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**Contrasting Perspectives of Pre-service and In-service English Teachers:  
What Should Be an English Teacher's Role? <sup>1</sup>**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study aims to find out and compare the perspectives of pre-service and in-service English teachers about the role of an English teachers. The study adopted a qualitative research design and a written interview protocol (WIP) was used to gather data. 292 pre-service teachers receiving education in English Language Teaching (ELT) Department at four different state universities and 49 in-service English teachers from 14 cities in Turkey participated in the study. Constant comparison method was used to interpret and categorise the qualitative findings. In light of the data analysis, 17 major teacher roles emerged: model, facilitator, guide, prompter, counsellor, consultant, supporter, organizer, authority, observer, mentor, motivator, helper, speaker, leader, friend and participant. There were both similarities and differences between the two groups of participants. For example, "model" had the highest frequency in both groups because 75 pre-service and 10 in-service participants stated that an English teacher should be a model for their students in terms of linguistic accuracy and fluency. However, some pre-service teachers saw English teachers as a prompter, counsellor, consultant, supporter, organizer, authority, observer and participant whereas there were no in-service teachers referring to these roles. To catch up with the changing nature of teaching and meet the expectations, pre-service teachers should be exposed to real classroom settings, observed and given feedback accordingly. As for in-service teachers, they should be mentored by a more knowledgeable or experienced peer and directed by inspectors and authorities based on their weak and strong points.

**Key Words:** Teacher role, English teaching, professional development, pre-service teacher education, in-service teacher education.

## 1. Introduction

Teaching is a dynamic profession changing in line with the necessities of the era and so is teacher role (Wallace, 1991). Teachers are expected to keep up with the changing demands of lifestyle in the course of time and they assume different roles depending upon the crowd of classes, learner characteristics, and the nature of the activity and physical appearance of the classroom. These roles range from group member, model, moderator to facilitator, guide and knowledge transmitter. The changing role of teachers is especially important in foreign language teaching contexts.

Due to the changing status of English in ESL and EFL contexts, English teachers may prefer turning into a different role to ease understanding or increase motivation. To exemplify, English teachers can refer to pair work or group work in crowded classrooms to ensure the participation of each student and promote their willingness. As to group works where students work together to reach common goals and team spirit is needed, the teacher needs to ensure group resilience and student willingness

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for an effective application. In group works, students learn to go on finishing their tasks in spite of hardships and survive difficult moments, which necessitates collective efficacy (Putney & Broughton, 2011). At this point, the teacher turns into the role of classroom community organizer to promote collective efficacy among group members. Similarly, English teachers can act as community organizer when students are assigned group work or engaged in project-based learning in order to guide students and help them overcome their difficulties. In this regard, Wei (2016) points out the need for change for English teacher roles due to changing learner characteristics.

## 2. Previous Studies

Teachers work in different institutions and their schools that are their workplaces determine the effects of context-bound differences on their personal and professional features. These effects could cause negative consequences like teacher burnout, job leaving or even some health problems. Included in risk factors for teachers' health, teaching role was associated with work stress and strain according to the answers of 399 secondary school teachers in the UK (Mulholland, McKinlay, & Sproule, 2013). Consequently, teacher role may have irreversible influences on teachers if not considered deeply or handled appropriately. In contrast, handled appropriately, changing teacher roles can improve students' learning. Upon the analysis of 210 educational research related articles published between 2005-2011, it was found out that teachers' acting as a role model was among the factors such as professional competencies, learner characteristics, classroom interaction and school culture which influence teaching for creativity (Davies, Jindal-Snape, Digby, Howe, Collier, & Hay, 2014).

Teachers take on different roles not only for students but also for parents. In this-regard teacher-parent roles as different links of the stakeholder chain draws attention. Crozier (1999) pointed out the discrepancies between the changing expectations of working-class parents of secondary school students and the same strategies employed by teachers for parental cooperation regardless of differences. It appears that using the same strategy may cause some parents to regard themselves as passive in education and teachers may not improve their roles related to parental involvement.

