finds that something is desirable to act on. So the motivating reason for Searle is not merely a fact of *desiring*; rather, the motivating reason is a *desire-independent reason*. (Searle 2001) The reason is grounded in the condition of *desirability* that transcends the realm of mere self-interest of the agent. Thus *desire-independent reason* acts as a *motivating reason* for the agents overall good.

Aristotle also makes it clear that the way Socrates thinks about the making of a desirable action is false (Aristotle 1999). Aristotle's moral psychology is based on *reason,* which is central to the "the function of man" (2010). Reason is central to the function of man that helps in examining the content of desire and provides justification of action. This justified reason could be right and wrong. Aristotle believes that reason need not be the motivating source behind every action. For example, habitual action, which is developed over a period of time by undergoing certain moral education, can lead to spontaneously intending to do virtuous actions. In such a case of habitual action, reason hardly plays an explicit role. Good habits are a source of happiness in them and have the power of motivating to perform goodaction. Though good actions are initially products of rational deliberation, virtues generate constant reliance on reason (Brickhouse and Smith 2010). The desirable action ought to be *virtuous action*.

However Searle argues that "there cannot be a separate faculty of rationality distinct from such capacities as those for language, thought, perception, and the various forms of intentionality, because rational constraints are already built into, they are internal to, the structure of intentionality in general and language in particular" (2001). Reason or rationality is not a faculty that is disassociated from thoughts, expression and perception. Just as perception, thoughts and expressions are intentional in nature, rational attitude is also intrinsic to the agent's *intentional attitude*. In other words, to say that human beings are rational beings is to say that their thoughts, actions and speech exhibit intentionality. Intentionality is a feature of the psychophysical existence of human life. Unlike David Charles, Searle tries to show that reason, in the rationality tradition of action, is uniquely placed but does not bear the Cartesian outlook. An action is voluntarily performed and therefore the agent is held morally responsible for both performing *incontinent* and *continent* action.

However, the Aristotelian notion of incontinent or *akratic* action can only be overcome through the cultivation of reason and virtue. For Aristotle, action originates in the agent's desire, but the agent has the *power* to overcome the force of desire. The power expresses *the will* of the agent, as we have mentioned in the first section of the paper. The will as *power* is nothing but a confluence of attitudes such as voluntary, rational and intentional, which form purposive action. John Akrill explains this *power* as 'power of man' that does something in knowledge, not in ignorance. The knowledge involves: 'person, the instrument and the result' – i.e. what the agent carries out, how s/he carries out and what would be the consequence (Ackrill 1978). One may know well that his/her action would bring bad consequence, but still, she commits that action due to a lack of rational ability and cultivation of good habits. Virtues are purposively cultivated to develop good habits and improve moral character. The teleological account of action is agent-centric; the agent makes a purposive choice. The content of desire is contained in the purposive act of bringing about an action. Hence the content of desire is examined rationally and also in the light of virtue in order to perform a *desire-independent action* – moral action.

V

In the case of *incontinent* or *akratic* action, there are two possible theoretical standpoints through which Charles construes the Aristotelian account *moderately*: One is desire-based theory, and the other is intellectualist-based theory. The desire-based theory emphasizes the attitude of valuation, whereas the intellectualist account articulates the motivational reason to explain action. The attitude of valuation is essentially grounded in practical reasoning which helps in evaluating the intent of the desire. The '*akratic desire* is inappropriate because its satisfaction is inconsistent with satisfaction of *desire*.' If the first desire to perform is *x*, then the *akratic desire* would be *y*, where *p*, the person though desired to pursue *x* but all in a sudden gets motivated by the *akratic desire* namely the *y* – the performed *akratic* action is y. The inconsistency discloses two different satisfactory ends that the person aims to achieve. One fails in the *akratic* case to comprehend appropriately why *y* is suddenly being intended? Is this choice of y *unconditional*? The unconditionally something could be good in itself but the case of *akratic* desire is something that is *irrationally* aimed at. Charles examines little more than that. For him, if the initial desire begins as a source of action, then it 'focuses on the picture of good' (Charles 1984). Further, if that picture results in inconsistency, then it becomes *irrational* (1984) to suppose something unconditionally good. The two contrasts of good directedness result in irrationality. Thus, for Charles, 'to judge *y* over *x* as good', as Davidson points out while explaining the cause of *incontinent* action, is problematic. It is because 'judging is a rational action which Aristotle replaces with virtues' (1984). As virtues fulfill the condition of desirable action, virtuous actions are desirable action. Keeping this in mind, one would like to know how the initial desire for action is connected with valuation. 'Desire as a non-cognitive motivational state plays distinctive role in practical reasoning;' there is not much clarity whether value and desire are related. However, desire has some element of motivational reason that could also be outsourced through its association with beliefs and character. Charles assumes a *causal* relationship between the desire and the process of valuation (1984). It is in this context that the motivating reason of action becomes an essential factor to consider for the desirable action. This brings out the relationship between desire and belief. As belief is a factor of intellectual or rational consideration. *Akrasia* will be caused if there is 'split between the valuational and motivational factors' (1984). Practical reasoning that acts as a source of evaluation legitimizes the decision. Unless the person integrates desire, motivational factors and practical reason, *desirable action* will hardly follow. For Charles, the *akratic* action is an outcome of the *failure of integration*. The split that occurs in absence of integration leads to total failure – it is the failure of a person; the lacuna is not faculty-centric where the operation of reason, desire and belief are to be treated separately; rather, Charles' non-Cartesian standpoint, as we have discussed earlier, entails a person-centric approach to *akrasia*.

Donald Davidson's notion of presupposition of *unconditional reason* for incontinent action seems to be problematic for Charles as we have mentioned above, and also for Searle. For example, while undertaking an action *akratically* the person has an unconditional reason for doing *x,* which s/he finds better than doing *y* if one uses practical reason to hold unconditional judgment. Davidson writes, "Every judgment is made in the light of all the reasons in this sense that it is made in the presence of, and is conditioned by, that totality" (Davidson 2002). A judgment is an outcome of the use of practical reasoning and in *akratic* cases, the person goes against his/her own judgment. There could be multiple reasons for committing an action. Every action is therefore conditionally formed with a reason – is a prima facie condition which are good, obligatory, right, etc. He writes, "To avoid our recent trouble, we must suppose that '*x* is better *prima facie* than *y'* does not contradict '*y* is better, prima facie, than*x*', and that '*x* is prima facie right does not contradict '*x* is prima facie wrong.' But then the conclusion we can draw, in every case of conflict (and hence of incontinence) will be that '*x* is better, prima facie than *y*' and '*y* is better prima faciethan*x*'" (2002). It is logical to prefer *x* over *y,* and there is no contradiction even if the preference is changed to *y* over *x*; provided *y* is supported by a reason. When a reason is stated for a preference; it is stated considering the *practical wisdom* of the person. The incontinent person only acts and judges irrationally. Here, being irrational follows from person going against his/her own judgment. The irrational reason is intelligible as it falls within the preamble of logic. All rational men/ women will accept the reason as a *directive* (2002). Therefore, "The *akrates* does not as is now clear, hold logically contradictory beliefs, nor is his failure necessarily moral failure" (2002). The incontinent action is rather based on a certain consideration which is not desirable. The consideration is conditional and contrasted between 'conditional evaluative judgment' and 'evaluative judgment' (2002). The conditional evaluative judgment is formed from the person's own point of view considering his own practical wisdom. It is contrasted with evaluative judgment – that is, *desirable*. With respect to this, Davidson explains that the prima facie desirability condition – what is desirable or obligatory, - *ought to be performed* (2002).

Although Davidson denies the case of *moral failure* in the case of committing incontinent action, still his *cognitive humility* argues in favour of '*virtue* of continence' – it is hard but helpful to act on the *principle of continence*. The hardship is actually a struggle to follow the *prima facie obligation* that one encounters passion and reason. The will or *conscience* has to judge estimating the strength of both sides and take decision in favour of either of them (Davidson 2002). He further expresses his profound humility while suggesting, "But there is no reason in principle why it is any more difficult to become continent than to become chaste and brave. One gets a lively sense of the difficulties in St. Augustine's extraordinary prayer: 'give me chastity and continence, only not yet" (Davidson 2002). It is desirable to perform continent or *enkratic* action. The virtue of being an *enkratic* person is grounded in the very aspiration and commitment to undertake desirable action. As we understand, Davidson spells out the spiritual urge with humility referring to the verses of Agustine. There is a normative demand to undertake struggle against all odds including the forces of *akratic* attitude and intend performing *enkatic* action to strengthen the will to achieve *moral success.* As success comes as increment, achievement of moral perfection can only be achieved if and only if the person undertakes this as a habit. As Davidson rightly warns saying Aristotle mentions that it is 'impossible to be habitually incontinent' (2002). The obstacle for moral success is thus nothing but failure to resist and undertake something *unconditionally.*

Searle challenges that *akratic* failure does not imply any *unconditional* reason as Davidson believes. Rather, for Searleaction is necessarily conditional. The rational of making a '*conditional* value judgment is not an *empirical* statement' (Searle 2001). Rather, for instance, the conclusion that Davidson (Davidson 2002; Searle 2001) derives P3: 'There are incontinent actions', from P1: 'If an agent wants to do *x* more than he wants to do *y* and he believes himself free to do either *x* or *y*, then he will intentionally do *x* if does either *x* or *y* intentionally.' and P2: 'If an agent judges that it would be better to do *x* than to do *y* then he wants to do *x* more than he wants to do *y*.', - demands *interpretation,*'(Searle 2001) P3 does not necessarily follows, rather is construed with a false assumption that P1 and P2 are causally related. It would be also a false assumption that 'agent's intention to do right thing could be unconditional' (2001). To be conditional is to have a reason for action. The failure to supply *desirable* reason does not make the action *desire-independent*. The agent thus might as well fail to supply why he has done it. It may show imbalance in motivation. (Mele 1983) Motivation could be unconditional but deliberation in the evaluative mode of thinking is conditional. According to Searle, "The problem of weakness of will is not how I can reconcile two apparently inconsistent judgments; rather the problem is that having made only one judgment, I can than act contrary to that judgment? And answer is that I do not make another judgment in order to act; I can just act. That is in this sort of case, I have an intention-in-action with no prior intention and no prior deliberation" (2001). Intention-in-action refers to *thinking per se* – thought that the agent lives within that very moment of experience. When the agent confronts with an *akratic* situation – thought, the level of temptation becomes very high and thereby he *fails* to resist the temptation (2001). This is normally the case with a normal person. Searle is clearly suggesting that the situation that individuals who are victims of addictions, have obsessions and working under compulsions could be differently treated. The normal person is a rational person who can form relevant rational judgment and have unconditional intention. For Searle, a normal person must have the ability to form *desire-independent reason* for action. One can have a causal explanation of behaviors of drug addicts who lack a serious will to form reason for oneself and do something in the future. A normal person's commitment for future action shows the 'ability to bind *the will* now and create a *reason* for the future act only because it is the manifestation of the freedom' (Searle 2001) – the freedom of *will*.

