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The Journal of Teaching English for Specific and Academic Purposes
Vol. 12, No 2, 2024

Table of Contents

Regular Papers

THE JOURNAL OF TEACHING ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC AND ACADEMIC PURPOSES
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Review research paper

A REVIEW OF BIG DATA ANALYTICS IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Abstract. *The emergence of large corpora built from collections of human language, especially when integrated into artificial intelligence-driven systems, has created new opportunities for language teaching and learning, even though data collection and analysis in computer-assisted language learning is nothing new. Amazing linguistic talents are currently being generated by artificial neural networks. When working with large data sets, the education sector is progressively gaining popularity thanks to the use of data mining tools. Data from online educational platforms and the current ability to quickly gather, store, manage, and process data present an opportunity for educational institutions, students, teachers, and researchers. Numerous uses of big data exist in language learning, such as the real-time tracking and analysis of learner behavior, the creation and modification of teaching resources and techniques, and the enhancement of equational systems and rules. This position paper explores the application of big data in language learning and looks at several key ideas along with the most widely used instruments, approaches, and strategies in learning analytics and educational data mining. The methodological foundation of this study was the comprehensive literature review procedure. The value of data analytics in teaching English as a second language is assessed in three distinct scenarios. A tailored framework in the form of a process diagram has been suggested by the authors for English language learners whose mother tongue is Arabic.*

Key words*: EFL, TESOL, Big Data Analytics, Data mining, Learning Analytics*

1. INTRODUCTION

The advent of big data analytics has played a crucial role in the revolution of teaching and learning that has occurred in recent decades as a result of the integration of technology into education. Application of big data analytics has gained a lot of attention as academic institutions look for novel approaches to improve language instruction's efficacy. The goal of this research paper is to present a thorough analysis of big data analytics' application to TEFL (English as a Foreign Language) instruction. In the process, we look at how big data

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analytics has changed historically in education, talk about how relevant it is to language acquisition, and assess the advantages and disadvantages of its use.

Language acquisition is a dynamic and intricate process, especially when learning English as a foreign language. It calls for students to interact with a variety of linguistic components, cultural quirks, and instructional techniques. Standardized curricula and tests have long been the foundation of traditional language instruction, which occasionally fails to meet the specific needs and advancement of each individual student. On the other hand, the emergence of digital technology and the gathering of enormous volumes of educational data present a hitherto unseen chance to tailor and maximize language instruction.

2. BACKGROUND

Big data analytics, also known as learning analytics (LA) or educational data mining (EDM), has been increasingly popular in the educational field in recent years. In order to extract important insights on student behavior, performance, and engagement patterns, big data analytics entails the methodical collection, analysis, and interpretation of enormous datasets. These revelations can be used to improve educational results, customize learning experiences, and strengthen pedagogical methods (Baker 2019).

In addition, the dashboard produced by the data analysis process can help with decision-making and forecast outcomes for further improvement (Naidu et al. 2017). A more proactive and forward-thinking strategy will be enabled by the ability to track student advancement as well as the institution's success rate, status, successes, and areas of weakness in comparison to comparable benchmarked schools (Al Yousufi 2023).

The application of big data analytics to language learning is consistent with the more general learning goals of customization and flexibility. Conventional TEFL training may use a one-size-fits-all approach, presuming that students are all the same. Nonetheless, students in TEFL classes frequently have a variety of linguistic origins, learning preferences, and degrees of ability. By tailoring instruction to each student's needs, big data analytics can assist teachers in improving the learning process (Smith & Brown 2018). Big data analytics in TEFL offers a number of exciting opportunities for pedagogical advancement.

First of all, it makes it possible to monitor student performance and progress in real time. By examining how students engage with digital materials, teachers can learn more about the areas in which their pupils thrive and struggle. Targeted interventions can be informed by data-driven insights, providing struggling learners with timely support (Anderson 2017).

Second, big data analytics can help with the creation of intelligent tutoring programs and platforms for adaptive learning. These systems adapt the level of difficulty and content of exercises based on individual performance and preferences, using algorithms to give learners tailored learning pathways. This flexibility maximizes engagement and retention by guaranteeing that students receive content that is neither very difficult nor too simple (Johnson 2021).

Thirdly, big data analytics can help with curriculum evaluation and improvement. Through the examination of student accomplishment trends and the efficacy of various teaching resources, educational establishments can make well-informed choices on curriculum development and resource distribution. The efficacy and efficiency of TEFL programs are improved by this data-driven strategy (UNESCO 2020).

3. Literature Review

Data analytics has become a useful tool for educators and institutions to improve the teaching and learning of English as a second or foreign language. This includes educational data mining (EDM) and learning analytics (LA). This review of the literature investigates the use of data analytics in TESOL, looking at its advantages, disadvantages, uses, and field-wide effects.

3.1. Personalized Learning

Creating customized learning paths for students is one of the main uses of data analytics in TESOL. Teachers can customize education to match the needs of each student by evaluating each student's language proficiency level, learning style, and progress (González-Brenes 2015). To ensure that students receive individualized help, adaptive learning platforms, for instance, use data analytics to modify the level of exercises and content based on student success (Baker 2019).

3.2. Assessment and Feedback

Using data analytics, teachers may evaluate student performance at a more detailed level. Language proficiency in speaking, writing, listening, and reading can all be assessed by automated assessment systems, which can also indicate areas in need of improvement and provide thorough feedback (Romero & Ventura 2010). Students' understanding of their strengths and weaknesses is aided by this data-driven feedback loop, which promotes self-directed learning.

3.3. Curriculum Improvement

Data analytics can be used by institutions to assess how well teaching materials and language programs work. Educators can make data-driven decisions on curriculum design and resource allocation by examining student outcomes and engagement patterns (UNESCO 2020). This guarantees that TESOL courses stay current and adaptable to changing demands in education.

4. Proposed Process

The relationships between the Student, Learning Platform, English Course, Analytics Engine, and Language Data are depicted in this process diagram (Fig. 1). The student uses the Learning Platform to access the English course and peruses the course materials. The English Course provides them with feedback on the exercises they submit. The learning data is then sent to the Analytics Engine by the Learning Platform, which the Student uses to view learning analytics. After retrieving language data from the Language Data source, the Analytics Engine examines the learning data. Lastly, the student receives the analytics findings from the learning platform.

Big data analytics is applied in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) in a dynamic ecosystem that is largely dependent on the interactions between the student, learning platform, English course, analytics engine, and language data.

4.1 Student: The centerpiece of this ecosystem and the main gainer of the whole thing is the student. The English course material and the learning platform are just two of the elements the student engages with. Completing tasks, passing tests, taking part in debates, and interacting with multimedia content are examples of these interactions. Through the data points that are produced by each of these encounters, one can learn more about the student's learning path, preferences, skills, and limitations.

4.2. Learning Platform: Students access course materials, participate in activities, and monitor their progress in this virtual environment. By providing a single hub for learning, it helps students and educators communicate with one another. The platform keeps track of the activities and interactions of the students, including how long they spend on assignments, what resources they use, and how often they participate.

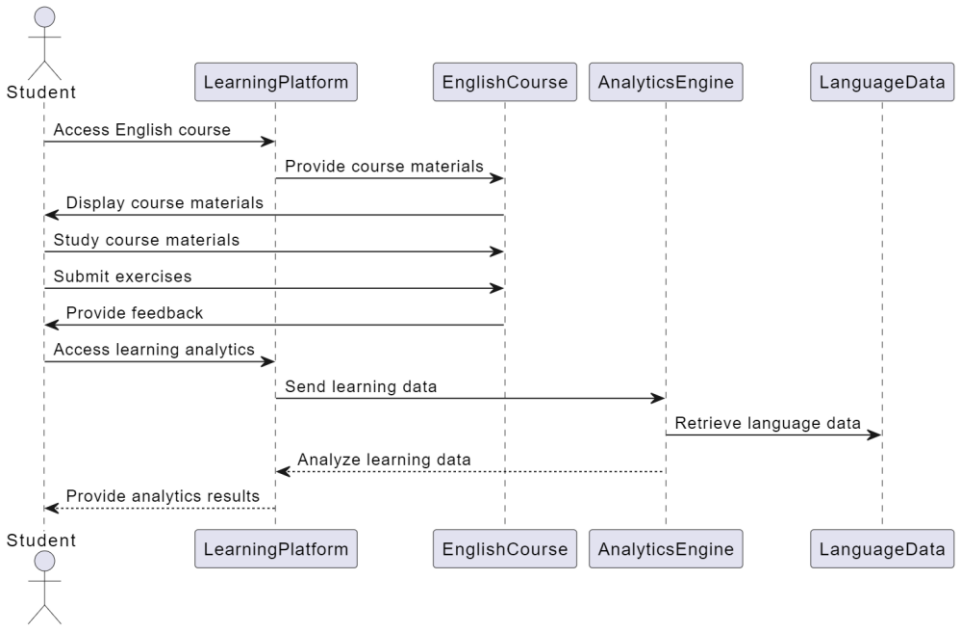

Fig. 1 UML diagram showing the proposed flow of the process

4.3 English Course: The lessons, activities, evaluations, and teaching materials included in the English course are meant to help students learn the language. These courses may be offered online or in conventional classroom settings. Text, audio, video, and interactive features are all possible in the material. Students create data that reflects their performance, comprehension levels, and responses as they interact with the course material.

4.4. Analytics Engine: The fundamental element in charge of handling and evaluating the data produced by students' interactions with the English course and learning platform is the analytics engine. To extract significant insights, it makes use of statistical approaches, machine learning algorithms, and data mining techniques. Personalized learning pathways, learning outcome prediction, and behavior patterns in students are a few examples of these discoveries. The analytics engine converts unprocessed data into knowledge that educational institutions and educators may use.

4.5. Language Data: A key component of language instruction and analysis is language data, which includes language corpora, linguistic databases, and reference resources. This information can be used to monitor vocabulary growth, analyze language usage trends, and gauge language proficiency. Furthermore, student-generated data and language data can be combined to offer a holistic picture of language learning progress.

When these encounters occur together, they form a feedback loop that keeps improving and customizing the learning process. By processing the data produced by student interactions, the Analytics Engine offers institutions and instructors insightful information. Based on the recommendations generated by analytics, educators can then change the course material, their teaching methods, and the individualized support they provide to each student. This environment gives teachers the ability to make data-driven decisions that increase TEFL program efficacy and, ultimately, student language learning outcomes. In the sector of education, where data-driven insights are reshaping the future of teaching and learning, it also highlights the revolutionary potential of big data analytics.

5. Benefits of Data Analytics in TESOL

5.1. Better results in learning

Using data analytics in TESOL has the potential to greatly improve student learning outcomes. Improved language competence and acquisition can result from tailored learning paths and prompt interventions based on data-driven insights (Smith & Brown 2018).

5.2. Resource Optimization and Efficiency

Data analytics finds areas where teaching and learning can be improved, which helps organizations use resources as efficiently as possible. Cost savings and more effective use of instructional resources are possible as a result (González-Brenes 2015).

5.3. Data-Driven Decision-Making

Based on data analytics, educational institutions and teachers can make well-informed judgments on curriculum development, instructional tactics, and resource allocation. The quality of TESOL programs is improved by this evidence-based strategy (Romero & Ventura 2010).

6. Challenges in implementing data analytics in TESOL

6.1. Data Privacy and Security

Data about students is collected and stored, which raises privacy issues. Establishing strong data security protocols and ensuring compliance with data protection laws are requirements for institutions (Baker 2019).

6.2. Ethical Considerations

One crucial factor to take into account is the ethical usage of data, particularly when working with minors. In order to resolve ethical concerns, transparency and informed consent are crucial (UNESCO 2020).

6.3. Technology Integration

Technology integration with conventional teaching techniques is necessary for the implementation of data analytics in TESOL. To use data analytics tools effectively, educators require assistance and training (Smith & Brown 2018).

7. Conclusion

The area of TESOL has a lot to gain from the incorporation of data analytics. But it also necessitates giving ethical and privacy issues considerable thought. In order to guarantee equitable access to data-driven learning resources, future TESOL research should address the digital divide, look into the long-term effects of data-driven instruction, and investigate the development of more advanced analytics tools (González-Brenes 2015).

The use of big data analytics in TEFL is emerging as a crucial frontier as technology and education grow more mutually dependent. The revolutionary potential of big data analytics in streamlining language training, customizing student experiences, and enhancing curriculum has been emphasized in this introduction. It has, though, also shown how important it is to give ethical and privacy issues serious thought.

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Review research paper

DEVELOP! DRAW! BUILD! WIRE: TEACHING ROMANTICISM TO ENGINEERING STUDENTS USING HYBRID PEDAGOGY

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Abstract. *As the 21st century has been marked as the age of 4Cs, the necessity of educating creative engineers has become a challenge for all educators, especially those teaching Humanities. Using Hybrid Pedagogy as a methodological approach to teaching, which strives to establish interconnectedness of learning, teaching, and technology in our lives, engineering students at the University of Kragujevac were engaged in the international celebration project Frankenreads. These students successfully materialized a series of 'engineering' project outcomes; they created a website, a video, a 3D visualization, an exhibition of book cover designs, a moving robot, and a dramatic enactment. The project assignments served as a bridge to students' future professions in an event agenda that could have easily been a real employment project. The paper finally explores how the implementation of authentic humanities-oriented projects creates more meaningful and impactful engineering educational contexts.*

Key words: *Frankenstein, Hybrid Pedagogy, Engineering, Humanities, Higher education, Romanticism*

1. INTRODUCTION

Whatever the literary category it belongs to, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* (1818) remains, arguably, one of the most influential novels in the world. The inventory of genres that could, conventionally, be pulled to define it, range from (the first) science-fiction novel to a Gothic (horror) story, only to let it be further thematically dissected as an epistolary narrative with elements of alchemy, a psycho-thriller, a literary utopia, an archetypal (anti)heroic mythic narrative, a teenage novel of identity, a tragic odyssey of the mankind, even a feminist novel (Mellor 1988), etc. To elope any rigid reductionist categorization and leave many insightful scholarly readings of the book aside, here I will rely solely on the pleasure a reader finds in the text whatever literary form it takes, and stick to what common knowledge of the book is - Frankenstein is a classic of English literature whose timeless cultural legacy goes far beyond the English-speaking countries. As such, no other Belles-lettres novel has had its iconic storyline so ruthlessly exploited in pop culture that it has been established as a pan-social authority and a phenomenon of its own. Finally, the prefix Franken- has

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become a meaning bearer of many terms across many disciplines, and has been constantly reappearing as a pejorative term, a synonym for something scary, corrupted, or modified. From the ecocritical perspective, the underlying motif of scientists playing God and the concept of humanity's misappropriation of power have raised many concerns about how we deploy biotechnologies. In the age of advent of the Artificial Intelligence, Metaverse and human engineering, this issue has become even more actual. For all those reasons, Shelly's novel emerges as an invaluable resource for teaching, especially to engineering students. It is a fantastic playground for raising intercultural awareness with an enormous potential for building various multidisciplinary projects that can add transformative value to participants' experiences.

A hybrid character of the novel, genre-wise, might initiate an interesting discussion on how hybrid our knowledge of Frankenstein is, giving us, educators, more capacity to decide which teaching approach to use when teaching it. For many, Frankenstein is a monster itself, not its creator. Indeed, building upon numerous film adaptations that have established a common visual identity of Frankenstein, many young people nowadays associate the monster with a green ogre with bolts in its neck. Similarly, the question of authorship is usually erroneously attributed to P. B. Shelly who is considered a more prominent literary figure than his wife. In other words, the question that arises here is: to what extent have we unintentionally 'inserted' our own interpretations into the character for the past 200 years by assigning meaning or a trait the character does not have, or by adopting certain Franken-related clichés without prior consulting relevant resources? These misconceptions become ingrained and widely accepted, perpetuating a hybrid understanding of the character. Over the years, such unintentional mish-mash hybridity in our connaissance of the novel has been cultivated for years in media and elsewhere further solidifying the misconceptions and distorting our understanding of the original intent and essence of the novel. For dispersing these and other common misconceptions about the novel, it would be interesting to explore whether 'cultural syncretism' in our learning about Romanticism is oversimplifying and devaluing the novel (especially with students who do not study Humanities), as we also might wish to investigate why has the consumerist culture privileged a 'hybrid' Frankenstein model, thus disregarding many artistic merits of the book?

I hypothesised that students who pursue STEM degrees and are considered Digital natives belong to the group whose knowledge of Frankenstein is indeed hybrid. That is why I conducted a project with the aim to teach foundations necessary for understanding Frankenstein's relevance and implications for science and technology today. For this particular project, the hybrid pedagogy approach emerged as the most suitable, hands-on teaching concept.

2. HYBRID PEDAGOGY OR FRANKENSTEINISATION OF EDUCATION

The hybrid learning model is not a new concept in education (Köppe and Midelkoop 2020) and should not be confused with blended learning as they contain the same instructional elements. Hybrid learning refers to learning that happens both in a classroom and online (Stommel 2012), includes synchronous and asynchronous communication, and can be defined as "an intermediate step between fully F2F and fully online learning environment" (O'Byrne and Pytash 2015, p.138). However, Hybrid

Pedagogy differs from the hybrid learning model as it emerges more as an overarching paradigm, not just a mere instructional strategy, and refers to "learning that happen[s] in a virtual place into a more engaged and dynamic conversation" (Stommel 2012). What makes Hybrid Pedagogy different is its specific methodological approach, as it is defined by the purpose of the physical place – in other words, Hybrid Pedagogy "merges the dimensions to such an extent that they become part of the same ecological system" (Hilli et al. 2019, p. 69). This concept is based on the premise that delineation between binaries in the learning environment (online/offline mode, teacher/student roles, formal/informal contexts, and analogue/digital communication) are blurred with the purpose "of creating new classroom experiences that cut across countries, courses, roles, contexts, as well as communication and media platforms" (Hilli et al. 2019, p. 66). In Hybrid Pedagogy "people connect and interact through a hybrid network of physical and technology-mediated encounters to co-construct knowledge and effectively engage in positioning practices necessary for their work" (Cook et al. 2016, p. 125). In other words, Hybrid Pedagogy is technologically supported collaborative learning geared toward (or even driven by) active student agency and engaging interactions in educational practices with the goal to accomplish learning outcomes in a more personalized and productive manner. Stommel and Rorabaugh (2012) elaborate:

> "As a philosophical concept, hybridity suggests hesitation at a threshold. Hybridity is not an attempt to neatly bridge the gap, but extends the moment of hesitation and thereby confuses easy categorization."

With an aim to elope the reductive binarity in terms of space/channel of instruction, Hybrid Pedagogy also disrupts the traditional boundaries set around the educators' participation in the process. Not only does it go beyond the simple integration of online and face-to-face learning, but, as Stommel (2020) posits, Hybrid Pedagogy extends beyond learning itself and encompasses a broader consideration of the multifaceted roles and experiences of educators in academic and non-academic contexts. It emphasizes the need for educators to navigate and cultivate a balanced understanding of hybridity within themselves while guiding students to recognize and navigate the complex interplay of hybridity in their own lives. This approach propels education into the 21st century by fostering critical engagement with tools, experiential learning, and the exploration of collaborative communities, thereby redefining teaching and learning processes (Marquis 2022).

Hybridity at its core emphasizes the exploration of intersections and interconnectedness within education. From a more holistic perspective, it could be described as a momentum, a fluidity, similar to "a fear Mary Shelley explores in Frankenstein, wondering about identity and physicality from the first phrase, 'I am by birth' " (Stommel 2018). As Melvin nicely put it "Hybridity implies that a number of pedagogies can be merged in order to work together […], it is not just a case of mixing traditional approaches with a digital dimension […]" (2019). It is a bricolage of different perspectives and approaches that are, in essence, related to the creation of communities of inquiry in which educators nurture a sense of belonging, addressing numerous challenges along the way. We, as educators and facilitators, have to design and build these communities with an understanding of these challenges (Stommel 2020).

In practice, Marquis (2022) suggests, Hybrid Pedagogy course discussions are initiated either in a virtual space or in the physical classroom, but they transition to the opposite medium, and go back and forth, when necessary. Secondly, students actively

participate in project-based or problem-based learning, leveraging advanced information and communication technologies to conduct research, synthesize knowledge, and present their findings. Crucially, the class projects involve connections with real-world clients, either within the local community or in virtual settings, and utilize high-tech tools to establish and maintain those relationships. Additionally, the incorporation of real-world experts and examples is facilitated through collaborative technologies, allowing for engaging conversations, exploration of diverse perspectives, and participation in experiences that would otherwise be inaccessible locally. Finally, the outcomes of these course projects are shared with a broader community through in-person interactions and presentations, as well as through virtual channels like Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, etc. From this perspective, Hybrid Pedagogy might introduce novel and exciting outcomes, as its specific approach allows us "to assess how changing time, place, and modes affects instructional objectives" (O'Byrne and Pytash 2015, p. 139).

Unfortunately, research studies on the practical implications of Hybrid Pedagogy have been scarce. Munday (2022) empirically showcased that numerous benefits emerge from the Hybrid Pedagogy approach in higher education settings, listing several factors such as the removal of geographic boundaries, the increased inclusivity afforded by digital teaching and learning; and the increased flexibility of accessing learning materials. The findings of his research suggest that Hybrid Pedagogy in higher education encompasses a pedagogical framework that skilfully blends various discourses, formats, tools, individuals, and contexts. Some benefits of Hybrid Pedagogy as a tool for assessment in higher education have already been explored (Köppe and Midelkoop 2020). However, as current research studies show that "[t]here may be a devaluing of the importance and effect of pedagogy and instructional design in hybrid learning" (O'Byrne and Pytash 2015, p. 139), this paper aims at demonstrating how under the Hybrid Pedagogy approach interesting and valuable projects can be designed.

Metaphorically speaking, the application of the Hybrid Pedagogy approach to this specific project might be referred to as the Frankenstainisation of Education. I would define it as an educational process in which we deliberately replace sections of the syllabus with more hands-on, life-like assignments related to the core course, where the teaching/learning focus gets radically changed; instead of aiming at reaching the initially planned learning goals, the teaching instruction is replaced by a self-directed and self-assessed student engagement in which the goals are defined by students. A productive process of increased student agency is central to it while teacher intervention is minimized. Further on, as outcomes go far beyond the classroom setting and are shared with a wider community, to perform such tasks it is essential that the participants engage, learn, share, commit, delve, produce, re-build, and deliver from a wide range of interdisciplinary angles and perspectives, reaching for many diverse skills and personal experiences, probably more intensively as compared with regular learning conditions. Such educational approach, broadly speaking, is indeed Frankensteined – uncertain, non-measurable, focused on innovation and collaboration, self-contained, self-influenced, hybrid in its use of online and offline tools and resources, aimed at students' drawing upon various, often non-related sources, being a bricolage of numerous learning paths and frameworks. In other words, it is a self-driven approach starting from 'the wondering' to create 'the wonderful', finally to be able to add to the overall value of the participants 'collective experience. A process that disregards the objectives written in a syllabus, geared towards 'learning bits here and there' along the way. As such, this

process is as unique in its own terms as Frankenstein itself. However, the problem of evaluating students' efforts and measuring the achieved learning outcomes is the main reason why clear guidelines for using this approach can be found non-applicable to any other similar group. While the actual project deliverables get materialized, what remains hidden is 'how we got there' and to what extent each contributor was engaged in the process. The group dynamics and the personal interactions appear difficult to assess.