Yoon (2008) questioned the roles regular classroom teachers possess and revealed that the participant teachers saw themselves as teachers for all students, for regular education students or for a single subject. Their teaching practices were found to be affected by English language learners' participation and students' self-positioning as powerful or powerless students. Thus, it can be said that teachers assume different roles in different classroom settings and teacher roles mutually interact with student roles. As for foreign language teaching, Moon and Harris (2016) studied the role expectations of 71 pre-service English teachers in Australian context and found that 94% of the respondents valued strong content knowledge as the most important teacher quality while this was closely followed by love of the subject with 92% of the respondents. Additionally, desire to work with children was found significant by 88% of the respondents whereas 70% preferred communication skills as an indicator of teacher quality.

There are national and international criteria for pre-service and in-service teachers in order to follow certain standards in teacher education across countries. Like South-African policy makers, Turkish Ministry of National Education (MoNE) established various competences and roles for teachers. However, teachers' beliefs and practices may not match due to contextual factors. What is required at theoretical level may not be actualized depending upon classroom realities or changing teaching

practices (Harley et al., 2000). Turkish MoNE established generic and field-specific teacher competencies and has been improving their content with the participation of the stakeholders. English teachers are also expected to possess these competencies and gain various roles in the course of teaching activities (Atmaca, 2016).

The reason why teacher beliefs come to the fore in teacher education results from the fact that teachers' professional knowledge and beliefs shape their teaching practices (Lemus-Hidalgo, 2017). Initial beliefs of student teachers when they start pre-service teacher education programme may undergo certain changes in the course of time. Their explicit beliefs in the form of pedagogically correct values and implicit beliefs affected by pedagogical discourses come into play while they form their beliefs about teaching (Wright, 1997). In line with their beliefs, the teacher roles they assume in their classes show differences and they may experience reality shock while gaining a different role for different students, schools, parents and administrators. Therefore, student teachers' awareness should be increased about the changing nature of teacher roles so that when they become in-service teachers, their previous knowledge can assist them to cope with the possible situations.

Although there are studies about teacher roles in foreign language teaching, there exist no studies which compare the perspectives of pre-service teachers and in-service teachers. Therefore, this study aims to find out and compare the perspectives of pre-service and in-service English teachers about the role of an English teacher in Turkish EFL context. In this way, the study will shed light upon an overlooked area in foreign language teacher education and fill a gap in the literature. The study will answer the following research questions:

- 1- What are the perspectives of English teachers about the role of an English teacher in Turkish EFL context?
- 2- Are there any similarities and differences between the perspectives of pre-service and in-service English teachers about the role of an English teacher in Turkish EFL context?

### 3. Methodology

This study is a descriptive study since it aims to reveal and describe the current situation of the phenomenon in question in detail. The study adopted a qualitative research method because the researcher aimed to get in-depth opinions of the participants and examine the phenomenon from different perspectives. However, only utilising words was thought to be insufficient to make generalisations and obtain the general framework. Thus, frequency of the emerging themes was also given to benefit from the complementary nature of words and numbers (Cresswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003).

As the data collection tool, a written interview protocol (WIP) which consists of question items was designed by the researcher and sent to six academicians in ELT department at four different state universities in order to get expert opinion. Its validity and reliability procedures were completed via think-aloud protocols. After the revisions required by the experts were completed, the interview protocol was piloted on 48 pre-service and 10 in-service English teachers in Ankara, and some minor changes about wording were done. It took about 30 minutes to complete the interview protocol. After it took its final shape, the researcher sent e-mails to 8 instructors to apply it and they all replied positively to the researcher. As for in-service teachers, the researcher wrote a petition to Turkish

Ministry of National Education (MoNE) to get permission to apply the interview protocol on the teachers working at state schools. 14 cities in Turkey were chosen to conduct the study and these cities were third-level cities in terms of their socio-economic representation of the region they are found in according to TÜİK (Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu-Turkish Statistical Institute) criteria. This was done to increase the representativeness of the sample and make sound conclusions. The study took about one year to conduct due to lack of participation or late replies of some in-service teachers.

