

Research Article

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# Empowering Voices: Integrating Resistance and Empowerment Pedagogies in EFL Teaching in Palestine

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## Abstract

**Background/purpose.** This research investigates how incorporating resistance and empowerment-oriented pedagogies into TEFL can serve as a vital tool for identity affirmation, preserving national culture, and fostering resistance against the occupation's systematic oppressive practices in the Palestinian context.

**Materials/methods.** The mixed approach was adopted to answer the study questions; a questionnaire was distributed to 33 EFL instructors to find out to what extent they incorporate resistance and empowerment pedagogies while teaching TEFL; the research also conducted semi-structured interviews with a group of 8 EFL instructors at a Palestinian university. The interview questions delve into the pedagogical approaches that can address the national needs and aspirations of EFL students at Palestinian universities, and to what extent they are being addressed by EFL teachers. They also investigated the challenges and opportunities associated with this approach and its impact on students' language proficiency and their socio-political awareness.

**Results.** The findings show a strong tendency towards applying these pedagogies, yet emaciated and weak educational practices inside TEFL classrooms.

**Conclusion.** In the light of these findings, this study recommends several educational and pedagogical procedures for future consideration.

## 1. Introduction

Teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) has a significant role in creating a better global understanding and intercultural communication among different nations and cultures. In the Palestinian context, Palestinians have been suffering from political unrest and oppression under Israeli occupation since 1948, and since then, they have been struggling to create bridges with the world for a better understanding of their cause. In such political and social conditions, TEFL has a paramount significance as a tool for resistance, empowerment, and resilience. In this regard, this research investigates how incorporating resistance and empowerment-oriented pedagogies into TEFL can serve as a vital tool for identity affirmation, preserving national culture, and fostering resistance against the occupation's systematic oppressive practices. In addition, this study stands out as the first one in the Palestinian context that sheds light on the importance of incorporating resistance and empowerment-based teaching pedagogies into teaching English as a foreign language. It also delves into EFL teachers' perspectives toward considering resistance and empowerment-based pedagogies in TEFL in Palestinian universities.

### 1.1. Research Rationale

As stated before, it is obvious that the educational scene in Palestine is quite complicated as it intersects with the political, social and economic contexts. At the same time, it has always been characterized by operating in times of uncertainty, political conflicts, and repeated occupations. In such conditions, teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) plays a significant role not just as a tool for transmitting knowledge and communicating with others, but also as an agent to provide Palestinian learners with the right means for empowerment, critical thinking, and self-expression. In this vein, TEFL does not entail teaching learners vocabulary, grammar, and language skills; it also involves equipping them with new skills to express themselves firmly and enhance their critical thinking for real social change and personal empowerment.

This research investigates how integrating resistance and empowerment pedagogies in TEFL can supply Palestinian learners and young generations with opportunities to challenge political oppression and refute the dominant false narratives against their national identity and their connection with their homeland. It also seeks to explore the potential of resistance pedagogies to cultivate a strong sense of national belonging and self-worth. In this sense, TEFL is required to improve learners' language skills, enhance their language proficiency, and foster students' confidence and abilities to challenge their daily hardships under Israeli occupation. The integration of resistance and empowerment pedagogies in EFL classrooms can serve as an alternative approach to traditional, Western-centered pedagogies that do not reflect the actual needs or aspirations of Palestinian learners and their daily lived conditions. Hence, this research can contribute to a broader understanding of how integrating resistance and empowerment pedagogies in EFL classrooms can be adopted to reflect the life realities of EFL learners in similar contexts with similar socio-political conditions in other parts of the world.

### 1.2. Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent do Palestinian EFL instructors at Palestinian universities incorporate resistance and empowerment-based pedagogies into teaching EFL?
2. How do Palestinian EFL instructors perceive the integration of empowerment-based and resistance-oriented pedagogies into teaching English as a Foreign language (TEFL)?

## 2. Literature Review

### ***2.1. Education in Palestine in the Light of the Political Situation***

There can be no doubt that there is a strong relationship between education and politics. These are inseparable, especially in the situation of emerging nationalisms and independence movements. This explains the plenty of research that has been conducted about education in post-conflict regions and political transitions. Much research was conducted after the political movements in Eastern Europe, post-colonial Africa, and Asia (Santisteban, 2002). That research was concerned with the changing curriculum as a result of changing political systems and all the consequences that ensued. In the Palestinian case, dramatic political changes happened after 1994 and the Oslo Accords. The agreement between the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and the occupying power has had consequences for several daily life scenes, including the educational process and schools. For the first time, Palestinians had control over their schools and education in West Bank and Gaza. They started a huge reform for the educational process and began building their national curriculum, which was concluded in 2004 with new textbooks for all grades from 1st grade to 12th.

However, stable political conditions did not last. In September 2000, the second Uprising (Intifada) erupted; it was followed by a military invasion of the major Palestinian cities in the West Bank and the siege of the late President Yasser Arafat at his headquarters. These bloody events were accompanied by a comprehensive closure for schools and universities, in addition to the major destruction of many schools and universities on the pretext that they accommodated Palestinian militants and fighters. These events were followed by the death of president Yasser Arafat and the second presidential and legislative elections in 2005. During all these events, Palestinian schools and universities were exposed to military invasions and many school teachers and students were arrested or killed by Israeli forces in flagrant violation of basic human rights.