When discussing hybridity as a teaching approach, one must not forget that the project we are talking about here was realized prior to the pandemic of COVID-19. Back in 2018, there was no collective uncertainty we all experienced during 2020 and onwards. Our 2018 Hybrid Pedagogy, being offered to students as an optional, non-mandatory framework for this project, allowed us to use the plethora of rich-in-cues activities that prioritized a communicative channel which seemed the most adequate at a certain point. As only a minority of students were firm proponents of exclusively remote instruction at that time, we privileged the circumstances and our personal preferences, and approached the process without the pandemic and post-pandemic pressures we were to encounter years later, without any fear of putting ourselves out there, and with voluntary unlocking more opportunities to collaborate in a vivid tapestry of a dozen of hybrid voices.

Toying with the idea that we could resort to a wide array of possibilities by empowering these young adults to take up learning opportunities, this Hybrid Pedagogy approach enhanced the feeling of togetherness in regard to the means of instruction and the desired outcomes. This feeling may have been poignantly missed during the lockdown, mainly due to the fact that in the next two years, we did not have any similar inspiring project to gather around, but, quite the contrary, we were focused solely on fulfilling the assignments listed in the syllabus. However, what may not come as a surprise, the Frankenstein learning experience had prepared us for the sudden transition to online instruction once the pandemic occurred, so we felt that the hybrid approach was something we had certain knowledge of.

On the other hand, the "Frankensteinisation" of education, while innovative, also presents certain challenges, one notable concern being the inherent complexity and unpredictability of such an approach. By replacing traditional syllabus elements with hands-on, self-directed assignments, educators risk creating a learning environment that is less structured and more difficult to evaluate. This shift from predetermined learning goals to student-defined objectives can lead to ambiguity in measuring educational outcomes and assessing individual contributions. The diverse, interdisciplinary nature of projects may enhance creativity and engagement but can also obscure the clarity and coherence of student achievements, making it challenging for educators to provide consistent feedback and for institutions to uphold academic standards. Moreover, this approach demands a high level of adaptability and self-regulation from students, which may not always align with their capabilities or expectations. Students accustomed to more structured, instructor-led environments might struggle with the autonomy and self-assessment required in such a framework. This can exacerbate inequalities in student performance, as those with stronger self-management skills may excel, while others may flounder. Additionally, the focus on innovative, collaborative projects might divert attention from fundamental knowledge and skills, potentially leading to gaps in core competencies. Consequently, while the Frankensteinisation of education obviously fosters a dynamic and flexible learning environment, it also poses significant challenges in terms of assessment, student preparedness, and the preservation of essential academic rigor.

The concept of "Frankensteinisation" in education can indeed be related to the idea of hybridity, but it is not synonymous with it. Frankensteinisation in education can be seen as a specific, radical instance of hybridity. Hybridity generally refers to the integration of diverse educational modalities, blending online and face-to-face interactions, formal and informal contexts, and various pedagogical approaches to create a dynamic and flexible learning environment (Stommel 2020; Hilli et al. 2019). This approach aims to blur traditional boundaries and adapt to varied learning needs while maintaining a coherent educational framework. In contrast, Frankensteinisation involves a more extreme transformation of curricula, characterized by an eclectic mix of instructional strategies and content driven by student agency and innovation, often deviating significantly from established norms (Marquis 2022).While hybridity seeks to enhance flexibility and adaptability within a structured framework, Frankensteinisation represents a more experimental approach that prioritizes creativity and personalization, potentially at the expense of coherence and clarity. This radical approach can lead to novel educational outcomes but also introduces challenges in terms of assessment and alignment with traditional educational objectives.

3. Literature Review

Unfortunately, there is not much evidence in the relevant literature of similar projects conducted with university students. One of the recent ones, nicely elaborated on by Sarah Maitland (2021), reports on how she taught Frankenstein to 2 different groups of students in two universities, although her approach did not include practical, hands-on activities similar to ours. Maitland (2021) argues that much of students' understanding of the Frankenstein text comes from their social context. Even after her numerous modifications in the teaching approach and providing more context "the outcome was much the same", as many of her students felt that the central idea of the story was that the violence was all natural and came as a consequence of bullying or hatred. This outcome suggests that Maitland's aim of encouraging a deeper, more critical engagement with the text—one that would challenge students to explore its complex themes beyond simplistic interpretations—was not fully realized, potentially due to the lack of interactive, hands-on elements that might have facilitated a more nuanced understanding.

On the other hand, in primary and secondary contexts, there are several research studies that elaborate on similar projects. For example, Nagy et al. (2020) reported on the project specially designed for Frankenstein 200 celebration with the idea to apply the narrative-based approach to teaching so as to enable learners to position themselves as scientists and learn about science and science ethics. The experiment did include the creation of a robot, a toy, mechanical sculptures, electricity experiments, etc, and included 145 observations which provided evidence that the Frankenstein narrative helped some participants reflect on the responsibilities of scientists when they design and conduct experiments (Nagy et al. 2020, p. 123). However, the participants were 5- to 12-year-olds, so this study is not relevant to be compared with the one we conducted. Similarly, Mawasi et al. (2021) designed a set of practical, interactive activities (a playdough doll, a moving mechanical device, etc.) to mark the bicentennial of Mary Shelley's novel, and afterwards explored how those assignments helped shape students' perceptions and understanding of science ethics. The findings of the exploratory research indicated that students (aged 14) felt that Science ethics is about being cautious, and about asking for

permission to conduct experiments which should be conducted in such a way that they cause no suffering of any kind. Finally, attempts have been made to introduce hybrid didactic ESP courses, and studies have shown that those were found enriching and can increase students achievements (Montalban 2021).

4. WHAT WE DID–RE-INVENTED BY TECHNOLOGY

Following the kind invitation of The Keats-Shelly Association of America (www.k-saa.org) to partake in the global event of celebrating 200 years of the novel Frankenstein with a related program of our own, I decided to design our own 3-day-event entitled '200 years of Frankenstein: Re-invented by Technology', at the Faculty of Technical Sciences in Čačak, with the students who attended English courses there. The general event framework consisted of the public reading of the book, which was the only activity the organizers asked for – participants could also organize various kinds of events, lectures, film screenings, and exhibits at high schools, universities, public libraries, and museums. We proudly joined the group of around 200 universities from 30 countries participating in the international event with an original program held in October-November 2018. The content of our event was to be decided upon with my engineering students in one of our English course classes. The main project goal was to involve the engineering students in a set of tasks and activities which might fall within their real professional duties as they demonstrate competences in the fields they actually major in. The idea was to incorporate teaching Frankenstein and the Romantic movement foundations under the Hybrid Pedagogy approach, which should help them understand the topic better so that the deliverables would be, hypothetically, worth paying for by any potential employer/customer, and in our case, those that would be perceived as enjoyable and entertaining by any random visitors. In other words, students were to offer innovative solutions within their scope of engineering education and future occupation, but with a twist – a customer (or audience in our case) wants the Frankenstein theme.

A cohort of 85 engineering students, hailing from diverse disciplines such as Graphic and Printing Technology, Information Technology, Electrical and Mechanical Engineering, and Production Management, actively participated in the assigned projects. Each group of students, according to their respective majors, was entrusted with specific assignments aligned with their areas of expertise. With a time frame of 8 weeks, encompassing regular teaching hours, we embarked on a comprehensive journey through various project phases: preparation, creative work/design, and culminating in the public display of their accomplished tasks.

In the initial stages, our collective brainstorming sessions resulted in a decision to devise several mini-projects and conduct open-access workshops to facilitate the realization of these endeavours, so that we could finally produce a website, a video, a 3D visualization, an exhibition of book cover designs, a moving robot, and a dramatic enactment of a fictional interview with Mary Shelley. Needless to say, we all agreed that the outcomes were to be presented to a wider audience, through several open-access public events.

For the students specializing in Information Technology (IT), the assignments revolved around the design and creation of diverse multimedia elements. They were tasked with developing captivating videos, engaging websites, and an immersive 3D Franken-simulation,

each project aiming to unleash their technical prowess and artistic sensibilities. The Graphic Technology majors embarked on an exciting journey of visual expression, focusing on the design of an exhibition showcasing book covers as well as crafting visually striking logos, posters, and flyers. This engagement allowed them to showcase their graphic design skills while delving into the artistic and aesthetic dimensions of their discipline.

Meanwhile, the students pursuing Mechanical and Electrical Engineering respectively were challenged with the construction of a functional moving robot, combining their engineering skills with creative problem-solving. Additionally, the selected students were tasked with the creation and delivery of a dramatic enactment centred around the intriguing question of authorship within the novel, adding a thought-provoking element to their assignments. Lastly, the Production Management majors embraced a multifaceted role, assuming responsibility for securing project investments, budget management, event promotion, and providing essential technical support. This comprehensive set of tasks allowed them to apply their knowledge and skills in a practical context, honing their organizational and managerial abilities.

Throughout the course of the project, dedicated workshops and guidance were provided to each group, ensuring that they had the necessary resources and expertise at their disposal. The workshops not only nurtured their technical proficiencies but also fostered a collaborative spirit, enabling students to learn from one another and build upon their collective knowledge.

At the culmination of the 8-week timeframe, a public exhibition was organized to showcase the remarkable achievements of the engineering students. The event provided a platform for them to present their work to a wider audience, creating an opportunity for meaningful engagement and feedback. Moreover, the use of various technological tools and platforms allowed for the dissemination of their projects beyond the physical exhibition space. Social media channels, including Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and discussion boards, facilitated the sharing and amplification of their endeavours, reaching a broader community of enthusiasts and stakeholders.

In accordance with Hybrid Pedagogy, for 8 consecutive weeks, students were provided additional time slots to explore, think, evaluate, and exchange ideas, and they were encouraged to use office hours along with both asynchronous and synchronous communication channels, while the decision-making was conducted together so that the concept of ‘blurred’ teacher-student roles was secured. Besides the public book reading and a lecture on Mary Shelley which were offered as one of the instructional practices that can provide a solid foundation in the Romantic period and the novel, the students were encouraged to conduct thorough research on their own and look for the appropriate literary or cultural material which could inspire or instruct them to find out more about the topic, the book, about the Romantic movement, culture of the epoch, etc. Extensive reading resources were provided on the college website, and regular office hours were organized weekly to check the groups’ progress. The workshops were public and open-accessed, so other students and visitors could interact with the participants.

In the final public event, the project outcomes (deliverables) were presented to the audience: Franken-robot, Franken-book-covers, Franken-IT. Visitors could play with a moving robot, watch videos and simulations, or vote for the best book cover design. A website was also launched (http://vstss.com/frankenreads/) that could be navigated from one of the onset computers, and dramatic enactment of a fictional interview with Mary Shelley was performed.

7. Conclusion

The project assignments served as a bridge to students' future professions in an event agenda that could have easily been a real employment project. However, thematically, the project topic and the literary reference went beyond their usual scope of interest. It raised some interesting questions: Can you design a Franken-related website if you have not read the book? How does a visual identity derived from pop culture interfere with the existing preconceptions of a novel? How to measure the learning outcomes in such a collective experience?

Although significant time and discreet teaching instruction (it was more of an intervention than imposed teaching) were dedicated to teaching Frankenstein and Romanticism to engineering students, what we see from the project outputs (Figures 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6) is that their project designs borrowed much of the visual identity derived from pop culture. In other words, the existing preconceptions of the novel or what I earlier named 'cultural syncretism', materialized in the general use of green colour and a typical bolts-in-the-neck Franken-look, indeed much influenced their representations of Frankenstein's identity. Some of the students were inspired by the official frankenreads.org website logo, which also depicts Frankenstein as a green ogre. Regardless, none of the students offered innovative, bold designs based on their personal impressions of Frankenstein, which would seem less of a replica, or just more daring. I would say that the students decided to communicate with the audience who, like themselves, usually have humble knowledge of the topic. One of the reasons for such project outputs lies in the fact that the majority of students confessed that they did not have to read the book to be able to partake in the project activities. They felt that what they read or heard about the novel was sufficient to participate in the assignments. As they reported, and what could be observed during the workshops, their main challenges along the way remained those of the engineering nature, whereas those of the thematic/literary concept were somehow disregarded; they were more concerned about how to wire a robot properly and which batteries to use; how to program the website to be compatible with android phones; whether the book cover design was created according to the CMYC requirements? The predominance of engineering-related challenges with students somehow emerged naturally. In addition to this, some of the students had concerns about whether their participation in the project would affect their final course grades.

As for the knowledge gained, the Frankenreads project did address some of the students' misconceptions about the novel itself and Romanticism as a movement. Although it seemed they were mainly curious only about the Frankenstein trivia and were satisfied with a simple plot analysis of the novel, the majority of students still gained new competences in literature, as they learned how to approach the topic and how to search for resources. As the Hybrid Pedagogy approach suggests, learning was conducted through a meaningful, natural collaboration and ideas exchange, without any forced influences or teaching demands. What is crucial, the students were all thrilled to have been able to contribute to the project, and they confirmed that they enjoyed the process.

What were the key takeaways? Firstly, students learned that their future customers may well be not only picky, but also well-informed and quite literate, so in order to create content for a bigger outreach offering non-original repackaging of prior solutions might be condemned as mere recycling of the people's general visual memory. These students, belonging to the Instagram generation that usually gets captivated by visual stimuli, now learned to explore the brevity of a text (or literature, broadly speaking) to extract more of

the overall epistemic value so that more impactful content can be created. What prevented them from showing more grit in project design might be a cautious attitude of theirs that turned out to originate from their shyness or lack of boldness, or it just came as a logical consequence of the necessity to emerge deeper in creative thinking and design thinking so as to unlock their full potentials. One of the reasons might be also found in the fact that the differences between low-culture and high-culture contexts had not been pre-taught in detail so the students had no awareness how these differences might cause misunderstanding in the realm of international business communication (Bakić-Mirić et al. 2023). Secondly, during the process, these students came to realize that in order to avoid plagiarism of any kind and offer fresh and innovative solutions, they needed to carefully assess the trustworthiness of the sources used in a project, which I would say is an important lesson learned. This lesson is particularly significant when engaging with classic literature, even if only a few chapters have been read. Finally, students learned that the rich world of literature only complements the world of engineering and science and that we should never do without it, as the humanities give our lives meaning and depth. The transformative power of the humanities lies in the fact that they provide initial guidelines for all of humanity's aspirations and needs, as people first envision things and expose their ideas in their writings, much long before engineers even dare to craft them.

What might have helped students explore the novel more (and thus deliver more quality solutions) is a special edition of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, designed "for scientists, engineers and creators of all kinds", in particular for STEM students (Guston et al., 2017). Unfortunately, we were not aware of the existence of the book as it had been published a couple of months prior to our project planning phase. However, the book might have served as a wonderful source to bridge the gap between the imaginative world of Shelley's Frankenstein and the innovative minds of young STEM enthusiasts, sparking an interdisciplinary fusion of literary source and their perspective of the set assignments which would have brought more depth, relevance and context to the outcomes. Apart from extensive annotations throughout the chapters, which have been meticulously done by a range of scholars, this edition contains suggestions for further reading, several essays and a set of discussion questions (p. 264-273) aimed at inciting thought-provoking debates between students and educators. The annotations provide a wonderful array of data on robotics, artificial intelligence, science history, electricity and medicine, among others.

What stands out in the introductory part of the book, and what makes it a handy resource for projects like this, is the idea that until now Frankenstein "has been primarily edited and published for and read by humanities students" (Guston et al. 2017: xxiii) and that this edition was designed with a didactic purpose. Interestingly, the authors' intentional design of the volume comes as an acknowledgement of what STEM students and educators might struggle with when dealing with Frankenstein. Namely, after announcing that the novel is about "our individual and collective responsibility for nurturing the products of our creativity and imposing constraints on our capacities to change the world around us'' (Guston et al. 2017: xii), the editors deliberately defined the word creature as a noun which has "a more neutral, descriptive, and pedagogically appropriate denomination" (Guston et al. 2017, p. xii). What is more, the authors emphasized that their intention was to raise awareness of "the cautionary nature of the tale or on the part that continues to inspire students who believe that they can do better—as creative and responsible thinkers, makers, researchers, and citizens (Guston et al, 2017: xvii). The editorships' strong didactic inclination towards this grandiose and versatile piece of art was additionally confirmed in the essay "Traumatic

Responsibility of Victor Frankenstein as Creator and Casualty'' by Josephine Johnson who opened up with the didactic take on the responsibility, only to dissect it into what Victor could have done differently (Guston et al. 2017, p. 201), and conclude that irresponsible actions in scientific endeavour have serious consequences. Other essays in this volume also highlight the themes of Victor's hamartia – using science not to secure betterment for humanity but to achieve glory (Bear in Guston et al. 2017, p. 232) or, similarly, resonate with the idea that intentions to improve a human (bioengineering) is indeed bioterrorism that calls for a radical ethical rethink (Mellor in Guston et al. 2017, p. 239-244). These ideas underscore the imperative for a more pronounced integration of the humanities' principles within STEM pedagogy in projects like this, which might provide learners with a much more profound sense of context and social conscientiousness and less of the technocratic apparatus solely focused on scientific achievements and advancements per se.

It is, finally, clear that engineering education would only benefit from similar projects. Of course, another question is how often and to what extent similar projects could be implemented in the curricula so that they do not remain in the category of an incidental experiment. For this particular project, the Hybrid Pedagogy was chosen as the most adaptable approach, allowing unobtrusive teaching to be delivered so that active student agency, collaboration, and curiosity are maintained throughout the process. However, we must bear in mind that, due to the high flexibility of the approach, there were no mandatory activities or grading which would allow for the student efforts to be acknowledged. Another point that could affect the more frequent implementation of similar projects is the time reference. As activities are time-consuming and require additional off-campus engagement, a number of selected projects to be realized during one educational cycle should be carefully planned in advance. I suggest choosing projects of a bigger volume once in an academic year, since, as seen from the workshops, the more significant or bigger the project, the more excited students get.

To conclude, from what this project indicates, it looks like you can design a website if you have not read the book, as the global culture of Frankenstein is so strong and rich that the young people's perception of Frankenstein as a monster hallmark, no matter how inaccurate or romanticized, is almost inherent in them, as it is what they grew up with. This confirms that with the archetypal quality of the book character embedded in our collective knowledge with the cultural legacy so impeccable that, to comprehend its main values, you are NOT required to 'dissect' the novel and master the theories of literary scrutiny, and those memorable and extraordinary assignments can still be realized. Maybe that is enough in times of cultural crisis that emerges nowadays, especially for those who are referred to as 'Digital natives', although we, who major in the Humanities, would like to broaden and deepen the literary perspective of such projects, especially with young people, as they can add a real transformative value in their experiences.

Finally, engineering is considered a desirable career choice due to the economic stability and high employability rate it provides. In 2010, UNESCO delivered a comprehensive Report on Engineering which states that the goal of the UNESCO Engineering Initiative (UEI) is to increase the number of students studying engineering at the tertiary level to improve the overall socio-economic development of societies (UNESCO). However, the adequacy of the current engineering education across European countries might be a matter of discussion especially when it comes to analysing what happens when graduates find jobs. Namely, in situations when they experienced a

lack of engineering workforce in the market, many employers (Google, IBM) reported satisfaction with the humanities-based educated employees they hired instead of engineers (Krsmanović). This implies that engineering educational policies, as a public value, should establish a more holistic perspective on education with a strong emphasis on acquiring core concepts in the Humanities, instead of insisting on building rigid syllabi within too narrow technological disciplines. Building upon this, our Frankenstein project suggests that we should always valorize the epistemological value of the Humanities as a field with fantastic potential to facilitate our understanding of the world we live in. To start with, implementing any authentic humanities-related project using Hybrid Pedagogy, such as this one, is a promising beginning for more meaningful and impactful engineering educational contexts.

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APPENDIX

All photos in this paper are credit by the author.

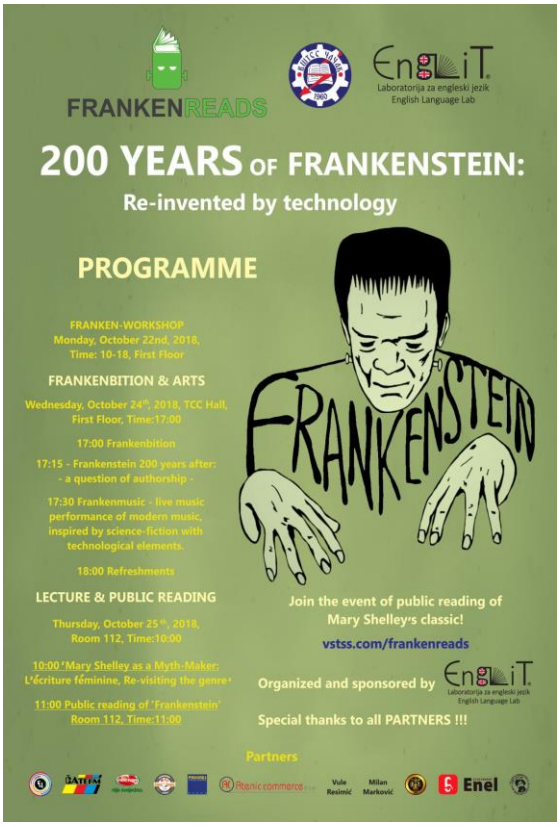

Fig. 1 Event flyer/poster

Fig 2. A Franken-robot in the making

Fig 3. The final event

Introduction:

DJ: Today we have the one-in-a-life-time opportunity to speak with one of the most intriguing authors of our time, lady who has become a voice of many, the pioneer of a whole new genre, science-fiction. I would like our guest to enlarge about the circumstances that affected creation of her book as well as her expectations of its future. When I say circumstances, I mean the role of the woman in romantic society which by no means is associated with the role of a housewife or a mother.

DJ: To start off lightly, can you tell me something about your upbringing and the beginnings of your literary journey?