As we have mentioned earlier, the will has the adjudicating power of making a decision. Not intending to execute the decision by undertaking it in action or not able to resist the temptation, for a normal person, seems to us are indicators of *motivational failure*. A motivated reason for action is not only rational but also has certain normative grounding which could be construed through purposeful living that binds the *prior intention* with *intention-in-action* and connects to future intention. The lack of deliberation not only would result in irrationality but also weaken the moral commitment. The irrational attitude exhibits inconsistency and weakens the interest to rationally pursue the intention in a normative order of life. As a result, structure of social life rationally weakens the power of *the will* and consequentially a person *morally fails* to execute right decision.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, it may be concluded that the Aristotelian thesis holds that actions originate in desire, though some desired actions may be rationally weak. This necessitates an examination of the *content* of desire in light of reason and virtue, both of which are crucial for the formation of *desirable action*. While Searle does not deny the role of desire in initiating action—indeed, he assumes it, given his view that *akratic* (i.e., weakness of will) actions are natural to human agency—he nonetheless insists that intentional actions reveal a *deontic intentional attitude*, which is fundamental to the constitution of desirable action.

Despite their differences, both Aristotelian and Searlean models of desirable action appeal to normative conditions. In the Aristotelian framework, this involves maintaining a distinction between voluntary and non-voluntary (which includes both involuntary and non-voluntary) actions. A moral-psychological reading of Aristotle reaffirms the foundational role of reason and virtue as constituting the normative grounding of desirable action. The *normative element* in desirable action is, in this sense, *desire-independent*: it arises not merely from impulse but from moral reasoning that integrates both evaluative judgment and motivational intent. In contrast, *akratic* action lacks such moral grounding, and this deficit in moral reasoning compromises the formation of desirable action.

Davidson's emphasis on *enkratic* (self-controlled) action highlights the importance of moral aspiration and commitment, arguing that moral success is possible only through the strengthening of the will. Searle, likewise, recognizes that commitment to future action is integral to the will, and he maintains that the absence of commitment and obligation weakens the agent's capacity for moral action. When the will succumbs to intense desire, moral failure becomes inevitable. Although Davidson critiques Aristotle, he does not deny that certain forms of wrongdoing are rooted in vice, nor does he reject the Aristotelian view that habitual akrasia is incompatible with virtue.

Moreover, akratic action, when undertaken unconditionally, results in moral failure. Davidson attributes such failure to *unconditional reason*, but this view is rejected by both Charles and Searle. For Charles, moral failure stems from a lack of integration among desire, belief, and reason—a *cognitive failure* at the level of agency. Searle, by contrast, critiques both Davidson and Charles by arguing that motivational reasons for action are *conditionally* formed. For Searle, *enkratic* action must be grounded in *desire-independent* but *evaluatively grounded* reasoning. The akratic agent, lacking such evaluative reasoning, suffers from both motivational deficiency and weak resistance to temptation. Hence, moral failure for Searle is primarily a *motivational failure*.

Taken together, these varied accounts converge on the insight that moral failure arises when an agent acts on intense desire at the expense of normative elements such as commitment, obligation, responsibility, and virtue. In such cases, the motivational basis for distinguishing between merely desired and truly desirable actions is weakened. Ultimately, moral failure results from excessive self-indulgence, which undermines the agent's normative orientation. Thus, practical wisdom (*phronēsis*) and a morally resolute will are indispensable for the performance of desirable action.

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The Greek Language in Diaspora: Perceptions Across Three Generations of Greek Australia Woman

By Maria Irini Avgoulas & Rebecca Fanany±*

This paper will discuss the experience of language in diaspora – particularly it will elucidate the perception (both visual and verbal) across three generations of Greek Australian woman living in the diaspora community of Melbourne, Australia. Discussion will focus on the lived experience of three generations of woman who were interviewed in either Greek or English by an experienced qualitative researcher who held both an insider and outsider position within this community. The aim was to consider the issue of language maintenance and its significance. Findings show that, despite the decades that have passed since migration, identity loss has not occurred among this sample of Greek people in Melbourne. Common phenomena, such as translanguaging and the nature of bilingualism in this population, are also considered. This emphasizes the importance of language maintenance in this community and its significance in the identity perceptions of its members.

Keywords: *heritage language, Greek, language maintenance, diaspora*

Introduction and Background

This paper presents data and findings from a qualitative study using an ethnographic method that considered the health beliefs and practices in three generations of Greek Australian women in Melbourne. Maintenance of a Greek way of life and the associated customs in diaspora is not a new phenomenon. Greek culture in Australia dates from when the first Greek people began arriving in Australia many decades ago. For the descendants of these immigrants, maintaining their Hellenic heritage has been seen as both vital and important. The aim of the research presented here was to explore transmission of health information among three generations of Greek Australian women in a format that allowed the 48 participants to share the meaning they give to life experiences associated with health, illness and overall wellbeing. The data collected were analysed using principles of thematic analysis and semiotics. Despite the fact that the original study was focused on health beliefs and practices, it collected a large amount of linguistic data, in the form of both examples (language used by participants in discussing other topics) and references to the role of the Greek language directly. It is this subset of linguistic data that is discussed in this paper.

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Review of Literature

In the context of migration, maintenance of a heritage language has been seen to support cultural and social cohesion, specifically in the Australian context (Clyne 2008, MacLeod et al. 2016). However, mastery of the majority language is important and is closely linked to educational success which leads directly to employment and socioeconomic status (Blake et al. 2018). Conversely, loss of the heritage language has been associated with lower academic attainment and social problems in migrant communities affecting individuals, families and the community as a whole (Bankston and Zhou 1995). For younger individuals, difficulty in school and in obtaining employment may be most significant, but the heritage language is often the medium by which cultural practices and traditional values are transmitted between generations; and language maintenance supports wellbeing, self-perception, and identity (Wong Fillmore 1991). Identity has been shown to be a significant factor in family cohesion in immigrant communities (Ho and Birman 2010). Maintenance of the heritage language among younger generations who were born in diaspora allow for the intergenerational connection with older relatives who may only speak the heritage language (Park and Sarkar 2007). There are numerous social and cultural factors that can affect language maintenance as well as language loss (Karidakis and Arunachalam 2016). For English speaking cultures like Australia, however, the number of generations since migration seems to be significant, and research has shown that shift in language dominance tends to occur within three generations (Willoughby 2018).

For members of a diaspora community, culture often reflects aspects of the culture of origin as well as elements drawn from the society in which they are living. Their "diaspora identity" then depends on the settlement process and the extent to which the culture of origin, its norms, traditions and way of life, can be maintained in the new location (Colson 2003). In this, memories of the past and traditional conceptualizations, usually provided by older relatives, supplement new practices and ways of life particularly for younger individuals. For them, continued participation in the social and cultural networks associated with their heritage may be of greater significance and particular importance in establishing and maintaining specific narratives based on collective memory of significant events or experiences (Giorgas 2000a, Giorgas 2000b). The maintenance of heritage culture depends on the ability to use the heritage language. However, the degree to which this can be achieved varies with the motivation and circumstances of speakers as well as the demands on migrants to acculturate and use the majority language.

Methodology

The research presented here was carried out using a qualitative method with the overall aim being to understand and elucidate the way in which the participants understood their own experiences, culture, and their perceptions of being of Greek background in Australia. An ethnographic approach was applied that included the collection of data via in-depth interviews that was a way give a voice to the participants who represented three generations. The youngest generation was interviewed first, followed by their mothers' generation with members of the immigrant generation (grandmothers) last. The reason for this was an assumption that ideas about Greek health, wellbeing and culture derived in large part from the immigrant generation who had firsthand experience of life in Greece. Efforts were made to ensure that as much as possible that the information, stories and historical knowledge provided represented the original thoughts and beliefs of each set of participants.

Below please refer to the interview schedule applied when interviewing the participants.

General Questions for all Participants

1. *What does it mean to be healthy? (We want to know what you think "healthy" means).*
2. *How can you tell if someone is healthy or sick? Are there observational signs?*
3. *What foods are most healthy? How do you know?*
4. *What foods are unhealthy? How do you know?*
5. *Can we improve/protect our health by eating certain things? (fasting)*
6. *Does God make people sick? Why?*
7. *Are religious people more likely to be healthy? Why?*
8. *Is being sick a punishment from God? For what?*
9. *Are there religious teachings about disease and health?*
10. *How is illness treated in your family? Are there any specific remedies used in your family?*
11. *Are there diseases that cannot be treated by doctors? What examples?*
12. *How do you treat illnesses in your family without going to the doctor?*
13. *Are there diseases or illnesses that are specific to Greek people?*
14. *What do you think about magic?*
15. *What do you do to stay healthy?*
16. *Are there things in your environment that you think are unhealthy? What are some examples?*

Specific Questions for Grandmothers (Migrant Generation)

1. *How was illness treated in Greece when you were a child?*
2. *When you were sick are a child did you go to the doctor?*
3. *How was illness treated in Greece by your parents?*
4. *What are some folk remedies that you may remember from your mother (fever, cuts or specific remedies).*
5. *Have you used or are you aware of any medical plants to treat illness?*
6. *Was illness treated differently in Greece than in Australia?*
7. *Did you eat different food when you lived in Greece?*
8. *What have you tried to maintain and hand down to the younger generations about the Greek way of life?*
9. *What do you remember about your first few years in Australia?*

10. *Did migrating to Australia impact your health?*
11. *How many years after migrating to Australia did you return to Greece?*
12. *How often do you visit Greece? And why?*
13. *Have you been to Greece with your children? And/or your grandchildren?*
14. *Is the way of life different in Greece to Australia? How? Why?*
15. *Have any of your health lifestyle habit's changed since migrating and what may have influenced these changes?*
16. *Are you a member of any Greek groups and/or clubs?*

Specific Questions for the 1st and 2nd Generation

1. *What has you mother and or/grandmother told you about how illness was treated in Greece?*
2. *Do you know if your mother/and or grandmother went to doctors as a child in Greece?*
3. *Do you know how illness is treated in Greece?*
4. *What has your mother and/or grandmother told you about her first few years in Australia?*
5. *Do you think migrating to Australia has impacted her health?*
6. *Have you been to Greece? If yes, how old were you and with whom did you go? What do you remember about Greece is it similar to what your mother or grandmother has told you? If no, why? Would you like to visit Greece? If yes would you like to go to Greece again?*
7. *What do you know about the way of life in Greece- is it different to the Greek way of life in Australia? Do you know of any Greek remedies (health beliefs) and from whom? Do you use them and trust them? Have you taught your mother and or grandmother any non-Greek remedies? If yes do they use them?*
8. *Do you have many Greek friends?*
9. *Have you shared your Greek culture (customs, traditions, health beliefs) with any of your non Greek friends?*
10. *Are you a member of any Greek clubs or groups? Why? If yes have these groups provided you with a link to your Greek heritage*
11. *What has your experience been as a 1st or 2nd generation Australia? School and what they may have learnt from their mother or grandmother about the Greek culture (language, food, cooking)*
12. *Did you go to Greek school? Why? Did you like it?*
13. *Is it important for you to maintain the Greek way of life? Why? How? Would this be or has it been challenging?*

The first author of this paper is a member of this same Greek diaspora community and was in a position to conduct the interviews in the preferred language of participants.

Sixteen families from the Greek community in Melbourne took part in this research making a total of 48 female participants. Table 1 outlines participant demographics.

Table 1. *Participant Demographics*

	Immigrant generation	**1st generation**	**2nd generation**
Age [at the time of interview]	58-78	37-50	16-18
Years in Australia	39-56	Australian born	Australian born

A total of 48 women from 16 families who took part in this study and were interviewed over a six-month period. Recruitment occurred via several channels such as through the Greek Orthodox schools of Melbourne, the Greek Orthodox churches of Melbourne and various Greek specific cultural groups.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were used to explore the transmission of health beliefs – that included participants' understanding of health and the nature of health and illness. Ethics approval for this project was obtained from the Human Ethics Advisory Group (HEAG) of the Faculty of Arts and Education of Deakin University

All interviews were audio recorded by permission and then transcribed. These transcripts were used as the material for analysis which was carried out using principles of both thematic analysis and semiotics that allowed for the identification of themes. A selection of findings relating to language use are discussed below.

Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study indicated that language maintenance was important to all three generations of Greek Australian women, whether or not they spoken Greek fluently. They all felt language was intimately connected to culture and that Greek culture was of great personal as well as general value. They tended to be proud of their heritage and of the achievements of the Greek people, of which they saw themselves as a part. It was notable that this sentiment was expressed by members of all three generations, whether or not they had an firsthand experience of Greece.

All three generations used both Greek and English, but in different ways. The oldest generation, the grandmothers, were all first language speakers of Greek. Many spoke only very limited English and tended to use Greek with their families and friends. However, even among these speakers, evidence of English encroachment was seen, with many having adopted the English word for common items which they used as loan words in discourse that was otherwise fully in Greek. Many of these individuals expressed a strong desire for their children and especially grandchildren top continue to use the Greek language. However, they did accept that English was necessary for these younger family members to succeed in Australia. Some of the women in the immigrant generation expressed their views as follows:

> *"I speak to my children and grandchildren in Greek. The younger one doesn't always understand me and, by accident, I sometimes speak to them in English, and that's wrong. And they then answer in Greek. I love that, too."*

> *"There are times by accident that I speak in English as I have forgotten the Greek word. This also happened to me in Greece. I don't know how this happens."*

Tables 2 and 3 include some language use examples by all generations.

Table 2. *Examples of English Words used by the Immigrant Generation*

Homemade	Anyway	alcohol
Jeans	Lungs	hamburger
Chips	Restaurant	stress
Healthy	Computer	mobile
bus stop	Drugs	cheese cake
ice cream	Government	happy
Cancer	Pollution	infection
no hope	very difficult	take it easy

Table 3. *Use of Some Greek Words by 1st and 2nd Generation Participants*

1st generation		**2nd generation**
μάτι (evil eye)		κήπος (garden)
Ευκελεο (Holy Unction)		Νιστια (fasting)
Γιαγιά (grandmother)		σέλινο (celery)
χαμομήλι (chamomile tea)		Ευκελεο (Holy Unction)
Αγιασμός (Holy water)		Σταυρός (cross)
χωρίο (village)		χωρίο (village)
Προσευχή (Prayer)		Πάτερ ημον (Lord's Prayer)
πρόσφορο (offering bread)		Μοναστήρι (monastery)
Παναγία (Virgin Mary)		Προσφορο (offering bread)
ρίγανη (Oregano)		χαμομήλι (chamomile tea)
Μύρο (Myrrh)		Γιαγια (grandmother)

The mothers in the study, who had been born in Australia but were raised y Greek speaking parents, tended to be true bilinguals who were able to use either Greek or English in any setting or context they experienced. They had often acted as unofficial interpreters for their parents and routinely engaged in code switching between languages, depending on the circumstances and speakers involved. While the women of this generation were fluent Greek speakers, the way they used the language was highly affected by the Australian context where they had grown up, with Greek terms and expressions mirroring their parents' usage and being adapted by their own experience. Many of them hoped their children might also speak Greek but did not feel it to be the pressing issue their parents did. They tended to send their children to Greek school (a supplementary program for language maintenance), and some tried to use the language with children. However, the women of this generation had a personal understanding of the Australian context and the need for their children to be full and natural speakers of Australian English. Nonetheless, they had sentimental feelings for the Greek language. One said:

> *"I use all the Greek herbs in my cooking like ρίγανη [oregano]. I can say the word 'oregano' [but] when I say ρίγανη, the word [English word] just gets stuck."*

The youngest participants in the study were all English speakers first. Their use of the language did not differ from other Australian young people, and they were not fluent in Greek. Some routinely used various terms as loan words in English, particularly when speaking to their parents or grandparents, while others were primarily English speakers. Many of these younger women were of the opinion that Greek was important and viewed the language as a sign of identity that could be used to support exclusivity among speakers from a similar background. All were proud to be of Greek heritage, and several wished to master the language to a higher level. The participants expressed this as follows:

> *"Sometimes I'm talking to one of my Aussie friends and I'm trying to explain something to them and I get caught because I can't think of the word in English and another funny thing that occurs when we have a secret or don't want a non Greek to understand us we speak in Greek -its funny to hear but does happen, often too."*

> *"[I have] definitely more Greek friends. Some have been family friends, and then you're friends with them as well. At school as well, everyone flocked together. We kind of stuck with each other, because we are more like minded, we understand each other, and we can use the Greek slang in conversation. I think it would be familiarity because we have common grounds."*

Language shift is evident among these members of the Greek community in Melbourne, but there is also evidence that heritage culture is being translated from Greek into English as the dominant language of the population shifts. This is giving rise to instances of translanguaging among younger speakers, where some speakers seem to possess a single integrated repertoire of language that is largely English but with Greek elements replacing English terms in key domains, such as religion, cooking, and family relationships. Increasingly, Greek is becoming a foreign language that requires formal study for these younger speakers because the community no longer supports natural acquisition of the language. The bilingual first generation is highly integrated into the Australian mainstream, and the inevitable cultural influences from other groups and especially English speakers has impacted the transmission of the language. Some of the members of this generation are married to non-Greek individuals, making the common language of the home English. For the youngest generation, language use in school and among peers tends to dominate, especially as their parents also speak English.

Conclusion

Despite this, there seems to be little loss of cultural import among the youngest members of the community. Many of them stated that they intend to pass a Greek identity on to their own children and participate themselves in Greek cultural forums, either in person or online. Therefore, it would not be surprising if the Greek cultural institutions that were founded by the immigrant generation and supported by the first Australian generation continue into the future as cultural forums for people who are English speakers of Greek background.

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The Archetype of Hero, Hidden Hero and Anti-Hero in *the Book of Esther* in the Light of Mesopotamian Myths

*By Claudiu-Liviu Onișoară**

This paper explores the presence of certain archetypes, specifically the hero, the hidden hero and the anti-hero in the Book of Esther and analyses them within the context of Mesopotamian myths. The Book of Esther has a complex narrative where characters such as Esther, Mordecai, Haman embody the distinct archetypal roles that resonate (or not) with traditional literary models. Esther emerges as a hidden hero who seems passive, but eventually uses the royal influence to save her people from destruction. This interference seems similar to the figure of Ishtar in Eastern mythology; she often intervened in the course of events or, on the contrary, determined a chain of events. Mordecai, on the other hand, reflects both the archetype of the wise counsellor and the hero (or, more likely, the hidden hero). His loyalty and strategic thinking drastically contribute to the reversal of power. His role can be compared to that of Marduk in the Enuma Elish, where strategic actions lead to the triumph of order over chaos. Meanwhile, Haman serves as the anti-hero (or villain) and his evil ambition ultimately brings about his downfall. This theme is mirrored in Mesopotamian literature through characters like Qingu, whose aspirations threaten the divine order. However, those are thwarted in the end. This study aims at revealing a deeper understanding concerning the story and the character development. The comparisons highlight the common literary motifs shared between Esther and Ancient Near Eastern literature, particularly the roles of heroism, destiny and reversal of fortune.

Keywords: *Esther*, *hero*, *archetype*, *myths*, *Mesopotamia*

Introduction

The study of archetypes in literature requires, first and foremost, a symbolic[1] and at the same time methodical approach to texts. Characters do not remain mere fictional creations, but become the expression of universal patterns of behaviour, mentality or destiny. The notions of "hero", "anti-hero" and "hidden hero" align with this hermeneutic approach applicable to *Esther*. The emphasis shifts from historical verisimilitude, more precisely, from the treatment of the characters in terms of their historical plausibility[2], to their narrative and symbolic configuration. In other words, the focus moves to how these textual actors are constructed within the story and what role they play in the unfolding events.

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[1]Northrop Frye noted that we usually speak of "symbolism" when we think of learned cultural archetypes or of conventional associations, "as of white with purity or green with jealousy" – N. Frye, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957, 102.

[2]In other terms, treating the characters as real figures from the past.

The hero archetype[3] is omnipresent in world literature. Broadly speaking, it is defined by a central figure who undergoes a transformative path, frequently transitioning from anonymity to glory, from weakness to power, and ultimately making a decisive contribution to the restoration of order within the narrative. Joseph Campbell systematized[4] this journey in the context of his famous theory, "the hero's journey" ("monomyth"), which has been adopted and subsequently disseminated throughout the scholarly literature; according to this theory, the monomyth is an "amplification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: *separation – initiation – return*"[5]. In essence, the hero either embarks deliberately or is driven by necessity or external forces in search of adventure, encountering hostile presences along the way that must be overcome or appeased in order to proceed. This threshold into the unfamiliar leads the hero on a path where he encounters resistance, thus being tested and possibly receiving some help in key situations. In the climax, the moment of confrontation and the peak of the ordeal, from which he emerges victorious, the hero receives his reward. The triumph may be represented by marriage ("holy union"), recognition by the father-creator, or it may be his own apotheosis. His return (somehow from the transcendent plane) to his own world brings a kind of salvation (the elixir) or resurrection[6].

In "Campbellian" terms, if we consider the case of Queen Esther, she follows a different kind of heroic path: she is not summoned to the unknown, but rather to the centre of power (*i.e.* in plain sight), and her trials are strategic rather than initiatory. However, her journey somewhat follows the pattern of separation, confrontation and transformative return, including going through the initiation of court life, offering salvation not to herself, but to her people.

At the same time, Carl Jung proposed a symbolic understanding of archetypes, which he interpreted as manifestations of the collective unconscious. Among these, the concept of the hero has played an essential role in the history of Jungian psychology[7]. This perspective, even if derived from another area of study, offers additional meanings to literary interpretation. It enables the identification of recurrent phrases or structures that no longer relate exclusively to the author's intention or the cultural specificity of the period, but rather to a universal symbolic background that transcends these concepts. Thus, archetypes act as guiding structures around which the story’s conflicts and resolutions take form. They are, in a way, landmarks in the construction of a literary text. In *Esther*, this approach allows for a deeper exploration of the characters' symbolic functions, not only within the narrative itself, but also in relation to universal patterns that extend even beyond the myths of the ancient world. For instance, the elevation of Esther from

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[3]*The archetype* can be defined as a concept that explores the fundamental human traits; to be more precise, it studies the universal commonalities inherited by all human beings, regardless of their colour, race, cultural practices and belief system – V. Francis, "Literary Archetypes: The Notion and Application", *Journal of Ecohumanism* 4, no. 1 (2025): 5030.

[4]J. Campbell, The Hero With a Thousand Faces, 2nd ed., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968.

[5]Ibid, 30.

[6]Ibid, 245, 246.

[7]M.L. Byrne, "Heroes and Jungians", *The San Francisco Jung Institute Library Journal* 18, no. 3 (2000): 13.

marginal figure to saviour of her people reflects a heroic path common to a universal scenario, where an unexpected individual rises to heroism in times of crisis.

In the literature of the ancient Near East, particularly within the Mesopotamian mythological corpus, one encounters a tremendous amount of such archetypal patterns. They are often invested with cosmic, universal dimensions. The hero is most often a demiurge (*e.g.* Marduk), a saviour deity (Enki), an embodiment of love, passion and war (Ishtar), while the antagonist, the anti-hero, is associated with chaos, disorder or even usurpation at the cosmic level (Tiamat, Qingu, etc.)[8]. The texts of oriental literature from South-West Asia not only encompass primordial myths, often referred to as "founding myths", but also metaphors with subtle meanings, of heroism, power, justice, etc.