Despite these harsh political conditions and the long deadlock in the peace process, the Ministry of Education continued its work on building the national curriculum. However, the Ministry of Education has had to overcome many challenges. These critical political conditions had many disastrous consequences on education including prolonged school closures, constant curfews, arresting school teachers and students, the military checkpoints and the apartheid wall that separated school children from their schools and made their daily walk to schools risky and threatening, settlers attacks, putting extra pressure on the Palestinian Authority by withholding Palestinian tax funds and the consequent continuous disruption of salaries for school teachers and administrative staff. These critical conditions placed education in constant turmoil. In addition, it created a schizophrenic state for school students and educators, who read one thing in their textbooks but lived a completely different reality in their daily lives. They read that Jerusalem is the only Capital city of the future Palestinian state, while in reality they could only see Jerusalem on TV, as it was totally forbidden for them. They read about their human rights to live in dignity and peace and their right to education while they were deprived of their basic needs and exposed to a wide range of violations on a daily basis.

### ***2.2. Resistance and Empowerment in Palestinian Education***

The Israeli occupation of Palestine, ongoing since 1948, has significantly impacted various aspects of Palestinian life, particularly education. Education in Palestine is deeply intertwined with political struggle, serving as a survival tool and resistance against oppression. Freire (1970) argued that traditional education perpetuates domination by treating students as passive recipients of knowledge, advocating instead for a dialogical approach where learners engage critically with their realities to foster resistance and agency. His pedagogy of resistance aims to empower oppressed individuals to challenge and transform unjust social structures, making education a tool for liberation.

Building on Freire's ideas, Giroux (1988) and McLaren (2005) emphasized the role of critical pedagogy in resisting neoliberal and authoritarian forces. Giroux views educators as transformative intellectuals who help students question dominant ideologies and engage in social change, while McLaren critiques capitalist education systems that reinforce inequality and advocates for revolutionary pedagogy to foster democratic participation and social justice. Together, these scholars argue that education should empower individuals to challenge systemic oppression.

In Palestine, education has always been a site of political struggle. Zureik (2015), Barham, and Hennawi (2011) argue that education has been a key component of Palestinian resistance, from student-led strikes to the development of universities. Education is seen as a means of maintaining dignity, culture, and sovereignty, embodying the principle of 'Sumud', or steadfastness. Despite ongoing occupation, Palestinians have relied on education as a tool for both personal and national survival. Kefah (2023) notes that education provides a path to self-determination, not just for individuals, but for the future Palestinian state.

Hennawi's (2011) research highlights the role of education as a form of resistance, particularly in the context of the detention of Palestinian university students. She argues that the detention of students involved in political activities reflects the belief that education is a legitimate form of political resistance. Her findings suggest that education is perceived as a tool for challenging oppression and fostering social change, providing hope and survival despite the obstacles posed by occupation. However, she also emphasizes that Palestinian education is deliberately controlled under Israeli occupation.

Education in conflict-affected regions like Palestine serves as both a means of oppression and a tool for resistance. Pherali (2016) describes education as a double-edged weapon, where Palestinian students become targets of violence, yet education simultaneously offers a vehicle for collective resistance and aspirations for justice and freedom. His research with Palestinian refugee children reveals that education is deeply tied to their national identity. Moghli (2016) further explores the complexities of Human Rights Education (HRE) in Palestinian schools, arguing that HRE is often depoliticized to serve ruling authorities and foreign donors, rather than fostering critical engagement with liberation struggles. She critiques the education system for reinforcing structures of control, stifling creativity, and inhibiting critical thinking.

Overall, education in Palestine remains a battleground between forces of control and resistance, where it serves as a powerful tool for both maintaining social-political structures and driving transformative change.

This finding resonates with Paulo Freire's framework, which calls for education to be rooted in learners' cultural context. Freire criticized traditional education and passive "baking" methodologies of learning and advocated for an experience where learners not only receive information but also question the socio-political structure and engage with the world around them. In this regard, context-related education becomes a tool for resistance and empowerment, echoing Freire's approach.

### ***2.3. Teaching English as a Foreign Language in the Palestinian Context***

Before the Oslo Accords in 1994, Palestinian teachers used Jordanian English textbooks in the West Bank and Egyptian English textbooks in Gaza. Following the Accords, efforts were made to develop a national curriculum suited to the needs of Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territories (OPT). By 2000, the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education introduced the "English for Palestine" (EP) curriculum for grades 1-12 in public schools. This curriculum aimed to instill values such as good governance, social responsibility, human rights, and equality while reflecting Palestinian students' aspirations for freedom and national identity.

However, challenges remain in English instruction in Palestine. Large class sizes—averaging 40 students per class—few instructional periods, and limited access to technology hinder teachers' ability to provide personalized feedback and support. In addition, students have minimal opportunities to practice English. Bianchi and Abdel Razeq (2017) identified two key problems: inadequate teacher training to teach English through English, and insufficient opportunities for teachers to practice the language themselves while learning it. Moreover, political and social pressures often discourage teachers from fostering critical thinking, alienating students from the socio-political contexts relevant to their lives.

Despite these challenges, there is a push for innovation in English language teaching. Scott, Ujvari, and Smith (2023) advocate for integrating technology into TEFL, arguing that “pedagogy and technology can be untangled” and that technology facilitates change, especially in societies where identities are threatened by colonial powers. They emphasize that Palestinian educators should view education as a force for change.