V: I find it no surprising that being the daughter of two fruitful writers, I would think of writing so early in my life. My favorite pastime was writing stories, but even dearer to me was constant wondering, and following lavish trains of thought. I used to write beneath the trees near my house, but also in the foggy, gloomy, desolate parts of Scottish countryside, which I visited often. But as everything must come to an end, harsh reality soon took the place instead of my imagination. I had my own family now and started leading an ordinary life deprived of any form of writing. Nevertheless, being wife of such a famous poet as Percy Shelley I somehow approved of his idea that I should prove myself worthy of my parents' name, so, in the summer of 1816, we visited

Fig. 4. An excerpt from the play

Fig 5. The winning book-cover design and its author Milos Dramićanin

Fig 6. The setting scene for the drama enactment

Fig. 7 The audience at one of the events

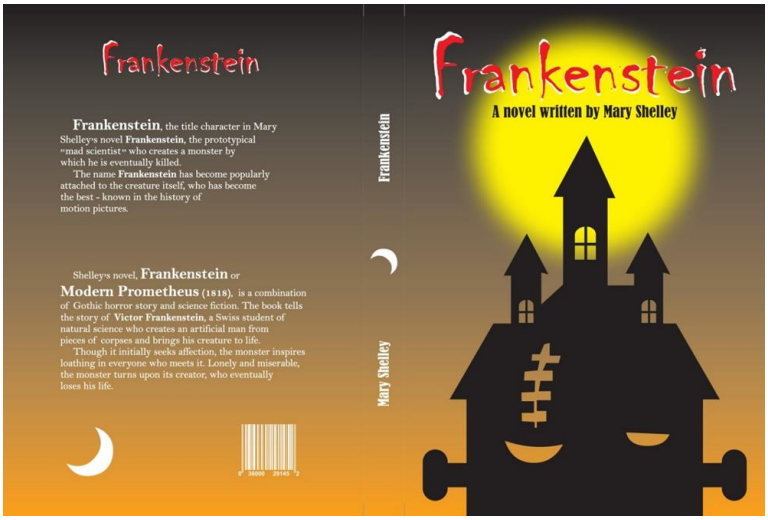

Fig. 8 One of the book-cover designs, by Đorđe Popović


Fig 9 Serbian editions of the novel, a display

Fig.10. The official Twitter account of the frankenreads.org announcing Serbian events

Fig 11. Vanja Čolović in the role of Mary Shelley

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Review research paper

EFFICACY OF PRE-WRITING ORAL DISCUSSION AS A METHOD FOR ENHANCING WRITING ABILITIES

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Abstract. *In the realm of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing, the scarcity of ideas often hampers original conceptual development. Teacher-led class discussions (TLCD) are widely acknowledged as an effective method for fostering learners' creativity. The teacher assumes the role of a facilitator, initiating and guiding discussions while maintaining a positive atmosphere among participants. The students' speaking proficiency, ensuing discourse, and the resulting emergence of critical thinking in writing are interconnected aspects. This experimental study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of employing such discussions as a precursor to writing tasks. Specifically, it seeks to address two main inquiries: 1) The influence of TLCD, utilizing a structured questioning approach, on enhancing learners' creativity in an EFL writing class, and 2) the varying levels of responsiveness among high, average, and low proficiency students concerning their writing outcomes in response to the questioning strategy utilized in teacher-led discussions. A cohort of 56 level 3 General Foundation Programme students at Middle East College was divided into control and experimental groups to investigate these questions. The experimental group engaged in weekly writing tasks following topic-based questions designed to facilitate conceptual learning. A mixed method approach was employed, encompassing surveys, interviews, and pre-and post-test written assessments exclusively to evaluate the strategy's effectiveness holistically. The findings reveal that high proficiency students derive significant benefits from integrating oral discussions and subsequent writing tasks, displaying notable improvements in their writing skills. In contrast, while the writing abilities of average and low proficiency students showed discernible enhancement, their progress was not statistically superior to the control group. These results highlight the potential of TLCD in stimulating creativity and enhancing EFL writing capabilities, particularly among proficient learners.*

Key words*: Teacher-lead class discussion (TLCD), Structured questioning approach (SQA), Socrative Seminar Model, Experimental group (EG), Control group (CG), Critical thinking (CT)), High proficiency level students (HPS), Average proficiency level students (APS)), Low proficiency level student (LPS), General Foundation Programme (GFP)*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Language acquisition and development in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts are intricate processes that demand a multifaceted approach to effective teaching. Proficiency in writing is not solely reliant on linguistic competence but also on fostering creativity and originality in conceptualization (Silva, 1993). EFL students often encounter the challenge of generating original and innovative content, primarily due to a lack of ideas, which hinders their writing efforts (Etermadzadeh et al., 2012). Acknowledging the crucial role of teacher-led discussions in nurturing learners' creativity (Richards & Lockhart, 1996), this research explores the intersection of teaching methods, critical thinking, and language advancement. The teacher's responsibility is akin to that of a referee, orchestrating and guiding discussions while cultivating a positive atmosphere for participation. Proficiency in speaking, ensuing dialogues, and subsequent growth in critical thinking are closely intertwined. Teacher-led discussions have been recognized as a successful approach in igniting students' creativity and encouraging them to explore diverse viewpoints and ideas. Building upon this notion, the present research examines the potential benefits of introducing TLCD as an initial phase for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing assignments, employing a strategic questioning method or Socrative seminar model.

While writing skills are often taught separately, integrating speaking techniques into EFL classrooms can provide a dynamic approach to enhancing students' writing capabilities. By acknowledging the interdependence of speaking and writing, educators can establish a comprehensive learning environment that promotes language development and empowers students to become more skilled and confident communicators (Nation & Macalister, 2020). Speaking and writing are intricately linked aspects of language acquisition. Both entail formulating ideas, structuring thoughts, and conveying messages effectively. Incorporating speaking exercises into ESL classrooms offers students a platform to articulate their ideas verbally before translating them into written form. This process aids learners in organizing their thoughts logically and facilitates the expansion of their vocabulary (Thornbury, 2005; Macalister& Nation, 2020).

Engaging students in roundtable discussions on a given topic encourages active participation and oral expression. These discussions expose learners to diverse perspectives and enable them to brainstorm ideas collectively. Subsequently, students can channel their insights into structured writing assignments, refining their ability to organize and convey complex ideas in written form (Nunan, 2003; Thornbury, 2012). Further, organizing debates and persuasive speech activities prompts students to defend their viewpoints persuasively. These exercises require students to articulate arguments clearly and logically, fostering critical thinking. Transferring these skills to writing helps students craft persuasive essays with well-structured arguments and coherent reasoning (Richards & Farrell, 2005; Macalister& Nation, 2020).

2. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Achieving a reasonable level of oral communication proficiency is imperative for the majority of learners to sustain discussions effectively. Discussions serve as a technique to lay a firm foundation for students' development of thinking abilities (Brookfield & Preskill, 2016). Consequently, speaking competence takes center stage in this scenario. Nevertheless, Omani EFL learners have perennially grappled with this skill, especially as

they approach graduation, owing to several reasons. Numerous studies (Brookfield & Preskill, 2016; Mercer & Littleton, 2007) have proposed employing diverse speaking approaches guided by the teacher before engaging in writing tasks on the same topic. This method nurtures critical thinking, creativity, and imagination.

Writing, akin to speaking, is widely acknowledged as the most challenging skill to both master and teach among EFL students and English language educators (Ferris, 2003; Hyland & Hyland, 2006). It holds a pivotal position among integrated language skills. Despite these recognized challenges, Arab EFL learners face a deeper issue beyond mere grammatical or structural deficiencies. The main issue arises from a lack of ideas when it comes to crafting academic essays. Regrettably, the written works of many students not only exhibit an absence of ideas but also lack originality and coherent reasoning, fundamental elements for crafting well-formed pieces. Hosni (2014) reported some reasons for this problem, highlighting that teachers often prioritize teaching grammatical rules and vocabulary over fostering speaking and practical writing skills. Also, Al-Brashdi (2002), Rababa (2005) and Al-Issa (2006), as cited by Naqvi et al. (2023), noted that in Gulf countries, such as Oman, a significant portion of school graduates and students in GFP programs face a deficiency in both English language proficiency and study skills. Moreover, Naqvi et al. (2023) also highlighted that the English textbooks presently employed within Omani classrooms fall short in fostering students' abilities for critical thinking.

While the well-known brainstorming technique aids learners to some extent in generating ideas before writing compositions, the concepts generated often comprise isolated words or fragments of incomprehensible sentences, indicating a student's unclear understanding of a topic and their lack of critical thinking or originality of thought.

Regrettably, there has not been sufficient research on the efficacy of TLCD in developing critical thinking and enhancing writing abilities among Arab EFL learners. Moreover, there is a scarcity of literature correlating such activities specifically to Arab EFL students. Therefore, this study aims to evaluate the viability and effectiveness of teacher-led discussions employing a targeted or structured questioning approach in Omani EFL learners' writing classes at the advanced tertiary level. The objective is to assess the improvement in critical thinking and its ongoing impact on their writing abilities.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

The aim of this literature review is to explore the critical role of class discussions in enhancing critical thinking (CT) skills among EFL students, elucidating how these discussions contribute to the refinement of language proficiency, fluency in expression, and logical excellence in both verbal and written communication. Despite the acknowledged importance of CT, particularly in EFL contexts, there exists a notable gap in the literature regarding the explicit connection between class discussions, CT development, and their enduring positive influence on productive skills like speaking and writing. Drawing from a range of scholarly perspectives, this review investigates the impact of various pedagogical approaches, such as Socratic questioning strategies, communicative language education strategies, and the interrelation between speaking and writing abilities, in fostering CT and enhancing language production skills. Additionally, this review aims to underscore the significance of addressing deficiencies in speaking skills among Omani EFL learners, which significantly affect their academic writing capabilities and social interactions within the classroom.

According to Etemadzadeh et al. (2012), incorporating Socratic questioning strategies in the classroom is crucial for creating engaged and independent learners. Moreover, Stojković and Zerkin (2023) assert that employing the Socratic method in an ESP setting triggers the activation of students' content and linguistic knowledge, stimulates them to devise fresh solutions in both domains, and engages their cognitive capabilities. Alkhoudary (2015) proposed that engaging students with questions in a classroom setting enhances the clarity of learners' thoughts. Furthermore, Richards and Rodger (2001), argue that the communicative language education strategy, which stresses meaningful interaction among learners as a technique to acquire the target language in a more natural way, is based on the integration of several language abilities. In complete agreement with Richards and Rodger, According to Elbow (2012), although speaking and writing differ in several aspects, speech can significantly aid writing in various ways.

Etermadzadeh et al. (2012) also noted that lack of ideas is regarded as one reason why learners are reluctant to engage in productive skills like writing. Students' low participation is mostly because of a blank mind rather than poor linguistic skills. They emphasize that employing questioning techniques or the Socratic Model assists students in enhancing their critical thinking skills. This, in turn, encourages them to become more active language producers, particularly in writing, as exceptional thinking is recognized as a precursor to proficient writing.

Speaking is the main source of language acquisition. However, according to Omani school instructors, speaking is not evaluated in examinations, thus they do not see the need to concentrate on it. Al-Hosni (2014) cites the instance of young EFL Omani learners at the school level to admit that speaking is less stressed by both teachers and pupils since it is not assessed. This is in line with Al Lawati's (2002) research results, which show that students pay close attention to writing, reading, and listening tasks that are exam items. He further reports that teachers and students agree that speaking tasks in textbooks receive the least attention because speaking is completely disregarded in exams.

Richards and Rodger (2001) contend that the communicative language teaching approach hinges on integrating diverse language skills, emphasizing meaningful learner interaction to facilitate a more natural acquisition of the target language. Echoing the sentiments of Richards and Rodger, Elbow (2012) asserts that despite the differences between writing and speech, speech can aid writing in various ways. According to Alkhoudary (2015), as writing is an intellectual skill, teaching thinking abilities may be connected to teaching writing rather than being taught separately. In the current era, writing is increasingly recognized as a communicative social activity that blends teacher-centered and student-centered approaches in teaching academic writing. This perspective on writing extends beyond linguistic and cognitive aspects to encompass a social dimension (Santose, 2010). Numerous researchers highlight the significance of social interaction in L2 (second language) writing classrooms, acknowledging it as a factor that can enhance students' writing quality (Weissberg, 2006).

Throughout this review, the literature underscores the critical need to address deficiencies in speaking skills among Omani EFL learners. The oversight of speaking skills in educational assessments, as highlighted by Omani school instructors and research findings, has resulted in a diminished emphasis on speaking within the classroom environment. This neglect of speaking skills, despite its foundational role in language acquisition and its synergy with academic writing, has been highlighted as a

significant concern, affecting students' social interactions and hindering their development in other language domains.

In addition, the synthesis of studies underscores the importance of integrating CT skills into EFL curricula, especially within writing-related lessons. Addressing learners' "blank mind syndrome" through questioning techniques that stimulate critical thinking has been identified as a means to enhance students' active participation and proficiency in productive skills, such as writing. Moreover, the connection between thinking abilities and writing skills advocates for a more interconnected approach to teaching these aspects rather than treating them in isolation.

4. Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How successfully do teacher-led class discussions foster critical thinking?
2. How important are language proficiency, lexical knowledge, and speaking skills for class discussion?
3. Does the structured questioning method improve writing skills?

5. Methodology

This experimental study consisted of 56 Omani General Foundation Programme (GFP) Level 3 students at Middle East College, Oman, evenly split between males and females chosen randomly. Each participant shared the same linguistic and cultural background. All students were native speakers of Arabic and studied English as a compulsory subject but not as their medium of instruction during school years. The 56 students, categorized into three skill levels—high, average, and low—were subsequently divided into two identical sets: the CG (Control Group) and EG (Experimental Group), ensuring an equal distribution of boys and girls within each group. They were taken from Level 3 which is the final level of GFP at MEC.

The experimental and controlled groups underwent both pre and post-tests (see Table 1 and Table 2) to assess their writing proficiency. Following the post-test, the experimental group (comprising 28 students) additionally took part in an online survey (refer to Table 3) conducted using google forms. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews with 12 students, representing varying levels of proficiency (good, average, and weak) from the experimental group were conducted to gather their perspectives on TLCD.

To assess and compare the performance of the two groups, pre-tests were conducted in week 3 and post-tests in week 14 in the fall semester of Academic Year 2021-2022. The study was confined to a 14-week session due to limitations and focused on a specified syllabus covering compare & contrast, argumentative, and opinion essays to align with the objectives of the curriculum. In the pre-test, both groups were tasked with an argumentative essay to gauge their writing skills. In the post-test, an argumentative essay was included to assess and compare their progress. Rubrics recommended by the module coordinator were utilized for essay grading, with slight modifications made for research purposes. The rubric, allocating a total of 100 marks, was divided into: structure (20 marks), grammar (20 marks), spelling (10 marks), critical thinking (15 marks), cohesion and coherence (10 marks), subject matter (15 marks), and lexical range (10 marks).

The in-depth analysis primarily focused on critical thinking, cohesion and coherence, content, and lexical range components. The mean and standard deviation of the overall 100 marks were also considered in the comprehensive analysis to maintain alignment with the research objectives.

However, during the experiment, alongside the methods used for both groups, the EG students received instructions through a unique approach called the Structured Questioning Approach (SQA) or Socratic Seminar Model (Christopher Phillips, 2011). This strategy was implemented before the students were assigned their weekly essay writing tasks, aiming to stimulate topic-based discussions in class and enhance critical thinking skills. The purpose of employing teacher-led discussions using the Socratic Seminar model questions was carefully planned to align with the core writing topics. These questions were thoughtfully organized to encourage discussions and explore potential solutions among the students. The intention was to foster a deeper understanding of the topics and stimulate critical thinking by prompting active engagement and exploration of various perspectives during the discussions.

Meanwhile, the CG also had weekly essay writing tasks but did not undergo the SQA method. Both groups received detailed feedback on their weekly writing assignments. After 13 weeks, a post-test of similar difficulty and structure to the pre-test was administered to compare the progress of the two groups. The objective was to analyze and identify any differences in their performance. Although the mean scores of the groups were compared, the actual assessment focused on specific criteria: “critical thinking”, “content”, “cohesion and coherence”, and “lexical range”.

6. Results (Experimental Study)

Mean and Standard Deviation (SD) were employed to analyze the data derived from both the pre-test and post-test of CG and EG. The mean scores for CG and EG on the pre-test were 48.98 and 49.184, respectively. It was more than 0.05 level alpha when there was a difference of 0.557 between the two means. As a result, there was no discernible statistical difference between the two means. Prior to the treatment phase, both groups exhibited a similar level of proficiency in English language (Table 1). The groups' respective mean scores on the post-test were 52.112 and 56.806 respectively. Results from CG's pre- and post-testing revealed a moderate difference between the two means. The experimental group, however, had superior outcomes in the post-test, and their mean score increased from 49.184 to 56.806. (Table 1). The overall and segmental analysis of the two groups in the post-test, taking into account “critical thinking”, “content”, “cohesion and coherence”, and “lexical range”, presents a clear picture of the findings. The detailed analysis of the pre-test and the post-test does not, however, include the achievement of the groups in “structure”, “grammar”, and “spellings”, as they were not supposed to be analyzed in the study (Table 2).

Table 1 Overall achievement of both the groups in pre-test and Post-test

Pre-test and Post-test by CG and EG				
Segment	Group	n	Mean	SD
Pre-Test	CG	28	48.98	8.789
	EG	28	49.184	10.788
Post -Test	CG	28	52.112	10.678
	EG	28	56.806	13.403

Table 2 Detailed achievement of both the groups in pre-test and post-test

Pre-test by two groups (CG and EG) in details					Post-test by two groups (CG and EG) in details				
Segment	Group	n	Mean	SD	Segment	Group	N	Mean	SD
Critical	CG	28	7.492	1.4855	Critical	CG	28	7.567	1.4256
thinking	EG	28	6.935	1.8992	thinking	EG	28	7.789	2.9118
Content	CG	28	7.407	1.9308	Content	CG	28	8.235	1.7277
	EG	28	7.677	2.0142		EG	28	8.795	2.3987
Cohesion	CG	28	4.666	1.1554	Cohesion	CG	28	4.897	1.1433
	EG	28	5.018	0.984		EG	28	5.832	1.6256
Lexical	CG	28	4.925	0.9025	Lexical	CG	28	5.357	1.4346
range	EG	28	4.962	0.9788	Range	EG	28	5.987	1.7136

6.1. Result (Interview And Survey Study)

As the interview served as a continuation of the survey, the data collected from both the interview and the survey intertwined thematically. Consequently, the survey analysis was followed by the interview analysis. The emerging themes from the research topics addressed in this study encompassed:

- Students' perceptions regarding the feasibility and effectiveness of TLCD to enhance critical thinking in writing
- Identification of the primary reasons why learners with low and average proficiency feel disadvantaged during question-and-answer sessions, based on student perceptions

The most prominent viewpoint among high-rated individuals regarding TLCD was articulated as follows:

"We believe that TLCD is beneficial for individuals skilled in verbal communication, yet less helpful for students learning at lower or medium proficiency levels. How can this approach support students in writing if they struggle to articulate their thoughts clearly, comprehend, or benefit from others' ideas?"

When questioned about the usefulness of TLCD, all four low proficiency students (LPS) agreed that TLCD could have been advantageous if they had the opportunity to participate actively. They referred to their limited vocabulary and grammar skills, which significantly affected their ability to express opinions effectively. They also indicated shortcomings in both these areas.

The survey received responses from 28 EG students. The following results provide an in-depth exploration of the primary factors contributing to a notable proportion of students encountering challenges during TLCD. It is evident from items Nos. 1 and 2 that many students cited their lack of speaking competence and a limited lexical range as key

challenges during TLCD. Additionally, some students who identified grammar as an issue also believed that all three factors listed in item 1 (including grammar) were at play. Moreover, item 2 in Table 3 demonstrates a significant correlation between limited lexical and speaking skills as the main causes.

Table 3 Students' perceptions of the main factors of the disadvantage experienced by low-proficiency and average proficiency learners during TLCD

No.	Items	A	b	C	d
1	I face the following problem/problems during TLCD. a) I cannot speak well b) My grammar is weak c) I do not have the vocabulary to speak d) All the three reasons	20%	20%	30%	30%
2	I think TLCD a) Helps me because I have more ideas b) Helps me to some extent d) Does not help me as I cannot speak well e) Does not help me as my vocabulary is weak	20%	35%	20%	25%

When asked about encountering challenges during TLCD in the interview, all four high proficiency students (HPS) unanimously expressed that they did not face significant difficulties except for occasional fluency issues arising from their limited vocabulary range. One HPS participant remarked, "In class discussions, my major hurdle is occasionally lacking the necessary vocabulary to express my ideas clearly and fluently. I wonder how learners with lower or average proficiency would cope with this situation. Many students, despite the conversation being in English and on challenging topics, tend to initially think in Arabic before searching for the right English words. Even when they find the correct words, they struggle to use them effectively." One of them mentioned, "We believe our primary issue is the lack of speaking practice."

Sharing their perspectives, all average proficiency level students (APS) highlighted their lack of confidence and occasional demotivation, primarily stemming from their challenges in grammar, limited vocabulary, and inadequate speaking skills. They perceived TLCD as requiring a strong command of language and lexical range, which they felt they lacked. They conveyed their incapacity to participate in TLCD fully and naturally because of their limited speaking abilities, emphasizing that depending on thinking in Arabic impeded their involvement in discussions.

7. DISCUSSION

The pre-test results for both the control group (CG) and experimental group (EG) suggest an equivalent level of English proficiency. However, the comprehensive analysis of the post-test results indicates variations in their performance. Our research questions, derived from teaching experience and prior studies on EFL Arab learners, guided the focus on four key components: logical touch, cohesion and coherence, lexical range, and forms for evaluating improvements in thinking skills among EG.

Although the post-test results for high and average proficiency EG learners demonstrated improvement, the majority of low proficiency struggled due to inadequate oral communication skills, limited lexical range, and insufficient abilities to sustain discussions. Various researchers have highlighted several contributing factors to the poor writing skills among Arab learners. Sivaraman, Al Balushi, and Rao (2014), Ahmed (2018), attributes these deficiencies to limited exposure to authentic English language contexts, a lack of writing practice, and inadequate instructional strategies that fail to address their specific linguistic needs. Al-Lawati (1995), cited by Alhosni (2014), emphasized that Omani EFL students encounter speaking difficulties predominantly within the linguistic domain, including vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and discourse, as they have not attained proficiency in fundamental language skills.

Referencing observations by Al-Mahrouqi (2014) on Sultan Qaboos University students, it is highlighted that students might struggle to persuade others if they lack adequate language proficiency or subject matter knowledge. In our research, high proficiency students actively participated in discussions but were discouraged by the inability of low and average proficiency students to engage meaningfully, resorting to communication techniques like code-switching, message abandonment, and topic avoidance. Al Alawi (2016) observed that low proficiency learners tend to utilize avoidance tactics more frequently due to their lack of linguistic competence.

Our findings align with seasoned EFL researchers, indicating a sizable portion of Arab EFL learners lack oral and linguistic proficiency. Consequently, our research raises questions about claims that improvement in critical thinking abilities translates to enhanced writing skills for EFL Arab tertiary level learners:

- How can these students engage in critical discourse when they struggle to articulate basic facts in both written and spoken forms?
- What insights do their writings offer when based on oral competence, lexical variety, and active participation, qualities believed to be weak among EFL Arab learners?

Essays from our EG low proficiency students, built on prior discussions, showed limited improvement in ideas, except for high proficiency students and to a lesser extent, average proficiency students, who significantly outperformed CG average proficiency students in the post-test. Notably, improvements were observed in the areas we focused on, whereas essay structure, grammar, and spelling did not show significant changes among CG high proficiency students.

However, the remaining EG students' writings lacked effective structure, coherence, lexical range, and critical thinking compared to highly proficient and average ability students.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, our study underscores the benefits of TLCD in enhancing the writing skills of high proficiency and average proficiency students within an EFL framework. However, it reveals challenges faced by low proficiency students, primarily stemming from inadequate oral communication skills, limited lexical range, and difficulties sustaining active participation in discussions. Previous research, notably studies on Arab EFL learners, has consistently highlighted the struggles in coherent expression due to insufficient language skills for effective communication. Our findings echo these observations, particularly noting the impact

of linguistic deficiencies on critical discourse and writing abilities. While high and average proficiency students exhibited improvements in their writing linked to discussion engagement, low proficiency students faced obstacles hindering significant progress. The low proficiency group struggled to articulate ideas coherently, lacked lexical variety, and displayed limited critical thinking in their writings, raising questions about the direct translation of enhanced critical thinking abilities into improved writing skills for EFL Arab learners. Moving forward, addressing the foundational language skills and fostering inclusive discussion techniques tailored to diverse proficiency levels could be pivotal in maximizing the benefits of TLCD for all EFL students.