There were 342 participants in total. 292 pre-service teachers (seniors) who receive education in ELT Department at four different state universities-namely Gazi University, Hacettepe University, Middle East Technical University and Pamukkale University- and 49 in-service English teachers working in 14 cities in Turkey participated in the study. The in-service teachers were working at different school types like primary school, vocational high school and Anatolian high school. The in-service participants were English teachers working in Denizli, Ankara, İstanbul, Diyarbakır, Trabzon, Yozgat, Mersin, Aksaray, Bolu, Afyon, Şanlıurfa, Niğde, Malatya and Artvin. Out of 49 in-service English teachers, 33 were female and 16 were male. 6 were aged between 21-25, 19 were aged between 26-30, 15 were between 31-35, 8 between 41-15 and finally 1 between 46-50. 34 of the in-service participants were married while 15 were single. 42 in-service participants were graduates of English Language Teaching, 2 graduated from English Language and Literature, 2 from Translation and Interpretation and 3 from other departments. 1 had less than one year teaching experience, 20 had teaching experience between 1-5 years, 13 had 6-10 years, 8 had 11-15 years, 4 had 16-20 years and finally 3 had 21 years and over. 40 had B.A. degrees and 9 had M.A. degrees. 19 in-service participants were working at state high schools, 19 were working at state secondary schools and finally 11 were working at state primary schools in Turkey. 16 of them previously worked at a state primary school, 13 worked at a secondary school, 18 worked at a high school and finally 2 worked nowhere. 1 one of them taught English less than 15 hours or for 15 hours in a week, 8 taught English between 16-20 hours in a week, 16 of them taught English between 21-25 hours, and finally 24 taught 26 hours and over for a week.

Qualitative data analysis procedures were adopted since participant opinions were gathered with the interview protocol. Constant comparison method of grounded theory, which is used interchangeably with content analysis (Dörnyei, 2007), was applied to categorize the emerging themes because the written statements of the participants were constantly compared against each other in line with the coming flow new data considering the previous and next statement and making an interpretation (Glaser & Strauss, 1980). To lessen the subjectivity of qualitative data analysis where the data are interpreted and categorised, a separate coder apart from the researcher was also involved in data analysis procedures. The second coder was a research assistant doctor in ELT department at a state university. The coders followed a zigzag pattern while interpreting and categorising the emerging themes since they moved back and forth to build a bridge between the old and new data sample. For intra-rater reliability, both coders first formed their own categories and then revised these categories after three weeks. As to inter-rater reliability, agreement levels between the coders were calculated according to the inter-rater reliability formula suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994: 64). After the first quarter (25%) of the data were analysed, the coders held a meeting and compared their own categories. The first agreement level was found to be 85% in the first meeting. They detected the disagreed points and shared opinions to remove disagreement. Some participants were found to write personal characteristics of a teacher rather than teacher roles so these were excluded from further analyses. Moreover, the statements which give clue about teacher in terms of cultural issues,

communicative competence, learner autonomy and desuggesting learners were excluded because these were not about teacher roles but rather about professional skills. After the first meeting, the coders went on analysing the rest of the data and when all the data (100%) were analysed, there was a second meeting where the coders compared their final categories. This time inter-rater reliability was found to be 95% according to the formula. However, the coders went on discussions until there was a complete agreement between their categories. Finally, 17 teacher roles mentioned by the participants were identified.

#### 4. Results

At the end of the analysis 17 main teacher roles which were included in the written statements of the participants were identified as follows: model, facilitator, guide, prompter, counsellor, consultant, supporter, organizer, authority, observer, mentor, motivator, helper, speaker, leader, friend and participant.

Table 1 *Emerging teacher roles*

Teacher Roles	Pre-service	In-service	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Model	75	10	85	28.5
Facilitator	31	6	37	12.4
Guide	30	8	38	12.8
Prompter	19	0	19	6.4
Counsellor	6	0	6	2.1
Consultant	2	0	2	0.6
Supporter	4	0	4	1.3
Organiser	2	0	2	0.6
Authority	5	0	5	1.7
Observer	6	0	6	2
Mentor	4	2	6	2
Motivator	21	5	26	8.7
Helper	9	1	10	3.3
Speaker	23	1	24	8
Leader	9	3	12	4
Friend	9	1	10	3.3
Participant	7	0	7	2.3
Total	262	37	299	100 %

