African Union Journal of Academic and Research Studies
مجلة الاتحاد الأفريقي للدراسات الأكاديمية والبحثية
Volume 1, Issue 3, 2026, Pages: 25-31
Journal homepage :https://aujars-journal.com/index.php/aujars/ar/index

Improving University Students' Presentation Competence Using Canva: Evidence from the University of Tripoli Al-Ahlia Presentation Skills Course in the English Language Department

Dr. Zaynab Mohammad Bub *
College of Engineering Technology - Janzour, Tripoli, Libya

تحسين كفاءة طلاب الجامعات في مهارات الإلقاء باستخدام برنامج كانفا: أدلة من مساق مهارات العرض التقديمي في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة طرابلس الأهلية

زينب محمد بب *
كلية التقنية الهندسية - جنزور، طرابلس، ليبيا

*Corresponding author: zaynabbub@gmail.com

Received: August 09, 2026	Accepted: October 20, 2026	Published: November 06, 2026

Abstract:
Recently, the digital learning environment has changed rapidly. University students are expected not only to communicate ideas verbally but also to design and deliver visually compelling presentations. This study investigates the impact of integrating Canva (a digital graphic design platform) into the Presentation Skills course in the English Language Department at the University of Tripoli Al-Ahlia. Drawing on students from three semesters (n = 87). The research explores how Canva affects students' presentation competence across dimensions of visual design, creativity, time management, confidence, and digital literacy. Grounded in Multimedia Learning Theory and Constructivist Learning Theory, the study employed a questionnaire-based approach. Findings reveal that Canva significantly enhanced students' ability to create professional, visually appealing presentations while fostering creativity, collaborative skills, and efficiency. Results align with prior research and contribute practical insights for educators seeking to integrate digital tools into higher education pedagogy.

Keywords: Canva, presentation skills, digital tools, higher education, English Language Department, multimedia learning, constructivism, creativity.

الملخص:
شهدت بيئة التعلم الرقمي تغطياً وتغيرًا سريعًا في الآونة الأخيرة؛ حيث لم يعد متوقعاً من طلاب الجامعات التواصل بأفكارهم شفهياً فحسب، بل أصبح لزاماً عليهم تصميم وتقديم عروض تقديمية جذابة بصرياً. تبحث هذه الدراسة تأثير دمج منصة "كانفا" (Canva) - وهي منصة رقمية للتصميم الجرافيكي- في مساق "مهارات العرض التقديمي" بقسم اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة طرابلس الأهلية. بالاعتماد على عينة من الطلاب عبر ثلاثة فصول دراسية (n = 87)، يستكشف البحث كيف تؤثر منصة "كانفا" على كفاءة الطلاب في العروض التقديمية عبر أبعاد التصميم البصري، الإبداع، إدارة الوقت، الثقة بالنفس، والتحول الرقمي (أو محو الأمية الرقمية). وانطلاقاً من نظرية التعلم وسائط المتعددة (Multimedia Learning Theory) ونظرية التعلم البنائي (Constructivist Learning Theory)، اتبعت الدراسة منهجاً قائماً على الاستبيان، وتكشف النتائج أن منصة "كانفا" عززت بشكل ملحوظ قدرة الطلاب على إنشاء عروض تقديمية احترافية وجذابة بصرياً، مع تعزيز الإبداع، ومهارات العمل الجماعي، والفاعلية. وتتطابق هذه النتائج مع الأبحاث السابقة، وتقدم رؤى عملية للمعلمين الساعين إلى دمج الأدوات الرقمية في تربويات التعليم العالي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: كانفا (Canva)، مهارات العرض التقديمي، الأدوات الرقمية، التعليم العالي، قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، التعلم متعدد الوسائط، البنائية، الإبداع.

INTRODUCTION

Effective presentation skills are among the most valued competencies in contemporary academic and professional settings. For university students enrolled in English language programs, the ability to communicate fluently in front of an audience is a central learning objective. However, presentation competence extends beyond

 Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

spoken fluency; it requires the capacity to organize information logically, support arguments visually, and engage audiences with well-structured, visually comprehensible slides.