9. LIMITATIONS

The study's limited sample size of 56 level 3 EFL Omani learners might not fully represent the broader population. Focusing exclusively on one specific group limits the generalizability of findings to other proficiency levels or contexts, potentially impacting the applicability of the results. Another limitation is that the study primarily concentrates on short-term effects, engaging participants in weekly tasks post-discussions. This short duration might not capture the sustained or long-term improvements in writing skills resulting from these discussions, thus limiting a comprehensive understanding of their lasting impact. Moreover, maintaining strict differentiation between the control and experimental groups, beyond the discussed intervention, could be challenging. Factors like teaching styles, classroom dynamics, or additional resources might inadvertently influence results, impacting the study's integrity and the accuracy of findings.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

The authors would like to make the following recommendations for the effective use of TLCD to enhance students' productive language skills:

1. Real-life Language Exposure: Encourage real-world language interactions for Arab EFL students inside and outside the classroom to improve oral communication and expand vocabulary essential for discussions and writing tasks.
2. Teacher Training and Support: Provide comprehensive training for EFL instructors to lead effective discussions that stimulate critical thinking and encourage original idea generation. Support teachers in fostering inclusive discussions accommodating students with varying language abilities.
3. Blend Oral and Writing Tasks: Merge oral exercises with writing assignments by using TLCD as a starting point for idea generation before structured writing tasks.
4. Guide students in translating spoken ideas into coherent written compositions, reinforcing the connection between spoken and written language.

Implementing these recommendations within TLCD will aid in developing students' communication skills, expanding vocabulary, fostering critical thinking, and bridging the gap between spoken and written expression in the EFL classroom.

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Review research paper

EMBEDDING WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING IN UNDERGRADUATE COLLEGE-LEVEL CURRICULUM TO ENHANCE EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS AMONG STUDENTS

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Abstract. *Work-integrated learning (WIL) is a prominent educational phenomenon that has brought about numerous positive changes in the field of higher education globally. The corporate sector and the governments in the world are seeking 'work-ready' graduates. WIL as an umbrella term includes a variety of strategies and approaches that incorporate theory with the practice of work within a purposefully designed curriculum. WIL makes meaningful, relevant connections to work throughout the curriculum in higher educational contexts which are intricately interwoven with employability skills and enhance these skill sets. Some of the pedagogical approaches adopted in WIL are Practice-based learning, Professional practices, Problem-based learning, Experiential learning, Workplace learning, and Practice-based education. A study adopting an exploratory mixed-method was conducted in Middle East College, Oman including an in-depth survey and interviews with faculty members, graduates, alumni and students at the undergraduate level to determine the efficacy of the contents of the curriculum enhancing Employability Skills of the students. Findings indicate that the curriculum enriched with WIL develops (a) General employability skills and respective requirements of a workplace, (b) Effective communication with colleagues across diverse roles, (c) Attitudes toward working effectively and competently, (d) Enhance academic knowledge and develop transferable skills, (e) Develop an understanding of ethical practices, (f) Build a professional identity and (g) Increase digital literacy skills. Students' WIL experiences were taken into account in designing and implementing curricula related to WIL which are in line with enhancement of employability among students. The results of this research are valuable for practitioners in higher level educational contexts to integrate WIL and employability skills to contribute to global enhancement of these two flourishing phenomena.*

Key words: *Work-integrated Learning, Employability Skills, Higher Education*

1. INTRODUCTION

Higher educational contexts are emphasizing deeper and more profound engagement with work-integrated learning (WIL) for various stakeholder reasons. It is clear that graduates' employability skills are intricately interwoven with WIL which makes a strong contribution towards educating and preparing work-ready graduates which the industry is

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demanding. Many theorists argue that the major function of higher educational contexts is to prepare an environment where students can utilize their body of knowledge to move toward becoming successful logical thinkers, logical persuaders, and problem-solvers based on the capacity to think critically and logically. To achieve the goal of preparing work-ready graduates, higher education is required (a) to improve graduate attributes and employability skills through a more profound understanding of the various work environments as well as providing real (authentic) workplace experiences (b) to expand and improve students' networks in industry to enhance their professional background and profile (c) to refine each graduates' preparation of CV (Curriculum Vitae), interview techniques the students need, as well as electronic profiles, and (d) to create student hubs cross-institutionally (both online and face-to-face) through which students would be able to share their concerns, worries, anxieties, and skills they need to move toward professional workforce.

2. WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING (WIL)

In this competitive world, the global work market requires its employees to not only have exceptional knowledge and skills but also be dynamic and innovative and contribute to the work environment (Doolan et al. 2019). Preparing such potential employees has been entrusted to the teachers who have a significant impact on the young minds, the students. Work-integrated Learning within national and international university contexts deals with the extension of acquired knowledge and the creation of capacities needed to engage in and be an effective professional practitioner. It emphasizes the fact that active learners should be engaged and prepared to enable them to integrate those experiences in practice in higher education contexts and engage them in professional practice with reflective and critical mindsets (Billett 2011).

According to Stirling et al., (2016) Universities and higher education contexts are increasingly focusing on the quality of teaching and learning and situations for students to experience various learning contexts. WIL which is well-designed is of great benefit to the students, the academic contexts, the higher institutions, the employers, and the communities through which students come up with new ideas and innovations for industry, community organizations, and government. Opportunities for WIL cover various disciplinary areas, from business and vocational training to the social sciences and humanities, environmental, applied sciences, health, and physical sciences. Educational cooperation and partnerships between the workplace and higher academic institutions increase and boost the integration of theory and practice within and between workplace and academic environments as well as fostering students' personal and professional growth and experience. It requires (a) systemic training, (b) structured work experience, and (c) institutional partnerships.

3. KEY DIMENSIONS OF WIL

Work Integrated Learning, is an umbrella term for a range of approaches and strategies that integrate theory with the practice of work within a purposefully designed curriculum (Patrick et al. 2008). It has been observed that integrating learning in the curriculum along with workplace experience provides an opportunity for students to combine theory and practice in a real-world work environment (Cooper, Orrell and

Bowden 2010). A close collaboration between academic circles and the corporate world can help in the development and delivery of the learning material (Winberg et al. 2022). This not only leads to an in-depth knowledge of the learners but also enhances work-related capabilities. The sharing of modern knowledge, like that of the technology-augmented approach helps students to "quickly contextualize the study content within the functional environment of the workplace and develop field-specific and self-regulated learning competences" can be inspiring to collaborators (Kusmin et al., 2018). Figure 1 clearly describes the basic dimensions of WIL.

Fig. 1 Key Dimensions of WIL (Stirling et al. 2016)

3.1. Employability Skills

In a competitive workforce, having the proper technical skills and qualifications will not guarantee an individual a job, rather it is mainly their interpersonal skills and employability skills that help them find the appropriate job. Undoubtedly, it is precisely communication skills that employers feel applicants are mainly lacking. Employability can be described as a set of achievements, skills, and personal attributes which lay the foundation for graduates to get employment and be successful in future occupations which will undoubtedly benefit themselves, the workforce, the economy, and the community (Yorke 2004). Employability skills refer to the values, personal attributes, and skills which are required to be acquired by graduates regardless of their field of study or specialization (Smith & Bath 2006). 'Work-ready' skills can be described as essential skills, generic skills, transferable skills, enterprise skills, soft skills and 21st century skills

(Gill 2018). Smith and Bath (2006) emphasize that these attributes include a mixture of qualities like problem-solving, critical thinking, intellectual curiosity, independent and logical thought, communication skills, information management skills, creativity and imagination, intellectual rigor, ethical practice, and integrity and tolerance.

4. Methodology and Results

Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) across the world realise the importance of preparing their graduates to be work-ready. A study was conducted at Middle East College, Muscat (HEI in Oman), to determine the efficacy of the curriculum taught at the undergraduate level to different engineering streams. Students studying three English modules: English for Special Purpose (ESP), English for Engineering and Communication Skills (CS) were identified for this study. A mixed approach was adopted that included an in-depth survey and interviews with faculty members, graduates, alumni, and students at undergraduate level. The number of students currently enrolled in various specializations and who took the online survey was 93. These were students who studied two English modules, ESP in the first Semester and CS in semesters five, six, or seven, depending upon their choice (Naqvi, 2018). Around six faculty members engaged in teaching these modules and 12 alumni were interviewed.

4.1 Modules Identified for the Study

There were two English modules that are offered to the students in the first semester of their specialization: (i) English for Special Purpose and (ii) English for Engineering. English for Special Purpose is offered to students who have either opted for a BSc (H) or Bachelor in Computer Science (Naqvi and Mathew, 2010) and a Bachelor in Electronics and Communication, and Electronics and Instrumentation. English for Engineering is offered to students whose specializations are either Bachelor in Mechanical Engineering, Civil Engineering or Quantity Surveying and Construction Management. The other module – Communication Skills is a higher level English module offered to the post diploma students who have already studied either of the first two modules in their first semester. Each of these modules has three assessments, one of them being group work and the rest are individual assignments.

4.1.1 Results of the Survey

The first three questions of the survey tested the knowledge of the students about Employability Skills and Work Integrated Learning and their interrelationship. It was encouraging to see that the students were aware of what are the Employability Skills required to get a job in the future. Most of them knew about the Learning Outcomes of the assessments of the modules being taught to them and how these would help them in procuring jobs in their respective fields of specialization. One of the important questions asked in the survey was whether the curriculum helped the students to develop their employability skills.

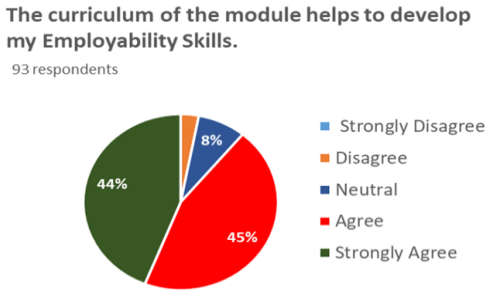

Fig. 2 Curriculum and Employability Skills

According to the responses received, we see that around 53% of the students either agreed or strongly agreed that the curriculum being taught to them was helping them to develop skills that would prepare them for getting jobs in the future.

In the group assignment, students must undertake live case studies, conduct surveys, and present their findings in a written report and present it orally. The nature of the assessments differs according to the level and the requirement of the module. Individual Assignments test the students' writing skills besides problem solving techniques.

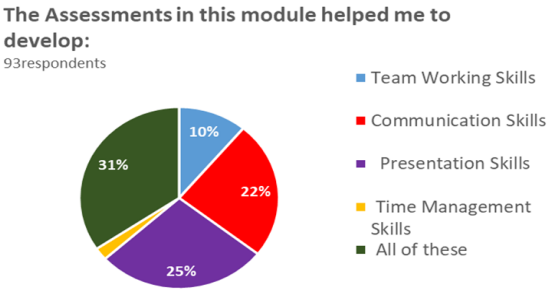

Fig. 3 Skills developed through Assessments

There was a question in the survey about the skills developed through the assessments majority of the students were of the view that more than one skill were developed. As shown in Figure 3, students felt that the assessments helped to develop skills like working in a team, communication skills, presentation skills and time management skills. Such responses reiterated that the curriculum for these modules was well designed and catered to the needs of the students to make them work-ready.

4.1.2 Results of the Structured Interview

For the personal interviews, six senior faculty members from the Centre for Foundation Studies at Middle East College who are engaged in teaching the three targeted modules were chosen. Similar questions were also asked from 12 Alumni students. Since these students had already graduated from the college the interviews

were conducted online. Of the different Interview questions, the following two got similar responses from both the teachers and the students: (i) Which of the assignments in English for Special Purpose, English for Engineering and Communication Skills help in preparing for the future? (ii) What are the benefits of such assessments?

Both the teachers and the students answered that group assignments are very helpful. It teaches the students to first present their plan in the form of a Proposal; it develops their Research skills as they had to refer to research articles and conduct surveys; it developed their writing skills as they have to prepare a written Report and finally it taught them to do oral presentations. For the second question the answers where that such assessments helped to develop: Time Management Skill, Team-working Skill, Leadership Qualities, Research Skills, Presentation Skills, Communication Skills, and Problem-Solving Skills.

4.1.3 Findings

The modules offered by Middle East College in Oman have been very successful in integrating the employability skills in their curriculum. The curriculum is well enriched within WIL which helps to develop: general employability skills that are required in a workplace; effective communication skills which will help in dealing with colleagues across diverse roles; attitudes toward working effectively and competently by learning time management; academic knowledge and transferable skills through research; a professional identity and increased digital literacy skills. The results of this research also provided valuable insight on how the integration of WIL and employability skills contribute to the all-round development of the students which in turn enhance their chances of performing well in their workplace. Furthermore, attributes such as sociability, logical thinking, self-evaluation, information-seeking, self-evaluation are highlighted within higher education contexts (Kniazian, Khromchenko and Sushchenko 2021) "There is a strong link between student satisfaction of their program and the availability of WIL opportunities. The more opportunities a student has to participate in a practice based learning setting, the more likely they are to feel content with their post-secondary experience" (ABACUSDATA 2016). Students who are having WIL experiences always feel more confident and better equipped to enter the job market and succeed in their careers. Since WIL reduces the gap between theoretical learning and expectations at the workplace students are more likely to transition into the workforce with greater ease.

5. BENEFITS OF WIL

One of the most important benefits of WIL according to students was that it provides a hands down experience of a professional and real-world environment. The teachers felt that they were successful in being contributors to the community and developing relationships with external organisations. Some other benefits of WIL were: it helps in developing relationships with industry, Increases the confidence level and communication skills of the students, provides access to resources both at the industry level and in the community, increases the involvement of the community, provides teachers with

opportunities to experiment with their teaching styles and train potential employees, etc. some other benefits for the students are the development of interpersonal relations, writing skills, punctuality, leadership qualities, putting theory into practice, awareness of workplace culture, meeting workplace expectations; opportunities to develop a range of personal attributes, coping in a rapidly changing world of work, career strategies, etc. (Govender and Wait 2017).

6. Recommendations

One of the suggestions related to WIL programme given by the students was that the structure of the curriculum should be more defined, and the Learning Outcomes should be communicated to them, (though the Learning Outcomes are already being communicated to the students through the Module Information Guides). Another suggestion was to increase the involvement of the stakeholders, especially employees from the corporate sectors, the potential employers. The College staff should consult with the industry partners, know their viewpoints to make WIL more relevant to the needs of the present world. Frequent feedback should be taken from the alumni and the suggested changes should be implemented. Teachers should ask the students about their future plans and career aspirations and accordingly expose them to the networks. Teachers were of the view that the students should also keep themselves abreast with the requirements of the industry and the job market. They should also build a network of contacts who can guide them about their future careers.

7. Conclusion

Researchers must collaborate at the global level to make others understand how 'academic study and work experience can enhance graduate employability, contribute to a skilled and competent workforce, meet industry requirements, and achieve economic development goals (Reddan, 2016). This process will require rigorous research for a systematic and substantiable curriculum for enhancing employability. From the above study we see that the curriculum of the three modules helped develop some key important skills: Team-working Skills which teaches the students to work with individuals of diverse backgrounds, to take and share insights, to accept and provide feedback; to interact with internal and external contacts; Problem-solving Skills helped to increase confidence and to be prepared to handle any uncertainties and they also gained experience of a real work environment. These skills are valuable for a potential future career within established companies (Winborg and Hagg 2022). Embedding the work integrated learning the curriculum not only helps the students to develop their soft skills but also boost their employment prospects. The students also become aware of the global challenges and can provide solutions to real problems. University / college education is not only about earning a degree but preparing oneself for employment in this big wide world.

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Review research paper

WHAT DO STUDENTS LIKE ABOUT ONLINE TOOLS? AN EXPLORATION OF STUDENT PREFERENCES AND THE UNDERLYING REASONS

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Abstract. *In this paper, we present the results of a quantitative survey on online learning carried out among 153 first-year students at the Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Zagreb in the academic year 2021/22. The classes were taught synchronously and interactively over 20 weeks using the Google Classroom learning management system (LMS). At the end of the period, students were asked to evaluate ten online tools and activities based on their perceived usefulness on 6-point Likert scales. Data on gender, general English proficiency and Business English grade were also obtained. The information collected was submitted for descriptive statistical analysis and correlation analysis. The paper presents the perceived usefulness of selected online tools and discusses the perceptions of usefulness across different sample subgroups. The defining features of online tools that influence student preferences are considered as well. Finally, the authors make suggestions and recommendations on how online tools can be beneficially incorporated into in-person classes and discuss some added benefits of using online tools, such as a possibility of tailoring teaching content to specific students' needs*.

Key words: *online learning, online teaching tools, ESP, tertiary education, student reactions*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the academic year 2020/21, classes at the Faculty of Economics and Business (FEB) were taught exclusively online and synchronously. We decided to use online tools with this cohort of first-year students aiming to recreate the dynamics of in-person classes in an online setting and provide students with sufficient opportunities to respond (ORT). At the end of this period, we wanted to assess the efficiency of our teaching, identify student preferences and create a reasonably thorough record of our experiences with the tools. We were also interested in blending online tools into our in-person classes. Our study responds to Nguyen's call to determine "the most efficient and effective learning pathways for different learners in particular courses" (Nguyen, 2015, 315).

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2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The efficiency of online courses contrasted with that of traditional ones has long been of interest to researchers. According to Nguyen (2015), traditional and online courses do not differ greatly in terms of effectiveness. Still, traditional courses tend to achieve better results in synchronous activities (Nguyen, 2015) while the online model facilitates flexibility. Research, however, shows that the online learning environment can have profoundly negative effects on student engagement and success. Online classes, if not organized purposefully, may generate a feeling of social isolation which has an adverse effect on student motivation (Amador and Mederer, 2013) and engagement (Martin et al., 2020).

The literature suggests that online classes can be engaging if student-to-instructor and student-to-student interaction is established through participation, community building and regular communication (Martin et al., 2020). When students feel engaged and relevant, i.e. their contributions are acknowledged, effective learning can take place (O'Shea et al., 2015). Moreover, O'Shea and colleagues (2015) claim that universities need to provide online classes where students do not feel like 'second-class citizens' when compared to traditional students. Additionally, community-building and close student-to-student, real-time interaction lead to higher motivation and cognition (Agbejule, 2021; Amador and Mederer, 2013; Baker, 2010; Kadiresan, 2021; Lin et al., 2017). In a survey of 256 students in three Finnish universities, Agbejule (2021) found that students generally preferred face-to-face instruction while they cited "the feeling of being involved as the main motivation for online learning" (p. 17). Amador and Mederer (2013) emphasize the significance of creating a dynamic, intellectual learning community in online classes. They warn against the trend of forming large online learning groups to achieve cost-savings as such groups are demotivating and alienate students.

Other researchers point out the vital role of the instructor in creating a learning-conducive environment. Kabalin Borenić et al. (2022) observed that the instructor's role becomes vital in online classes since students view their teachers as guardians and conductors of their learning experience. This is confirmed by Riapina & Utkina (2022) who observed "that representatives of the digital generation expect to be given constant support from their teachers" (p. 284). This is especially true for students with disabilities (SWD) whose motivation and progress are underpinned by instructor feedback and support (Cook et al., 2023). Kadiresan (2021) highlights the importance of instructor behaviour for ensuring student motivation and engagement. This includes enthusiasm and interactions with students. Baker (2010) distinguishes between instructor immediacy and presence. Instructor immediacy involves instructors' behaviours (both verbal and non-verbal) which create an impression of psychological and/or physical proximity between teachers and students. This is very hard to achieve in an online setting. Instructor presence in the online format, however, includes "the virtual 'visibility' of the instructor as perceived by the learner" (p. 5). Instructor presence is a significant individual predictor of student affective learning, motivation and cognition. It is easier to accomplish online than instructor immediacy (Baker, 2010). Establishing a relationship with instructors appears to be a consistently important consideration for students (Kabalin Borenić et al., 2022). The teaching process should develop through a two-way communication: firstly, instructors need to create OTR, which are prompts designed to elicit a response from individuals or groups (Haydon et al., 2012). Next, instructors need to provide positive and constructive feedback which is a recognized motivating force in online settings (Baker, 2010; Johnson, 2017; Kadiresan et al., 2021).

3. METHODOLOGY

The data for the study was collected through an anonymous and voluntary Google Form poll administered using the Google Classroom Learning Management System (LMS) after 20 weeks of online classes (1 April 2022). Student data (gender, self-assessed level of general English according to CEFR and the grade in Business English) was collected through an English-language poll with multiple-choice questions. Statements about 10 online tools were evaluated on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (not beneficial) to 6 (very useful). As our topic was not controversial, we used a Likert scale without a neutral mid-point to obtain clear and unambiguous answers.

3.1. Participants

The poll was administered to a convenience sample of 153 students (M=58; F=95), which made up around 10% of the total population of approximately 1,500 first-year students at the FEB. All the participants were native speakers of Croatian. Most students (N=117 or 77%) estimated their general English proficiency to be at B2 level or higher, according to the Common European Framework of Reference (C2 = 8.5%, C1 = 20.9%, B2 = 47.1%, B1 = 20.3%, and A2 = 3.3%). These estimates are confirmed by earlier proficiency testing in a comparable sample of FEB students which showed that 78% were at B2 level or higher (Sladoljev-Agejev & Kabalin Borenić, 2018). In terms of Business English (BE) grades, the results were as follows: 10 excellent (grade 5), 34 very good (grade 4), 47 good (grade 3), 17 satisfactory (grade 2) and 45 had no grade yet. We found a positive and moderate (r=0.436) correlation between students' self-assessed general English proficiency and their BE grade, suggesting that highly proficient students do not necessarily receive a high BE grade and that a weaker knowledge of general English does not necessarily translate into a low BE grade.

3.2. The teaching environment and types of activities

The participants attended online classes in large groups of up to 100 students who had never met before. The classes were conducted in Google Classroom, an LMS that both students and instructors found easy to use. This is in line with research that reports positive feedback on Google's LMS (Lindh, et al, 2016; Herrick, 2009; Railean, 2012 cited in Kakoulli Constantinou, 2018). When in class, students were required to have a functioning microphone and keep their cameras on the whole time. Most students had good internet connection, access to necessary equipment and a secluded space in which to listen to and participate in classes.

The online tools and activities included in the poll were the following:

- *Individual synchronous Google Docs assignments*. A worksheet prepared in Google Docs was assigned through Google Classroom to the whole group. Each student was sent an individual copy. Students worked on the worksheet during class and the instructor observed their progress, providing feedback, comments and corrections to the whole group and/or to students individually.
- *Google Meet polls*. Students were sent short multiple-choice poll questions throughout classes to stimulate interest and check active presence.
- *Edpuzzle video assignment*. Short videos with questions and teacher's comments were assigned. After answering each question, the software instantaneously provided

feedback and a score. The students were not able to progress in the video until they had answered each question but they had the option of replaying sections of the video to find the correct answers or redoing the assignment to get a higher score.

- *Attendance quizzes*. After classes, students were sent short Google Form quizzes covering the material dealt with in class. Students were expected to get 40% of the score for their attendance to be counted.
- *Replying to teacher's questions in the chat section of Google Meet*. In order to recreate traditional classroom interaction, students were encouraged to react to what was said in class, ask and answer questions and provide comments in writing. It allowed a large number of students to participate at the same time without disrupting the flow of the class.
- *Online team projects (meetings, presentations)*. Students were put into teams in which they had to produce a role-played meeting or a presentation and record it or present it live during a video call.
- *Asynchronous Google Docs teamwork*. Several students were assigned a shared Google Docs file and asked to complete the task over a period of time, collaborating asynchronously until a given deadline.
- *Revision quizzes*. Every three to four weeks, students were required to complete Google Form quizzes of around fifty questions to help revise the topics that were covered up to that point. The students were given ample time and were free to use any resources to complete the task.
- *Synchronous Google Docs teamwork*. Several students were assigned a shared Google Docs file and were required to work in the file during class. The teacher observed their progress and commented on the work.
- *Group activities in Google Meet breakout rooms*. Students were randomly placed in breakout rooms in teams of 4 to 6. They were required to carry out a task-based activity which required teamwork. The teacher briefly visited each breakout room to check on progress.