Naqeeb (2024) analyzed the sixth-grade English curriculum and found that it still promotes teacher dominance and limited student interaction. He argues that the focus of English instruction should prioritize fluency over accuracy. Similarly, Barghouthi and Sbeahat (2019) critique higher education in Palestine, pointing to poor instructional quality, lack of technological access, and the challenges posed by the occupation as major issues affecting the educational system.

Scholars agree that improving education in Palestine requires effective language teaching methodologies, enhanced learning environments, and infrastructure improvements, particularly when using culturally relevant materials. This aligns with Paulo Freire’s educational philosophy, which calls for education to be grounded in learners' cultural contexts. Freire (1970) criticized traditional, passive learning methods, advocating instead for a pedagogical approach where students engage with and question the socio-political structures around them. In this context, education in Palestine becomes a tool for resistance and empowerment.

Teaching English in higher education in Palestine occurs within a complex socio-political landscape characterized by conflict, restricted mobility, and systemic challenges. (Scott and Jarrad, 2023) explored how Palestinian educators have navigated the challenges of teaching under occupation by developing a paradigm shift in educational practices. The research emphasizes the importance of resistance through education, where “to exist is to resist”, highlighting how teachers adapt their methods to foster critical thinking, cultural pride, and resilience in their students. The study discusses how pedagogical practices have evolved to not only focus on academic skills but also on empowering students to understand and challenge the socio-political realities they face, ultimately creating an education system that is both empowering and subversive (Scott & Jarrad, 2023). Educators employ different kinds of pedagogies of resilience and resistance to teach English at higher institutions such as the use of blended learning, incorporating culturally related materials into teaching, collaborate learning strategies such as critical thinking and public speaking, and the use of technology as a tool for resistance and empowerment. The following sections describe the different pedagogical practices used by educators and its effects on fostering a sense of resilience and empowerment on Palestinian students’ lives and learning environment.

Blended learning is considered an adaptive learning method which combines in-person and online instruction and ensures continuity of education during disruptions caused by political or infrastructural constraints. This approach allows students to access learning materials flexibly while maintaining interactive engagement with instructors and peers (Smith & Scott, 2023). From a cultural perspective, teachers incorporate culturally relevant materials and topics into the English curriculum to connect language learning with students' lived experiences. By including Palestinian literature, poetry, and historical texts in English, educators provide opportunities for students to explore and

express their national identity within the global language framework. This approach helps students to resist cultural erasure and reaffirms their sense of belonging and agency (Saleh, 2021).

Palestinian educators should emphasize collaborative and critical thinking skills in their teaching practices. This involves training students in persuasive writing, public speaking, and academic research, which empower them to advocate for their rights and share the Palestinian narrative globally (Saleh, 2021; Smith & Scott, 2023). These methods not only enhance students' linguistic proficiency but also encourage them to critically analyze their socio-political context. Such strategies aim to prepare students as active agents of change, capable of articulating their perspectives and addressing societal challenges through the medium of English (Saleh, 2021; Smith & Scott, 2023). Also, collaborative learning strategies used by educators can encourage students to work together on projects that explore themes of resistance and resilience. Reflective teaching practices also allow instructors to adapt their methods to the evolving needs of their students and the socio-political context, ensuring that their pedagogies remain relevant and impactful (Smith & Scott, 2023). Digital tools can also serve as a means of resistance, enabling students to engage with diverse audiences and overcome mobility restrictions through virtual collaborations and online advocacy (Smith & Scott, 2023). Collectively, these pedagogical practices transform English language education into a tool for empowerment, resilience, and social transformation.

#### ***2.4. Inclusion of Political and Cultural Values in Palestinian English Textbooks***

Research has explored whether English for Palestine textbooks include political or historical values, employing methods like content analysis. Due to the importance of fostering learners' political values, it is essential to examine these textbooks for the inclusion of such values. Many studies have used Byram's (1993) checklist, which includes dimensions such as belief and behavior, socialization and life cycle, stereotypes and national identity, and socio-political values. Other researchers developed their own tools to match the context of their studies, ultimately classifying and quantifying the inclusion of different values.

Several studies, including those by Abu Ashiba (2010), Mosleh (2014), and Omar and Smadi (2022), have analyzed political values in English for Palestine textbooks. Findings consistently reveal a low inclusion of political values. Abu Ashiba (2010), for example, found political values constituted only 4.3% of the total values in grade 12 textbooks. Mosleh (2014) reported an even lower inclusion rate of 0.96% in grade 8 textbooks. More recently, Omar and Smadi (2022) analyzed political values in textbooks for grades 1, 3, 7, and 10, noting imbalances in how political values like equality and individual freedom were distributed across the textbooks. They concluded that the lack of political awareness among young Palestinians might be linked to the absence of these values in the educational materials.

The low inclusion of political values can be attributed to various factors, including the occupation's restrictions and political divisions between the West Bank and Gaza (Omar & Smadi, 2022). Additionally, the Palestinian government's lack of focus on engaging young people in political participation, such as voting or national events, may also play a role. This exclusion reflects a larger trend where Palestinian education systematically represses opportunities for students to critically engage with the socio-political context (Turner, 2016). Political freedom remains confined, likely prompting textbook designers to avoid explicitly including political content to prevent censorship or deletion.