Considering this background, a question arises: how does the *Book of Esther*, a text belonging to the corpus of biblical writings, with a complex narrative architecture, fit into the tradition of archetypal models? Far from being a simple historical or hagiographical narrative, the book is more akin to a court novel with dramatic nuances[9]; the manifestations of power, collective salvation and identity mechanisms unfold within the context of a latent conflict. To be more precise, a conflict that lies on the line between two incompatible worlds: the imperial Persian world, with its rigid hierarchies, its impersonal protocol and the absolutist logic of royal decrees, and on the other hand, the Jewish world, with its particular customs, which is permanently marginalized and only becomes visible in moments of crisis. The tensions are symbolic, through ambiguities of status (Esther is queen, but conceals her Jewish origin), through personal rivalries with historical and generational echoes[10] (Haman vs. Mordecai), but, above all, through the fact that identity is permanently hidden or revealed. Therefore, the conflict is between the visible and the invisible, between the periphery and the centre, between the minority and the dominant authority or its representatives. It is through this conflict that the entire structure of the story is shaped and the course of the action is determined.

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[8]In this sense, N. Frye, J. MacPherson, Biblical and Classical Myths: The Mythological Framework of Western Culture, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004, 277, 278. The authors argue that myth is the most ancient kind of story-telling, relying more on celestial and infernal settings than modern fiction. Its characters, as we have also suggested, are mainly either gods, or heroes with powers that are lesser, but nevertheless superhuman.

[9]However, given the complexity of the work, we would rather argue that *Esther* is an oriental story; in some respects, the book fits into biblical patterns: it borrows specific motifs and symbols, such as fasting, the destiny of the Jewish community, and there are also intertextual patterns (Esther and Mordecai's connection to Saul, in the Benjaminite line – *Esther* 2:5), and in others, into the literary tradition of the ancient Near East (the royal court topos, the motif of the monarch with absolute power, etc.). Yitzhak Berger refers to the genealogical line of Benjamin, from which Mordecai and Esther on the one hand, and Saul on the other, originated. *The Book of Esther* emphasizes the connection of Haman ("the Agagite" – *Esther* 3:1) with the Amalekites and, in a way, through Esther's actions, illustrates the rehabilitation of the Benjaminite line in relation to the disobedience and imperfections of Saul's actions – Y. Berger, "Esther and Benjaminite Royalty: A Study in Inner-Biblical Allusion", *Journal of Biblical Literature* 129, no. 4 (2010): 625, 628-630.

[10]Haman, being called an "Agagite" in *Esther* 3:1, is indicated to be of Amalekite origin, since Agag had been their king. The Amalekites had been in conflict with the Jews since the time of Samuel and Saul – J. Magonet, "The God who Hides: Some Jewish Responses to the Book of Esther", *European Judaism: A Journal for the New Europe* 47, no. 1 (2014): 113, 114.

The *Book of Esther*[11] does not, therefore, conform entirely to a traditional biblical model of "theological narrative", but neither does it entirely exclude this side of it[12]; rather, we can affirm that it reconfigures a certain type of oriental story in which motifs and symbols from Mesopotamian and Persian myths and epics are recognizable. In this already outlined framework, the characters seem to be deliberately, strategically constructed around literary functions, which can be considered, at the same time and to the same extent, archetypal models (the hero, the discreet hero, the anti-hero). Consequently, Esther can be seen in a double hypostasis: as a hidden heroine, considering the anonymization of her Jewish origin, and later as a revealed saviour, Mordecai as a wise hero and Haman as an anti-hero with a tragic ending. All these elements make *Esther* function as a text with archetypal value.

The theme is philologically fertile. The title of the article already reflects a well-defined triple thematic axis: the hero, the hidden hero and the anti-hero in the *Book of Esther*, all analysed in parallel with Mesopotamian writings and myths. The aim of the study is to identify the narrative function of these archetypes and to reveal common motifs between the biblical text and the literary tradition of the ancient Near East. It is important to note that archetypal patterns are not only confined to the ancient literary imaginary; their presence transcends time and culture, offering insights into identity, morality, and social values. Also, the analysis of these archetypes is relevant for contemporary or future studies[13], as it

[11]We can affirm that *Esther* participates in a mythical, archetypal tradition, but also that it transposes these models into its own register, using dramatic tensions and certain motifs from Mesopotamian myths in a literary complex manner.

[12]It should be pointed out that the style of *Esther* is not entirely unique in the biblical tradition, in the sense that some of its peculiarities are found in other biblical writings. As for the rich descriptive style specific to *Esther*, it has been said in the scholarly literature that it is unmatched, with one possible exception, the *Book of Daniel* – see D.J. Zucker, "The Importance of Being Esther: Rabbis, Canonicity, Problems and Possibilities", *European Judaism: A Journal for the New Europe* 47, no. 1 (2014): 103. Adele Berlin mentions the same work as a text comparable to *Esther*, to which she adds other books, such as *Judith* or *Tobit* – A. Berlin, "The Book of Esther and Ancient Storytelling", *Journal of Biblical Literature* 120, no. 1 (2001): 8. Even in terms of their genre, *Esther* and *Daniel* are sometimes considered together, even though there is no clear consensus that *Esther* fits entirely – or exclusively – into the genre known as the *diasporic novella*. Nevertheless, both have been referred to in some scholarship studies as belonging to this literary category. In this regard, see M.L Mills, "Household and Table: Diasporic Boundaries in Daniel and Esther", *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 68, no. 3 (2006): 408. Likewise, when the structure of the Old Testament is discussed in the scholarly literature, it has been said that the books of the Old Testament fall into two great cycles, with the exception of "the two very late independent books, *Esther* and *Daniel*" – M.L. West, The East Face of Helicon, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, 95. In this case as well the two books are considered together, standing out as a distinct pair. This aspect does not entirely detract from the unique elements of the *Book of Esther*, but the common traits with the biblical tradition in which it is included must also be considered.

[13]In support of this idea, see also El-S. El-Aswad, Creation Myth: Cosmogony and Cosmology. Motifs A600–A899. In J. Garry, H.M. El-Shamy (eds.), 24-31. *Archetypes and Motifs in Folklore and Literature: A Handbook*, London: M. E. Sharpe, 2005, 28 (a reference is also made to B.L. Knapp, A Jungian Approach to Literature, Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 1984). The author suggests that archetypal patterns implicit in creation myths are not restricted to archaic or folk cultures. These patterns appear in modern elite literature and science fiction. All forms of literature display recurrent themes or archetypes, showing how contemporary writers have reimagined ancient myths to reflect the values and aspirations of

helps to understand the construction of characters from the point of view of an ancient literary continuum.

Methodology

From a methodological point of view, the present study distances itself from classical interpretations or exegeses. We adopted a philological comparative perspective, focusing primarily on archetypes and, secondarily, on motifs, tropes, and functions of characters in the *Book of Esther*[14] and Mesopotamian literature. This method aligns with the recent directions in comparative literature and intertextuality studies, which emphasize the fluidity of motifs across civilizations.

I firstly addressed the concepts used in the paper, I talked about the "Campbellian" theory of the "monomyth", but I also considered the Jungian view of archetypes. I explained why the *Book of Esther* functions as a work of archetypal value and how it integrates both biblical and Ancient Near Eastern elements or nuances. In all this endeavour I used sources from the Mesopotamian literary tradition to make parallels between the characters and their functions specific to this corpus, in relation to the main characters in the *Book of Esther*.

The aim is not to demonstrate a direct influence between the ancient Near Eastern corpus and the *Book of Esther*, but rather to highlight literary and cultural continuity in the way certain typologies and situations are thematised. Archetypes are, hence, instruments for illustrating the deep complexity of the text and its echoes from the literary tradition of the region.

In other words, they connect the reader to a vast literary imaginary, in which the hero, the hidden hero and the anti-hero are not merely characters, but expressions of recurrent narrative (and cultural, more generally) patterns, charged with cultural memory, which go beyond the immediate context of the writing and subtly reactivate remnants of a myth-poetic tradition common to the ancient world. In this sense, the study not only examines several philological aspects of the book, but also contributes to contemporary academic understandings concerning the transcultural mobility of mythic patterns, with particular attention to the heroic traits.

Comparative Studies. Literature Review

The figure of Esther and Mordecai reinterprets, in a specific key, the heroic models established in Mesopotamian literature, such as Gilgamesh, Ishtar or Atrahasis. The latter are built on traits such as physical strength, a spirit of

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modern culture. However, the assertion can be extended not only to creation myths, but to myths in general. Thus, it is important not to overlook this dimension of archetypal patterns, as scholars can employ it in their studies. This approach may reveal underlying layers in literary analysis.

[14]In this study, we opted to analyse and contextualize the Hebrew version of the *Book of Esther*. While preparing the article, we consulted several English translations of the Masoretic text; however, due to its precision, the primary source, including for the reproduced quotations, remains the Jewish Publication Society (ed.), Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures: The New JPS Translation according to the Traditional Hebrew Text, 1988.

adventure and a tendency to defy the cosmic and social order; for example, Gilgamesh, in the epic that bears his name, is presented as a king of extraordinary power, through his desire to transcend his human condition and his tyrannical behaviour, which is particularly evident in the exposition. He breaks the rules set by the gods and the community. This reflects a tension between individual aspiration and the balance imposed at cosmic and, consequently, terrestrial level.

> "In those days, there reigned in Uruk, girded with walls,/a despot named Gilgamesh, famous for his strength,/who terrorized his subjects, none of whom could confront him (…)"[15].

In relation to Mesopotamian heroines (such as Ishtar/Inanna), Esther behaves, at least initially, as a "civil" heroic character, since her actions throughout the course of events are nonviolent, relying on diplomacy, subtle persuasion and, at the same time, discretion. Unlike Inanna, whose descent into the Netherworld involves a violent confrontation with Ereshkigal and the forces of the world led by her[16], Esther practices a strategy of inner resilience and discreet intervention. Esther does not defy a particular order of the world, of the universe, but works within it in order to achieve justice. Moreover, whereas Mesopotamian heroines have a divine or semi-divine status, Esther is deeply rooted in the human condition. She does not have the status of a deity. This hypothesis remains nuanced, however, since her self-control, fasting and recourse to a certain type of ritual humility indicate *a spiritual dimension of her own*, and different from that associated with Mesopotamian heroines.

Despite the absence of an obvious divine nature, as in the case of the goddess Ishtar, Esther possesses an incredible spiritual power; it is not one that manifests itself outwardly, not a colossal power, as depicted in Mesopotamian mythology, but a subtle and intrinsic one, which expresses itself through self-control, discreet interventions, and political strategies[17]. In "The Descent of the Goddess Ishtar/ Inanna into the Underworld" we observe how the goddess Ishtar/Inanna must pass through several gates, each time relinquishing an ornament or a piece of clothing[18]. This act of surrender seems to symbolise the renunciation of certain divine attributes. In other words, this implies a (forced) humiliation of the goddess. Similarly, in the *Book of Esther*, Queen Esther is forced by circumstances to fast and humble herself. From the interpretation of chapter 5, verse 1, where it is stated that she appears before Ahasuerus in royal apparel, it is suggested that, on fasting days prior to this, she had refrained from wearing her royal garments:

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[15]Translated from French. La Légende de Gilgamesh (présentée et retranscrite par Gérard Chaliand), Paris: Pocket, 2021, 18.