3.3. Data analysis

The obtained data was statistically analyzed by applying several methods of descriptive and inferential statistics. Upon entering and coding the data in MS Excel, data analysis was carried out using open-source statistical software JASP. The descriptive statistical analysis included mode, median, mean and standard deviation statistics. Pearson's Correlations were used to create a correlation matrix between all observed variables. In addition to analyzing the whole sample, a group analysis was also performed with regards to gender, BE grade and English proficiency level. In order to test the normality of the distributions and the assumption of the homogeneity of variance, Shapiro-Wilk and Levene’s tests were applied. According to these tests, neither the assumption of normality of the data distribution nor the assumption of the homogeneity of variance was tenable, which led to the use of nonparametric tests. Mann-Whitney U test was used for testing the statistical significance of the differences in the results obtained from male and female students, and Kruskal-Wallis test was used to test the statistical significance of the differences between BE grade and self-assessed proficiency groups.

4. FINDINGS

The data collected revealed how our students perceived the online tools used in the 20 weeks of online classes. It also provided a more detailed insight into how groups defined by gender, self-assessed English proficiency and BE grade rated the ten different tools and activities.

4.1. Perceived usefulness in the whole sample

Our students found that individual synchronous Google Docs assignments were the most useful activity (M 4.8 ± SD 1.3). It was graded as very useful (Mode 6) by most of the respondents. A close second were Google Meet polls (M 4.7 ± SD 1.3; Mode 6). Students' answers suggest that Edpuzzle video tasks (M 4.5 ± SD 1.5; Mode 6) and attendance quizzes (M 4.3 ± 1.4) were considered to be rather useful as well.

Somewhat less positively reviewed were five online tools and activities (Google Meet chat, team presentations and meetings, asynchronous teamwork in Google Docs, revision quizzes and synchronous teamwork in Google Docs) with mean scores ranging from 3.9 to 3.8. Only one tool - Breakout rooms (M 3.3 ± SD 1.6) - was generally not perceived as useful by the respondents. Table 1 below shows the ranking by perceived usefulness in the overall sample (possible grades were: 1 - not beneficial at all; 2 - not useful; 3 - not very useful; 4 - somewhat useful; 5 - useful; 6 - very useful).

Table 1 Perceived usefulness results – whole sample (N=153)

Activity	Mean	St. deviation	Mode
Individual synchronous Google Docs assignments	4.804	1.252	6
Google Meet polls	4.706	1.307	6
Edpuzzle	4.458	1.509	6
Attendance quizzes	4.275	1.387	4
Chat	3.869	1.098	5
Online team projects	3.843	1.518	3
Asynchronous teamwork in Google Docs	3.830	1.490	4
Revision quizzes	3.817	1.048	4
Synchronous teamwork in Google Docs	3.810	1.546	4
Breakout rooms	3.288	1.621	3

4.2. Perceived usefulness by groups

A comparison of the perceived usefulness scores for certain online tools and activities by gender, self-assessed proficiency and grade for BE 1 also provided valuable insights.

4.2.1. Gender

When it comes to gender (Table 2), female respondents rated the usefulness of nine out of ten online tools and activities higher than their male counterparts. In six cases, this difference was statistically significant. There was no statistically significant difference in the scores for usefulness of synchronous and asynchronous teamwork in Google Docs, and for the highest rated of all activities: individual synchronous Google Docs assignments.

Table 2 Perceived usefulness results by gender

Activity	Male (N=58)		Female (N=95)		p-value
	Mean	St. dev.	Mean	St. dev.	
Individual synchronous Google Docs assignments	4.586	1.325	4.937	1.192	0.107
Google Meet polls	4.431	1.339	4.874	1.265	0.033**
Edpuzzle	3.983	1.681	4.747	1.321	0.006*
Attendance quizzes	4.017	1.481	4.432	1.310	0.088***
Chat	3.672	1.130	3.989	1.067	0.081***
Online team projects	3.552	1.416	4.021	1.557	0.058***
Asynchronous teamwork in Google Docs	3.741	1.562	3.884	1.450	0.639
Revision quizzes	3.500	1.203	4.011	0.893	0.013**
Synchronous teamwork in Google Docs	3.741	1.562	3.853	1.543	0.773
Breakout rooms	3.603	1.622	3.095	1.598	0.044**

*Note. Mann-Whitney U test: *statistically significant at 1% level; **statistically significant at 5% level; ***statistically significant at 10% level*

4.2.2. Business English grade

A comparison of usefulness scores for selected online tools and activities by respondents' grade in BE showed a revealing pattern. Generally, the respondents with the highest (5) and the lowest (2) passing grade shared a similarly positive attitude to five online tools and activities. The exceptions to this general rule are individual synchronous Google Docs assignments, chat, and synchronous teamwork in Google Docs, which were most positively rated by the respondents who received grade 3 in BE. Unsurprisingly, as many as eight activities received the lowest score for usefulness from the respondents who had no grade in BE at the time of the poll. Kruskall-Wallis test results (Table 3) revealed that there are statistically significant differences between groups for individual synchronous Google Docs assignments (at 1% level of significance), Google Meet polls, Edpuzzle, attendance quizzes, chats, revision quizzes, breakout sessions (at 5% level of significance), and synchronous Google Docs teamwork (at 10% level of significance).

4.2.3. Self-assessed proficiency

The study also collected data on students' self-assessed general English proficiency. As many as six tools were rated highest by the most proficient students (C2 and C1), and lowest by the least proficient students (A2 and B1). A further three tools were the most appreciated by the least proficient students (A2) and the least appreciated by more advanced students (B1 and C2). However, the results of group analysis performed with the help of Kruskall-Wallis test revealed that there are no statistically significant differences between groups for any of the observed tasks (Table 4).

Table 3 Perceived usefulness results by BE grade

Task	No grade yet (N=45)		Grade 2 (N=17)		Grade 3 (N=47)		Grade 4 (N=34)		Grade 5 (N=10)		p-value
	Mean	St. Dev.	Mean	St. Dev.	Mean	St. Dev.	Mean	St. Dev.	Mean	St. Dev.	
Indiv. GDoc	4.200	1.140	4.941	1.197	5.106	1.272	5.059	1.254	5.000	0.943	< .001*
GM polls	4.178	1.284	5.000	1.118	4.787	1.382	4.941	1.254	5.400	0.843	0.010**
Edpuzzle	4.111	1.385	5.000	1.323	4.553	1.626	4.265	1.582	5.300	1.059	0.030**
Attendance quizzes	3.800	1.272	4.706	1.448	4.277	1.542	4.412	1.184	5.200	1.033	0.012**
Chat	3.467	1.079	3.941	1.088	4.149	0.978	3.912	1.215	4.100	0.994	0.037**
Online team projects	3.533	1.342	4.412	1.228	3.787	1.680	3.824	1.623	4.600	1.265	0.151
Asynch GD	3.667	1.168	4.529	1.179	3.915	1.572	3.471	1.813	4.200	1.398	0.114
Revision quiz	3.556	0.813	4.000	1.118	4.021	1.011	3.618	1.280	4.400	0.843	0.023**
Synch GD	3.556	1.341	4.176	1.590	4.234	1.492	3.500	1.762	3.400	1.506	0.091***
Breakout	3.467	1.424	3.000	1.581	3.574	1.704	2.618	1.615	3.900	1.663	0.036**

*Note. Kruskal-Wallis test: *statistically significant at 1% level; **statistically significant at 5% level; ***statistically significant at 10% level*

Table 4 Perceived usefulness results by self-assessed proficiency

	A2: Elementary English (N=5)		B1: Intermediate English (N=31)		B2: Upper Intermediate English (N=72)		C1: Advanced English (N=32)		C2: Proficiency English (N=13)		p-value
	Mean	St. Dev.	Mean	St. Dev.	Mean	St. Dev.	Mean	St. Dev.	Mean	St. Dev.	
Indiv. GDoc	4.400	1.140	4.774	1.203	4.708	1.238	4.969	1.356	5.154	1.281	0.413
GM polls	5.000	1.000	4.323	1.275	4.750	1.422	4.781	1.211	5.077	0.954	0.331
Edpuzzle	4.400	1.517	4.258	1.483	4.514	1.529	4.594	1.521	4.308	1.601	0.831
Attendance quizzes	4.400	1.517	4.226	1.477	4.250	1.330	4.250	1.524	4.538	1.266	0.974
Chat	3.600	1.140	3.968	1.048	3.875	1.125	3.719	1.224	4.077	0.760	0.884
Online team projects	4.400	1.517	3.742	1.237	3.750	1.536	4.094	1.614	3.769	1.878	0.728
Asynch GD	4.200	1.095	3.935	1.315	3.861	1.513	3.938	1.605	3.000	1.528	0.387
Revision quiz	3.800	1.095	3.613	1.054	3.903	0.995	3.969	0.999	3.462	1.391	0.485
Synch GD	3.400	0.894	4.032	1.449	3.667	1.492	3.875	1.879	4.077	1.441	0.647
Breakout	3.800	1.483	3.581	1.501	3.097	1.637	3.531	1.685	2.846	1.676	0.380

Note. Kruskal-Wallis test

4.3. Correlation analysis

The results of the correlation analysis also indicate numerous significant positive relationships between the perceived usefulness of various tools, suggesting that students who find one online tool useful, also tend to appreciate other tools.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. Rating of tools and activities

Students were asked to rate 10 types of online tasks by usefulness on a Likert scale of 1-6, where 1 means "not useful at all" and 6 is "very useful." The average usefulness rates ranged from 3.3 to 4.8. We ranked the tasks from the most to the least useful.

Students rated individual synchronous Google Docs tasks most positively. An important feature of these tasks is immediate individualized feedback and constructive comments given to students while working on the task. This kind of interaction between students and the instructor simulated in-person teaching most closely and fostered a perception of instructor presence (Baker, 2010). While positive and constructive feedback is important in all class settings, it is essential in an online setting to keep students motivated (Baker, 2010; Kadiresan, 2021; Johnson, 2017).

The following tasks were Google Meet polls, Edpuzzle tasks and attendance quizzes. They were rated above 4.3 points and also had the feature of instant or very quick feedback, but in these cases the feedback was not individualized. Despite that, the swift and timely feedback reinforced the perception of instructor presence (Baker, 2010). In addition, these tasks are considered to be relatively easy and quick to do, as they were mainly made up of multiple-choice questions. Google Meet polls helped students stay focused in class while Edpuzzle tasks provided additional complementary input in an attractive video format. Attendance quizzes allowed the students to quickly revise and organize the newly acquired information after classes.

A somewhat less positively rated group of tasks received around 3.8 points. The reasons for the lower scores may fall under two headings: time consuming and team activities. Chat tops this part of the list. Despite its similarity to the more popular Meet polls, Chat probably received a lower score because it requires more autonomous activity and a longer attention span in class. Revision quizzes also required students to invest more time and effort in completing them, making them less popular. On the upside, they provided relatively quick feedback and helped students to review the material before tests.

The next group of tasks were both time consuming and required team activity and coordination. To prepare for team presentations and meetings, students had to coordinate their work with classmates and focus on the task over an extended period of time. This was made more challenging by the fact that students had not met each other before, so there were no pre-existing personal relationships that would make coordination easier. In addition, team presentations and meetings were graded exercises and students found them more stressful. Another cause for stress and dissatisfaction in some students might have been the fact that their individual effort or extra input was not individually rewarded, and that some students who had put in less effort could benefit from their work. The problems relating to teamwork also affected the asynchronous and synchronous teamwork tasks assigned in Google Docs. There were a few additional issues that might have caused students to feel these tools were not as useful as others. Firstly, it might have been technologically challenging to work in Google Docs as a group. Some students might have felt reluctant to utilize the possibilities provided by the programme. Students who were insecure may not have participated sufficiently, while others might have felt weary about correcting their peers, especially given that there was no personal relationship to rely on.

Breakout rooms seemed to be an ideal vehicle to deliver task-based learning in online groups. Such tasks can create opportunities for high quality student-to-student interactions

and thus encourage the development of social bonds among learners and ultimately lead to higher student motivation (Amador & Mederer, 2013). Anecdotal evidence shows that Breakout rooms can be successfully used in smaller classes. However, in our experience working in Breakout rooms was the least appreciated task by a large margin (3.3) because it combined the least favored features of the other nine tasks: lack of immediate and personalized feedback, the need for teamwork and prolonged engagement. Mini-meetings set up in Breakout rooms were unsupervised and thus did not give the impression of instructor presence (Baker, 2010). The lack of supervision may have also allowed students an opportunity to relax or focus their attention on issues other than the class material. When it comes to teamwork, our students did not feel comfortable using this tool in the randomly selected, one-off teams created by the LMS. Talking to other students who they had never met before on a video call caused feelings of anxiety and discomfort. Furthermore, the realization that they may never be placed on the same team again demotivated students from engaging with each other. As a result, there was little or no communication in Breakout rooms. Consequently, our observation is in line with Amador and Mederer's (2013) finding that large online classes are alienating for students because they hinder the formation of meaningful student-to-student relationships.

We also investigated how different groups within our sample expressed their appreciation for specific tools. We noted certain patterns when looking at gender, self-assessed proficiency and BE grade.

When it comes to gender, female students appreciated almost all types of tools more than male students. The only tool that differs from this pattern is Breakout rooms, which was appreciated by male students significantly more than female students. These findings suggest that female students' learning habits are different from male students', which is in line with studies showing that female students habitually spend more time doing homework (Gershenson & Holt, 2105; Mau & Lyn, 2010) and that they use more learning strategies than their male counterparts (Karlak & Bagarić Medve, 2016). Females are also significantly more motivated (Karlak & Bagarić Medve, 2016) and autonomous (Varol & Yilmaz, 2010). All in all, female students seem to appreciate regular preparation for classes and exams through various exercises, while male students rely less on these tools for their success in BE. The difference in attitude to Breakout rooms also suggests that male students appreciated the opportunity to virtually connect with their classmates during classes.

When taking students' grades from the first semester (BE 1) into account, an interesting pattern emerges. Students who received either the highest grade (5) or the lowest passing grade (2) agreed about the usefulness of 5 out of 10 tools (Edpuzzle videos, Google Meet polls, attendance quizzes, preparing online meetings / presentations in teams and asynchronous teamwork in Google Docs). We found it intriguing that half of the tools surveyed were similarly rated by students at the two opposing ends of the grading scale. It may be that students with the highest grade achieved success due to their persistent effort and hard work and appreciated the tasks that made this success possible. Students with the lowest passing grade generally had weaker English skills but achieved a passing grade through hard work. The two groups, therefore, seem to share the highest levels of commitment and determination.

Three further tools (individual synchronous Google Doc assignments, chat and synchronous teamwork) received the highest rating from students who had grade 3 in BE. These results suggest that moderate achievers appreciated tasks that provide immediate feedback and guidance either from the instructor or classmates. This confirms Nguyen's

(2015) opinion that individualized online content is crucial for students' progress in online and blended environments.

Students who had not passed BE 1 consistently rated 8 out of 10 tools the lowest. It is no surprise that low achievers found most tools less useful than students with better grades. These students had either failed BE 1 or did not feel confident enough to take the exam in the previous semester. Their lack of success can be attributed to an insufficient amount of time and effort invested in their progress. We could argue that they are indifferent to the opportunity to improve their knowledge of BE and therefore they do not appreciate any of the tools available to them.

The study also collected data on students' self-assessed general English proficiency, which does not necessarily reflect BE proficiency. Although the results were not statistically significant, there is a pattern revealing that six tools (individual synchronous Google Doc assignments, Google Meet polls, Edpuzzle, attendance quizzes, chat and synchronous teamwork) are rated the highest by the most proficient students (C2 and C1) and the lowest by the least proficient students (A2 and B1), which may be explained by the relative complexity of these tasks.

6. CONCLUSION

The research results provide insight into students' perceptions of usefulness of 10 tools after 20 weeks of online classes. The analysis revealed that our first-year business students have clear preferences for some tools, which could be explained by the defining features of those tools. These insights enabled us to formulate some guidelines for future blended classes.

6.1. The perceived usefulness of online tools

Firstly, tools and activities which allow quick and individualised feedback with a high level of supervision are the most popular with students. This is because they contribute to a perception of instructor presence, which has been highlighted in literature as a motivating and engaging factor. In our research, individual synchronous Google Docs tasks fully satisfied these criteria. Secondly, tools with quick but not individual feedback - Google Meet polls, Edpuzzle tasks and attendance quizzes - were also popular, although somewhat less so. Thirdly, students generally preferred autonomous work over teamwork, which may reflect their social anxiety and their desire to get full credit for their work. Not surprisingly, lower achieving students appreciated teamwork more, as it gave them an opportunity to rely on others. Next, tasks which required more time and effort (e.g. team presentations/meetings and revision quizzes) were not rated as very useful. Finally, although our students were adept at using computers, it still seems that they preferred technologically less demanding tasks. Instructors also need to be aware that some types of activities are better received by certain groups as defined by gender, general proficiency or achievement. For example, female students are more appreciative of opportunities to practice. At the same time, more proficient students seem not to appreciate teamwork as they feel forced to take initiative and guide their less proficient classmates.

6.2. The incorporation of online tools into in-person classes

The global experience of being forced to teach online resulted in some positive outcomes. The community of educators quickly familiarized themselves with numerous online tools and improved their general teaching capabilities. The authors also became experienced in using online tools, some of which have become valuable additions to our tool-set. Blended instruction is now within easy reach and, for many of us, it is welcome. In our new environment, both students and educators expect more flexibility and new learning possibilities (Lockee, 2021). Including virtual tools in our in-person classes can help fulfill these expectations.

While there are many virtual tools that can potentially be incorporated into in-person classes, the following are the ones we have continued using as in-class activities in brick-and-mortar classrooms: polls, quizzes and Kahoot!. These tools foster inclusivity in the classroom by offering additional opportunities to respond. They are also useful for checking understanding and attendance quickly, while including a motivating element of competition.

Our tool-set of post-class activities has been substantially enriched by the addition of online tools. For instance, we use Google Form quizzes, Google Docs tasks and Kahoot! to give feedback quickly and efficiently, while Edpuzzle video assignments also provide additional input. These asynchronous teaching tools allow students to work at different speeds and to access various aids to complete the tasks. Using varied materials allows instructors to "build in options that provide multiple means of representation, action and expression, and engagement, by intentionally using digital tools and instructional strategies to reduce barriers of learning" (Rao, 2021). Finally, peer-learning, although not fully embraced by the students, can be facilitated through the functionalities of Google Docs and video conferences. Video recordings of student activities can be used for further feedback or for the grading process. Online tools can additionally enrich the learning experience by making international cooperation much easier and cheaper.

7.3. Institutional aspect of successful blended instruction

Our final point concerns the need for continued investment in education to keep benefiting from the achievements of the forced transition to online teaching during the pandemic. The quick and relatively seamless transition in the time of crisis was only possible because both institutions and instructors were willing to invest in themselves to make the transition possible. In order to unlock the potential of online teaching, both technology and expertise need to be kept up-to-date.

It is important to raise awareness that online teaching is not an instant solution to institutions' financial woes. One of the dangers of online teaching is that schools might feel tempted to create large classes and thus achieve cost savings. Research, however, shows that such classes are demotivating and inefficient and would not result in a positive outcome for students (Amador & Mederer, 2013; Kabalin Borenić et al., 2022).

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Review research paper

IS THE ACTION LEARNING APPROACH SUITABLE FOR TEACHING ESP? THE MAIN PREREQUISITES FOR ITS IMPLEMENTATION IN THE CASE OF AGRI-FOOD STUDENTS

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Abstract. *In the last decade, there has been a tendency towards embracing the action learning approach in the case of the students attending study programs such as agriculture, forestry, and food engineering. The paper aims to establish if the methods and instruments specific to this approach can be transferred to the ESP lessons and check on the feasibility and limitations of this approach when teaching English for agriculture and food engineering. For this reason, a questionnaire was applied to check the student's understanding of the action learning approach and their capacity to identify specific action-oriented methods and select a series of methods to be introduced when teaching English. According to the obtained results, the study shows that most students have satisfactory information as regards the action learning approach and can identify and show a certain preference for specific methods that could be used within the ESP course. More than this, an analysis of the different categories of learning methods reveals that the students display a preference for those that develop skills such as observation, visioning, problem-solving, and co-learning. Thus, future studies may explore topics related to the way ESP teaching can further enhance the acquisition and development of specific skills (observation, visioning, reflection, dialogue, participation, co-learning, problem-solving and critical thinking) in the case of future professionals in agriculture, forestry, and food engineering.*

Key words: *ESP, ESP for agriculture, ESP for food science, action learning, learner-centered approach*

1. INTRODUCTION

The action learning approach originated in the field of management and organizational development. Reginald Revans is the primary figure associated with the development of the action learning approach in the 1940s. He wrote extensively on action learning, outlining its principles, processes, and applications in various contexts. According to its inventor "there is no learning without action and no (sober and deliberate) action without learning" (Revans 1998, 83). The same idea is taken further, and other researchers have discovered that people

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learn most effectively when dealing with real problems that occur in their workplace (Day, 2000; Raelin, 1999; Reynolds & Vince, 2004).

The success of action learning in organizational contexts led to its adaptation in educational settings. Educators recognized the potential of this approach to engage learners actively in problem-solving, critical thinking, and reflective practices.

In ESP, learners often engage in language activities centered on problem-solving scenarios relevant to their specific field or profession. Both approaches recognize the value of learning through actively addressing challenges. By integrating language development with practical skills and addressing specific needs, these approaches enhance the effectiveness of learning experiences in professional or specialized settings. Thus, ESP is *"generally used to refer to the teaching of English for a clearly utilitarian purpose. This purpose is usually defined with reference to some occupational requirements …or vocational training programmes … or some academic or professional study"* (Mackay and Mountford 1978, 2)

Therefore, the action learning approach, as well as teaching ESP, found their way into higher education institutions, where they have been used within various study programs and contexts, including business education, engineering, medicine, psychology, leadership development, and lately in agriculture, forestry, and food science.

Arthur W. Chickering and Zelda F. Gamson stated that effective teaching encourages active learning, as "*students do not learn much just sitting in classes and listening to teachers, memorizing pre-packaged assignments, and spitting out answers.*" In order to have significant learning experiences, "*they must talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences, and apply it to their daily lives.*" They also mention that active learning can also occur outside the classroom, and the students can contribute to the design of courses or teaching materials (Chickering and Gamson 1987: 4). In the case of ESP, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) have emphasized the importance of considering the methodological aspects of ESP teaching to cater for the individual needs of ESP learners. A recommendation addressed to ESP teachers refers to the "*need to accommodate individual differences of their students by using diverse classroom activities and teaching techniques to ensure efficient and effective teaching*" (Javid 2011b, 59).

Both Action Learning and ESP often involve collaborative learning experiences. In ESP, learners may collaborate on projects or engage in group activities to enhance their language proficiency. With its group problem-solving approach, action learning encourages participants to work together and learn from one another's experiences and perspectives.