Omar and Smadi (2022) argue for the inclusion of political values in EFL textbooks, asserting that doing so can empower students to play active roles in society, promote accountability, and support the advancement of Palestinian society. They recommend that parents, civil society, and decision-makers engage in identifying and advocating for the inclusion of political values in EFL textbooks.

Similarly, Aljawadeh (2023) analyzed the social and cultural foundations in Palestinian secondary-level English textbooks, revealing imbalances in their inclusion. Social foundations accounted for 63.19% in 11th grade textbooks and 36.80% in 12th grade textbooks, while cultural foundations comprised 58.11% in 11th grade and 42% in 12th grade textbooks. Like earlier studies on political values, Aljawadeh (2023) recommended that curriculum designers pay more attention to incorporating social and cultural values relevant to Palestinian identity.

Overall, studies indicate that English for Palestine textbooks are disconnected from the political, social, and cultural realities of Palestinian life. They fail to reflect the broader context of Palestinian identity and issues. This research emphasizes that TEFL in Palestine has significant potential as a tool for resistance, empowerment, and resilience. Integrating resistance and empowerment into the curriculum is critical for justice and freedom.

### ***2.5. Pedagogical Practices for Empowerment in Higher Education***

The teaching of English in Palestinian higher education occurs in a complex socio-political landscape shaped by occupation, mobility restrictions, and systemic challenges. Scott and Jarrad (2023) emphasize the importance of resistance through education, where “to exist is to resist,” illustrating how educators adapt their teaching methods to foster critical thinking, cultural pride, and resilience. Pedagogical practices in Palestinian higher education have evolved to empower students to engage with and challenge socio-political realities, transforming education into a tool for both empowerment and subversion.

Blended learning is a key adaptive approach in Palestinian higher education, combining in-person and online instruction to ensure continuity during disruptions caused by political or infrastructural constraints (Smith & Scott, 2023). This method allows students to access learning materials flexibly while maintaining interactive engagement. Culturally relevant materials, such as Palestinian literature, poetry, and historical texts, are incorporated into the English curriculum to connect language learning with students' lived experiences. This approach fosters resistance to cultural erasure and reaffirms students' sense of belonging (Saleh, 2021).

In addition to fostering language proficiency, Palestinian educators emphasize collaborative learning, critical thinking, public speaking, and academic research to empower students as active agents of change. These pedagogical strategies help students critically analyze their socio-political context and articulate their perspectives, contributing to societal advancement (Saleh, 2021; Smith & Scott, 2023). Digital tools further support this process, enabling students to overcome mobility restrictions and engage in virtual collaborations and online advocacy (Smith & Scott, 2023).

Ultimately, these pedagogical practices transform English language education into a tool for empowerment, resilience, and social transformation in the Palestinian context.

In their article “Be Their Guiding Light in Tough Times: Creative Paths to Resilience for You and Your Students,” Halat and Rafidi (2024), both English language professors and EFL curriculum specialists, emphasize the importance of creative expression—through storytelling, art, music, or quiet reflection—in helping students process emotions and build resilience. The authors advocate for professional development programs that equip EFL teachers with resilience-building strategies, allowing them to meet student needs effectively while navigating their own challenges. Practical activities, such as the “Bridge to Resilience” and mindfulness exercises, offer students opportunities to foster hope and develop a sense of agency (Halat & Rafidi, 2024).

Resilience and resistance strategies in English language teaching at Palestinian universities not only support educational continuity but also empower students and educators to address broader socio-political challenges. Smith and Scott (2023) argue that these practices reflect the critical role of education in fostering adaptability and cultural preservation within conflict-affected regions. Blended

learning, for example, allows students to access learning materials flexibly, ensuring educational continuity despite political or infrastructural disruptions. Furthermore, educators incorporate culturally relevant materials, such as Palestinian literature, poetry, and historical texts, into the English curriculum, helping students resist cultural erasure and reaffirm their sense of national identity (Smith & Scott, 2023).

According to Abuhussein (2024), the Palestinian educational system should not be isolated from the political, social, and economic realities in which it operates. Education, in this context, can act as a tool of resistance, fostering a sense of national sovereignty and identity. In a context such as that of Palestine, foreign language education can represent a chance to bypass the isolation that the siege imposes (Imperiale, Phipps, Al-Masri, & Fassetta, 2017). This view aligns with Paulo Freire's framework, which calls for education that enables learners to develop critical awareness of their social realities and challenges oppressive structures. Freire's concept of praxis—reflective action aimed at transforming personal and societal conditions—underscores the importance of empowering individuals through education (Freire, 1970).

Palestinian educators like Refaat Alareer embody this philosophy, using English-language literature and poetry as tools of resistance. Alareer believed in the revolutionary power of language to express the harsh conditions under occupation and inspire hope for the future. Despite being under siege, he used his writings to challenge Zionist narratives and empower his students with critical thinking skills. His work reflects the broader potential of English education in Palestine to act as a vehicle for peaceful resistance and global engagement.

Erling (2017), in her book *English Across the Fracture Lines*, explores how English language education in conflict zones like Gaza can serve as a tool for resilience and peace-building. She highlights a case study where English teachers in Gaza incorporated culturally relevant materials—such as Palestinian cartoons, poetry, and songs—into their lessons, transforming the classroom into a space of critical dialogue and creative resistance. This approach, aligned with Freire's pedagogy, empowers students to articulate their experiences and challenge oppressive narratives. Through such innovative and holistic pedagogies, English education in Gaza has become not just a means of communication but a practice of hope and resistance (Erling, 2017).