[16]R.M. van Dijk-Coombes, "Lady of battle, his beloved spouse: The relationship between the body of Inana/Ištar and her spheres of war and love from the Jemdet Nasr to the old Babylonian period", *Die Welt Des Orients* 50, no. 1 (2020): 146, 147, 172.

[17]D. Oren, "Esther – The Jewish Queen of Persia", *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues* 18 (2009): 140.

[18]A. Pinker, "Descent of the Goddess Ishtar to the Netherworld and Nahum II 8", *Vetus Testamentum* 55, no. 1 (2005): 96-98. The author notes that the degradation and fall of the goddess are closely linked to the crisis and the collapse of Nineveh.

> "*On the third day, Esther put on royal apparel* and stood in the inner court of the king's palace, facing the king's palace, while the king was sitting on his royal throne room facing the entrance of the palace" (*Esther* 5:1).

In both situations we encounter the idea of a relinquishment of status, a progressive loss of power and the growth of a certain vulnerability. Ishtar, having reached the last gate, completely naked, suggests the loss of any form of authority or strength. Both figures are, hence, facing a process of humbling, but in different ways: Esther adopts an inner spiritual discipline, while Ishtar/Inanna is subjected to a symbolic "fall", given the underworld context. But the transformation they undergo leads to a different outcome.

Esther can be seen as the type of group saviour, and therefore possesses different traits from the goddess Ishtar or the male mythical heroes, some of them violent. Her actions focus on rescuing a large group of people, rather than on acquiring her own desires, as noted in the scholarly literature[19]. Esther is not defined by hostility or physical strength, but by characteristics such as diplomacy, humility and, above all, self-sacrifice. As a consequence, she seems to portray a new and distinct type of hero, one who works from the shadows, not seeking personal glory, but only the fulfilment of a higher purpose, the salvation of the people of her origin.

In contrast to the goddess Ishtar, who in Mesopotamian mythology often imposes herself through destruction, revenge and force, Esther uses "discreet" weapons. As the goddess of love and war, Ishtar descends into the Underworld in full force and symbolic violence, passing gate after gate[20]. Gradually, as indicated above, she loses the objects of divine status. She did not seek to save a group of people, but had a much more complex and personal relationship with both the other gods (Ereshkigal being her sister) and the forces of Underworld. Thus, Ishtar is a deity who oscillates between love and destruction, between power and vulnerability. Esther, on the other hand, does not follow such a path, her actions consisting of inner and outer forms of resilience. Fasting, humility are gestures by which she puts herself at the service of higher forces and submits to a divine plan involving personal sacrifice. Instead of being an impulsive or aggressive character, Esther is patient and silent. When she risks her life in front of King Ahasuerus, it is not out of bravery, but an act of courage. The balance on which Esther relies upon lies at the intersection of fragility and inner strength. She is a heroine who works with, through and for people, not against them. Her typology seems to be that of a community saviour, an alternative pattern to the models existing up to that time.

By the end of the book, however, the protagonist's apparent passivity disappears and the heroic role is progressively activated. Her actions become direct and involve a form of justice that is not altogether free from hostility. In *Esther* 7:6, she points directly at Haman, knowing that King Ahasuerus will punish him, and in *Esther* 9:12-14, she proposes the hanging of Haman's children. This act can be seen as one of retributive justice; it is not a violent physical action directed against someone in the sense of an attack, an exchange of force, but takes the form of condemnation. In

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[19]In this regard, see K. McGeough, "Esther the Hero: Going beyond 'Wisdom' in Heroic Narratives", *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 70, no. 1 (2008): 45.
[20]Pinker, "Descent of the Goddess Ishtar to the Netherworld and Nahum II 8", 97.

the face of a major threat to her people, Esther is forced to resort to all she could in the name of restoring order and justice.

In this sense, however, another connection can be observed between Esther and Ishtar, even if the meanings of the actions of the two are different and the context is entirely different. Indeed, in Esther emerges, by the end of the book, a kind of "remnant" of the goddess Ishtar, namely, her dynamic, active, fearless character. Nevertheless, it should be noted that Esther's actions are motivated by needs that go beyond her own person, specifically to save an entire minority in the Persian Empire. This contrasts with the often capricious and sometimes destructive nature of the goddess. We can thus emphasize that there is a certain analogy between the roles that both Queen Esther and the goddess Ishtar play as agents of change and restoration of balance in their own universe.

From the perspective of her evolution throughout the narrative, and in light of the aforementioned considerations, Esther can be seen as the type of the hidden heroine, since a large part of her actions are characterized by discretion and prudence. Added to this, of course, is her subtle ability to influence those around her. Unlike traditional mythical heroes, who assert themselves through overt acts of bravery and strength, Esther exercises her heroism through strategic silence, concealing her identity and revealing it at the opportune moment. The heroic character, however, is on full display at the climax of the book: Esther publicly assumes her identity and the cause of her people, risks her life in front of King Ahasuerus, and orchestrates several banquets and the rescue of the Jewish community in the Persian diaspora. Her transition from covert to overt heroism reinforces the complexity of her character. It distances her from established heroic models and even from some conventional biblical patterns. However, there are certain shades of Mesopotamian heroic figures in her personality: her trenchant and punitive character towards Haman resonates to some extent with the vindictive dimension of the goddess Ishtar[21]; yet Esther does not exhaustively take up such traits, but adapts them into a completely different ethical and spiritual framework. Esther refuses the path of direct violence, and her actions are limited to rescuing the Jewish community within the vast expanse of the Achaemenid Empire. Therefore, typologically, Esther seems to be a subtle blend of a heroine with innovative actions, but in which echoes and reinterpretations of older models can be observed. Ultimately, the literary vision of the work is intended to be less confrontational and more spiritually profound. The idea of heroism is thus given these nuances of depth, of spirituality, even if the Masoretic text does not, in the most eloquent way, refer to the type of conventional biblical spirituality.

[21]From another point of view, Esther is similar to Ishtar not only in the complexity of her feminine figure, but also in the ambiguity of her actions, of her strategy in the narrative. Her relationship with King Ahasuerus is not a romantic one in the classical sense, but rather a relationship of discreet political influence. Therefore, we are looking at a certain bargaining and symbolic appropriation of authority from within, which brings to mind certain destabilizing strategies of the goddess Ishtar (such as descending into the Underworld). In contrast, Queen Vashti, who explicitly disobeys without such a strategy, is removed from her position. Esther seems to follow a "hidden hero" trope, recognizable also in Mesopotamian literature. In this sense, gods and demigods sometimes masked their nature or intentions (a form of divine camouflage), a relevant example being the discreet appearances of the god Enki in the various epics, as well as his subtle insinuations in different contexts (*infra*).

Esther's example of wisdom and action from the shadows is not a unique one, as it is also found in Mesopotamian mythology, for example in the figure of the god Enki. He is a character, a distinctive figure not necessarily in strength, but in wisdom, cunning and subtlety. The god Enki intervenes mainly indirectly, through messengers or under the guise of silence, avoiding overt exposure and preferring the strategy of discreet influence[22]. A similar trait can also be observed in the figure of Mordecai, whose position as a shadowy advisor places him in a specific heroic context: that of the hidden hero, whose loyalty and vision silently shape the course of collective destiny.

In general, looking at the whole narrative and his involvement in its events, Mordecai seems to assume a dual function: that of a wise counsellor and that of the "catalyst" in the salvation of the Jewish community within the Achaemenid Empire. If the god Enki in Mesopotamian myths sometimes acts through symbolic encodings and intermediary elements (such as the warning conveyed through the "reed wall" in the "Epic of Atrahasis"), Mordecai intervenes without directly taking control of events (by revealing the plot against King Ahasuerus – *Esther* 2:21-23, by insisting on Esther's involvement – *Esther* 4:13-14, and by behaving morally and with dignity towards Haman and humbly towards God).

His character does not fully conform to the classical Mesopotamian heroic pattern (warlike, violent, domineering), but neither does it fully conform to the traditional biblical, prophetic one. Mordecai combines within himself elements of the humble and principled sage, the courageous and providential counsellor. Similar to Enki, Mordecai seems to understand the dynamics of power, and when it is corrupted, he realizes how to appropriate it from within to restore the natural order. He need not confront it directly, aggressively, but at most demonstratively, as in the situation when he refused to bow to Haman – *Esther* 3:2. Even his refusal to bow to Haman can be interpreted as a form of silent resistance, despite the fact that it generates an explosive conflict. This approach creates a kind of "camouflage pattern", also found in the case of Esther; in other words, it outlines the idea of the hero who is unrevealed and at the same time delayed in dynamic actions. This type of behaviour seems similar to that of the god Enki, who insinuates himself through mental agility, cunning and wisdom, and not necessarily through brute force.

In the symbolic realm, Mordecai brings together the distinctive features of several Eastern mythical figures. These include the god Marduk, the triumphant deity of order in "Enuma Elish". Although Mordecai does not act through military or physical force of any kind, he can be seen as an architect behind the curtain, acting for the collective salvation of the Jews. He makes a decisive contribution to reversing the destiny of an entire people, like Marduk, who in the cosmogonic epic of creation, "Enuma Elish", succeeds in bringing order out of chaos through strategy and wisdom. At the same time, and this cannot be easily overlooked, his name, Mordecai, phonetically and

[22]For example, as indicated in the scholarly literature, in the "Epic of Atrahasis", the god Enki communicates to Atrahasis – from behind and through a reed wall – information to Atrahasis on how to save himself from the flood – M. Weinfeld, "Partition, Partition; Wall, Wall, Listen". "Leaking" the Divine Secret to Someone Behind the Curtain", *Archiv Für Orientforschung* 44/45 (1997): 222.

etymologically refers to Marduk[23]. This aspect may suggest a literary intention to transform the godly (divine) model into a character who is human in nature, but nevertheless in a relationship with the divine. Both are figures of leaders who become central only at the moment of crisis, assuming a role of saviour not immediately through an imposing and ceremonial presence, but through gradually obtained authority, skill, agility and perseverance.

Mordecai can be seen as a character situated at the crossroads between advisor, counsellor, and mythical hero – on the borderline between loyalty, wisdom, and destiny. Naturally, he demonstrates strategic thinking within the context of a constant tension between anonymity and recognition; it is Mordecai himself who advised Esther not to reveal her background and Jewish identity – *Esther* 2:10. This aspect is reiterated in *Esther* 2:20: "But Esther still did not reveal her kindred or her people, as Mordecai had instructed her (...)", precisely to emphasize the importance of this action. This precaution not only reveals Mordecai's wisdom, but also his lucid awareness of the tense atmosphere within the evidently cosmopolitan space of the ancient Iranian Empire. In such a setting, ethnic hierarchies and rivalries inevitably and invariably emerge – such as those between the Jews and the Amalekites, represented respectively by Mordecai and Haman. Beyond the apparent administrative neutrality at the level of the imperial court, one could discern the presence of potential enemies of the people of Israel, which justified the concealment of identity. The strategy was not only a matter of survival, but also a subtle political tactic – hiding one's origins in order to fulfil one's destiny at decisive moments.