Later, Sandelands (1998) considers action learning as a form of "learning by doing," while Raelin considers it a developmental approach organized within a group setting that is capable of generating theory from relevant practical situations (Raelin 1997).

John Dewey offers the most comprehensive perspective on "experiential learning," which may represent the philosophical foundation of the action learning concept. Dewey believed that learning should be rooted in concrete, practical experiences and argued that education is most effective when it involves active engagement with the environment, allowing individuals to learn through direct experiences rather than abstract concepts. Dewey promoted reflective thinking as an integral part of the learning process. After engaging in action or experience, individuals should reflect on their experiences, consider the consequences of their actions, and extract meaningful insights (Dewey 1938). Reflection is a key component in both action learning and ESP. After engaging in language activities or addressing real-world challenges, learners are encouraged to reflect

on their experiences. This reflective practice enhances the learning process and helps individuals consolidate their understanding and skills.

In addition, the autonomy of the teacher's actions and the learner's active role are of utmost importance in the case of action learning. In this context, the authoritarian teacher figure is replaced by that of the facilitator/mediator or mentor, who needs to take into account learners' capacities in the sense that they will be able to be active participants (Koo, L. C. 1999). The ESP teacher has an even more challenging mission - embracing a multidisciplinary approach instead of just being limited to delivering linguistics and vocabulary-related information to the students. The ESP teacher must collaborate with the students and colleagues (teaching different disciplines) to remain constantly in touch with the latest research in the field so that the content delivered to students during the ESP class reflects the most updated information. John and Dudley-Evans (1991: 305) have reported that ESP courses are usually collaboratively run by language and content teachers, and "*ESP requires specialized or unique methodologies*." This fact will undoubtedly raise the student's motivation to learn ESP. However, some studies indicate that one role of the ESP teacher can be that of "*a facilitator rather than presenter of content*" (Hull, 2004: 1), whose primary role is to guide the learning process as well as to ensure the most appropriate learning environment for the students. It has been argued that ESP teachers are not "*specialists in the field, but in teaching English*" because their subject is English for the profession but not the profession in English (Milevica 2006).

Another perspective on action learning is offered by Bonwell and Eison, who consider active learning *"as any instructional method that engages students in the learning process*" (Bonwell and Eison 1991: 2). Learners are at the center of the learning process, and they need to learn through experiencing what they have learned in concrete situations. Both action learning and ESP (Dudley-Evans and St. John 1998) are highly learner-centered approaches), paying close attention to the multidimensional needs of the learners. They aim to develop learners' autonomy and independence by being responsible for their own learning. "*teachers and educational institutions should attempt to promote autonomy through practices that will encourage and enable learners to take more control of all aspects of their learning and will, thus, help them to become better language learners"* (Benson 2001, 109).

ESP focuses on developing language skills that directly apply to learners' professional or academic goals. Action learning, too, tailors its learning objectives to address the specific challenges and objectives of a given project or organizational context. The learning goals are aligned with the practical needs of the participants.

It has also been reported that ESP learners and action learning users should be actively involved in choosing the content materials, curriculum development, and teaching methodology to ensure maximum commitment and motivation of the program participants.

Furthermore, active learning is a process that makes learners mentally and physically active. O'Brien and Collins state, *"Active learning is the process of keeping students mentally, and often physically, active in their learning through activities that involve them in gathering information, thinking, and problem solving*" (O'Brien and Collins 2011: 5).

A more specific perspective on action learning applied in the case of the students attending agriculture and food science study programs is offered by the Nextfood action learning approach developed within the project called **Nextfood**: **Educating the next**

generation of professionals in the agrifood system (Horizon 2020, **Grant agreement:** No. 771738, www.nextfood-project.eu).

This approach is characterized by a shift from theory to phenomenon as the starting point for the learning process (experiential learning) and a shift in focus from knowledge transfer to building competencies needed to take informed and responsible action as the ultimate goal of learning. It is mainly based on Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory Learning, which stipulates that it is about acquiring knowledge and actively engaging with and reflecting on experiences. With this theory, Kolb emphasizes that learning is a continuous, lifelong process following a learning cycle (regardless of the moment learners enter the cycle) that must be completed as the learning process takes place (Kolb, 1984).

The shift from a traditional to an action-based educational system began in the Faculty of Environmental Protection five years ago when it became a member of the NEXTFOOD project consortium whose primary focus was to identify the most important skills necessary in the agro-food and forestry sectors as well as the design of different courses based on the action learning approach to educate the next generation of professionals in these sectors. One of the activities that still ensures the sustainability of this project even after its closure is the annual organization of a workshop on the action learning approach where high school students from VET partners, university students, teachers, professors, representatives of state institutions, farmers and other actors involved are invited. During this workshop, the organizers try to find out what are the main shifts that the educational system should produce, what are the hindering and supporting forces in the case of action learning approach, what are the best environments where different classes should take place, what are the best sources of information and finally what are the most suitable forms of evaluations when using this approach.

To enable the student to shift from theory to experiential learning, even in the ESP class, they must be placed at the core of the learning process, and the teacher must design all the materials according to the principles and methodology specific to the action learning approach.

Therefore, it is needed as some initial information to be collected from the students, such as the student's level of understanding concerning the "action learning" approach consisting of their capacity to identify action-oriented methods, indicate a preference for some specific methods and tools and detect the supporting and hindering forces for introducing the action learning approach in the ESP class.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was organized within the Faculty of Environmental Protection, University of Oradea, and the target group was represented by the first-year students attending two study programs: Agriculture and Food Science. The total number of students included in this research was 56 (35 female students and 21 male students) with a B1-C1 level of English proficiency. The students attending the study program in Agriculture have one hour of ESP per week, while those studying Food Science have two hours per week. In both cases, the goal of the ESP class is to enrich the vocabulary of the students with new specific terminology, improve the student's capacity to communicate at an academic level when taking part in international conferences, projects, or programs, enhance their capacity of understanding new literature in the field and writing research papers.

The methodological approach in this study consisted of organizing a workshop on action learning in the agro-food sector, during which the students were asked to fill in a questionnaire (see Annex 1) and answer two additional questions.

The questionnaire was designed into three sections: a demographic section including information related to gender, age, and origin (rural and urban); a section with general statements that check the student's understanding of the action learning approach in the ESP class (5 questions) and a final section consisting of ten statements that have in view the identification of specific action-oriented methods that could be relevant for teaching ESP, as well as their grading according to the level of preference to be used in the ESP courses. The scale used was from 1 to 5 (5 = strongly agree, 4 =agree, 3=neither agree/nor disagree, 2=disagree, 1= strongly disagree), and the average means have been calculated for each statement included in the questionnaire.

Given the fact that the students enrolled in the two study programs agriculture, respectively food science, come mainly from rural areas and there is a mixture of students regarding age and gender (more men in the case of students studying agriculture, only female students in the case of those studying food science), it was decided as the first section to include information on the gender, origin, and age of the students in case some relevant information could be linked to these aspects for further studies.

The second section had in view to check on the knowledge that students could have about the action learning approach at the respective moment. This section included five statements revolving around the definition of action learning, the environment where action learning can be performed, the persons and organizations who can use this approach, and how action learning can be used.

More precisely, this section includes the following statements:

1. In action learning, the participants select/are given some issues, analyze them, take some action, and reflect on that action.
2. Action learning helps learners to solve problems by asking the right questions.
3. Action learning involves "group-based learning."
4. The role of the teacher is reduced to that of a moderator/facilitator.
5. Action learning can be used both indoors (e.g., classroom, laboratory, office), outdoors (e.g., farm, food factory, kitchen, restaurant, hotel), and virtually (e.g., on different platforms).

The last section included ten statements and referred to ten different action-learning-specific methods students could practice during the ESP class. Learning methods like performing ***visioning exercises*** (e.g. *I can visualize a modern farm/the ideal food product and describe it in English*), ***organization of virtual trips*** (e.g. *I can watch a movie about an intensive farm/factory producing Parma ham and speak about it.*), ***game-based learning*** (e.g. *I can play, make strategies, and communicate with my group when playing Simplycycle* (board game based on environmental issues) and Cornucopia (internet game based on agricultural and environmental practices), ***engagement in problem solving*** (e.g. *I can find waste reduction solutions on a vegetal farm/local café and present the solutions in English*), ***role-playing*** (e.g. *I can act like a representative of a state institution/ consumer protection officer and have the dialogue in English*), ***co-learning within a group*** (e.g. *I can learn new things from my colleagues who are of different age, origin and background.*), practicing ***debate/dialogue*** (e.g. *I can have a dialogue in English with other colleagues in the group without judging their statements*), ***reflection exercises*** (e.g. *I can decide what went well and what went wrong during the class and provide feedback in English*), ***facilitator instead of***

a teacher (e.g. *I can learn ESP using action learning approach even if the teacher is not a professional in my field of study*), ***asking the right questions*** (e.g. *I can ask questions (in English) whose answers can lead me to the best solution*) are all types of activities that are specific to the action learning approach.

The two additional questions that the students had to answer at a later stage during the same workshop were:

- What would be the supporting forces when introducing the *action learning* approach in the ESP class?
- What would be the hindering forces when introducing the *action learning* approach in the ESP class?

These questions were introduced after the application of the questionnaire because the answers could make us better understand the way students think about possible supporting and hindering forces when applying the action learning methods, considering that the answers were in accordance with their intrinsic values, personality traits, and education received until that moment.

3. DISCUSSIONS AND RESULTS

Starting from the first section of the questionnaire, it is recorded that 56 students were included in the study from two study programs (agriculture and food science), and they were distributed according to their gender, age, and origin, as in Table 1.

Table 1 Demographic data of the students studying agriculture and food science

Study programme	No. of students	Gender		Age			Origin	
		female	male	18-28	29-39	40-50	rural	urban
Agriculture	32	11	21	25	3	4	25	7
Food science	24	24	-	22	2	-	14	10
Total	56	35	21	47	5	4	39	17

The results concerning the definition of the action learning approach and the identification of its most important characteristics are presented in **Table 2**.

Table 2 General knowledge on action learning

Crt. no.	Statements on action-learning approach	Average mean
1	In action learning, the participants select/are given some issues, analyze them, take some action, and reflect on that action.	4
2	Action learning helps learners to solve problems by asking the right questions.	3.88
3	Action learning involves “group-based learning.”	3.96
4	The role of the teacher is reduced to that of a moderator/facilitator.	3.77
5	Action learning can be used both indoors (e.g., classroom, laboratory, office), outdoors (e.g., farm, food factory, kitchen, restaurant, hotel), and virtually (e.g., on different platforms).	4.11
	General knowledge on action learning (5 questions)	3.94

The results regarding the preference shown by the students towards some action learning-specific methods that could also be used when teaching ESP are shown in descending order in Table 3.

Table 3 List of action learning-specific methods according to the preference level

Crt. no.	Statements	Average score
1.	Visioning exercises *I can visualize a modern farm/the ideal food product and describe it in English.*	4.73
2.	Organization of virtual trips *I can watch a movie about an intensive farm/factory producing Parma ham and speak about it.*	4.65
3.	Game-based learning *I can play, make strategies, and communicate with my group when playing board or virtual games (Cornucopia/Simplycycle).*	4.50
4.	Engagement in problem solving *I can find waste reduction solutions on a vegetal farm/local café and present the solutions in English.*	4.42
5.	Role-playing *I can act like a representative of a state institution/ consumer protection officer and have the dialogue in English.*	4.19
6.	Co-learning within a group *I can learn new things from my colleagues who are of different age, origin and background.*	4.11
7.	Debate/dialogue *I can have a dialogue in English with other colleagues in the group without judging their statements.*	4.03
8.	Reflection exercises *I can decide what went well and what went wrong during the class and provide feedback in English.*	3.98
9.	Facilitator instead of a teacher *I can learn ESP using action learning approach even if the teacher is not a professional in my field of study.*	3.80
10.	Asking the right questions *I can ask questions (in English) whose answers can lead me to the best solution.*	3.77

Thus, the lowest score of 3.77 is recorded by the statement that has in view *asking the right questions*. This score can be explained by the old practices of the Romanian educational system during communism when the students were seen as "recipients" of the information transmitted by the teacher, who is rather seen as a "source" of information. During communism, the students were not encouraged to ask questions, hence their fear of not "bothering" the teachers with questions. More than this, the situation perpetuated even after communism, and the students remained inefficient in asking the right questions. Even in the case of the foreign language classes, the emphasis was not precisely on communication and enrichment of vocabulary but on writing and learning grammar rules.

The highest score of 4.73 is recorded in the case of *visioning methods*. This is a surprising score for an educational system that has never encouraged or practiced methods meant to stimulate imagination, creativity, and innovation. There is an acute need for visioning exercises in both fields. On the one hand, farmers try to find solutions to produce food in more sustainable and creative ways due to the high level of pollution around the world and the increasing population on the globe; on the other hand, the food industry which tries to improve the quality of the present food products, come up with new food products capable of supporting and improving the human health (functional food), but also with finding solutions to prevent the food waste.

The following preferred methods, in descending order, make reference to the *organization of virtual trips* on farms or food factories with a score of 4.65, *game-based learning* by using different mobile applications or board games with a score of 4.50, *engagement in problem-solving* and finding solutions for farmers or food companies with a score of 4.42, *role-playing* (acting as stakeholders in agriculture and food industry) with a score of 4.19, *co-learning within a group of students with a score of* 4.11. The high scores in these situations can be explained by the students' familiarity with these methods during the ESP class. Starting with the first semester of ESP, the students are exposed to learning activities in groups of 3-4 persons in different contexts: filling in an observation sheet after watching a short movie about the way different food products are produced or after a virtual visit on a family farm; writing a short report on the solution/s found to different problem/s; acting like a food inspector or farmer; playing Simplycycle board game that has in view to increase the student's awareness on the dangerous materials found in different food packages.

The *debate/dialogue*, *reflection exercises*, and the *transformation of a teacher into a facilitator* have recorded low scores. The result of 4.03 in the case of the *debate/dialogue* can be explained by the fact that students have not practiced dialogue as a non-judgmental form of communication but rather as a simple form of communication.

The other two results, the organization of some reflection moments (3.98) and transformation of the teacher into a moderator/facilitator (3.80) represent the resistance to change that any person experiences when exposed to something new and does not know how to deal with it. The reflection was never part of the activities organized in any classroom in the Romanian educational system, even if it has started to be very valued lately. In the same manner, it is difficult for a student to accept the transformation of a teacher into a facilitator, meaning that the teacher is no longer a source of information but a person who guides the students in their learning process.

Behind these methods, there is an interesting association with skill development that is so needed in the future specialists in the agriculture and food industry. Having a closer look at these methods, it can be stated that they could all lead to the formation or improvement of some competencies such as observation, communication, reflection, visioning/creativity, dialogue, problem-solving, critical thinking, co-learning, and facilitation. Thus, asking the students to think about the ideal food product and describe it by making reference to all their senses (color, size, smell, texture and taste) can be an excellent visioning exercise meant to support the students by bringing elements of innovation in the process of new food products design alongside with the development of their technical vocabulary. Alternatively, the organization of a virtual trip on a farm where the students can observe the daily activities of the farmer, the animals raised or crops cultivated within the farm, and the problems the farmers must solve to make their activity more efficient, accompanied by an observation sheet delivered in advance by the teacher, could enhance the observation competence of

the students and in the same time the capacity of the student to communicate all these ideas in English.

According to the group of agro-ecologists from the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU) (Lieblein et al., 2012) who were also actively involved in the Nextfood project, competencies such as observation, reflection, visioning, dialogue, and participation are vital in preparing the next generation of professionals at a European and global level. To a great extent, these competencies overlap with a framework for key competencies in academic education in sustainability developed by Wiek et al. (Wiek et al. 2011).

Thus, the association of certain types of activities with the competencies they may develop can open up new paths for further research. Consequently, the ESP teachers can develop new learning materials that can support the development or further enhancement of the most relevant key competencies for the sectors wherein the students will perform after they enter the labor force.

The answers to the two additional questions regarding the supporting and hindering forces are relevant for identifying the main prerequisites of introducing learning methods specific to the action learning approach in the ESP class. They are both important because the supporting forces will indicate all those factors that trigger the change and facilitate the implementation of the action learning. In contrast, the hindering forces are those forces that prevent the change due to several factors that may block the whole process.

The students offer a diversity of examples concerning the supporting forces ranging from general observations (relaxed and informal atmosphere, nice setup of the classroom, desire to change something) to more specific ones (time for discussions and reflection, shifting from a passive to an active role, willingness to try new ways of learning/working/teaching methods).

All the answers collected from the students have been summarized in the list below. It includes ideas ranging from the physical description of the environment (place, time, atmosphere) to the need for change triggered by a state of open-mindedness, interactive dialogue among participants, shifting from a passive to an active role, and trying new ways of learning/teaching.

Supporting forces:

- relaxed and informal atmosphere;
- dialogue within an interactive group;
- time for discussions, analysis, exploration, and reflection;
- material/scientific/technical support from teachers/ facilitators;
- desire to change something;
- use different methods and materials to reach goals;
- all students summarize their learning at the end of the lessons after a reflective moment;
- being willing to participate;
- shifting from a passive to an active role;
- being part of a change process in the field;
- accepting open-mindedness;
- willingness to try out new ways of learning/teaching;
- organization of a classroom to have a space that allows cooperative and group work.

The hindering forces could also be identified in opposition to the supporting forces. This time, the students were more specific in identifying the hindering forces, and they made reference to infrastructure, teachers stuck in old practices, the need for more specific methods

in the case of teaching ESP, and the need for sufficient content knowledge of the ESP teacher. The complete list of the hindering forces can be read below.

Hindering forces

- lack of time for reflection due to the complex and stuffed syllabus/curriculum and interruptions in the class;
- poor infrastructure;
- some teachers are stuck in old practices/methods/ information;
- our educational system does not have the strings to be pulled in order to implement the action learning concept;
- difficulty in organizing field trips (many approvals and signatures required, lack of money);
- some methods cannot be applied in ESP, especially those that should be organized outside or in the lab, but visioning exercises or virtual trips can replace them;
- difficulty in bringing in relevant stakeholders during an ESP class;
- not all the students have the same level of proficiency in English;
- taking responsibility for their learning process;
- accepting uncertainty, complexity, incomplete knowledge;
- ESP teachers might not have enough content knowledge;
- stepping out of the comfort zone – facilitator/teacher;
- class size;
- Curriculum materials (syllabus, handouts, textbooks, teacher's guide) do not follow the action learning approach.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The findings suggest that the students understand the notion of action learning intuitively, being able to identify the most important characteristics of this approach (problem-solving, taking action, reflection, collaborative learning, asking the right questions, different learning environments, transformation of the teacher in a facilitator), fact that makes us confident in the easy transfer of some action learning methods to the ESP class.

Among the ten experiential learning methods, visioning exercises, virtual trips, games, and problem-solving are the most preferred learning methods. In opposition, the organization of reflection moments, the transformation of the teacher into a facilitator, and asking the right questions are the least popular due to the students' resistance to change and lack of familiarity with the respective situations.

In addition to the information collected from the students, as regards their preference or lack of preference for specific learning methods, the supporting and hindering forces needed to make the desired change represent a valuable indicator for the teacher on how to proceed and deal with the challenges in the planning phase of the ESP lessons. They also represent a starting point, or the prerequisites, for designing ESP materials, which could be suitable when applying the action learning approach.

At a more general level, these forces highlight the need for change from traditional to more specific and efficient educational approaches/methods and the barriers that could slow down or even stop the respective shift.

Further studies can be planned based on the possible differences between the students attending the two study programs due to their gender, origin, and age group. A different

research direction could highlight the interconnection between the learning activity type and the competence it could develop or enhance (e.g., observation, visioning, reflection, dialogue, collaborative learning).

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ANNEX 1

QUESTIONNAIRE ON USING ACTION LEARNING METHODS IN THE ESP CLASSES

PART A. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

GENDER:	MALE	FEMALE	DON'T KNOW
ORIGIN:	URBAN AREA		RURAL AREA
AGE GROUP:	18-28	29-39	40-49
STUDY PROGRAM:	AGRICULTURE		FOOD SCIENCE

PART B – GENERAL KNOWLEDGE ON ACTION LEARNING APPROACH

Crt. no.	Statements on action-learning approach	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree/nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	In action learning, the participants select/are given some issues, analyze them, take some action, and reflect on that action.					
2.	Action learning helps learners to solve problems by asking the right questions.					
3.	Action learning involves "group-based learning."					
4.	The role of the teacher is reduced to that of a moderator/facilitator.					
5.	Action learning can be used both indoors (e.g., classroom, laboratory, office), outdoors (e.g., farm, food factory, kitchen, restaurant, hotel), and virtually (e.g., on different platforms).					

*The scale used is from 1 to 5 (5 = strongly agree, 4 =agree, 3=neither agree/nor disagree, 2=disagree, 1= strongly disagree).

PART C- ACTION LEARNING METHODS

Crt. no.	Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree/nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	*I can visualize a modern farm/the ideal food product and describe it in English.*					
2.	*I can watch a movie about an intensive farm/factory producing Parma ham and speak about it.*					
3.	*I can play, make strategies, and communicate with my group when playing board or virtual games(Cornucopia/Simplycycle).*					
4.	*I can find waste reduction solutions on a vegetal farm/local café and present the solutions in English.*					
5.	*I can act like a representative of a state institution/ consumer protection officer and have the dialogue in English.*					
6.	*I can learn new things from my colleagues who are of different age, origin and background.*					
7.	*I can have a dialogue in English with other colleagues in the group without judging their statements.*					
8.	*I can decide what went well and what went wrong during the class and provide feedback in English.*					
9.	*I can learn ESP using action learning approach even if the teacher is not a professional in my field of study.*					
10.	*I can ask questions (in English) whose answers can lead me to the best solution.*					

*The scale used is from 1 to 5 (5 = strongly agree, 4 =agree, 3=neither agree/nor disagree, 2=disagree, 1= strongly disagree).

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Review research paper

MOTIVATING POTENTIAL OF PROFESSIONALLY-ORIENTED FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROJECT ACTIVITIES

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Abstract. *The paper examines the issues of using project-based learning in teaching foreign languages (FL) at the Bauman Moscow State Technical University, as a combined educational strategy with high potential for creating a favorable educational environment and promoting students' involvement in the educational process. The aim of the research is to develop effective methodological procedures using a differentiating approach to teaching students with different levels of foreign language competence, various psychological and motivational attitudes, and inclinations. To achieve this goal, we developed and implemented a number of methods based on project strategies as part of the FL course and conducted a survey aimed at identifying changes in motivation to learn languages. A team role assignment technology has been designed and described in detail for the project "Production in Space" with an eye to its potential use in other projects. The principle of changing functional roles for subsequent project works has been embodied in the role change matrix.*

Key words: *project activities, educational environment, motivation, motivating potential, team roles*

1. INTRODUCTION

Russian science and industry has recently faced the problem of the brain drain of highly qualified engineering personnel. Therefore, the replenishment of intellectual assets to ensure technological sovereignty raises the question of training a necessary number of highly qualified specialists in key areas of science and the real sector of the economy. The training of such specialists begins with the education system (Asadullin and Galeev 2023). The reality today is that in order to promote the membership in professional community, especially on the international level, young specialists must be fluent in English as a lingua franca. In fact, proficiency in one or more foreign languages (FL) gives engineering graduates the opportunity to participate in international scientific and practical conferences and present their own ideas in scientific and technical articles (Margaryan et al. 2021), (Gurova, Reznik, and Shafikova 2018). Such activity provides students with the necessary awareness of future prospects which can bring tangible benefits, and help stimulate motivation for persistent FL study, which implies the ability to apply the acquired knowledge and skills on practice (Spirovska 2017).

