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**Research Paper**

**Exploring Online Misconceptions in EFL Learners'  
Productive Intelligibility Strategies**

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**Abstract**

Productive intelligibility strategies used by EFL learners to make themselves understood in reciprocal interactions with their teacher and peers are essential for success in online English learning courses. This qualitative study aimed to identify Iranian basic-level EFL learners' reactions to online misconceptions by identifying their productive intelligibility strategies, which involve manipulating their linguistic productions and taking social and cultural norms into account. Content analysis and critical discourse analysis were applied to the interactional discourse of 50 learners with their instructor and classmates during a three-month online English course. The students used phonological, lexical, and grammatical efficient intelligibility techniques to target online misconceptions of their teacher and classmates. Nonetheless, due to the specific affordances of the online learning context, learners' self-confidence, and the gravity of the misunderstood linguistic elements, discrepancies emerge in the subcategories of efficient intelligibility strategies. Furthermore, Iranian basic level EFL learners' low level of language proficiency did not lead to their avoidance of reacting to misconceptions. They strategically reproduced power relations and recontextualized Islamic culture in targeting their teachers' misconceptions in online context through a flow of dynamic interactions. The findings uncovered the potentials of online learning in

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shaping the linguistic and discursive aspects of learners' strategic productions.

**Keywords:** EFL Learners, Online Misconceptions, Power Relations, Productive Intelligibility Strategies

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## 1. Introduction

In recent years, online English teaching has been regarded as an adjunct or an alternative to traditional classroom teaching, which could have made itself free from such inadequacies of classroom teaching as being restricted by time and space limitations and reducing learners' autonomy (Lee et al., 2016). It has been argued that online English learning enjoys, among other things, integrating new technologies for distance learning and increasing motivation and participation chances for learners (Chen, 2016), and facilitates their critical thinking (Wu et al., 2014). Yet, it has raised concerns regarding the degree to which it triggers learners' linguistic and communicative competence, which are the bases of successful learning (Salmon et al., 2016).

Among the fundamental concepts in online English learning related to successful learning are the "productive intelligibility strategies" or the strategic productive accommodations learners use to make themselves understood in reciprocal interactions with their teacher and classmates (Munro, 2008).

Learners' productive intelligibility strategies, which are followed by observing interactional discourse and identifying their interlocutors misunderstanding (Yazan, 2015), seek to establish a true shared understanding of the problematic area by employing a variety of linguistic

manipulations influenced by social and cultural norms. To be more specific, productive intelligibility strategies include making strategic phonological, lexical, and grammatical accommodations to demonstrate the disputed accuracy of previously mentioned phrases or sentences. Given that productive intelligibility strategies are directed at the interlocutors (the teacher and classmates) in an educational setting, they trigger their user's awareness of social and cultural norms (Yazan, 2015). In this way, the online usage of the productive intelligibility strategies for targeting misconceptions could be challenging for the basic-level EFL learners. On the one hand, they are not linguistically and communicatively competent. On the other hand, they may be negatively influenced by the online courses which integrate low-quality teaching practices (Damford & Miller, 2018), ignore individuals' learning needs (Lewis, 2000), and lack such mediational tools as gesture and body language (Gilmore & Warren, 2007).

Previous studies on productive intelligibility strategies have certain drawbacks. They have commonly failed to provide a comprehensive account of using productive intelligibility strategies as they are merely focused on phonological (rather than phonological, lexical, and grammatical) efforts of language users to achieve intelligibility (e.g., Gooskens et al., 2018; Mauranen, 2006; Satio & Van Poeteren, 2012; Tang & VanHeuven, 2015). In addition, they have not discursively analyzed the productive intelligibility strategies to reveal the social conventions and mental practices (Van Dijk, 2008) which lie behind them. More importantly, they overlooked the potentials of the online context of English learning in shaping learners' strategic performance for removing misconceptions which constitute a typical feature of educational interactions (Mauranen, 2006). This study aims to identify the productive intelligibility strategies of Iranian basic-level EFL learners in online English learning for resolving their teacher and classmates'

misconceptions. Following Yazan (2015), this study uses the phrase "productive intelligibility strategies" to cover both the learners' linguistic manipulations at the levels of phonology, lexicon, and grammar and their usage of social and cultural norms to convince their interlocutors that they are true. In this way, the term "misunderstanding" refers to failure(s) in comprehending a linguistic message (Sayer, 2013) that the speaker truly produced.