In conclusion, educators in Palestine demonstrate how English language education can transcend traditional teaching goals by fostering resilience, critical consciousness, and social change. By integrating culturally contextualized materials and fostering critical dialogue, teachers empower students to engage with global narratives while preserving their cultural identities. These practices align with Freire's call for education that transforms both individuals and societies, positioning English as a tool for both personal empowerment and broader socio-political resistance.

### 3. Methodology

The current study aimed at investigating incorporating resistance and empowerment-based pedagogies into teaching English as a foreign language in the Palestinian universities. To answer the study's questions, a quantitative-qualitative, mixed method of data collection was followed in a mixed approach (Creswell, 2014). To this end, the researcher adopted a quantitative descriptive design, depending on the design of a questionnaire to survey to what extent Palestinian EFL instructors incorporate resistance and empowerment-based pedagogies into TEFL. Besides, the current study examined EFL instructors' perspectives toward incorporating resistance and empowerment-based pedagogies into TEFL. As for the qualitative part, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 8 EFL instructors at a Palestinian university to uncover their attitudes and perspectives toward the incorporation of resistance and empowerment-based pedagogies into TEFL.



### **3.1. Sampling**

This study was conducted in the second semester of the academic year 2023-2024. A total of 33 instructors at the Department of Languages and Translation at Birzeit University who teach English as a foreign language were asked voluntarily to participate in answering the study questionnaire. In addition, eight EFL instructors from the same department were selected randomly to conduct semi-structured interviews. In this study, a convenience sampling technique was employed. All participants were selected based on their availability and accessibility as colleagues of the authors, who are university instructors of English language. This sampling technique was practical and effective as all the participants were familiar with the research topic, given their relevant teaching experience and expertise. While convenience sampling does limit the generalizability of the findings to a broader population, it was an appropriate choice for this study, as it allowed for a targeted exploration of the issues at hand.

### **3.2. Data Collection**

Data collection was obtained quantitatively and qualitatively following a mixed approach. As for the quantitative data, they were obtained through the implementation of a questionnaire, which was distributed to 33 EFL instructors. In terms of the qualitative data, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 8 EFL instructors.

### **3.3. The Study Instruments**

This study depended on two main research instruments to obtain research data.

A- —The descriptive survey method was used. The researchers designed a 10-item questionnaire to obtain quantitative data. The questionnaire was designed to uncover the degrees of incorporating resistance and empowerment-based pedagogies into teaching TEFL by EFL instructors.

B- The researchers prepared a total of eight interview questions to conduct semi-structured interviews with eight EFL instructors.

### **3.4. Validity and reliability of the questionnaire**

The questionnaire's face and content validity were set by a jury of experts from the Department of Languages and Translation at BZU, who confirmed its face and content validity. As for its reliability, the internal consistency (Cronbach approach) was applied. The questionnaire's Cronbach coefficient was set at 0.93.

To verify the tool's stability, the correlation coefficients between the tool items and the total score were extracted, and Table 1 shows this.

**Table 1.** Correlation coefficients between the tool items and the total score

No	Total score
1	0.532**
2	0.735**
3	0.782**
4	0.677**
5	0.663**
6	0.713**
7	0.591**
8	0.547**
9	0.605**
10	0.615**

\*\*Statistically significant at the significance level ( $\alpha \leq 0.01$ ).

Table 1 showed that all correlation coefficients between the tool's items and the total score were statistically significant and that none of these items were deleted.

### 3.5. Questionnaire stability

Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to verify the internal consistency of the questionnaire items as a whole, as it is the most common measure among researchers to achieve this purpose. It shows that the Cronbach alpha coefficient for the tool as a whole reached 0.845, which is a good percentage as it is greater than 0.70 (Gliem & Gliem, 2003).

Study tool's scale:

Relied on a four-point Likert scale to answer the questions according to the following score:

- A score of (1) expresses the answer (Rarely).
- A score of (2) expresses the answer (Sometimes).
- A score of (3) expresses the answer (Usually).
- A score of (4) expresses the answer (Always).

Interpret the arithmetic averages of the study sample members' ratings on each item of the study tool, the following equation was used:

Period length = (the upper limit of the alternative - the lower limit of the alternative) / number of levels

$(4-1)/3 = 3/3 = 1.00$ , so the levels are as follows:

- Low agreement score of (1-less than 2.00).
- Medium agreement score of (2.00-less than 3.00).
- High agreement score of (3.00-4.00).

### 3.6. Validity of the Interviews

a. The set of interview questions was also validated by three educational experts from the Department of Languages and Translation at Birzeit university.

b. Pilot interviews were conducted with the help of two EFL instructors who volunteered to ensure the clarity of questions and detect any possible vagueness and ambiguity in the questions.