In scholarly literature, it has been noted that Mordecai appears to be a secondary figure, but in actual fact, he represents a pivotal agent of salvation[24]; in the same way as the god Marduk, he carries out each action gradually, through wisdom and humility (for instance, he dresses in sackcloth and ashes – *Esther* 4:1 – to evoke compassion and attract the support of providence). The interpretation of *Esther* 6:3 ("'What honour or advancement has been conferred on Mordecai for this?' the king inquired. 'Nothing at all has been done for him', replied the king's attendants") reflects Mordecai's discreetly heroic attitude – specifically, his refusal of honours and his lack of any request for immediate reward after uncovering the plot against the Persian king. His silence regarding recognition can be seen both as a sign of loyalty and humility, and as part of a narrative construction. In the latter sense, it serves to amplify the significance of the King Ahasuerus's dream and revelation, while also marking the

[23]In the scholarly literature, the parallel between the "Enuma Elish" and the *Book of Esther* has also been analysed, along with the corresponding names "Mordecai - Marduk" and "Esther - Ishtar". Adam Silverstein highlights the influence of Babylonian writings – including the "Enuma Elish" – on the text of *Esther*. We agree that the impact of this literary tradition, and of this epic in particular, is significant; however, this does not affect the originality of the work, as it may simply reflect a subconscious anchoring in ancient literature – in this regard, see A. Silverstein, "The Book of Esther and the 'Enūma Elish'", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 69, no. 2 (2006): 223.

[24]A. Silverstein, "The Book of Esther and the 'Enūma Elish'", 212-214. The author emphasizes that Mordecai holds – or ought to hold – the primacy in the *Book of Esther*, presenting several arguments in support of this view. He also contends that the foundational influences on the narrative derive from an epic centred on the god Marduk. We do not fully concur with this perspective, as the decisive role in the salvation of the Jewish people ultimately belongs to Esther, even though it is Mordecai who encourages her to take action.

turning point in the dramatic reversal of fates – Mordecai ultimately receiving the honours and prestige instead of Haman.

The final triumph is less about physical confrontation and more about a reconfiguration of power, from which it follows that, within this framework, Mordecai emerges as an agent of restored justice and balance. At the same time, his close relationship with his cousin Esther implies a deliberate orchestration of events, one that almost assumes the role of a demiurge. Or rather, it could be said that their actions were prompted and sustained by providence. This careful orchestration, in which human agency appears to be guided by a higher force, resonates with the Mesopotamian tradition wherein gods such as Enki intervene subtly, through indirect means, on behalf of humankind.

In contrast to Mordecai and Queen Esther, Haman takes shape as an anti-hero – a negative character, an antagonist driven by ambition and pride, by the illusion of controlling destiny and by cruelty. He embodies the type of the failed hero: one who aspires to the highest honours (*Esther* 6:6), to recognition and glory, yet whose intentions are fundamentally tainted by arrogance and hatred. In this regard, Haman can be interpreted as a false hero, possessing authoritarian traits and holding high status and social rank, yet lacking any of the traditional heroic virtues. His narrative arc recalls myths such as that of Qingu, a character in the "Enuma Elish", who, endowed with the Tablets of Destiny[25], becomes a symbol of cosmic chaos. Ultimately, he is defeated by Marduk, the epic's hero and restorer of universal order. Like Qingu, Haman projects himself as an agent of imperial reordering, only to fall victim, in the end, to his own *hybris*.

The theme of the reversal from glory to ridicule, or from the status of a high-ranking official to being hanged on the very gallows prepared for his rival – in other words, on the instrument of his own vengeance – works, in his case, as a paradigmatic illustration of mythical downfall. This entire decline is further intensified by the ironies employed by the author of the book, especially the irony of fate. In this case, chance or destiny seems to act as an autonomous narrative force. Indeed, it could be considered a discreet God, acting as a superior will over Haman, shattering his destructive aspirations. The imbalance caused by a genocide in the truest sense of the word could not be tolerated, thus reaffirming the natural order of things, with the Jews gaining the right to defend themselves – *Esther* 8:11. Haman, therefore, is an agent of imbalance, hatred, and division. Of course, the contrast between him and Mordecai (antithesis) and Esther is evident.

The image of the rope or, more precisely, the gallows prepared by Haman for Mordecai, which ultimately becomes fatal to him (*Esther* 7:10), constitutes the symbol of the reversal of destiny, as well as tragic irony. Moreover, it represents a literary trope that transcends mere physical punishment, as it visually marks the total downfall of a character whose image was entirely built on the idea of control, power, and domination. In the literature of the Ancient Near East, such instruments of punishment or triumph could become symbols of one's own downfall. In the case of Qingu, his

[25]Both the Tablets in the "Enuma Elish" and the lots (*purim*) in the *Book of Esther* function as symbols – more precisely, as instruments of fate and power. Adam Silverstein, on the other hand, draws a parallel between the Tablets and the king's ring in his examination of this motif – A. Silverstein, "The Book of Esther and the 'Enūma Elish'", 220.

possession of the Tablets of Destiny gives him the illusion of absolute sovereignty. However, they are eventually taken from him by Marduk, after which his blood is used to create humans – a degrading end for someone who sought to rule the world. Similarly, in the "Descent of Ishtar to the Underworld", the goddess experiences a moment of weakness and forced humiliation in the Netherworld, where she is stripped of all her objects and garments, and, consequently, her powers. All these are taken from her, one by one, in a symbolic process of power depletion that overturns her initial status. Ultimately, she is defeated and hung on a hook[26], reduced to silence until the eventual restoration of her initial situation. Such images of characters suspended in the air (even in the literal, visual sense) and of the reversal of glory to humiliation are recurrent in the ancient literature of the Near East. It is not known why exactly Ishtar set out to dethrone her sister from the Underworld, Ereshkigal, but her hostile intentions end in her own defeat, just as Haman, who intended to destroy his rival and his entire people, is ultimately defeated, ironically, by his own instrument of death.

Thus, for Haman, the gallows becomes a "metonym of his fall", as it undermines his ambition to reorder the world according to his own pride. It is, therefore, a symbolic lesson about the failure to reconfigure the world according to immoral, cruel, and inappropriate principles, a recurring motif, in fact, under various forms, in the literary tradition of the ancient Near East.

In conclusion, the three figures discussed – the hidden and revealed hero (Esther), the wise, dignified, and discreet hero (Mordecai), and the anti-hero (Haman) – can be understood as literary reinterpretations of archetypes found in Mesopotamian tradition (*e.g.* through the characters mentioned above: Ishtar, Marduk, Enki, Qingu, etc.). These archetypes are not merely repeated and exposed as such, but resized, reconstructed, and reintroduced in a human social context, rather than a divine one. They carry a more pronounced ethical charge and are incorporated into a narrative that has multiple shades (various motifs), not limited to a single providential spectrum.

Conclusions

The *Book of Esther* reinterprets traditional archetypes of the ancient Near East, transposing them into a profoundly humanized narrative framework, with political and strategic accents, as well as elements of courtly storytelling, carnival-like motifs and parody. Heroism is no longer associated with brute force or cosmic-scale conflagrations; instead, it is transferred to the sphere of discreet actions, diplomatic wisdom and loyalty. Thus, in a sense, the warrior becomes a wise counsellor and mediator, the exposed brave one becomes the hidden hero, and victory is one of reason and collective resistance.

The Mesopotamian archetypes of the ordering hero and the chaotic anti-hero are reinterpreted in the *Book of Esther* in the light of human salvation, rather than cosmic salvation. The theme of fate's reversal and the inversion of roles and power remains a central mechanism, common to both traditions, although the outcomes are relatively different: one is mythological, while the other has a largely secular character.

[26]R.M. van Dijk-Coombes, "Lady of battle, his beloved spouse: The relationship between the body of Inana/Ištar and her spheres of war and love from the Jemdet Nasr to the old Babylonian period", 147.

Finally, it must be noted that the comparative study reveals a subtle continuity of literary motifs at the boundary between biblical tradition and that of the ancient Near East, a transition from the mythic representation of universal order to a nuanced symbolism of collective destiny, justice, and quiet providence.

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Facilitating Second Language Acquisition: Examining the Influence of Sequential Event Alignment (the Structure Building Based) vs. Shifting in the Reading Proficiency of Upper Intermediate Iranian EFL Learners

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The current study was conducted to comparatively investigate the effects of sequential alignment and shifting strategies on the reading proficiency of Iranian English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners. For the purpose of quantitative research, 130 students studying at the "IELTS Online Academy" language institute were selected. Then IELTS placement test was run to verify their level. The participants were divided into three groups with 30 members in each. As the instruments of the study, two tests were used; one reading pretest of IELTS that was run before the treatment and one posttest of reading IELTS that were run after the treatment. The results of paired-sample t-tests and one-way ANOVA tests revealed that both Sequential Alignment and shifting statistically significantly promoted learners' reading comprehension ability. However, it was found that the sequential event alignment group had significantly outscored the Shifting one.

Keywords: *sequential alignment, shifting the events, EFL teaching, reading proficiency, IELTS tests*

Introduction

In today's complex field of language learning, it is essential to grasp how reading skills develop. Two key mechanisms involved are sequential alignment and shifting. This research explores how these processes affect the reading abilities of Iranian students learning English as a foreign language (Traxler 2012, p. 201).

Reading proficiency is a crucial skill for EFL learners, affecting their academic success, communication abilities, and overall language competence. Understanding the cognitive mechanisms involved in reading—specifically sequential alignment and shifting—can lead to more effective instructional strategies (Traxler 2012, p. 201).

Despite extensive research on reading comprehension, the specific impact of sequential alignment and shifting has remained underexplored. This study touches this gap by examining their influence on Iranian EFL learners' reading performance. When readers encounter a passage, their minds naturally seek coherence by connecting adjacent elements. The smooth flow of information relies on the reader's ability to align these linguistic units sequentially. How does this alignment affect comprehension, retention, and overall reading proficiency? Can it serve as a scaffold for learners navigating complex texts?

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On the other hand, imagine a reader encountering a sentence with multiple layers of meaning—a shifting mindset allows them to explore various interpretations, adapt to context, and extract nuanced information. But how does this mental agility impact reading comprehension? And can it be cultivated in EFL learners?

The current study explores the impact of Sequential Alignment vs. Shifting in the Reading Proficiency of Iranian EFL Learners. There does appear to be a strong correlation between sequential alignment Vs shifting the goals and actions of protagonists with developing reading abilities, especially in the early stages of learning process.

Research Questions

Consistent with the background of the study above, the research problem formulations are:

1. Do Sequential Event Alignment strategies significantly enhance the reading proficiency of Iranian EFL learners?
2. Does event index-based shifting have any significant effect on developing Iranian EFL learners' reading ability?
3. Is there any significant difference between sequential event alignment and shifting events in their effect on reading ability?

Literature Review

Reading Proficiency in EFL Contexts

With the advent of technology, we are now standing at the threshold of a new era. Society seriously demands learners who can find their way through the maze of this ever-changing world. It also applies in the case of reading a story. When comprehending a simple story, readers construct representations of the characters, events, states, goals, and actions that are described in the story. Readers create, as if were, a micro world of what is conveyed in the story. The linguistic structure of the story can be regarded as a set of processing cues on how to construct such a world (Rolf et al. 1998). Promoting reading ability has always been highlighted in the literature.

To put it simply whatever your pupil knows, he/she should know not because you have told him, but because he has grasped it himself. "Knowledge of language learning strategies, on the other hand, is important to the learning process. The term learning strategies, has been defined by many researchers." (Kabgani et al. 2015).