## **2. Literature Review**

Current intelligibility studies have disregarded the social and cultural norms surrounding the use of intelligibility techniques and the grammatical and lexical manipulations employed by language users to achieve intelligibility. They presented a "phonological" view to intelligibility covering mainly the pronunciation issues and speech intelligibility of high-proficiency language users. Sheppard et al. (2017) argue that pronunciation problems of language users imply an interdependency between speech perception and articulation. Thus, incomplete speech perception causes intelligibility problems. Cruttenden (2008), however, maintains that L1 articulatory properties determine L2 sounds production. In this way, intelligibility issues may be thought of as errors caused by negative transfer (Canepari 2005; Derrick 2005; Johnson & Elissa, 1989). Supporting this view, Arslan and Hansen (1996) argue that Arabic learners of English substitute their L1 /C/ for the English /3/ phoneme in words like add and bat, so their listeners may misunderstand them. Nazari and Yonous (2020) also reported that Iraqi speakers of English experience intelligibility problems at the segmental level due to the differences between phonemes of English and Arabic languages. Bello et al. (2020) believe that mutual intelligibility between nonnative speakers of different varieties of English depends on their ability to make certain phonological accommodations and perform above the guessing

threshold levels. Learners' intelligibility performance is also colored by their identities and the ways they look at their language and that of others (Henderson, 2021), their ability and the confidence to understand other languages (Almusharraf, 2021; Doloh, & Chanyoo, 2022; Nagamine, 2020; Pommee et al., 2022), and their familiarity with the context and the topic (Salheen & Thai, 2022). Pronunciation intelligibility, however, is not affected by learners' proficiency level. It is influenced by the linguistic properties of the target and native languages (Al-Abdely & Thai, 2016).

Some studies have focused on the role of listeners and speakers in intelligibility. Bent and Bradlow (2003) believe that the difference between listeners and speakers' L1 contributes to intelligibility; listeners better understand speakers whose L1 is the same as that of theirs. Munro, Derwing and Morton (2006) state that the problems that arise due to the listeners and speakers' different L1 are not as important as the speakers' individual differences in familiarity with the target language. The speakers' familiarity with the topic has also been found to influence intelligibility (Salheen & Thai, 2022). The listener's familiarity with the target accent, on the other hand, does not always increase intelligibility (Kennedy & Trofimovich, 2008). Lindeman (2002) highlighted the impact of the listener's attitude on intelligibility. Listeners with negative attitudes toward the target language are more likely to consider their communication ineffective, even if objective measurements show that the interaction was successful. Thus, developing positive attitudes could facilitate learners' communication abilities (Henderson, 2021). Mauranen (2006) states that high-proficiency speakers could prevent listeners' misconceptions through engaging in proactive clarification and repair strategies to ensure achieving their communication goals. But, the researcher failed to explore the manipulations caused by misconceptions to prove the correctness of the previously stated sentences.

Phonological intelligibility has also been studied in terms of the linguistic propensities of the closely related languages determining their mutual intelligibility. Gooskens et al. (2018), for example, investigated the mutual intelligibility of the languages in Slavic, Germanic, and Romance language families through testing the degree to which their young and educated speakers and listeners experienced mutual intelligibility. They indicated that the listeners who had more exposure to the spoken languages better understood them. Inherited intelligibility has been reported between genealogically related languages as their users could understand each other in the first exposure (Tang & VanHeuven, 2015). Gooskens et al. (2010) indicated that asymmetric intelligibility exists between Danish and Swedish languages based on which Dans better understand Swedish. This has been related to the asymmetric attitudes of the speakers of the two languages; Swedish have fewer positive attitudes toward Dans.

The reviewed literature shows that intelligibility has not been fully operationalized in previous studies; the lexical and grammatical manipulations were disregarded at the expense of the phonological performances of language users. Moreover, misconceptions were hardly ever related to productive intelligibility strategies, although they could form the logic of learners' efforts to develop true mutual understandings (Yazan, 2015). Therefore, this study aims to investigate learners' productive intelligibility strategies in relation to misconceptions. In so doing, it focused on the online context of English learning to highlight the ways it shapes learners' strategic performance. In sum, the following two questions guided this study:

1. What productive intelligibility strategies do Iranian basic-level EFL learners use at the levels of phonology, grammar, and lexicon in online English learning to clear up their teacher and classmates'

misconceptions?