#### Reliability of the Interviews

To ascertain the reliability of the semi-structured interviews, the following steps were done:

a. The researcher ensured that the interviewees were fully willing to conduct the interviews voluntarily.

b. The researcher made sure that the interviewees understand the questions asked.

c. The interviews were conducted in English language and the responses were also reported in English.

d. After the interviews were conducted, the researcher summarized the interviewees' responses, then the responses were approved by the interviewees.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Results

This part includes the results of the study that aimed to extent do Palestinian EFL teachers in higher education incorporate resistance and empowerment-oriented pedagogies into teaching English as a foreign language. The results of the study

Results related to the first research question: To what extent do Palestinian EFL teachers in higher education incorporate resistance and empowerment-oriented pedagogies into teaching English as a foreign language?

This question was answered by extracting the means and standard deviations of the study sample members' estimates of the study tool items as Table (2) shows.

**Table 2.** Means and Standard Deviations of the Study Sample Members' Estimates of the Study Tool Items

No		Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank	Degree
8	How often do you highlight the importance of your students' English language use in diverse contexts and its role in media, literature and politics?	3.15	0.71	1	High
7	How often do you connect language learning with real-world issues and global discourse of resistance, which can stimulate students to be more active in their communities and enhance their civic engagement?	3.12	0.74	2	High
3	How often do you empower EFL students to voice out their own perspectives and challenge dominant narratives?	2.91	0.95	3	Medium
1	How often do you include materials that craft national identity among students and develop students' critical thinking skills through analysis and evaluation of various ideologies and perspectives?	2.88	0.78	4	Medium

No		Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank	Degree
2	How often do you encourage students to present and discuss national issues through using language of resistance in English?	2.79	0.82	5	Medium
9	How often do you engage your students in sociolinguistic discussions about their role as language users and potential agents of social and national change?	2.70	0.95	6	Medium
5	How often do you engage students in authentic materials with a wide range of vocabulary, grammatical structures and discourse conventions that reflect resistance themes and objectify sociopolitical reality?	2.58	0.83	7	Medium
6	How often do you integrate materials about resistance movements, values of social justice, human rights and equity around the world which can enhance global citizenship education?	2.45	0.83	8	Medium
10	How often do you highlight any interdisciplinary connectedness between EFL and other subjects like political sciences and sociology through incorporating resistance and empowerment-oriented pedagogies?	2.42	0.97	9	Medium
4	How often do you integrate resistance-oriented materials into EFL classrooms that expose students to diverse cultures and social movements?	2.39	0.93	10	Medium
<b>Total</b>		2.74	0.55		Medium

Table 2 shows that mean range between (2.39– 3.15), being the highest mean for Item(8) " How often do you highlight the importance of your students' English language use in diverse contexts and its role in media, literature and politics?", but the lowest mean was for Item(4) " How often do you integrate resistance-oriented materials into EFL classrooms that expose students to diverse cultures and social movements? ". It also shows the mean for the instrument as a whole (2.74).

#### **4.2. Discussion related to the results of the first research question**

According to the results of the questionnaire, it was found that EFL teachers' degree of incorporating resistance and empowerment-oriented pedagogies into teaching English as a foreign language is medium (2.74), as shown in Table 2. The researcher attributed this to several reasons. First, the teaching material itself and how to tailor it to respond to learners' factual needs. EFL teachers sometimes find it challenging to apply the required pedagogical concepts within the current teaching material they have. Furthermore, time constraints may add another obstacle that hinders applying these pedagogies within EFL classroom. EFL instructors usually prioritize promoting students' four language skills within the given time they have. Other challenges are related to the educational approach or educational policy which is opposed by the official curriculum in many developing nations, especially in a country like Palestine. In such countries, teachers are required to abide by the teaching strategies and pedagogies suggested by the the curriculum developers.

### **4.3. Results and discussion related to the second research question**

The second research question ‘How do Palestinian EFL instructors perceive the integration of empowerment-based and resistance-oriented pedagogies into teaching English as a Foreign language (TEFL)? The researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with 8 instructors from the Department of Languages and Translation at Birzeit University. The researchers prepared a total 8 interview questions. A thematic analysis was adopted to analyse the qualitative findings. This method was chosen for its ability to identify, analyse, and report patterns or themes within the data. Thematic analysis was employed to identify key themes related to Palestinian EFL instructors’ perspectives toward integrating resistance and empowerment pedagogies in EFL teaching.

#### ***Understanding resistance and empowerment-oriented pedagogies in TEFL***

Most interviewees agreed that ‘resistance and empowerment-oriented pedagogies refer to the EFL teachers’ ability to adapt and adopt teaching strategies and practices that would virtually enable learners to employ their linguistic competency to frame and voice out their national narrative. They almost agreed that this is extremely important when presenting the Palestinian question to the English-speaking communities, who are misinformed. One of the interviewees added that *“pedagogical practices need more to connect to politics, history and identity. The goal of language use here is to speak for Palestine and reinforce your narrative against those who are trying to bury it”*. Another one stated that *“a resistance-oriented strategy aims to support students in resisting oppressive structures, developing critical literacy skills, and critically thinking about and interacting with their environment”*.

#### ***Effective methods and approaches for incorporating resistance-oriented materials into EFL classrooms***

In this theme, it was obvious that there are diverse pedagogies that EFL instructors would employ. However, most of these pedagogies revolve around localizing and nationalizing the subject matter of the teaching material so that it engages the learners in areas of their interest. One instructor said, *“I think the most common method for me is to “localize it”*. Sometimes, within the curriculum that I teach, we come across cultural differences within the context of the material, so I tend to localize it. For example, I would ask the students to research their own country. Another one added, *“When there is an opportunity to address students’ political-social context and reality, I usually trigger students’ thinking and knowledge”*. In addition, they would utilize other effective strategies, including useful strategies like using stories and histories from their community, encouraging students to write their own essays, and having debates about global issues related to their lives.