Wenden and Rubin (1987) have defined learning strategies as "any set of operations, steps, plans, routines used by the learner to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval and the use of information" (Rubin & Wenden 1987, p. 19). Hence, as Oxford (1990) mentioned, many different strategies can be applied by comprehenders and language learners. Metacognitive techniques for organizing, focusing and evaluation of one's own learning; Affecting strategies for handling emotions or attitudes; social strategies for cooperating with others; cognitive strategies for linking new information with existing schemata and for analyzing and classifying it: Memory strategies for entering new information into memory storage and for retrieving it when needed; and comprehension strategies such as guessing or using gestures to overcome deficiencies and gaps in one's current language knowledge (Kabgani et al. 2015).

A wealth of empirically validated cognitive research has demonstrated key features that the mind uses to store and retrieve events in short term memory when experiencing a story (Kives et al. 2015). This study has taken into consideration the same orientation, attempting to investigate the audiences' understanding and attention as they experience a story.

Theoretical Framework

We introduce the theoretical framework that underpins our study. Drawing from cognitive psychology and language acquisition theories, meanwhile we discuss how sequential alignment and shifting align with existing models of reading comprehension.

Narratologists categorize a narrative into story (people, places, things, and events) and discourse (how the story is told), (Kives et al. 2015). Historically, computational models of narrative have focused on presentation of the diverse structural properties of narratives (as cited in Kives et al. 2015). However, authors of many books, intentionally design stories to affect their audience in specific ways (Bordwell 1989, Lard 1989).

According to Szilas (2003, as cited in Kives et al. 2015) a model of narrative must go beyond simple story structure and account for how the experience receives the narrative. A decade prior to the coining of the terms mental model and situational model, Bransford et al. (2012, as cited in Kives et al. 2015) had demonstrated empirically that the nature of the described situation can have a powerful effect on the readers' memory (Kives et al. 2015).

It is not surprising that Bransford et al. (1972) drew the conclusion that "sentences are information which people can use to construct semantic description of situation" (Traxler 2012, p. 144). Over the past 15 years, many researchers have argued that the construction of a coherent situation model is tantamount to the successful comprehension of a text (Traxler 2012).

The event Indexing model is among situation models. It is a cognitive model of online narrative comprehension. Cognitive psychologists studying narrative comprehension define a situation model as an integrated mental representation of a particular situation in the story world. Situation models are formed by a reader from an amalgamation of information explicitly stated in a narrative and inferred by the reader (Kives et al. 2015).

The Event indexing model posits that as we perceive a narrative, we discretize the narrative into events, or chunks of narratively important action (Zwaan et al. 1995). Each event is indexed by the reader relative to a number of key factors or dimensions including;

- Time index: the time frame in which the events occur.
- Space index: the space in which the event takes place.
- Protagonist index: whether or not the event involves the protagonist.
- Casual index: the event's causal status with regards to previous events.
- Intention index: the event's relatedness to the intentions of a character (Kives et al. 2015).

The event indexing model, as proposed by Zwaan et al. (1995) suggests that events form the foundation of our understanding of situations. As we read text, we create mental representations of these events based on five dimensions: time, characters, causation, motivation, and location. The more similarities between an event and our existing mental model, the easier it is to integrate it. These mental models, including the event indexing model, encompass information about entities (characters, objects) and their characteristics (both physical and mental). These entities represent real-world elements and their relationships with each other in a situation. These entities are represented by tokens in a situation model. Typically, the aforementioned properties are most relevant for understanding a situation (Zwaan et al. 1995).

Identifying Gaps

Although there's an abundance of studies on reading strategies, limited research focuses on contrasting sequential alignment and shifting. This paper highlights the gaps in existing literature and stresses the importance of conducting empirical studies to delve deeper into these techniques.

Methodology

Participants

The study included a sample population of 130 female EFL learners aged between 24 and 40 years old (M = 23.54, SD = 6.63). These learners were attending a private English language institute called 'IELTS Online Academy' in Tehran, Iran. The institute was chosen due to its diverse levels and student age ranges. All participants were selected from those studying the first level of the upper intermediate course. The learners were enrolled in a course aimed at enhancing speaking, reading, writing, and listening skills, totaling 20 learning hours. In addition to their course book, the Upper Intermediate book of cutting edge series, active reading, was utilized for the sake of this study. Classes were conducted two days a week, with each session lasting 60 minutes.

Research Design

We choose a quantitative design, allowing us to compare learners' performance across different reading tasks.

The study did not involve the manipulation of variables. Quantitative procedures such as tests were used to evaluate learners' reading abilities. The study focused on two independent variables, which were the sequential alignment and shifting. The dependent variable was the students' reading development according to the sequential model. Initially, pretests (O1, O3, and O5) were conducted, followed by the application of experimental treatments (X1, X2), and finally, post-tests were administered to the groups (O2, O4, and O6) at the conclusion of the treatment period. The control group underwent a regular process (C) and did not receive any specific treatments, instead working on exercises in their books.

Instruments

Our data collection tools include standardized reading tests and self-report surveys to assess learners' strategy preferences. The data collection involved the administration of the IELTS General Tests 2023 version, a respected exam by The British Council to assess the English proficiency level of the participants. The IELTS General tests consisted of four sections: listening, reading, writing, and speaking. In this study, the IELTS test served a dual purpose - to ensure the participants had similar proficiency levels before the treatment and to gather data on their reading comprehension abilities in the pretest. Specifically, the reading section, where participants answered 40 questions, was used to evaluate the reading comprehension performance of the learners in the pretest.

Procedures

This study attempts to assess the reading ability of EFL learners, based on sequential alignment and text shifting events. For this purpose, a sample of 90 EFL learners, all English learners with upper intermediate proficiency at IELTS online Language Academy, was selected. Participants attended six intact upper intermediate levels. The sample IELTS test was distributed to the learners. The reading section consists of three parts and 40 questions, distributed to the participants. After analyzing the results of these tests ($M = 63.55$, $SD = 16.75$), the researcher selected 15 students whose scores fell within one standard deviation of each student's mean score to participate in this study. Each layer was then randomly assigned to a mapping, migration, or control group. All lessons were taught by the researcher. After some time, participants from all three groups were post-tested. Another version of the IELTS reading test was given to participants, which included 40 questions and 3 sections.

Two experimental groups read the text throughout the semester. The researcher read the texts containing the sequential alignment for the first group built upon the elements of the previously fired event button. 10 readings selected from the book titled "active reading". Participants were expected to answer reading comprehension questions. They also work in groups and describe events in the text, based on an event indexing model.

Texts containing changes to the events of the story were distributed to another group. The information in the texts contains changes that indicate a discontinuity between the previously triggered event and the new information. The control group received a placebo and participants were assessed by asking them to retell stories and take a reading comprehension test. Additionally, fill-in-the-blank texts were arranged for both groups.

The researcher asked participants in both the sequential alignment and the shifting group to continue the story. Additionally, the speed at which participants completed the task was also recorded.

1. Students in both groups were given a word related to the characters that they had to complete using information they had in mind about each character in the text.
2. Matching task: Students are given two rows of sentences; they must match, based on the information in the tests.
3. Sentence completion task: Students in the map and move group were given incomplete sentences and had to fill in the blanks.
4. Clustering task: Students read a list of verbs and place the verbs into a set of boxes. Students are asked to put two verbs in the same box if they think they go together.

The control group received no treatment. Students regularly do speaking and listening exercises in their books. They did not receive any messages. Students do some of the listening and speaking exercises found in the cutting edge course book.

Students in the experimental group received two types of treatment depending on their group: the sequential alignment or transforming story events.

Students in the sequential alignment group got access to texts from active reading. Parts of the text containing a map of events were tested. Some tasks used that fit this category are:

1. Students in this group are given reading comprehension questions about each character as well as the events in the story. They must choose the correct answer.
2. Matching task: Students are given two rows of sentences; they must match, based on the information in the tests.
3. Sentence completion task: Students in the mapping group were given incomplete sentences and they had to fill in the blanks.
4. Grouping task: Students read the list of verbs and put the verbs into the empty boxes. Students are asked to put two verbs in the same box if they think they go together. For example: go out and cry.

Results

Preliminary Checks

To find out whether parametric test such as paired sample t-test and one-way ANOVA could be employed to analyze the data, the researcher ran the preliminary checks. Preliminary checks included the examination of the normality of the pre and posttest scores and homogeneity of variances. Table 1 demonstrates the test of normality for pretest scores.

Table 1. *Test of Normality for the Pretest*

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Pretest	.108	89	.021	.960	89	.008

As Table 1 shows, in the pretest there was no violation of the normality assumption as tested by Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests. Table 2 displays the results of the test of homogeneity of variance for the pretest.

Table 2. *Test of Homogeneity of Variance: Levene's Test for the Pretest*

F	df1	df2	Sig.
2.750	2	87	.070

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups
a. Design: Intercept + pre individual metacognition + Groups + Proficiency + Groups * Proficiency

As Table 2 illustrates, the error variance was equal across groups, and there was no violation of the assumption, indicating that parametric tests could be applied to compare the differences among the groups in the pretest.

Next, preliminary checks including the examination of the normality of the scores and homogeneity of variances were done for posttest results. Shown in Table 3 is the result of the test of normality for posttest scores.

Table 3. *Test of Normality for the Posttest*

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Pretest	.11	90	.00	.95	90	.00

As Table 3 demonstrates, in the posttest, similar to the pretest, there was no violation of the normality assumption as tested by Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests. Table 4 displays the results of the test of homogeneity of variance for the posttest.

Table 4. *Test of Homogeneity of Variance: Levene's Test for the Posttest*

F	df1	df2	Sig.
.33	2	87	.71
Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.			
a. Design: Intercept + pre individual metacognition + Groups + Proficiency + Groups * Proficiency			

As Table 4 illustrates, the error variance was equal across groups, and there was no violation of the assumption, indicating that parametric tests could be applied to compare the differences among the groups in the pretest.

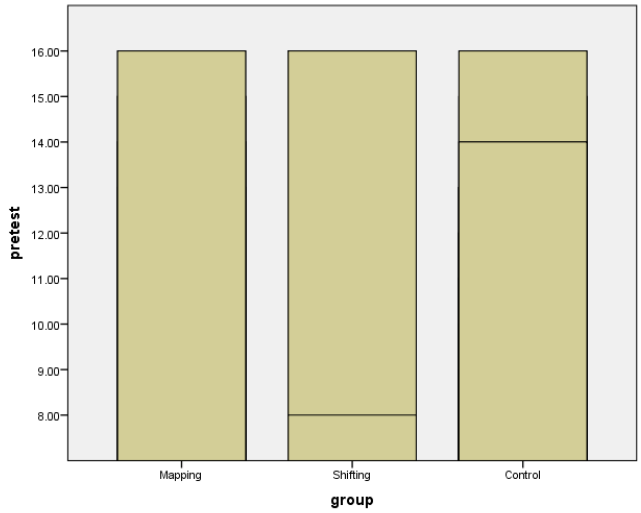
Reading Skill Homogeneity Test

To further ensure the homogeneity of the learners in all groups in terms of reading ability the results of the pretest scores in the three groups were compared using a one-way ANOVA test. Table 4 shows the Mean and Standard Deviation for all the groups in the pretest. Figure 1, similarly illustrates the mean scores of the groups in the pretest.

Table 5. *Mean and Standard Deviation for All the Groups in the Pretest*

Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Sequential alignment	30	12.26	1.85
Shifting	30	12.50	2.40
Control	30	12.20	1.88
Total	90	12.32	2.04

Figure 1. *Pretest Mean Scores*



As it can be seen in Table 5 and Figure 1 all groups had almost the same mean score in the reading comprehension pretest measured by the test. Table 6.depicts the results of the ANOVA for the pretest scores.