2. How do Iranian basic-level EFL learners take social and cultural considerations into account in clearing their teacher and classmates' misconceptions?

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1 Participants and Context of the Study**

Participants of this study were 50 basic-level EFL learners in a language institute in Kermanshah, Iran. They were from different cultural and social backgrounds and were aged 12-25. Based on their placement test, all participants were recognized as A2 (basic-level) English learners. Then, they were randomly classified into three classes, each with 15-18 male and female learners.

The participants were informed that they were part of a research study. As a result, their voluntary participation was established at the outset of the study. To decrease the Hawthorne effect (Selinger & Shohamy, 1989), however, they were not told about the exact focus of the study. They were just informed that the data from this study would be used in a study on learners and teachers' online English learning interactions. The research data were saved in a password-protected account for the teachers, which was only available to the researchers. In terms of ethical considerations, numbers were assigned to learners during the study to protect their privacy and confidentiality.

Each class received online instruction on general English twice a week. The length of each session was 90 minutes. Classes were instructed on different weekdays. But, they all were taught by the same teacher using *Big Blue Button*, a synchronous learning platform, which made it possible for the teacher to share real-time audio and video files and slides. The platform also enabled learners to communicate with their teacher and classmates through talking (with or without sharing their webcams) and chatting.

### 3.2 Materials

Participants of this study were studying *Eight 3a* from the *Eight* coursebook, which has been developed according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for Iranian EFL learners. The *Eight* coursebook is published by the *Jahad Daneshghahi* institute and covers levels from A1 (introductory level) to C2 (advance level). The *Eight3a* book used in this study corresponds to A2 (basic level).

### 3.3 Corpus

The corpus of the present study included all the oral and written interactions of learners and the teacher within a three-month online English course. It included the content of 57 online sessions encompassing 19 sessions for each class.

Throughout the study, each class received 19 online instruction sessions. Overall, then, the corpus of this study included the content of 57 online sessions.

### 3.4 Design

This descriptive study used content analysis to identify the phonological, lexical, and grammatical manipulations of learners. According to Schreier (2012), content analysis answers such questions as what, why, and how. It reveals the common patterns in the data through coding and categorizing text. For investigating the cultural and social considerations of using productive intelligibility strategies, this study used Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which according to Fairclough (1992), targets the relation between language productions and social and cultural norms. CDA regards ideologies and attitudes as the socially shared mental models that are reproduced in communications (Van Dijk, 2000).

### 3.5 Data Collection Procedure and Techniques

This study was conducted from January to March, 2021. It constituted 57



online sessions for all three classes of basic-level EFL learners. At the beginning of each session, the teacher got online and uploaded the pdf presentation file. Then, the learners joined the class.

Each session included a pretty fixed order of teaching materials; vocabulary, grammar, listening, pronunciation, and conversation. Considering the proficiency level of learners, the teacher integrated modifications in teaching each part and checked learners' understanding at the end. For example, in teaching grammar, she used written explanations carefully ordered from easy to difficult with the key grammatical words in different colors (red for new grammars, and yellow and green for the repeated grammars). Then, the teacher checked learners' understanding using the grammaticality judgment technique.

Aimed at discovering learners' productive strategies, the teacher encouraged learners to discuss their misconceptions, preferably in L2. She also asked for learners' clarification whenever she could not understand them clearly. Learners' performance to clear their teacher and classmates' misconceptions involved written and oral chats transcribed later. Therefore, all the reported data in our study is in the written form.

### **3.6 Data Analysis Procedure**

This qualitative study used content analysis for coding and analyzing the relevant data on learners' productive intelligibility strategies. Following Schreier (2012), the researchers did content analysis in three stages. First, at the open coding stage, the main productive strategies of learners, which could shape our analysis, were identified. Second, at the focused coding stage, the main productive strategies were divided into phonological, lexical, and grammatical categories. At the final analysis stage, the researchers made the necessary modifications in the classifications of the initial categories.