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However, our observations show that quite a number of future engineers are not highly motivated to study FL for different reasons. Some of them lost their interest and got unmotivated in secondary schools, others lack confidence in their language aptitudes, etc. Therefore, the problem of creating more motivating educational environment makes teachers experiment with various learning techniques and methods in search of optimal ones, providing the ability to generate, interpret and operate professional information in a foreign language (Trubitzina, Kubacheva, and Baeva 2022) because the educational environment can both motivate students and demotivate them (Rubic and Matijević 2019).

Modern pedagogical practices suggest applying technical achievements, such as online resources and platforms (Titova and Staroverova 2023), electronic course designers (Dimitrienko, Gubareva, and Chebakov 2019), mobile phones (Martin 2021). Particular attention is paid to the opportunities provided by artificial intelligence (Kusumastuti 2023). All these technologies undoubtedly foster more engaging and effective language learning practices for students.

Another strategy, aimed at increasing students' motivation, is the flipped classroom model. It makes students more involved in the process of pre-class material study and analysis, and releases time for in-class activities by raising questions and their group discussions (Gromoglasova et al. 2022), (Zain 2022), (Abdullah et al. 2021).

Learning materials are also regarded as an incentive-fueled factor. Students' skepticism of the material significance decreases motivation (Lee 2023). Perhaps, nothing can so reduce the attractiveness of the academic process as information-wise obsolete sources. This is why higher education teachers must not only utilize genuinely interesting, engaging materials in the training program, but also be prepared to independently create educational content in accordance with the students' professional interests and needs.

Psychological factor can be recognized as another motivation driver. It is not a secret that FL learners may suffer from language learning anxiety (Balakrishnan, Abdullah, and Khoo 2020), (Yılmaz, Babatürk, and İnalöz 2023) which could dramatically affect their achievements. FL instructors must take into account the needs of their learners and design lessons and learning materials which are less anxiety-provoking. This is in line with the view of Wu (2010) who suggested that it is the teachers' duty to create a less threatening atmosphere, motivate, and strengthen student confidence and that the students who are more motivated tend to be more successful language learners (Balakrishnan, Abdullah, and Khoo 2020).

Students' engagement is directly related to motivation: the more the student is engaged the higher his/her motivation is. Greater involvement in the university educational environment implies increasing not only extrinsic motivation, caused by the system of reward and punishment, but intrinsic, based on students' own desire to study, too (Messerer, Karst, and Janke 2022). Therefore, the best learning environment increases the degree of students' engagement which shifts educators' focus towards what the student but not the teacher does (Akbari et al. 2016). Using the main principles of Socratic method forces students to communicate in a "cooperative manner" by exchanging and discussing ideas "completing one another" (Stojković and Zerkin 2023).

Project-based learning (PBL) is believed to combine all the revealed approaches to the problem of increasing motivation. It helps students to play an active role in the educational process by building their own knowledge and using it in practice (through project activities), which increases both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation (Shin 2018). Project work (PW) also takes into account the personality traits of students (extraversion,

conscientiousness, etc.) in order to involve them in the project at its different stages and promote development of soft skills including responsibility, initiative, and problem-solving (Dogara et al. 2019). The flipped classroom techniques are typical for PBL as various stages of the problem-solving process inspire students to look for and analyze the necessary information beforehand (Tawfik and Lilly 2015). Moreover, being digital natives, i.e. fluent with modern technologies, students learn to treat them as a means of achieving results needed (Bell 2010). Participating in PW enhances students' cooperation skills as they collaborate with their educators and groupmates on the project structure and procedure to achieve the goal (Lasagabaster and Beloqui 2015). Collaboration of such kind facilitates learners' attentiveness to the class activities and relevance of the learning materials used (Shin 2018). Participation in the work of a small group in solving a specific real problem, gaining personal experience is a strong motivator and allows you to make the choice of a profession justified (Alexandrov et al. 2021). Such a team environment assumes that each member consciously addresses the performance of their functions and informally approves, understands the role and functions of the teammates.

In our research, we consider justified role assigning as one of the key factors determining the effectiveness of PW. To make the right choice or assignment of the role both the current level of FL proficiency and the personal traits of the students should be taken into account. In addition, the basic idea of the research lies in the fact that the internal desire to learn FL will grow in future engineers owing to the emergence of a synergistic effect when the overall result is higher than the sum of the contribution of individual team members (Nikolaeva and Borodina 2021).

The study's working hypothesis suggests that participation in projects involving the distribution and rotation of team roles from one project to the next has an impact on the quantitative evaluation of engineering students' motivation for learning a foreign language.

2. Data Collection and Research Methods

The study involved 69 first-second-third year students of the departments of Mechanical Engineering and Special Machinery. The survey was conducted by the Motivation questionnaire comprising preliminary surveys before the project and follow-up surveys after the project class activities. It consisted of 12 questions which can be categorized into 4 main groups: professional motives (questions 1-3), academic motives (questions 4-6), personal motives (7-9), and integrative motives (10-12). Students were asked to rate simple statements on a five-point Likert scale, based on their personal views: 5 points for strongly agree, 4 points for agree, 3 points for neither agree nor disagree, 2 points for disagree, and 1 point for strongly disagree. This scale was used to determine the level of agreement or disagreement. The Alpha Cronbach test was performed to check the reliability of the scales. Its value for the entire set of statements was 0.73 showing good alpha ratings for four dimensions, as they are above 0.60.

After the survey was completed, each item was calculated both separately and summed to create a score for a group of items on the four categories mentioned above. The average mean was specified on a scale from 1 to 5. The same was done for each group of motivation.

To measure potential post-project changes a paired *t* test was applied involving the same groups of students. The data were valued by means of *t-criteria*, standard deviation (SD),

degree of freedom (*f*) and *p-value*. The results of the paired *t*-test are shown in Tables 5 and 6. The conclusion about statistically significant changes was made for the cases when an observed value was higher than a critical one with *p- value* being lower than 0.05.

3. TEAM ROLES AND STRUCTURE OF THE PROJECT

Selected example of implementation of a short-term student project on the topic "Production in Space" studied in the course of English for engineers (Borodina, Kalugina, and Margaryan 2019) is briefly presented in the paper. The overall goal of the project was to propose and justify a new experiment on board the International Space Station. For the final result, the teams were to prepare an oral presentation in English providing the overview of previous successful experiments and proof of the future experiment viability in order to win financial backing from investors. The project work lasted five weeks (Module) and consisted of three phases:

1. Introduction
2. Search and Research
3. Project defense

Before the project started the students were assigned different roles whose combination might provide synergy with a greater effect from the performance as opposed to independent work. We suggested applying the team roles classification proposed and described by Meredith Belbin (Cambridge University) used by firms' managers for forming teams of employees, in order to successfully achieve the goals (Belbin 2011). The results of modifying it for the academic tasks with the description of team roles and personal traits needed to play them are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Project team roles

Role	Behavioral style
Innovator	Creative, imaginative, free-thinking, generates ideas and solves difficult problems. Active in the classroom, always participates in the discussion of problematic issues.
Resource Investigator	Can search, process information needed for the project, draw conclusions. Avoids participating in conversations, but is distinguished by efficiency.
Coordinator	Mature, confident, focused on the team's objectives, can debate or argue reasonably.
Monitor / Evaluator	Evaluates suggestions, corrects errors, and edits. Knows grammatical rules, a good speller.
Completer / Finisher	Responsible, "perfectionist", keeps to a precise schedule. Performs well on written assignments.

At first, organizational and preparatory stage - Introduction, students were invited to participate in the project. During this stage they became familiar with the project task and were divided into teams, each having 4-5 participants. The stage included announcement of the topic, project description, and rules; setting the main goal of the project, recommendation for gathering information, and giving Task 1. Table 2 shows the project description denoting the contribution of each role-member into the project fulfillment and linguistic areas trained during its preparation and implementation.

Table 2 Project description

Role	Functions and responsibilities in the PW	Linguistic areas
Resource Investigator	Collects material about already conducted experiments and about a new experiment and passes it to the Monitor – Evaluator (Task 1).	▪ intensive FL reading ▪ critical thinking (active analyzing, assessing, synthesizing, evaluating and reflecting on information gathered)
Monitor – Evaluator	Checks the information selected by the Resource Investigator and revises it for oral presentation. The edited information is passed to the Coordinator	▪ linguistic analysis of the text ▪ categorizing and structuring information
Coordinator	The coordinator prepares a template based on the sample (see Table 3), which will be presented later during the project defense.	▪ synthesizing FL information ▪ FL monologues and dialogues ▪ reasoning
Innovator	Responsible for Task 2. Offers ideas for an experiment, prepares theses on the issues that will be presented during the defense of the project, analyzes possible responses of opponents, prepares responses.	▪ using the previously generalized information to create a new text product based on it ▪ FL monologues and dialogues ▪ reasoning
Completer – Finisher	Prepares project visualization in the presentation format - Task 3 (headings, notes to the slide, photos, graphics, videos, interactive objects)	▪ categorizing and structuring information ▪ creative writing in a FL

To proceed further to the Search and Research stage, students completed Task 1 involving scrutiny of two or three already conducted experiments with products/materials production in space. The following roles were actively involved at this stage:

- The Research Investigator selected the necessary information sources and conveyed them to the Monitor/Evaluator;
- The Monitor/Evaluator edited the material collected, evaluated it for the compliance with the project topic, and passed the edited version to the Coordinator;
- The Project Coordinator (with the help of a teacher) prepared a template for his/her Team, which might contain the following items – what was produced, how it was used in the Earth conditions, what advantages of materials/products made in space had over those made on Earth (see Table 3).

Table 3 Template for Task 1

Objects of study (materials/products)	Made of/composed of	Application on Earth	Advantages
1. 2. 3.			

The next step in the project implementation was Task 2 which implied design of a new experiment. The students had to provide findings on the following questions:

- the proposed product to be made in space;
- the features and benefits of the product;
- the demand for this proposed product;
- the competition;
- necessary resources: finance, equipment, skills and expertise.

To perform this task, the project participants' roles joined with the Innovator being a leader.

The logical conclusion to the project was its Defense with presentation of the future experiment on board the space station (Task 3). The Completer/Finisher was responsible for project visualization.

Initially, when assigning roles, the teacher should take into account how well a particular role corresponds to the existing level of a student's language abilities. The risk is that if a student is unable to complete his/her task in the project, s/he may lose motivation or, even worse, become disillusioned with his/her own capabilities. However, with teamwork being effective during the first project, it is possible to swap the roles for the next ones so that different aspects of language abilities could be activated (see Table 4).

Within the framework of the learning process we consider assigning team roles as one of the main factors determining the motivating component of project activities.

Table 4 Role change matrix

1st project/role	Resource Investigator	Monitor – Evaluator	Coordinator	Innovator	Completer
Student 1					
Student 2					
Student 3					
Student 4					
Student 5					
2nd project/role	Resource Investigator	Monitor – Evaluator	Coordinator	Innovator	Completer
Student 1					
Student 2					
Student 3					
Student 4					
Student 5					
3rd project/role	Resource Investigator	Monitor – Evaluator	Coordinator	Innovator	Completer
Student 1					
Student 2					
Student 3					
Student 4					
Student 5					

At the end of the project defense, each team shared their feedback: students were asked to complete English motivation questionnaire.

4. FINDINGS

In order to investigate whether students` motivation to study FL changed after participating in the project, we conducted the paired *t* test and compared the total average scores of the pre-and post motivation questionnaires.

The results of the study are presented in Table 5. According to the table, the mean of the post-test is higher than that of the pre-test – 4.1 and 3.83 respectively. The *t*-value obtained from the survey equals 3.10, *p*=< *0.05*. The *critical value* of the *t*-test for a given number of degrees of freedom *(f)* is 1.97. Thus, the observed *t-value* is bigger than the *critical t-value* (3.10 > 1.997), leading us to the conclusion that the changes are statistically significant.

Table 5 Pre-and Post-Project FL Learning Motivation

	Mean	Standard Deviation	N of respondents	f	t-value
Pre-motivation	3.83	0.56	69	68	3.10*
Post-motivation	4.1	0.42	69	68	

*p < 0.05

Taking into account the fact that the second research was conducted soon after completion of the project, we can conclude that participation in the project positively changed students' attitude to learning FL.

If the PW influences students' FL learning, it would be interesting to know what aspect of motivation has changed.

Table 6 Motivation Cluster

Aspect		M	SD	*t*-critical	*t*-observed
Professional motive	pre	4.26	0.85	1.997	1.0
	post	4.37	0.73		
Academic motive	pre	3.28	1.40		
	post	3.61	1.13	1.997	2.79
Personal interest	pre	3.86	1.07		
	post	4.12	0.93	1.997	2.06
Integrative motive	pre	3.99	1.13		
	post	4.18	0.98	1.997	1.41

*p < 0.05

As shown in Table 6, PBL has had an impact on some of the considered clusters, but not all of them. Difference between the means of items comprised in the Professional motivation 4.26 (pre) and 4.37 (post) indicates some growth, but statistically insignificant since the *t* critical (1.97) is higher than *t* received from the experiment (1.0). The same refers to Integrative motive (the pre-mean 3.99 versus post-mean 4.18) with *t*-observed amounting to 1.41, this value not allowing us to speak about some exterior factor influencing an increase in levels of motivation (at least, in the short-term). However, in case of Academic motive (the pre-mean 3.28 versus post-mean 3.61 with *t*-observed =2.79) and personal interest (the pre-mean 3.86 versus post-mean 4.12 with *t*-observed =2.06) we can notice statistically significant results concerning influence of the PBL on the growing interest to study FL as an important University subject and for personal purposes.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The numerical results of the study support the major part of the working hypothesis. Project activities for FL teaching can serve as a promotional tool for creating a favourable educational environment since they have a positive effect on most motivation components.

Professional motivation presented the highest mean of all clusters with the leading score 4.5 for the statement "Knowing FL (English) increases my chances of getting a job". However, statistical analysis did not reveal a significant impact of the project on this component of motivation. We can assume that the reason why its value, though having grown on completion of the project, did not significantly change, lies in the fact that engineering students realize the role of the FL for their future job placement. In fact, the initial score was high enough for the learners of non-linguistic majors.

Similarly, the second valued item – Integrative motivation – did not indicate significance from statistical point of view, but in general has grown rather than diminished. It would be useful to conduct a longitudinal research to check if this component of motivation will improve as we continue implementation of PBL.

The cluster of Personal interest presented the third place mean pointing out to the students' interest in reading and listening to music in English. Besides, pre-and post-analysis revealed a change in students' attitude to learning FL. Thus, the average mean for the statement "I like learning English" rose from pre-mean 3.9 to post-mean 4.2, suggesting the idea that the students find the project-based environment more attractive than traditional classes.

At the first research stage students showed low Academic motivation. For example, the statement "I have to learn English because I don't want to get bad grades" earned only 2.6 and 3.2 points before and after the project respectively. Students do not confess that their motivation to study FL is based on the fear to get a bad mark. Their motives would seem to be more mature: language knowledge and associated prospects are more important than today's grades. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that Academic motivation results were significantly different in the pre- and post-tests marking the growth of motivation.

The research has helped identify the dominant motives in the structure of educational motivation after students' participation in project activities among professional, academic, personal, and integrative motives. The result of the study supports the idea that PBL causes students' more active involvement into a learning process changing all components of motivation, especially academic motivation and self-interest. We expect that professional and integrative motivation being initially quite high can grow more in the process of PBL in the long term. The quantitative growth of all motivation components, at the same time, demonstrated the increase in students' activity in the educational process as a whole. The use of all motivational strategies in conjunction with the "flipped classroom" approach has fostered an interest in the independent selection and, particularly, analysis of the study material, its topicality and significance; this approach has also uncovered the latent potential in students by demonstrating how they can combine their inherent skills in the use of computer technology and FL knowledge with their professional competencies. During PW, students gained some teamwork skills: the ability to share duties, delegate responsibilities, and debate or argue reasonably (Margaryan et al. 2021) owing to which their FL anxiety decreased.

To conclude, the obtained data on the motivation growth suggest that participation in the project and its successful implementation significantly affect the increase in interest

and progress in the FL study, and therefore, the project activity has a high motivating potential. Empirical evidence of our study allows us to predict that PW can have a long-lasting effect on engineering students' motivation to study FL due to the possibility to combine essential motivating strategies. So, we are planning to conduct a prolonged study aimed at verifying this point.

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Review research paper

EFFECTIVENESS OF VIDEO-RECORDED PRESENTATIONS ON STUDENTS' PREPARATIONS IN LEGAL ENGLISH CLASSES

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Abstract. *In contrast to numerous other occupations, lawyers are required to possess proficient communication skills. This is crucial as their job involves direct interaction with clients that cannot be substituted by artificial intelligence. Therefore, university courses place a strong emphasis on the development of self-competence. This experience instills in individuals a sense of confidence, professionalism, and decency, so enhancing their prospects for achieving success in the legal field. The objective of this study was to investigate the impact of video-recorded presentations on students' readiness for group presentations in legal English classrooms. The present study sought to examine if engaging in this particular activity could enhance students' preparedness and foster habitual behavior. In the context of legal English classes, students focus on certain areas in order to deliver a refined and proficient performance. The research comprised a sample of 116 undergraduate students majoring in legal English from the Faculty of Legal Foreign Language at Hanoi Law University. At the commencement of the course, all participants were informed that their group assignment presentations would be recorded on video, which was a novel stipulation. The findings indicate that students should prioritize aspects such as presentation organization, topic selection, language proficiency, and delivery skills in order to achieve success in front of the camera. The analysis of the focus group data further revealed that participants who were informed about the necessity for their actions to be documented expressed a need for additional time to adequately prepare and engage in collaborative efforts. The researcher anticipates that this study will contribute to the existing body of research on the utilization of video-recording in English language instruction.*

Key words: *Video-recorded presentation, preparations, legal English classes*

1. INTRODUCTION

Aligned with the prevailing trajectory of integration, globalization, and progress, the higher education programs in Vietnam, including those at Hanoi Law University, have progressively prioritized the cultivation of soft skills among students. Of particular significance is the emphasis on enhancing presentation skills, which has garnered considerable attention from employers during the recruitment and standardization of their workforce (Lan, 2022). This emphasis aims to equip students with the necessary attributes of confidence, adaptability, and persuasive abilities, thereby facilitating their success in their

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future professional endeavors. The prevalence of group presentation assignments is evident in the majority of modules offered within the bachelor's program at Hanoi Law University.

Undergraduate students specializing in Legal English at Hanoi Law University are enrolled in a four-year university program, during which they are required to complete six courses focused on legal English. The overall grade for each legal English topic is determined by a combination of factors. Attendance contributes 10% towards the final result, the group presentation assignment accounts for 30%, and the remaining 60% is allocated to the final written test. The objective of the group presentation assignment is to enhance students' proficiency in both collaborative work and public speaking. While the former facilitates effective collaboration with newcomers and alleviates the challenges associated with establishing new working relationships, the latter equips individuals with the ability to deliver optimal consultation to clients in their future professional pursuits.

Over a span of over 15 years, the researcher, who has served as a teacher of legal English and an instructor assisting students with their group presentation assignments, has seen that the quality of students' presentations has not been flawless. A significant proportion of the presenters exhibit a deficiency in self-assurance when it comes to delivering their presentations in a seamless manner. The individual's body language exhibits observable signs of anxiousness and nervousness. Moreover, the excessive verbosity and level of detail in their presentation content, which is not tailored to the preferences of their audience, elicits feelings of boredom and distraction among the listeners. As a result, the environment during presentations tends to be characterized by monotony and inefficiency. The aforementioned restrictions arise from inadequate preparation, a common issue among other teachers affiliated with the researcher. Furthermore, students contend that the act of performing and receiving evaluations in the presence of the teacher can sometimes be subjective and influenced by emotions. The potential for receiving higher grades may be influenced by the teachers' positive disposition. Furthermore, the presentation is unsuccessful in attracting substantial attention from their peers who have finished their assignments or are awaiting their turns. In many instances, presenters and their guiding teacher often perceive a lack of consideration from their peers, leading them to refrain from making comparisons of the ultimate outcome. As a result, the persons involved shown a decreased level of commitment towards their joint presentation assignment, ultimately leading to its lack of productivity. To enhance the circumstances, a video-recorded presentation was distributed to all junior-level students enrolled in Advanced Legal English 2. The primary objective of this effort was to foster awareness among students on the need of thoroughly equipping themselves to deliver outstanding presentations.

The absence of preparations renders perfection unattainable. This implies that any exceptional performance stems from a diligent, comprehensive, and methodical preparation, along with a seamless progression of the subject matter. As per the Cambridge definition, preparation refers to the condition of being adequately prepared for an impending event or the act of taking measures to attain readiness. In essence, this stage holds significant importance and should be included into one's activities to yield optimal outcomes. The initial phase of a process necessitates individuals allocating a greater amount of time and effort towards preparation. Individuals may experience feelings of boredom, fatigue, and demotivation due to factors such as limited time, insufficient information, or a lack of timely help from competent instructors or peers. In order to adequately prepare, students must establish a clear, logical, and scientific framework. The concept of outlining functions can be understood as a

navigational tool employed by individuals to effectively collaborate with their group members.

Recent research has revealed that there are various subjective and objective obstacles that hinder undergraduate students from actively participating in intellectual discussions. The hurdles can be classified into three primary categories: psychological obstacles, academic competence inadequacies, and the influence of external factors. Undoubtedly, a commonly encountered obstacle faced by students in the course of delivering a legal presentation is the manifestation of anxiety or unease arising from the act of performing in front of an audience. Al-Darwish and Taqi (2015) have observed that students frequently report experiencing anxiety upon realizing the necessity of delivering a presentation in a public context. Whai and Mai (2016) support this perspective by emphasizing that individuals experience this emotion as a result of their impression that participating in an oral presentation might be either difficult or easy, which originates from an innate fear of public speaking. Students often face many obstacles when delivering presentations. These challenges encompass a reliance on notes, tendencies to fidget, jiggle, sway, or become stiff, and a lack of inventiveness in finishing their lectures (Widyastuti & Mahaputri, 2015). Within the academic sphere, students place great value on the acquisition of presentation skills. Nevertheless, numerous students struggle with this skill due to a lack of goal setting in their academic speaking presentations, challenges in prioritizing the crucial points that necessitate presentation, a deficiency in self-awareness during the delivery of the presentation to an audience, and a lack of self-motivation while presenting the materials. The interconnection of these aspects has been observed by Imaniah (2018) in relation to self-awareness. To address these constraints, it is imperative for learners to engage in comprehensive preparations for their collaborative presentation project. One potential strategy to address the impact of both objective and subjective barriers on learners and improve their comprehension of the preparation process is the integration of video-recorded presentations. This technique is seen as a unique and unfamiliar experience for learners, as they have not before encountered it. The primary objective of this study was to evaluate the level of readiness among students for their group presentation task by employing two unique inquiry prompts.

1. What are the preparations undertaken by students in anticipation of their oral group presentation assignment?
2. What is the impact of video-recording on the process of preparation?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Legal English Features

Legal English serves as a means of communication among legal professionals within their respective workplaces in nations where English is the official language. The impact of globalization on the use of legal English as a common language in the global legal community is undeniable. Therefore, the requirement to engage with different legal systems necessitates legal professionals to demonstrate proficiency in English and utilize the appropriate legal terminology. Legal professionals are required to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the law as well as a proficient command of legal terminology in order to effectively equip oneself in their field. Hence, the primary focus for law schools across the globe is to incorporate legal English courses into their curriculum.