Table 6. *Pretest Analysis of Variance*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.48	2	.74	.17	.84
Within Groups	370.16	87	4.25		
Total	371.65	89			

As illustrated in Table 6 the results of the one-way ANOVA yielded no significant difference in mean scores, $F(2, 87) = .175$, $p = .84$, indicating that the participants in all groups were homogeneous in terms of the reading comprehension skill prior to the treatment.

Research Question One

Given the results of the preliminary checks, it was concluded that parametric tests could be used to analyze the data. The first research question in the current study examined whether Sequential Event Alignment strategies had any significant effect on developing learners' reading ability. To find the answer to this question, the researcher ran a paired-sample t-test to find the difference between the performance of the learners in the Sequential Event Alignment strategies prior to and after the treatment.

Table 7 demonstrates the paired-samples t-test results for the Sequential Event Alignment experimental conditions.

Table 7. *Paired-samples t-test Results for the Sequential Event Alignment Strategies*

Source	Mean	SD	T	df	sig
Pretest_ alignment Posttest-alignment	-16.43	1.30	-68.98	29	.00

As Table 7 shows, a statistically significant increase could be detected in the Mapping group (M = 16.43, SD = 1.30) when pretest scores were compared against the ones obtained on the posttest, $t(29) = 68.98$, $p = .00$. Thus, it was concluded that Sequential Event Alignment strategies statistically significantly increased learners' reading comprehension ability. Thus, the first hull hypothesis was rejected.

Research Question Two

The second research question in the present study examined whether event index based shifting had any significant effect on developing learners' reading ability. To answer this question, the researcher ran another paired-sample t-test to find the difference between the performance of the learners in the shifting group prior to and after the treatment.

Table 8 demonstrates the paired-samples t-test results for the Shifting experimental conditions.

Table 8. *Paired-samples t-test Results for the Shifting Group*

Source	Mean	SD	T	df	sig
Pretest_shifting Posttest-shifting	-7.96	1.21	-35.84	29	.00

As Table 8 shows, a statistically significant increase could be detected in the Mapping group (M = 7.96, SD = 1.21) when pretest scores were compared against the ones obtained on the posttest, $t(29) = 35.84$, $p = .00$. Thus, it was concluded that event-based shifting statistically significantly increased learners' reading comprehension ability. Therefore, the second null hypothesis was rejected.

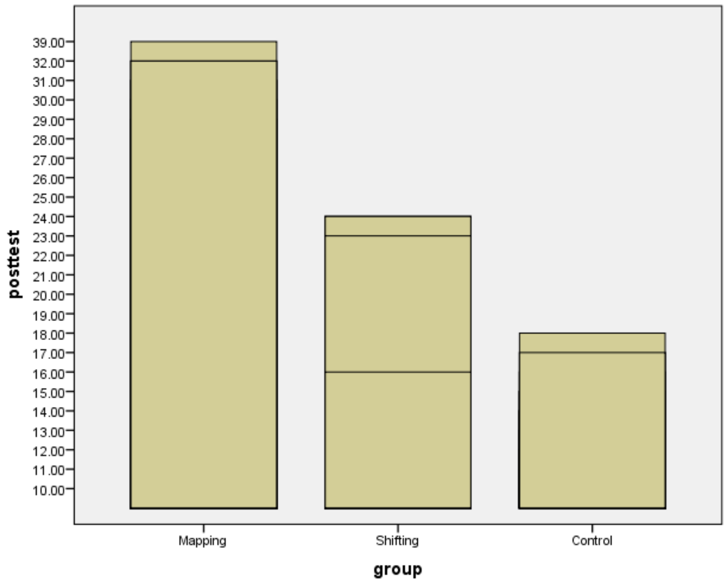
Research Question Three

The third research question posed in this study was aimed at finding out whether Sequential Event Alignment strategies had an advantage over shifting on promoting learners' reading comprehension skill. To answer this question, firstly, the descriptive statistics for the posttest were calculated. Table 9 shows the Mean and Standard Deviation for all the groups in the posttest. Figure 2, similarly illustrates the mean scores of the groups in the posttest.

Table 9. *Mean and Standard Deviation for All the Groups in the Posttest*

Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Sequential	30	28.70	2.64
Shifting	30	20.46	2.16
Control	30	13.76	1.95
Total	90	17.97	3.75

Figure 2. Posttest Mean Scores



As shown in Table 9 and Figure 2, in the posttest, the mean score gained by the two experimental groups were higher than that of the control group. Besides, the Sequential Event Alignment group means score was higher than that of the Shifting group. To find out whether the difference between the Sequential Event Alignment strategies (M =28.70, SD = 2.64) and shifting (M = 20.46, SD = 2.16), and control (M = 13.76, SD = 1.95) groups were statistically meaningful, the researcher ran a one-way ANOVA to compare the mean scores in the posttest. Table 10 depicts the results of the ANOVA for the posttest scores.

Table 10. *Posttest Analysis of Variance*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3356.82	2	1678.41	325.11	.00
Within Groups	449.13	87	5.16		
Total	3805.95	89			

As shown in Table 10 the results of the one-way ANOVA in the posttest yielded a significant difference in mean scores, $F(2, 87) = 325.11$, $p = .00$. A post hoc Scheffe's test was run to determine where the differences existed. Table 11 depicts the results of the post hoc Scheffe's test.

Table 11. *Posttest Post hoc Sheffe's Test*

Group	Shifting	Control
alignment	8.23*	14.93*
Shifting		6.70*

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

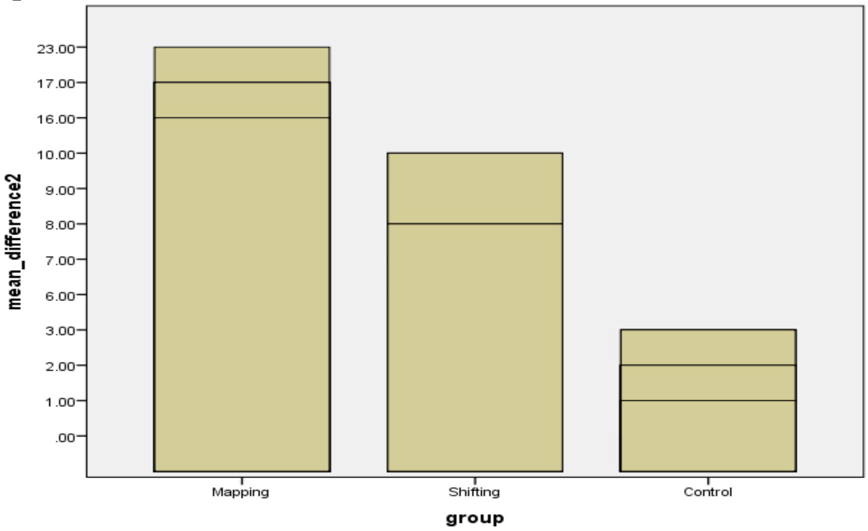
As Table 11. illustrates, the difference between the two experimental groups (i.e. sequential alignment (M= 28.70, SD = 2.64) and shifting (M = 20.46, SD = 2.16)) was detected to be statistically significant. Besides, both experimental groups were found to statistically significantly outperform the control group (M = 13.76, SD = 1.95).

Besides, to ensure the Sequential Event Alignment group had superiority to the Shifting one, the researcher ran a one-way ANOVA to compare the gains in the groups. The gains were calculated through subtracting the pretest scores from the posttest ones. Table 12 shows the Mean and Standard Deviation for all the groups when the gains were calculated. Figure 3, similarly illustrates the gain mean scores of the groups when pretest scores when subtracted from the posttest scores.

Table 12. *Gain Mean and Standard Deviation for All the Groups (Posttest – Pretest)*

Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Sequential alignment	30	16.43	1.30
Shifting	30	7.96	1.21
Control	30	1.56	.77
Total	90	5.65	3.11

Figure 3. *Gained Mean Scores*



As illustrated in Table 12 and Figure 3, when the gains were compared, the mean score gained by the two experimental groups were higher than that of the control group. Moreover, the Sequential Event Alignment group means score was higher than that of the Shifting group. To find out whether the difference between the Sequential Event Alignment group (M = 16.43, SD = 1.30) and shifting (M = 7.96, SD = 1.21), and control (M = 1.56, SD = .77) groups were statistically meaningful, the researcher ran a one-way ANOVA to compare the mean scores in posttest-pretest differences. Table 13 shows the results of the ANOVA for the gains.

Table 13. *Gains Analysis of Variance*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3336.62	2	1668.31	1323.09	.00
Within Groups	109.70	87	1.26		
Total	3446.32	89			

As displayed in Table 13 the results of the one-way ANOVA when the gains were compared yielded a significant difference in mean scores, $F(2, 87) = 1322.09$, $p = .00$. A post hoc Scheffe's test was further run to find out where the differences existed. Table 14 depicts the results of the post hoc Scheffe's test.

Table 14. *Posttest Post hoc Scheffe's Test*

Group	Shifting	Control
Mapping	8.46*	14.86*
Shifting		6.40*

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level

As Table 14 displays, the difference between the Sequential Event Alignment strategies (M = 16.43, SD = 1.30) and shifting (M = 7.96, SD = 1.21) groups was detected to be statistically significant. Besides, both experimental groups were found to have obtained mean score statistically significantly higher than the control group (*M* = 1.56, *SD* = .77).

Given the results of the two one-way ANOVA tests run to compare the mean scores in the posttest and the gains, it was concluded that Sequential Event Alignment was significantly more effective than event index based shifting on developing Iranian EFL learners' reading ability. Thus, the third null hypothesis was rejected.

Discussion and Conclusions

The current study aimed at examining whether Sequential Event Alignment vs. Shifting had any effects on developing Iranian reading proficiency. Besides, the present study investigated whether shifting was significantly more effective than sequential event alignment on developing learners' reading ability. The result of paired-sample t-tests and one-way ANOVA tests revealed that both sequential event alignment and shifting statistically significantly promoted learners' reading comprehension ability. Besides, it was found that the sequential event alignment group had significantly outscored the Shifting one.

The results are commensurate with the postulations regarding the significant role of the construction of a coherent situation model in the successful comprehension of a text (Traxler 2012).

The findings of the present study also echo those hinting at the impact of the nature of the described situation on the readers' memory (Bransford et al. 1972, Kives et al. 2015). Like those studies, the current study highlighted the role of events in a narrative in making the narrative comprehensible for the readers.

It presented the statistical procedures taken to analyze the pre and posttest data to answer the three research questions. The first two null hypotheses were rejected as it was found that both sequential alignment and shifting statistically significantly promoted learners' reading comprehension ability. Moreover, an advantage was found for the sequential alignment group over the shifting one. Thus, the third null hypothesis was also rejected. The findings of this story are consistent with the claims made by EIM as the learners in the mapping group gained significantly higher scores when their pretest scores were compared with those of their posttests. In the sequential alignment group, the learners were given texts in which the new information cohered with the previous ones. Besides, in the study at hand, significant differences were detected between the performance of the learners in the sequential alignment and shifting groups.

The fact that mapping was found to be more effective in promoting reading comprehension ability as opposed to shifting, also echoes the premises of the EIM. It predicts that the more common indexes the new information has with the previously presented one, the easier it integrates with the old one and the less the processing load. So according to the predictions made by the model, temporal and spatial continuity with previous information facilitates the processing of the new information. The model also predicts that continuity in indexes lead to a coherent mental representation in long-term memory. The long-term memory representation of a situation model consists of a network of nodes each coding the event referred to in the story. The links between these nodes strengthens as the number of common event nodes increases.

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