For analyzing the discursive aspect of the productive intelligibility

strategies, the researchers took advantage of Fairclough and Van Dijk's views on CDA. Fairclough's CDA approach focuses on the social-cultural dimensions of language. His analytical framework includes discourse practices and events or sociocultural practices. Van Dijk (1993), however, focuses more on the role of mental models "in the (re)production and challenge of dominance" (p.249). Therefore, the CDA view of this study shows how the mental models of learners reflect the social and cultural norms.

#### **4. Results**

The primary goal of the study was to identify the productive intelligibility strategies Iranian basic level EFL learners use at the levels of phonology, grammar, and lexicon in online English learning to clear up their teacher and classmates' misconceptions.

Based on the content analysis results, Iranian basic-level EFL learners showed more sensitivity to the teacher's misconceptions than to those of their classmates. Nonetheless, they used the same strategies for clearing their teacher and classmates' misconceptions, which were in line with the nature of misconceptions. For example, they manipulated the grammar of their sentences when they noticed that their interlocutors' misunderstanding was grammatical. In the same way, they used lexical and phonological productive intelligibility strategies for misconceptions resulting from their vocabulary usage and pronunciation. Table 1 shows the frequency of the productive intelligibility strategies basic learners used in relation to their interlocutors. It should be noted that the cases in which the learners remained silent to their teacher and classmates' misconceptions were not counted as they did not imply production.

Table 1

*Frequency of Learners Productive Intelligibility Strategies in the Online English Course*

	<b>In Relation to the Teacher</b>	<b>In Relation to the Classmates</b>
Learners productive intelligibility strategies	123 (91.8%)	11 (8.2%)
Total no.	134	

Based on Table 1, the online learning context did not engage basic-level EFL learners much in pair interactions even when they noticed that their classmates did not truly understand them. According to Sauro (2009), online instruction creates a virtual learning environment that contextualizes independent learning for each learner. In the same vein, Dowling, Godfrey and Gyles (2003) maintain that online learning may not encourage collaboration as much as classroom learning does.

Table 2 shows how differently Iranian basic-level EFL learners used the subcategories of the productive intelligibility strategies in relation to their teacher and classmates.

Table 2

*Distribution of the Subcategories of Learners Productive Intelligibility Strategies in the Online English Course*

	<b>About the Teacher</b>	<b>About Classmates</b>
Grammatical productive intelligibility strategies	61 (49.5%)	7 (63.63%)
Lexical productive intelligibility strategies	19 (15.4%)	3 (27.27%)
Phonological productive intelligibility strategies	43 (35%)	1 (9.09%)

Based on Table 2, a major part of the learners' productive intelligibility strategies occurred when their grammatical competence was doubted by their interlocutors, implying that the traditional view of the significance of grammar in language learning (Chen & Myhill, 2016) has penetrated into the online context of language instruction.

The main grammatical productive intelligibility strategy of Iranian basic-level EFL learners was reasoning in English (rather than in their L1), which

indicated their struggle to be informed users of the English grammar (Extract 1). Notice that throughout this study, the symbol (#) stands for misconceptions, leading to interactions to remove them. Moreover, the subcategories of the productive intelligibility strategies introduced in this study are unique because no previous study has focused on them.

Learner 21: She # a jacket now.

Teacher: Could you repeat the verb. Did you say "she wears"?

Learner 21: Teacher she is wearing, because (of) now.

*Extract 1: Reasoning strategy*

In the above extract, learner 21 reasoned about her using present continuous through making a simple sentence and highlighting the time expression (now). According to Van Rijt, Wijnants and Coppen (2020), reasoning involves making a principled understanding of the underlying grammatical concepts and connecting them. Thus, it indicates learners' in-depth engagement in grammar learning.

As for the next grammatical productive intelligibility strategies of basic learners, our content analysis showed no significant difference in their preferences of repeating the correct syntactic structures, which has been identified as an important linguistic tool of influence on learners' cognitive development (Merritt, 1994; Norrick, 1987), their problem-solving capability (McCafferty, 1992; Roebuck, 2000) and reasoning (Buckwalter, 2001) and using L1 explanation to remove their interlocutors' misconceptions. Our participants used repetition and L1 explanation strategies for discourse production and covering their linguistic deficiencies, respectively. McCafferty (1992) believes that discourse production works as a means of intersubjectivity maintenance. Extract 2 below exemplifies discourse reproduction in this study. It shows that after removing the teacher's misunderstanding, learner 19 continued discourse production to maintain her interaction with the teacher. This study found a relationship between

intersubjectivity maintenance and the learners' self-confidence. The more self-confident the learners felt, the more they lengthened their interactions with the teacher.