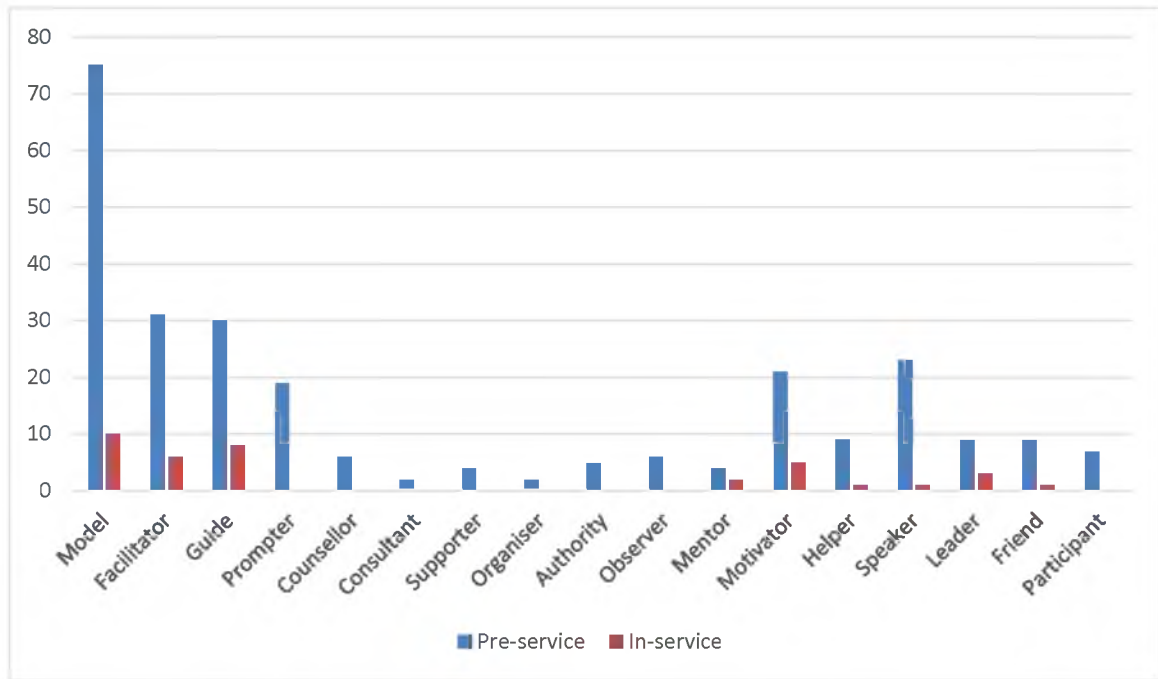
The pre-service participants reported the following roles: model (N: 75, 28.6%), facilitator (N: 31, 11.8%), guide (N: 30, 11.4%), prompter (N: 19, 7.2%), counsellor (N: 6, 2.3%), consultant (N: 2, 0.8%), supporter (N: 4, 1.6%), organiser (N: 2, 0.8%), authority (N: 5, 1.9%), observer (N: 6, 2.3%), mentor (N: 4, 1.6%), motivator (N: 21, 8.1%), helper (N: 9, 3.4%), speaker (N: 23, 8.7%), leader (N: 9, 3.4%), friend (N: 9, 3.4%) and participant (N: 7, 2.7%).

The in-service participants reported the following roles: model (N:10, 27.1%), facilitator (N: 6, 16.2%), guide (N: 8, 21.6%), mentor (N: 2, 5.4%), motivator (N: 5, 13.5%), helper (N: 1, 2.7%), speaker (N: 1, 2.7%), leader (N: 3, 8.1%) and friend (N: 1, 2.7%).



In line with the percentages, it can be said that “model”, “helper” and “friend” have very similar values in both groups. However, “facilitator”, “guide”, “mentor”, “motivator” and “leader” values are at a higher level in the in-service group. In contrast, “speaker” has a higher value in the pre-service group. In light of the findings, it is seen that the number of teacher roles reported by the pre-service participants is more than those of in-service participants.

Figure 1. Comparison of pre-service and in-service participant answers



According to the findings, “model” was the most preferred English teacher role by the participants (N: 85). This is followed by the roles of guide (N: 38) and facilitator (N: 37). Having native-like fluency or speaker role is in the fourth place (N: 24). Aside from these roles, some participants emphasized that an English teacher should love English and teaching while some others stressed the personal traits of a teacher such as being positive and honest as an indicator of a teacher.