Traditionally, students preparing presentations have relied on tools such as Microsoft PowerPoint or Google Slides. While these platforms offer basic functionality, they often demand considerable time investment, particularly from learners with limited design experience. The emergence of Canva (a web-based graphic design platform featuring customizable templates, dragand-drop functionality, and collaborative features) has introduced new possibilities for the educational context. Canva reduces the technical barriers associated with visual design, enabling even beginner users to create professional-quality presentations with minimal effort (*Churiyah et al., 2022; Fahrudin & Pamungkas, 2022*).

Despite growing interest in digital tools for language teaching, research on Canva's application within presentation skills courses in North African higher education remains limited. This study addresses that gap by examining how students in the Presentation Skills course at the University of Tripoli Al-Ahlia use Canva over three semesters. By analyzing student perceptions gathered through a structured questionnaire, the study provides evidence-based insights into the pedagogical value of Canva in this specific context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Presentation Skills in Higher Education

Presentation competence is a multidimensional construct encompassing verbal fluency, non-verbal communication, audience awareness, content organization, and visual design (*Hinchcliff & Mehmet, 2023*). Research consistently identifies several challenges students face when preparing and delivering presentations, including insufficient preparation time, difficulties in organizing content coherently, lack of design skills, and presentation anxiety (*Anwar et al., 2019*).

Digital Tools in Language Learning

The integration of digital technologies into language learning has been extensively studied, with findings consistently pointing to improvements in motivation, engagement, and skill development (*Priansa, 2017; Siti Mutmainnah et al., 2024*). Tools that support visual communication, collaborative work, and creative expression are particularly beneficial in presentation-focused courses.

Canva in Educational Contexts

Canva for Education has attracted considerable scholarly attention. Churiyah et al. (2022) found that Canva enhanced students' creativity and digital literacy. Fahrudin and Pamungkas (2022) reported improvements in visual design skills and engagement. Sinduningrum et al. (2021) observed that Canva's collaborative features promoted teamwork, while Wahidin et al. (2022) noted significant increases in student motivation. Hinchcliff and Mehmet (2023) found that students using Canva reported higher confidence levels and greater satisfaction compared to those using traditional tools.

Research Gap

While the existing literature provides substantial evidence of Canva's educational benefits, studies focusing on North African or Libyan higher education contexts are clearly absent. The present study addresses this gap by providing evidence from the English language department at the University of Tripoli Al-Ahlia.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Multimedia Learning Theory

Richard Mayer's (2009) Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning posits that learners process verbal and visual information through separate cognitive channels, and that well-designed multimedia materials can reduce cognitive load while enhancing comprehension and retention. Canva directly supports these principles by enabling students to combine text, images, infographics, and animations within a single presentation.

Constructivist Learning Theory

Constructivist Learning Theory, rooted in Piaget (1970) and Vygotsky (1978), holds that knowledge is actively constructed through experience, reflection, and social interaction. Canva embodies constructivist principles by placing design activity in the hands of students, who make independent decisions about layout, color pattern, and content sequencing, while collaborative features repeat the social learning dimension emphasized by Vygotsky (1978).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive survey research design, employing a structured questionnaire to assess students' perceptions of using Canva in the Presentation Skills course.

 Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Descriptive survey methods are well suited to capturing participants' attitudes, experiences, and self-reported behavioral changes (*Cohen et al., 2018*).

Participants

Participants were drawn from three successive semesters of the Presentation Skills course at the University of Tripoli Al-Ahlia (n = 87). Canva was introduced as the primary design tool for creating presentation slides, which students submitted directly to the course instructor via the platform's sharing functionality.

Instrument

A structured Likert-scale questionnaire measured students' perceptions across seven dimensions: (1) ease of use and accessibility; (2) visual design quality; (3) creativity and innovation; (4) time management and efficiency; (5) confidence and presentation skills; (6) collaborative features; and (7) overall satisfaction. Items were rated on a five-point scale (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree). Open-ended items invited qualitative feedback.