Learner 19: Rohan hardly ever # a headband.

Teacher: Hardly ever use? or hardly ever uses?

Learner 19: Hardly ever uses.

Teacher: Ok. Thanks.

Learner 19: Hardly ever uses. Rohan is He. We (say) uses in simple present.

*Extract 2: Repetition strategy for intersubjectivity maintenance*

Further analysis of basic learners grammatical productive intelligibility revealed another strategy wherein they highlighted coordinated structures to convince their interlocutors that they were using the correct grammar (Extract 3).

Learner 14: In my vocation, I went to Tehran and # souvenirs for my friend.

Learner 9: Teacher he# souvenirs

Learner 14: I said bought. I went.....I bought.

Learner 9: Oh, I thought I 'buy'.

*Extract 3: Coordination strategy*

Notice that in the above extract which occurred in class 1, both learners knew that the sentence referred to the past time, and the verbs in the sentence have to show tense agreement. But, learner 9 misunderstood the second verb and thought that his classmate used "buy" and "went" together. In response, learner 14 quickly cleared up the misunderstanding by coordinating the two verbs (*I went.....I bought*). Alsagoff (2016) believes that this shows the facilitative effect of the internet context in paying attention to details and ignoring redundancies. Extract 3 also shows a general shame among basic-level learners for stating their misconceptions based on which they initially addressed the teacher rather than their classmates (*teacher he# souvenirs*). According to Galmiche (2018), learners' fear of being criticized by their classmates is among the leading causes of their shame, influencing their developmental trajectories and psychological well-being. Table 3

summarizes our findings on the subcategories of learners' grammatical productive intelligibility strategies.

Table 3

*Learners' Grammatical Productive Intelligibility Strategies in Online Learning*

<b>Grammatical Productive Intelligibility Strategies</b>	<b>About the Teacher</b>	<b>About the Classmates</b>
Reasoning	35 (57.37%)	1 (14.28%)
L1 Explanations	12 (19.67%)	4 (57.14%)
Repetition	10 (16.39%)	2 (28.57%)
Coordination	4 (6.55%)	

The higher frequency of learners' phonological productive strategies in comparison with productive lexical strategies could be attributed to their teacher's focus on pronunciation during the online course (Table 2). Based on our data, basic learners mainly removed their interlocutors phonological misunderstanding through using the "rising intonation strategy," which, at the same time, revealed their skepticism about pronunciation and their need for teacher confirmation (Extract 4). Thus, despite Williams's (2012) and Shintani's (2016) findings, online learning did not result in consolidated pronunciation development in basic learners and could not prevent them from asking the same question in subsequent sessions.

Learner 37: We keep our car in a big#

Teacher: Repeat your last word.

Learner 37: **gə<sup>1</sup> rɑːʒ?**

*Extract 4: Rising intonation strategy*

The fact that basic level learners did not use the rising intonation strategy in relation to their classmates shows that, in online learning, just as in traditional face-to-face classes, learners consider teacher as the main knowledge source (Ibrahim, Kalman, & Milner-Bolotin, 2013) and the authority whose concerns must be respected (Pace & Hemmings, 2007). As the next phonological productive intelligibility strategy of learners, repetition occurred when learners felt that they could simply remove the teacher's

misunderstanding by pronouncing the intended word again. Table 4 represents the main phonological strategies of Iranian basic-level EFL learners.

Table 4

*Basic Learners Phonological Productive Intelligibility Strategies in Online Learning*

<b>Phonological Intelligibility Strategies</b>	<b>Productive</b>	<b>In relation to the Teacher</b>	<b>In relation to the Classmates</b>
Rising Intonation		37 (86.04 %)	-
Repetition		6 (13.95%)	1 (100%)

Table 5 shows that, although basic learners used lexical productive intelligibility strategies less than phonological productive intelligibility strategies, they showed more creativity in their usage. It also shows that learners' main lexical productive intelligibility strategies (repetition and oral spelling) are the same for their teacher and classmates.