#### ***Incorporating resistance and empowerment-oriented pedagogies into TEFL and its impact on language learning and critical thinking***

Interviewees agreed that that incorporating resistance and empowerment-oriented pedagogies can enhance EFL learners' language learning and improve their critical thinking skills. They believe that one significant goal of effective teaching approaches is to get the learners engaged in class practices and activities that touch their interests and needs. They stated that such pedagogies can help students get more engaged and involved in the learning process. According to one of the teachers, *“They live within a particular situation, and they encounter resistance every single day within their personal environment. Having students think and link what they learn to their own reality will indeed impact their thinking ability and enhance their higher-order thinking skills”*. EFL teachers think that when students are encouraged to discuss and be involved in debates and reflections, their thinking will absolutely be enhanced. One teacher reflected *“When students are offered discrepancies to their reality and surrounding through learning situations which touch their feelings and minds, they*

certainly will be more able to build more cognitive representations and explanations for the text they read for example”.

### **Addressing sensitive, controversial topics linked to resistance, national activism, and their potential impact on EFL classroom discussions**

There was a consensus that there are some debatable sensitive topics, which might involve national identity or political conflicts. One interviewee stated that *“Controversial, cultural and political issues may influence students’ views on issues such as freedom of speech, equality, social justice, human rights, colonialism, imperialism, and decolonization. Discussion on such issues can be sensitive, as they may touch upon historical injustices, power dynamics, oppression, and cultural identity”*. However, interviewees agreed that teachers can handle these by adopting several strategies including: setting clear rules for respectful discussions, using balanced resources, focusing on helping students express themselves, facilitating constructive-open dialogues through which thought provoking questions could be raised, guiding students to critically analyze and evaluate different views and perspectives, providing support and resources, and helping students how to express their thoughts and to avoid assumptions and generalization.

### **The extent to which resistance and empowerment pedagogies align with educational goals and encourage students to engage with societal and national issues**

All interviewees agreed that this is part of addressing learners’ reality and interest, so of course, empowerment-based pedagogies can get students more motivated, especially by addressing their situation and world of interest. One teacher stated that *“Resistance and empowerment-based pedagogies have the potential to significantly impact learning objectives and engage students with social and national issues”*. She added that *“Supporting EFL students in analyzing language use in texts related to resistance, empowerment, activism, or social movements can significantly contribute to enhancing their language proficiency by expanding vocabulary, improving language structures, fostering critical thinking skills, promoting cultural awareness, enhancing communicative competence, and developing language proficiency in authentic contexts”*.

### **Guidance for EFL instructors interested in resistance-oriented pedagogies**

The interviewees agreed that teachers need to tailor the prescribed learning topics and themes to meet the learners’ national interests. This can be done through personalizing the class activities and tasks. They also agreed that teachers must constantly refresh their knowledge and continue their education. One teacher said *“Learning is a continuous process throughout one’s life. Exploring and becoming familiar with resistance and empowerment-oriented pedagogies is crucial for us as educators”*. She suggested that EFL teachers can take EFL materials and activities and modify them to include themes related to resistance and empowerment-focused teaching methods. This may involve articles from a newspaper or a news report. Interviewees also insisted that EFL teachers should create plenty of chances for students to express their thoughts, insights, and experiences so that their voices and viewpoints are valued and respected in the classroom.

### **Merits and limitations of resistance-oriented pedagogies**

EFL teachers stated that there are numerous benefits to incorporating resistance-based teaching methods in classrooms, many of which can be seen in a group of students studying English, especially when combined with traditional language learning approaches. Some of the stated merits include the following, according to interviewed teachers: interacting with content that challenges resistance and encourages students to examine, assess, and criticize societal problems; enhancing their critical thinking abilities in language learning and social consciousness; engaging in conversations about social justice and resistance encourages students to utilize language effectively and genuinely;

improving their skills in reading, writing, listening, and speaking; engaging with pedagogies that emphasize resistance helps students develop a feeling of global citizenship; finally, students can become more motivated to identify and work towards addressing societal disparities and injustices on a local and global scale. On the other hand, EFL teachers stated that there are some limitations that teachers can consider: careful planning, implementation and support, curriculum constraints and limitations, educational policies, teacher training – how teachers should deal with sensitive topics and managing potential conflict, thoughtful preparation, execution, and assistance, and assessment challenges.

### ***The value of resistance-oriented professional development programs for Palestinian EFL instructors and their impact on teaching effectiveness***

In their responses to the question related to this theme, EFL instructors agreed that Palestinian EFL instructors can benefit from resistance-oriented professional development programs. They stated that professional development programs that focus on resistance and empowerment have the ability to improve the position of Palestinian EFL teachers by providing them with the power to bring about change in their classrooms and communities, as well as advancing language learning and social justice at the same time. EFL interviewees insisted that professional development programs focused on resistance can motivate EFL instructors in Palestine to link their language teaching with broader community issues and activism endeavors. They believe that instructors can encourage students to be socially responsible and active, which can lead to a new generation of critical thinkers and influencers. One interviewee added *“As an educator I do recommend that teachers use resistance-oriented pedagogies that are in line with teacher attitudes, student expectations, and classroom configurations, striking a balance between traditional and non-traditional teaching methods”*. She thinks that *“these key elements have the power to cultivate a sense of engagement, enthusiasm, and curiosity in students as they engage in tasks, conversations, and collaborations within a specific field”*.