Similarities and differences between pre-service and in-service participants were identified. To exemplify, “model” as a teacher role had the highest frequency in both groups because 75 pre-service and 10 in-service participants stated that an English teacher should be a model for their students in terms of linguistic accuracy and fluency. However, some pre-service participants thought English teachers as a prompter, counsellor, consultant, supporter, organizer, authority, observer and participant although no in-service teachers mentioned these roles in their statements.

Some participant quotations are given to exemplify the emerging teacher roles. “P” refers to pre-service teacher while “I” refers to in-service teacher. The following number represents the order of participation. It should be noted that this study offers one part of a large scale study and there were 450 participants (366 pre-service and 84 in-service teachers) to apply the interview protocol. However, only the respondents who answered the question item about teacher role in it were included in this study. First of all, pre-service quotations will be given.

*P12: He/she should be moderator, not the authority. In the future, with lots of technology, teachers' role will be improved strongly.*

P12 does not see an English teacher as an authority. Instead, s/he prefers the role of moderator and thinks that changing technology will change teacher roles in the future. This statement can be regarded as an evidence of the unavoidable effect of the era requirements on teachers.

*P62: First of all, an English teacher should be a model, but not only about English but also the whole parts of life. The other important thing is that an English teacher has to teach the correct and the best one.*

P62 sees an English teacher as a model and values their professional values. Having content knowledge, high level of linguistic accuracy and teaching world knowledge are among the expected teacher traits. Teaching values that are not included in course books is thought to contribute to learning beyond classroom walls.

*P65: The role is clear: not to just teach English, but to teach culture and world knowledge.*

P65 thinks that the role is not limited with teaching English only. Rather, teaching cultural issues and promoting consciousness about world knowledge also count in teacher roles. This statement reminds the inseparable nature of language and culture and points out the interaction of linguistic and cultural knowledge for an effective foreign language teaching.

*P73: First of all, an English teacher tries to make the students like English lessons and triggers them to learn a language.*

P73 talks about the motivator role of an English teacher and think that student motivation comes first to learn a foreign language.

*P259: Knowing the students, well. Giving important to diversity. Prepare the materials according to the Ss' needs. Motivating the Ss for learning the language. Encourage them to speak the language meaningfully. Doing real-life activities. Making explicit the learning outcomes.*

P259 makes a list about English teacher roles and includes building rapport with students, varying the materials and activities to cater for student needs, encouraging students, applying real life activities, enhancing speaking skills and setting realistic educational goals.

*P350: Prompter, resource and sometimes participant. Being facilitator is also good.*

P350 mentions several teacher roles such as prompter, resource and participant. S/he also favours the facilitator role of the teacher.

Now in-service participant quotations will be given to further exemplify the afore-mentioned teacher roles.

*I377: An English teacher should make the students like this language and teach them that this language is not just a lesson, also the language contributes to their lifelong career.*

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I377 explains the motivator role of the teacher and reports how motivation can contribute to students' future career. S/he adds the place of motivation for lifelong learning, too.

*I406: An English teacher shouldn't be busy with the formal and administrative staff. We should help learners find their own way to learn. If I faced discrepancies about my role I would go on my own way.*

I406 stresses the helper role of the teacher but does not underestimate the individual preferences of the teacher due to practical problems. S/he also criticizes the administrative works of a teacher and work overload.

*I423: Teaching a second language is a difficult task so it requires a lot of energy, Teachers must be role model while learning language and they should set positive examples for the students. A teacher should be facilitator and motivator. They also should know the students' changing needs, for this reason they should always update themselves.*

I423 points out the tiring nature of teaching a foreign language and orders teacher roles as model, facilitator and motivator. S/he also adds the need for teachers to keep up with the requirements of changing technology to serve student needs better.

*I430: Teaching a foreign language is totally teaching everything of the language. The country, the people, the culture, the traditions, the music, the celebrities and so on. So you need to know everything about it. You should be like one of those people of that country.*

I430 thinks that language cannot be separated from the country it is spoken, native speakers and cultural events where the target language is used. S/he seems to be in favour of promoting intercultural competence among students and values teachers' professional and intercultural competences.