FINDINGS

The findings are organized around the seven questionnaire dimensions. Figure 1 provides an overview of student agreement rates across all dimensions, confirming that responses were strongly favorable throughout.

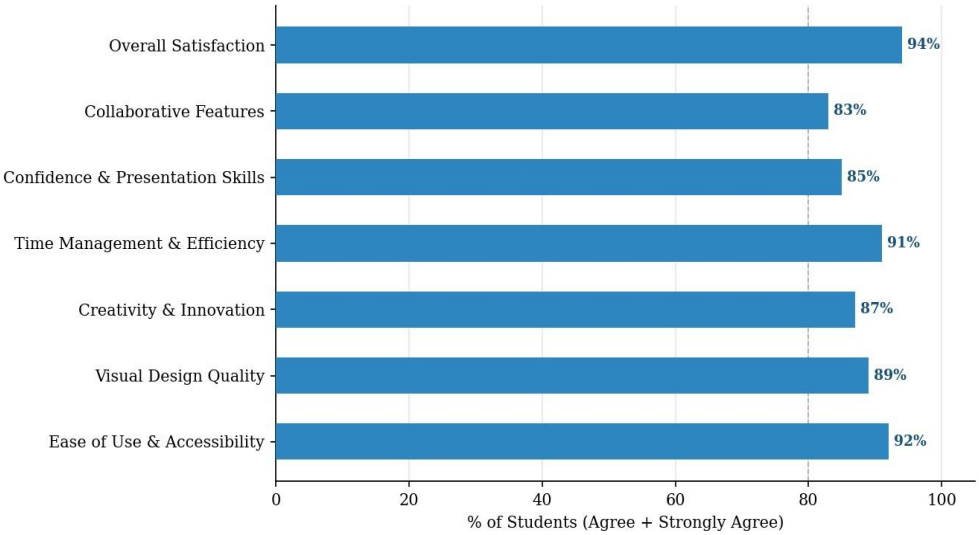


Figure 1. Student Agreement Rates by Questionnaire Dimension (n = 87).

As shown in Figure 1, the highest agreement rates were recorded for Overall Satisfaction (94%) and Ease of Use & Accessibility (92%), with all other dimensions exceeding 83%. Figure 2 provides a more granular view of the full Likert-scale distribution.

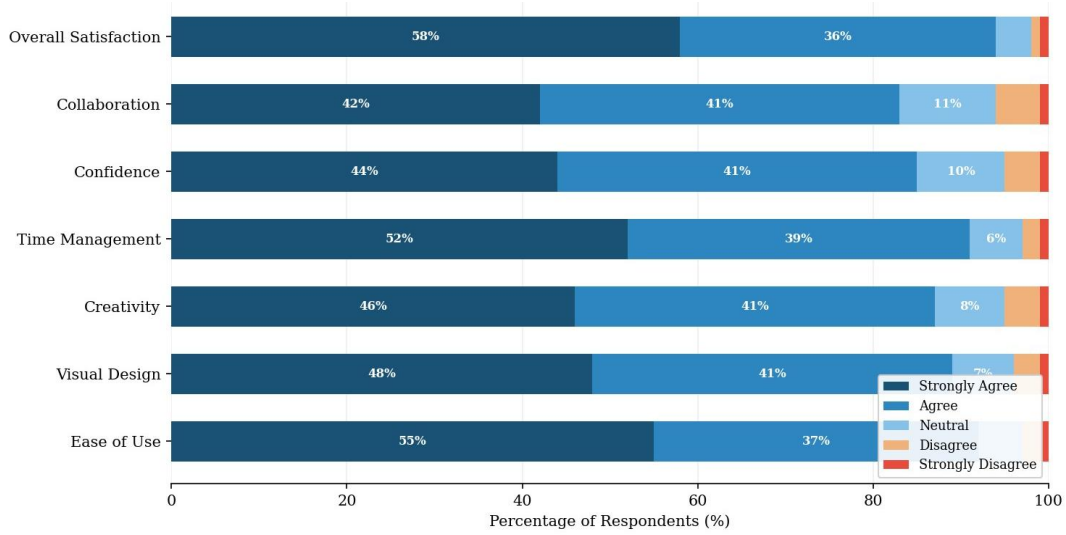


Figure 2. Likert-Scale Response Distribution Across All Dimensions (n = 87).

 Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Ease of Use and Accessibility

A substantial majority of students (92%) reported that Canva was easy to learn and accessible across multiple devices. The platform's intuitive drag-and-drop interface significantly reduced the learning curve, allowing students to focus on content quality rather than technical mechanics.

Visual Design Quality

Students reported marked improvements in the visual quality of their presentations after using Canva (89% agreement). The extensive library of professionally designed templates, fonts, and graphic elements allowed students to produce elegant, aesthetically coherent slides without prior design training.

Creativity and Innovation

Canva emerged as a significant enabler of creative expression, with 87% of students agreeing it enhanced their creativity. Many respondents noted discovering previously unrecognized creative abilities through their engagement with the platform.

Self-Reported Skill Development: Before and After Canva

Figure 3 illustrates students' self-reported skill levels before and after Canva integration, showing substantial gains across all measured competencies.

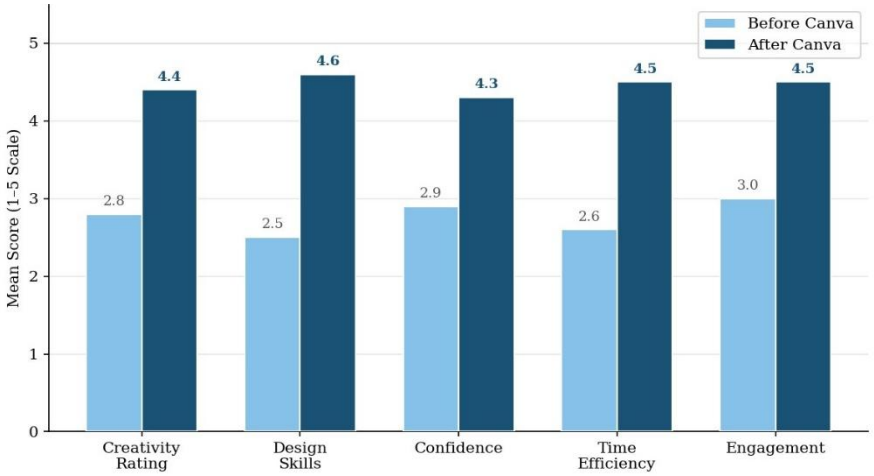


Figure 3. Self-Reported Skill Levels Before and After Canva Integration (n = 87)

The most pronounced gains were observed in Design Skills (from 2.5 to 4.6) and Time Efficiency (from 2.6 to 4.5), followed by Creativity (2.8 to 4.4) and Confidence (2.9 to 4.3). These results indicate that Canva had a broad and positive impact across multiple competency dimensions.

Time Management and Efficiency

One of the most consistently reported benefits was efficiency (91% agreement). Figure 4 shows students' self-reported estimates of time saved on presentation design after adopting Canva.

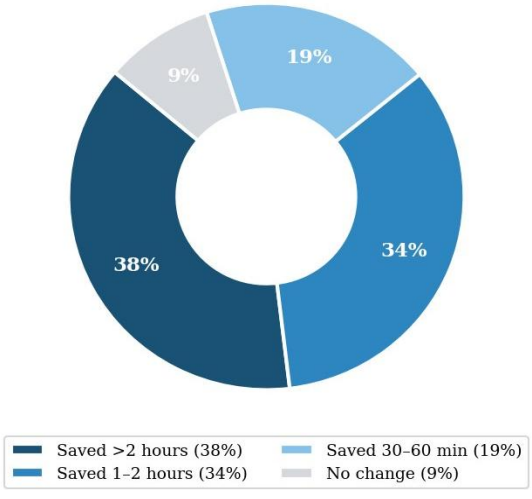


Figure 4. Reported Time Saved on Presentation Design After Using Canva (n = 87).

 Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Notably, 72% of students reported saving more than one hour per presentation, with 38% indicating savings of over two hours. This freed time was redirected toward content development and delivery rehearsal, enhancing the overall quality of student presentations.

Semester-Over-Semester Trends

Figure 5 tracks mean scores across the three semesters in which Canva was used, revealing a consistent upward trend across all key dimensions.

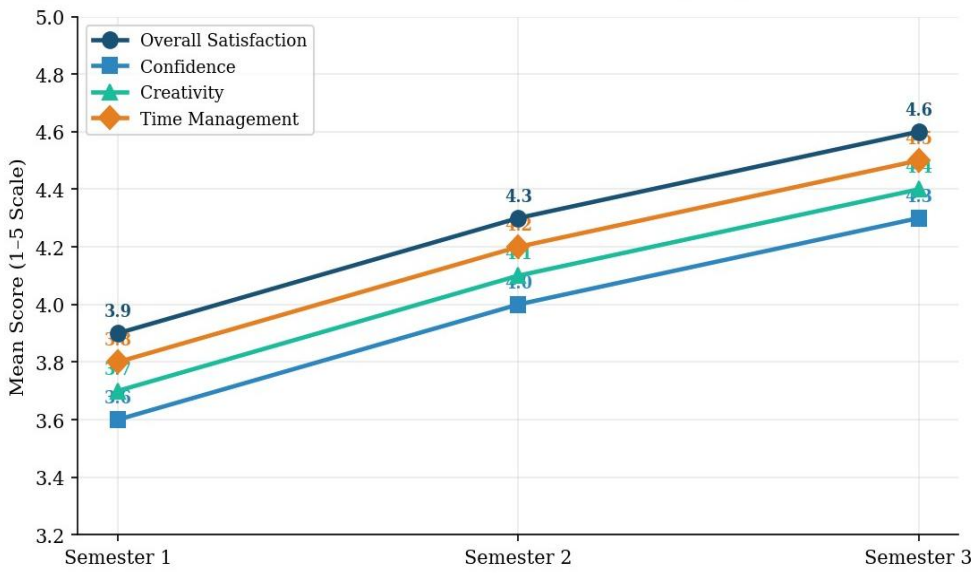


Figure 5. Mean Scores Across Three Semesters by Key Dimension (n = 87).

Scores improved steadily from Semester 1 to Semester 3 across Overall Satisfaction (3.9 → 4.6), Time Management (3.8 → 4.5), Creativity (3.7 → 4.4), and Confidence (3.6 → 4.3). This upward trajectory suggests a compounding effect, with students' growing familiarity with Canva leading to progressively greater benefits over time.

DISCUSSION

Canva and Multimedia Learning

The findings offer strong support for Multimedia Learning Theory (Mayer, 2009). Students' reports of improved visual design quality and greater clarity of communication align with the theory's prediction that combining text with visual elements enhances learning outcomes. The substantial gains in design skills (from 2.5 to 4.6 on a 5-point scale) are particularly noteworthy and consistent with findings from Churiyah et al. (2022) and Sinduningrum et al.
(2021).

Canva and Constructivist Learning

The enhancement of creativity, confidence, and collaborative skills resonates with Constructivist Learning Theory (Piaget, 1970; Vygotsky, 1978). Students' active engagement in design decision-making and peer collaboration replicates the knowledge-construction activities that constructivist pedagogy prioritizes. Canva's scaffolding through templates also reflects Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development, enabling students to achieve higher competence levels than they could independently.

Time Efficiency and Pedagogical Value

The finding that 72% of students saved more than one hour per presentation has important pedagogical implications. In settings where class time is limited, tools that enhance efficiency without sacrificing quality are particularly valuable. The time saved can be redirected toward higher-order activities such as argumentation development and delivery rehearsal, improving the depth and quality of student learning.

Sustained Growth Across Semesters

The semester-over-semester improvement trend (Figure 5) suggests that Canva's benefits are not merely novelty effects but reflect genuine, sustained skill development. As students became more proficient with the tool, they were able to leverage its full range of features more effectively, resulting in progressively stronger presentation outcomes.