One interesting finding of our study was that some learners used a string of lexical productive intelligibility strategies when they noticed that their first or their first two lexical strategies could not clear up their interlocutors' misconceptions. Extract 5 targets the interaction of two learners from class 2 when personalizing a conversation about buying clothes. In this extract, learner 26 used the oral spelling strategy when he noticed the failure of the repetition strategy in removing her classmates' misunderstanding.

**Learner 26:** I'm looking for a nice #hat.

**Learner 30:** Later hat?

**Learner 26:** No, leather hat.

**Learner 30:** Little hat?

**Learner 26:** No, L, E, A, T, H, E, R.

*Extract 5. Repetition and oral spelling strategies*

Extract 5 partially shows that basic level learners internalized their teachers' accommodations like rehearsal and simplified pronunciation, which targeted their receptive intelligibility (Rix, 2009). In other words, this

productive intelligibility strategy represented the modifications they were exposed to by their teacher to facilitate their learning.

Table 5

Basic Learners Lexical Productive Intelligibility Strategies in Online Learning

<b>Lexical Intelligibility Strategies</b>	<b>Productive Intelligibility Strategies</b>	<b>In relation to the Teacher</b>	<b>In relation to the Classmates</b>
Repetition		10 (52.63%)	2 (66.66%)
Presenting a synonym		3 (15.78%)	-
Oral spelling		4 (21.05%)	1 (33.33%)
Typing the word		2 (10.52%)	-

The second research question aimed at revealing the ways Iranian basic level EFL learners take social and cultural considerations into account in clearing their teacher and classmates' misconceptions.

Based on the CDA analysis, Iranian basic-level EFL learners showed their awareness of social and cultural norms of communicating in educational contexts mainly in relation to their teacher. The fact that they felt more committed to react and to clear up their teacher's misconceptions could mean their sensitivity to power relations (Fairclough, 1995) which was represented in their educational discourse. They went through different stages in removing their teachers' misconceptions from the times they were focusing on their classmates' misconceptions. For their teacher, they *usually* underwent 3 stages: noticing misunderstanding, removing it, and checking the teacher's comprehension. For their classmates, however, there was no final check on their classmates' understanding. The following two extracts represent the difference.

Learner 39: they are Mila's nieces.

Learner 50: nice(s)?

Learner 39 (noticing and removing misunderstanding): nieces

*Extract 6. Stages of removing a classmate's misunderstanding*



Learner 17: My brother is  
an# and tidy person.

Teacher: Your brother is  
an outgoing and tidy  
person?

Learner 17 (noticing and removing misunderstanding): my brother is an  
easygoing and tidy person.

Learner 17 (checking teacher`s understanding): easygoing is not hardworking.  
Do you know?

*Extract 7. Stages of removing teacher`s misunderstanding*

Van Dijk (2008) argues that "power" controls the discourse of language users through controlling their minds. Given that, it can be argued that basic-level learners intentionally reproduced power relations (power of teacher over students) in their discourse, which could mean avoiding the consequences of disregarding their teachers' misunderstanding and/or recontextualizing (Bernstein, 1971) discourse practices of Iranian Islamic culture in the online context of learning based on which teachers have a high social position and should be respected. Van Dijk (2008) considers the effects of culture on interaction in different contexts and asserts that some shared social attitudes, ideological values, and norms may influence the nature of interactions.

In reproducing power relations in the online context of learning, Iranian basic level EFL learners mainly regarded their classmates' misconceptions as unfair criticisms to which they could remain silent or answer aggressively or indirectly through addressing their teacher. Van Dijk (1993) interprets such reactions as challenges to the dominance of equal group members through negative other-presentation. The following extract, for example, shows an aggressive tone toward a classmate which was changed to a humble and gentle one when communicating with the teacher.

Learner 42: It rains # and I stay home.

Learner 36: It rains heavy?

Learner 42 (talking aggressively to his friend): No, what do you say?

Learner 42 (addressing his teacher): Teacher rains heavily.

*Extract 8. Tone change*

Fairclough (1995) asserted that power is represented in terms of asymmetries relations between participants in discourse events, wherein one group is regarded as inferior to the other. Given that, basic learners in our study were reproducing power relations by treating their interlocutors' misconceptions in unequal ways.