In general, there was a consensus that resistance-focused training programs can improve the position of teaching English as a foreign language in the Palestinian context by offering a culturally appropriate and empowering approach to teaching the language. However, it is important to carefully and inclusively implement these programs.

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study aimed to investigate incorporating resistance and empowerment-oriented pedagogies into teaching English as a foreign language in the Palestinian context. This study concludes that teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) is paramount in the Palestinian context as a tool for fostering the spirit of resistance, resilience and empowerment. TEFL does not only involve language acquisition, but can also serve as a tool for empowering learners and deepening their national and patriotic spirit by incorporating pedagogies that highlight national identity and resistance against oppressive practices.

It was also concluded that EFL instructors at Birzeit University have strong tendencies towards integrating and applying such teaching resistance and empowerment-based pedagogies in EFL classrooms. However, the degree of current incorporation of these pedagogies in EFL classrooms is medium due to several educational and contextual challenges. Hence, the degree of true incorporation is still in its early stages. Palestinian EFL instructors face challenges in implementing these pedagogies effectively, sustainably and orderly. Despite the fact that EFL instructors highly recognize the importance of addressing EFL learners’ socio-political affairs, yet their teaching practices are still underdeveloped and requires more support and reinforcement. There are numerous challenges that hinder the application and implementation of the desired empowerment-based pedagogies. These include insufficient teacher training and the need for better institutional support. Furthermore, EFL teachers and learners do not live or exist in normal socio-political

conditions; there are practical constraints that could not be ignored. This has naturally led to inconsistent and weak implementation of these educational approaches and pedagogies. Finally, it was concluded that for these strategies and resistance and empowerment-based pedagogies to be fully implemented and realized, greater institutional support needs to be provided in terms of professional development, training and reinforcement for using innovative instructional pedagogies and related teaching methods. In the light of these conclusions, the authors recommended the following.

## 6. Recommendations

It is highly recommended that critical pedagogy be integrated into teaching English as a foreign language. This would promote students' socio-political awareness. EFL instructors at higher education institutions are recommended to incorporate discussions on topics that are globally trendy and affecting Palestinian students' lives directly, including issues related to human rights and political conflicts. Empowering students to defy oppression and reinforcing their understanding of their identity and the world could be achieved by incorporating critical pedagogy. It is also recommended to develop EFL curriculum for higher education institutions that would respond to Palestinian students' realities and their socio-political sensitiveness. Such curriculum would empower Palestinian students and foster their culture and national identity. It would also highlight themes of resilience and resistance in addition to its role in promoting language acquisition and learning. The researchers also recommend using teaching methods that foster collaborative activities, group discussions and debates where students can engage in topics related with resistance and empowerment. Such methods would activate students' sense of solidarity and collective identity.

Another fundamental recommendation is concentrating on teacher training which embraces resistance and empowerment pedagogies. Policy makers at the Ministry of Higher Education and presidents of Palestinian universities should guarantee providing professional development programs for EFL instructors. Such professional development workshops could be similar to the training workshops that enable teachers and instructors using effective methods in teaching EFL. However, the intended Teacher Training would focus on resistance and empowerment-based pedagogies. While enhancing language proficiency, these workshops and training sessions could involve training EFL teachers on how to incorporate socio-political contexts into teaching English language.

Finally, it is of high importance to utilize authentic materials in teaching English language in higher education institutions. Using Palestinian authentic materials, e.g. Palestinian historic texts, literary texts and media articles which embrace Palestinian national values and Palestinian culture is very influential while teaching the language. Students' national pride in their heritage and their deep faith in the righteousness of their cause will definitely be fostered.

## Declarations

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The authors originally wrote this article. An AI tool was utilized to improve the readability of only some parts.

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## Appendix A

### Semi-Structured Interviews Questions

1. In what ways can you perceive “resistance and empowerment-oriented pedagogies” in the TEFL context? What could be its significance in language learning in the Palestinian context?
2. What are some particular strategies or approaches have you utilized for an effective integration of resistance-oriented content into EFL classrooms?
3. Do you believe that incorporating resistance and empowerment-oriented pedagogies can enhance EFL learners’ language learning and improve their critical thinking skills? How?
4. Are there any potential sensitive or controversial topics related to resistance and national activism that may arise amidst integrating resistance and empowerment-oriented discussions in EFL classrooms? If yes, how would you navigate them?
5. To what extent can resistance and empowerment-based pedagogies achieve learning objectives and promote students’ engagement with social and national issues?
6. How can you advise EFL instructors who already have interest in incorporating resistance and empowerment-oriented pedagogies into EFL classrooms but unsure how and where to begin?
7. Are there any potential merits related with integrating resistance-oriented pedagogies into EFL classrooms which can go in line with language instruction and social justice? Are there any limitations? Could you state them?
8. In your opinion, do you think Palestinian EFL instructors can benefit from resistance-oriented professional development programs in the Palestinian context? Do you believe this can enhance their role as language instructors? In what ways?