Implications for Pedagogical Practice

The findings suggest several practical implications:

 Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

- Canva should be formally integrated into Presentation Skills curricula as a core design tool, supported by structured instruction.
- Assessment rubrics should explicitly include visual design quality as a marked component.
- Instructors should leverage Canva's collaborative features to design group tasks that promote peer interaction and distributed accountability.
- Professional development programs for faculty should include Canva for Education training.
- Institutions should ensure equitable access via official Canva for Education accounts.

CONCLUSION

This study has provided empirical evidence of the positive impact of Canva integration on university students' presentation competence at the University of Tripoli Al-Ahlia, English Language Department. Survey data from 87 students across three semesters demonstrate consistent and meaningful improvements in visual design skills, creativity, time management, confidence, and collaborative ability. The semester-over-semester growth trend further confirms that these benefits deepen with continued Canva use, reinforcing its long-term pedagogical value.

The findings contribute the first contextually grounded evidence from a Libyan higher education setting, extending the applicability of existing international research. Future work should employ experimental designs to establish causal relationships, and longitudinal studies should track whether observed benefits persist into professional contexts.

In conclusion, Canva represents a powerful and accessible digital pedagogical tool that, when thoughtfully integrated into Presentation Skills instruction, can transform the quality of student presentations, enrich the learning experience, and prepare graduates for the visual communication demands of contemporary academic and professional life.

REFERENCES

1. Anwar, K., Arifani, Y., & Nimasari, E. P. (2019). Digital-based collaborative learning: Exploring students' perspectives on technology-enhanced group tasks. Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics, 4(2), 145–159.
2. Churiyah, M., Sholikhan, S., Filianti, F., & Sakdiyyah, D. A. (2022). Indonesia education readiness conducting distance learning in Covid-19 pandemic situation. International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding, 7(6), 491–507.
3. Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). Research methods in education (8th ed.). Routledge.
4. CPLT. (2023). Canva as a pedagogical learning tool in tertiary education: A review. Centre for Professional Learning and Teaching Working Paper Series.
5. Fahrudin, A., & Pamungkas, A. S. (2022). The use of Canva in improving students' visual design ability in English class presentations. Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, 9(1), 88–100.
6. Hinchcliff, R., & Mehmet, M. (2023). Digital design tools and communication competence: Student experiences with Canva in higher education. Education and Information Technologies, 28(3), 3201–3220.
7. JELTIS. (2024). Canva for presentation skills: Bridging multimedia design and English language learning. Journal of English Language Teaching, Innovation, and Strategies, 6(1), 12–27.
8. JIIP. (2023). Implementation of Canva media in constructivist learning: Evidence from Indonesian higher education. Jurnal Inovasi dan Ilmu Pendidikan, 5(2), 67–80.
9. JIML. (2025). Canva-based learning activities and critical thinking development among university students. Journal of Innovation in Media and Learning, 3(1), 34–48.
10. Mayer, R. E. (2009). Multimedia learning (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
11. Piaget, J. (1970). Science of education and the psychology of the child. Orion Press.
12. Priansa, D. J. (2017). Pengembangan strategi dan model pembelajaran. Pustaka Setia.
13. Sinduningrum, E., Rahmat, A., & Sumirat, F. (2021). Students' perceptions of using Canva as a learning media in presentation skills class. Proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Sustainable Innovation, 221–229.
14. Siti Mutmainnah, S., Ibrahim, N., & Muin, A. (2024). Teachers as creative facilitators: Rethinking pedagogy in the digital age. Asian Journal of Applied Linguistics, 11(1), 55–70.
15. Wahidin, U., Asyari, M., & Hidayat, H. (2022). Canva-based learning media: Improving motivation and learning outcomes in higher education. Jurnal Teknologi Pendidikan, 14(2), 102–115.

 Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

16. Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes. Harvard University Press.

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions, and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of **AUJARS** and/or the editor(s). **AUJARS** and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions, or products referred to in the content.

 Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).