**5. Discussion**

This study attempted to target Iranian basic level EFL learners' reactions to online misconceptions through identifying their productive intelligibility strategies which involve manipulating language at the levels of grammar, lexicon, and pronunciation and taking social and cultural considerations into account.

Regarding the types of productive intelligibility strategies used by Iranian basic level EFL learners, it was noticed that they employ the same phonological, grammatical, and lexical manipulations to target their teacher and classmates' misconceptions, which were in line with the nature of their misconceptions. Nevertheless, they used the productive intelligibility strategies more in relation to their teacher than to their classmates. Therefore, it can be stated that online instruction in this study increased learner interactions with the teacher (Baten, Bouckaert & Yingli, 2009; Yilmaz & Yuksel, 2011) through covering her misconceptions. This interaction flow can result in both pragmatic and linguistic development for the engaged learners (Mauranen, 2006). Iranian basic level EFL learners also showed more willingness to direct their misconceptions at the teacher which implied their shame of starting conversations with their classmates. Considering that, teachers need to be emotionally supportive to their learners and foster positive emotions in them through encouraging risk-taking (Galmiche, 2018). Kalali Sani et al. (2021) state that what helps students manage such dramatic

moments is setting professional and ambitious goals which encourage making social interactions.

The diversity of the subcategories of the productive intelligibility strategies could be attributed to the affordances of the online context (Alsagoff, 2016) for recognizing details and disregarding redundancies (as manifested in excerpt 3), learners' self-confidence level (as manifested in excerpt 2) and the gravity of the language component which was misunderstood (as manifested in excerpts 1, and 4). For grammatical and phonological misconceptions learners proved more responsible and creative. Regarding the phonological productive intelligibility strategies, it was partially found that familiarity with the target language pronunciation could influence intelligibility performance, which contradicted the findings of Kennedy and Trofimovich (2008). Ghorbandordinejad and Afshar (2017) argue that learner's successful linguistic performance is related to their self-efficacy. Yet, the degree to which they seek perfectionism in their performance might negatively influence their interactions. Moreover, this study revealed that learners' misconceptions could be the results of their unfamiliarity with the topic under investigation. The more familiar the learners were with the topic of discussion, the fewer phonological misconceptions they experienced. This finding confirms the findings of Salheen and Thai (2022) and Doloh and Chanyoo (2022), who highlighted the significance of learners' familiarity with the context and the topic of discussion.

As for the social and cultural considerations of using productive intelligibility strategies, it was found that Iranian basic level EFL learners made a distinction between the social positions of their teacher and classmates and employed different tones and stages for removing their misconceptions. According to Van Dijk (2008), social power and dominance determine the

ways language is used. Iranian basic level EFL learners considered their classmates' misconceptions as unfair criticisms on their performance to which they could remain silent or respond aggressively. This contradicts the finding of Rezaei et al. (2020) based on which the Persian speakers of English indirectly use the negative other representation strategy in their discourse. Participants of this study tended to save their own face and did not respect their classmates' social status. Nonetheless, they were pretty respectful to their teacher's misconceptions and usually used a three-stage sequence (notice, target, and understanding checking) to remove them. This confirmed Ebadi and Vakili's (2015) finding based on which learners recontextualized the respectful discourse practices of communicating with the teacher in the online classroom context.

### **6. Conclusion**

As it can be inferred from the discussion section, basic learners' low level of language proficiency did not lead to their avoidance of reacting to misconceptions. Online learning increased their responsibility to their learning (Newman et al., 1989) and their teachers' misconceptions through a flow of dynamic interactions activating a range of their linguistic and discursive abilities (Jenkins, 2000).

As a pioneer study in exploring basic learners productive intelligibility strategies in the online context of learning, this study suffers two limitations. First, the participants of the study were from different social and cultural backgrounds, affecting their productive performance. Second, the qualitative nature of the study limits the generalizability of its findings. Therefore, replicating the study in other contexts with different research methods can yield different results. Further research can also delve into the effects of productive intelligibility strategies on learners' success or failure in online language learning. Furthermore, it can focus on how productive intelligibility

strategies affect learners' attitudes toward English and their acculturation into the English culture.

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