*I433: An English teacher shouldn't prepare the students for the exam. I think English exams are not reliable. English teachers should be just a guide in teaching English.*

I433 criticizes the central exams which directly determine the academic future of students in Turkey. S/he does not think that preparing students for such high-stake exams should be the foremost role of an English teacher. Instead, the guide role is thought to be better.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to find out and compare pre-service and in-service participants' perspectives about English teacher roles in Turkish EFL context. 17 roles emerged: model, facilitator, guide, prompter, counsellor, consultant, supporter, organizer, authority, observer, mentor, motivator, helper, speaker, leader, friend and participant. Besides, "model" was found to be the most preferred English teacher role (N: 85). This is followed by the roles of guide (N: 38) and facilitator (N: 37). Having native-like fluency or speaker role comes in the fourth place (N: 24). As for similarities and differences between pre-service and in-service participants; the "model" role had the highest frequency in both groups because 75 pre-service and 10 in-service participants favoured this role. However, some pre-service teachers thought English teachers as prompter, counsellor, consultant, supporter, organizer, authority,



observer and participant while there were no in-service teachers who included these roles in their statements.

This study bears some similarities and differences with the previous research results. Echoing Putney and Broughton (2011), the organizer role of the teacher for effective group work activities emerged as an important teacher role. In parallel with Davies, Jindal-Snape, Digby, Howe, Collier and Hay (2014), the role model status of the teacher had the highest frequency (N: 85). In contrast to Moon and Harris (2016), strong content knowledge and love of the subject were not the frequently mentioned roles. Rather, a few participants touched upon these two issues in their statements. One of the teacher roles which was not mentioned by the participants in this study is the cooperate role of the teacher with related stakeholders including parents, which may result from the fact that teachers employ similar or the same approaches to deal with parental issues (Crozier, 1999).

To serve the needs of learners with different language levels, ages and expectations, English teachers should be exposed to different teaching settings as much as possible during pre-service teacher education. If they are required to be well-equipped in advance, they should be given ample practicum and application opportunities in different school settings (Knoblauch & Chase, 2015). However, in Turkey, English teacher candidates have school experience and practicum courses in their last year and they visit the same school for the whole academic year. On the one hand, this could be advantageous for pre-service teachers to be familiar with a certain age group and get used to the school climate and rules. On the other hand, they may miss the opportunity to work with a different learners group at a different age and language level. Thus, they should be encouraged to teach in real school settings as much as possible and the link between universities, schools and stakeholders should be considered and strengthened (Deed, Cox, & Prain, 2011), which is possible with the help of an effective mentoring programme for pre-service and in-service teachers (Koc, 2011).

Pre-service teachers are given theoretical knowledge about approaches and methods for foreign language teaching. They come across new terms and new teacher roles in each teaching method which has its unique characteristics in terms of theory of language and language learning, syllabus, activities, teacher roles, student roles and materials (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). They may feel overwhelmed or confused and ask themselves “which one is the best?” They are inclined to memorise some key terms and teaching roles in different methods but at the end of the year, after they take the final examination, they might forget what they have learned all the year. In addition, some of them may not be able to arrive at sound conclusions or form their individual preferences regarding teacher roles. If pre-service teachers cannot synthesize the teacher roles they are exposed to all year, the education they receive may not make sense in that when they are appointed at a school, they may get lost in the gap between what they were told at university and what they are expected in real teaching settings. In Turkish EFL context, for teachers to promote success among their students, first of all they must be equipped with the necessary theoretical and practical competencies. If not empowered with self-sources, teachers may find it difficult to foster linguistic knowledge of their students and suffer from dilemma in their teaching roles and competencies. As for teacher educators, while delivering the content of the course, they must pay attention on consciousness-raising activities emphasizing the traits of the post-methods era and the necessity of the eclectic approach or individual approach based on contextual needs and learner characteristics. Pre-service teachers should be informed that there is no perfect and one teaching method or teaching role due to changing nature of educational settings and stakeholder expectations.

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
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
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
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
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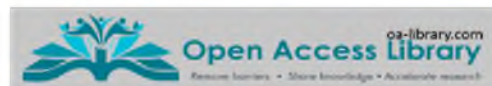


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