The nature of Legal English presents a considerable challenge in its interpretation, even for individuals who are native speakers, due to its distinctive characteristics, which include the use of specialized terminology, specific linguistic structures, established linguistic conventions, and precise punctuation. Legalese is a prominent attribute of the English language used in legal contexts. According to Schane (2006), there exists confusing language in legal documents, as well as a specialized vocabulary used by attorneys. Therefore, it is widely believed that legal English exhibits notable distinctions from other forms of English used for specific purposes (ESP). The study conducted by Northcott (2008) examined the phenomenon of legalese within the context of forensic linguistics and legal discourse. Both elements necessitate a thorough understanding of linguistic qualities within the framework of law or legal documents. Veretina (2012) posited that the objective of stylistics is not merely to categorize various styles, but rather to analyze and elucidate the linguistic characteristics inherent in a given style. These characteristics encompass morphological, lexical, syntactic, and textual elements. The researcher examined the lexical and syntactic aspects of legal English terminology in a two-dimensional analysis.

Regarding the lexical aspect pertaining to the utilization of archaic terminology, it is worth noting that legal professionals employ a formal linguistic style known as legalese, which may pose challenges for individuals without legal expertise in comprehending its content. According to Veretina's (2012) findings, it is evident that legal professionals exhibit a reduced inclination towards employing archaic vocabulary in comparison to other terminologies. However, it is noteworthy that numerous archaic phrases continue to persist within a substantial number of legal papers. Moreover, Rylance (1994) observed that the utilization of technical terminology is a common occurrence within the realm of law. Certain concepts are recognizable to those without specialized knowledge, but others are exclusive to legal professionals, perhaps leading to misinterpretation. Moreover, it is worth noting that certain words in the legal domain possess ordinary connotations that diverge from their customary definitions. Furthermore, legal English incorporates a diverse range of Latin and French vocabulary and expressions. Furthermore, Veretina (2012) substantiated that the impact of the French language extended beyond lexical borrowings. The utilization of synonyms is a notable characteristic in legal English. According to Garner (1989), the predominant forms of synonym pairings are doublets and triplets, often connected by the conjunction "and". Veretina (2012) noted that within the realm of syntactic features, legal documents tend to employ complicated and compound phrases rather than simple ones. In legal papers, sentences are characterized by the inclusion of extensive material, repeating elements, noun phrases that are heavily modified, as well as the usage of both coordinate and subordinate clauses. The utilization of nominalization is highly favored in formal writing, and this holds true for legal writing as well. Noun forms derived from verbs are frequently employed in lieu of their corresponding verb forms. According to Bhatia (1993), the utilization of nominalization in writing results in an elongated and less dynamic text. Moreover, the utilization of third-person perspective and passive voice, characteristic of the impersonal style, is frequently observed in legal writing. This practice contributes to the perception that the field of law maintains an unbiased stance. However, Veretina (2012) emphasized that this generalization has the potential to create ambiguity and hinder individuals who do not have expertise in law from understanding.

In conclusion, the integration of contemporary technology to establish reliable sources for future examination or to construct an equitable rationale is essential, as evidenced by numerous aforementioned scholarly investigations. Meanwhile, it is of equal significance to

exert pressure on pupils to diligently prepare their oral group project presentation. Furthermore, the cultivation of a habit of meticulous preparation is vital for educators in accordance with their professional responsibilities.

2.2. Preparations for presentations

Preparation entails the strategic organization, systematic practice, and thorough rehearsal of a presentation. Consequently, the presenter must not only ensure that the content is well-prepared, but also devote adequate time to rehearsing the presentation, with a particular emphasis on three fundamental elements: the audience, the presenter, and the presentation itself.

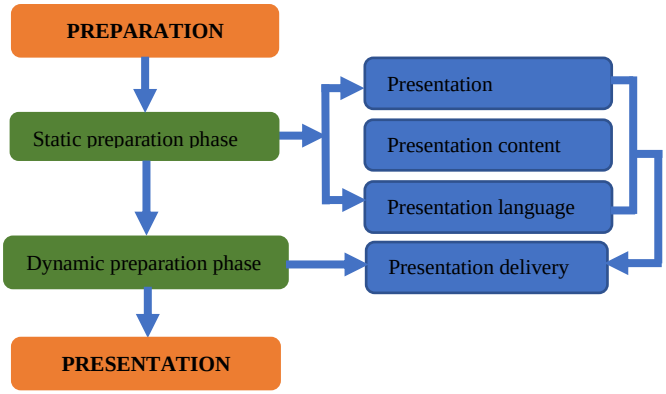

Fig. 1 Preparation process for presentation

With respect to the arrangements for an oral presentation within the framework of legal English, it was seen that all junior participants exhibited a thorough comprehension of the evaluation criteria that would be employed to assess their performance. As a result, the individuals were given explicit guidance on the essential actions to be taken during the preparatory stage. The preparation process was visually depicted by the researcher, taking inspiration from the presentation evaluation criteria established by Mathews and Mario (1990). As depicted in Figure 1, the process of preparing for a presentation can be divided into two separate phases: the static preparation phase and the dynamic preparation phase.

During the initial phase, learners are required to focus their attention on three distinct facets. The initial step involves the process of topic selection, which is subsequently followed by the creation of a well-organized presentation with three essential elements: an introductory section, a development segment, and a concluding part. The introduction of presenting information should adhere to a logical and consistent structure, facilitating audience comprehension and ease of following. The aforementioned objective can be accomplished by the explicit articulation of key concepts and the utilization of transitional phrases to demonstrate their interrelationships. In addition, it is essential to select a suitable topic that is of proper length, ensuring that it can be sufficiently addressed within the designated timeframe. Furthermore, it is imperative to customize the content to align with the audience's cognitive abilities, considering their pre-existing understanding. Furthermore, it is imperative to augment the text with relevant specifics, verifiable data, and illustrative instances that successfully reinforce the primary concepts being put forth. Finally, the

aspect of language preparation for the presentation is being considered. During this step, students are required to meticulously select vocabulary that is appropriate for their intended audience. It is advisable for individuals to refrain from using or, if necessary, provide clarifications for complex or specialized terminology. Additionally, it is crucial to ensure the precision of one's pronunciation and intonation. Furthermore, employing a diverse array of expressions is recommended, while avoiding the use of unsuitable jargon or informal language. Furthermore, it is imperative for students to proficiently manage their grammar and vocabulary in order to articulate accurate and impactful communication.

In the concluding phase, after the formulation of the presentation framework, the establishment of its content, and the refinement of its language, learners redirect their attention towards the delivery of the presentation in a manner that appears spontaneous and effortless. This involves placing emphasis on achieving fluency through lengthy practice, as opposed to depending on reading or rote memorizing. Concurrently, individuals also employ precise articulation and manage their vocal intensity to ensure audibility, while maintaining an appropriate rate of speech. Furthermore, it is crucial to establish and uphold visual engagement by maintaining eye contact, as well as employing suitable posture and body gestures, in order to effectively captivate and sustain the attention of the audience during the entirety of the presentation. The aforementioned factor plays a pivotal role in achieving the intended favorable outcome of the presentation, which is sought by all presenters.

In conclusion, the lack of adequate preparations hinders the achievement of perfection. This declaration asserts the fundamental importance of preliminary phases in any undertaking, with a particular emphasis on their relevance in the realm of providing legal English presentations. The degree of meticulousness in the preparation of a task is directly proportional to the level of flawlessness it exhibits.

3. METHOD

3.1. Research design

Action research aimed to determine how video-recording affected learners' group presentation preparedness. Invitations were sent to 116 junior Legal English specialists from the Faculty of Legal Foreign Language. Over two weeks, participants completed active Google form questionnaires through email. The researcher's email stated the study's goals and guaranteed participant privacy. The researcher also acknowledged that individuals may not engage if they felt uncomfortable with the email. The questionnaire instructions were included. In this study, 20 people from the greater population were selected using stratified random selection. Based on alphabetical order, these people were divided into four five-person groups. Six questions were asked of participants. One person led the group and took questions and recorded responses. Documentation made participants feel good about answering questions. The questionnaires and interviews were thoroughly evaluated before data analysis. Data was processed using SPSS statistics.

3.2. Participants

A total of 116 individuals classified as juniors, aged between 21 and 22, participated in the study. Of these participants, 41 were male, accounting for 35.3% of the total, while 75 were female, representing 64.7% of the total. In terms of residential locations, it is

seen that 34 individuals, constituting 29.3% of the sample, are from urban areas and currently reside with their parents. Conversely, the other 82 participants (70.7%) belong from various provinces across Vietnam and now inhabit rented accommodations or share living spaces with their peers.

3.3. Research instruments

Researchers created questionnaires and in-depth interview questions based on oral presentation rating criteria by Matthews and Mario (1990) and Montero et al. (2001). Five highly skilled instructors were given a questionnaire and interview questions for content evaluation. A preliminary test with 20 participants assessed the questions' validity and reliability. Only items with good Cronbach alpha reliability ($0.8 > \alpha \geq 0.7$) were chosen. The final version was reviewed by four eminent scholars from different universities to verify the culpability.

The survey questionnaire including 23 items is subdivided into four parts labeled preparation for presentation organization (4 items); preparation for presentation content (5 items), preparation for presentation language (8 items), and preparation for presentation delivery respectively (7 items).

The semi-structured interview consists of 6 researcher-made questions in order to explore participant real thoughts relating to assessing their group presentation assignment under the form of video recording rather than by the teacher on-site.

3.4. Statistical tools

The five-point Likert scale was used to create the survey questionnaire. Regarding the necessity to provide video-recorded presentations, opinions ranged from severely unnecessary (1-1.8), unnecessary (1.9-2.6), neutral (2.7-3.4), required (3.5-4.2), to highly necessary (4.3-5.0). Participants were asked to choose one of five responses from "strongly disapprove" to "strongly approve." Students' preparation perceptions were surveyed using a five-point Likert scale. It varied from "strongly disagree" to "disagree," "neutral," "agree," and "strongly agree." After consent, a group leader administered the interview questions on-site with video-recording.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. The necessity of implementing video-recorded presentation

Figure 2 illustrates the importance of including video-recorded presentations in teaching sessions focused on legal English. Based on the results obtained, it is evident that a notable fraction of the participants (n = 72, accounting for 62.1%) demonstrated their endorsement of the essential requirement to record their group assignment presentations. In relation to the aforementioned assertion, a subgroup of participants (n=32; constituting 27.6% of the overall sample) demonstrated a heterogeneous perception on the practice of documenting their collaborative group work during the activity. Among the 12 participants included in the study, which accounted for approximately 10.3% of the total respondents, it was observed that these individuals held the belief that the incorporation of recording oral presentations in group work was either redundant or exceedingly superfluous. In brief, a substantial majority of the

questioned students exhibit an understanding of the importance of employing video-recorded presentations, which is consistent with Neda's result (Neda, 2023).

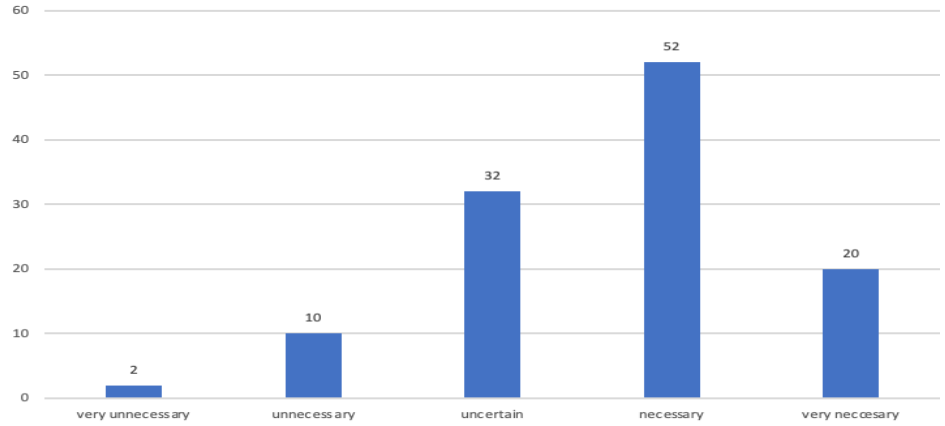

Fig 2 Respondents' perception towards the necessity of implementing video-recorded presentation

4.2. The consensus on deploying video-recorded presentation

As seen from the data presented in Figure 3, a significant majority of the surveyed students (N=72, equivalent to 62.1%) indicated their agreement with the practice of recording group presentations in their legal English lessons. Approximately 32 individuals, accounting for 27.6% of the sample, expressed their agreement by returning their wonder. The remaining participants (n = 12, or 10.3% of the total sample) expressed their disagreement with the utilization of video-recorded presentations in their legal English courses. The aforementioned results are further supported by the data obtained from the focus group interview. Fifteen out of twenty participants in the interview expressed that video recording of their oral presentation group assignments enables instructors to assess with greater precision and comprehensiveness. This is attributed to the fact that instructors have more uninterrupted time to evaluate the recordings, as opposed to being distracted during an on-site assessment. In an alternative methodology, it was unanimously acknowledged by all participants that the utilization of video-

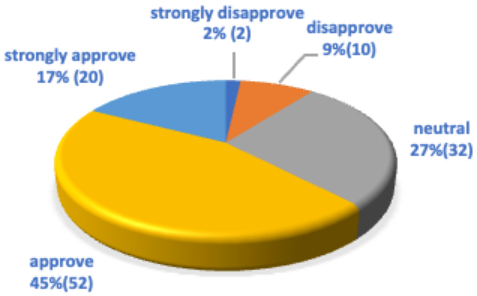

Fig 3 Respondents' consensus on deploying video-recorded presentation

recorded presentations facilitates a reassessment of their individual strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, they strive to guarantee equitable scoring practices within their own group or in comparison to other groups. According to a survey conducted among 20 participants, 12 individuals expressed the belief that recording lecturers' oral lectures would enhance the seriousness and professionalism of the classroom environment. They argued that this approach would facilitate interaction between presenters and the audience, as students may be apprehensive about potential bad judgments. In contrast to onsite presentations, where instructors primarily focus on assessing presenters while disregarding the audience, who often divert their attention to their electronic devices or engage in side conversations, video-recorded presentations are regarded as a means of reinstating an academic atmosphere during presentations. Moreover, the students surveyed unanimously agreed that being recorded while delivering a presentation compelled them to engage in more thorough preparation beforehand. Additionally, they considered the notion of adopting a more formal attire in order to excel in the realm of video production. Based on the research findings, it can be inferred that the advantages of incorporating video recordings in legal English classes surpass the associated disadvantages. Specifically, out of the total of 20 participants, 5 expressed their reservations towards being filmed during their presentations due to concerns about potential exposure of their weaknesses and subsequent bullying by their peers. Additionally, the students encountered difficulties in locating a cooperative group member and an effective group leader, resulting in confusion during the preparation of their oral presentation. The act of recording presentations has been observed to diminish the presenters' confidence levels and introduce a higher degree of confusion compared to instances where only the teacher provided feedback on their work.

4.3. Preparations for presentation

According to Mathews and Mario (1990), there are four primary components that presenters must consider when preparing for their presentation. These components are presentation structure, presentation content, presentation language, and presentation delivery. The data presented below illustrates the extent of preparation undertaken by presenters for their presentations, as compared to the level of preparation when the presentations are recorded in video format.

4.3.1. Preparations for presentation organization

The data obtained from Table 1 provides insights into the perspectives of the participants regarding the necessity of preparing presentation frameworks. The majority of individuals recognize the need of structuring their presentations into three sections: Introduction, Development, and Conclusion (M=4.69; SD=.052%). In addition, they exhibited greater attention to discourse markers in order to emphasize the transitions (M=4.15; SD=.066%). Moreover, the principal points are organized in distinct paragraphs. The mean (M) is 4.24 with a standard deviation (SD) of 0.038%. In addition, the ideas presented in the discourse are formulated in a scientific manner and are evidently comprehensible, as indicated by a mean score of 4.15 with a standard deviation of 0.048%.

Table 1 Students' preparations for presentation organization

For video-recorded group assignment oral presentation I need to	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Description
1. structure our presentation with 3 parts: Introduction, Development and Conclusion.	116	4.84	.938	Very high
2. use discourse markers to highlight the transitions	116	4.65	.966	Very high
3. state main points clearly in separate paragraphs	116	4.69	.652	Very high
4. draft ideas logically and easily to follow.	116	4.71	.748	Very high
Valid N (listwise)	116			

This discovery exhibits a degree of resemblance to the data obtained from focus group interviews. When queried about their convention preparations, all respondents indicated that they employed similar strategies when tasked with a group presentation. Additionally, they clarified that the distinctive characteristics of legal subjects and the specialized nature of legal English necessitate a meticulously structured framework. The presentation format mandated by university regulations requires adherence to a three-part structured presentation and the practice of organizing important ideas into distinct paragraphs. In particular, the utilization of discourse markers serves to emphasize the process of concept movement and facilitate the audience's comprehension in written form. Based on the findings of the study, it can be inferred that there is no significant disparity in the quality of presentation organization between in-person presentations and recorded presentations among students.

4.3.2. Preparations for presentation content

The survey results shown in Table 2 provide insights into the preparatory actions undertaken by undergraduate students in legal English courses in anticipation of their presentation topic. The participants expressed their concurrence at a significantly elevated level on five items that validate the necessity of simplifying the central concepts (M=4.79; SD=.994%). Furthermore, the content pertaining to the subject matter was appropriately and pertinently composed (M=4.69; SD=.052%), and it was deemed suitable for the audience's overall comprehension (M=4.60; SD=.677%).All participants unanimously agreed that weakening the primary argument in their presenting material cannot be effectively justified without the inclusion of adequate and relevant data, facts,

Table 2 Students' preparations for presentation content

For video-recorded group assignment oral presentation I need to	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Description
1. clear the central idea	116	4.71	.994	Very high
2. compose a relevant and pertinent content to the topic	116	4.69	.940	Very high
3. tailor the content to the audience's comprehensive ability	116	4.60	.677	Very high
4. design sufficient appropriate details, facts, examples to support central idea strongly	116	4.36	.969	Very high
5. fit the content in the time allowance	116	4.75	.684	Very high
Valid N (listwise)	116			

and examples. The mean score for this consensus was 4.36, with a standard deviation of 0.969%. The allocation of time is a significant concern for individuals when adapting content to meet specific time limitations (M=4.75; SD=.684%).

Similarly, the findings derived from the interviews indicated that participants consistently followed a standard routine when preparing for their presentations, according to a set of four specific steps. Nevertheless, a minor discrepancy arose in relation to item 5. The interviewees said that in the past, they did not prioritize the consideration of time allocation, as the instructor typically placed greater emphasis on the quality of their presentation content rather than the infringement of time constraints. Hence, if the duration of their presentation was brief, the instructor only provided a reminder without it having any impact on their final grade. However, the act of being recorded induced heightened levels of anxiety among the individuals, hence impacting their ability to effectively construct the content within the given time constraints. In summary, regardless of whether it is being recorded or not, the delivery of presentation content in legal English constantly reflects the students' utmost effort. However, the duration of presentation material is modified by the presenter throughout the recording process.

4.3.3. Preparations for presentation language

According to the data shown in Table 3, it can be observed that the use of presenting language was held in high regard. Students in the legal area place a significant emphasis on meticulous preparation when engaging in public speaking activities. When composing their written work, students made an effort to choose words that are easily understood by the audience in order to enhance the accessibility of their presentation (M=4.62; SD=.509). In order to provide the audience with the most effective service, all legal jargon and terminology were attempted to be written or explained in simple and understandable language (M=3.40, SD=.915). In order to enhance the retention of the presentation content by the audience (M=4.13, SD=.904), any improper jargon and casual language were consciously omitted. Moreover, a factor that influences the audience's listening ability is the presenter's pronunciation and intonation. The aforementioned findings were exemplified by the data from items 3 and 7, which exhibited mean scores

Table 3 Students' preparations for presentation language

For video-recorded group assignment oral presentation I need to	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Description
1. choose appropriate vocabulary for the audience	116	4.62	.789	Very high
2. explain legal jargon, legal terms in plain language	116	4.40	.915	Very high
3. check pronunciation and intonation of new words	116	4.33	.883	Very high
4. avoid no inappropriate jargon or informalities	116	4.13	.904	Very high
5. use a variety of expressions	116	3.67	.883	High
6. express my nice facial expressions to create a friendly environment at the speaking site.	116	3.20	.970	Normal
7. make sure the accuracy of grammar and vocabulary applied	116	3.38	.863	Normal
8. apply signal words or conjunctions to make a clarity of ideas	116	3.62	.894	High
Valid N (listwise)	116			

of 4.33 (SD=.883) and 3.38 (SD=.863) correspondingly. When the speaker demonstrates clear and fluent pronunciation of new terms, along with exact application of vocabulary and grammar, it allows the listener to enhance their comprehension to the greatest extent possible. Additionally, it was confirmed by students who were interviewed that signal words or conjunctions are the most effective means of highlighting their ideas (M=3.62; SD=.894). In summary, the act of preparing for a language presentation is an essential component that students should consistently undertake, regardless of whether they are being filmed or not.

4.3.4. Preparation for presentation delivery

Table 4 Students' preparations for presentation delivery

For video-recorded group assignment oral presentation I need to	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Description
1. control the volume loud enough to be heard clearly	116	4.84	.938	Very high
2. apply some eye contact with audience	116	4.71	.698	Very high
3. rehearse much to provide a natural delivery instead of reading or memorizing	116	4.89	.562	Very high
4. practice to reach an appropriate rate of speech instead of being too fast or too slow	116	4.56	.814	Very high
5. apply some posture or body movements instead of distracting mannerisms	116	4.05	.673	Very high
6. dress formal clothes to be looked more professional	116	4.56	.814	Very high
7. make my best physical appearance by some make-up, perfume, hair style or hair color.	116	4.29	.745	Very high
Valid N (listwise)	116			

In relation to the preparation for delivering a presentation, the research findings presented in Table 4 demonstrate a substantial level of approval among the respondents on the investigated items. The initial criterion implies that the volume should be regulated at a level that ensures audibility for the entire audience, with a mean value of 4.84 and a standard deviation of 0.938%. Additionally, it is recommended to establish eye contact with the audience (M=4.71; SD=.698%). Specifically, there is a high level of agreement (M=4.89; SD=.562%) on the notion that practicing extensively in order to achieve a natural delivery, as opposed to reading or remembering, is beneficial. In addition, it is important to engage in the practice of attaining an optimal pace of speaking, avoiding both excessive rapidity and sluggishness (mean = 4.56; standard deviation = 0.814%). The participants reached a consensus about the importance of employing specific postures and body movements in relation to body language, while avoiding any distracting idiosyncrasies (M=4.05; SD=.673%). The act of being recorded on video serves as a catalyst for individuals to invest more effort in cultivating their self-image. In a meticulous manner, individuals enhance their visual presentation to convey a more professional image through the utilization of formal attire (M=4.56; SD=.814%). Additionally, they adorn their physical appearance with cosmetic enhancements such as makeup, perfume, hairstyling, or hair coloring (M=4.29; SD=.745%). In conclusion, the seven aforementioned assertions presented in Table 4 appear to be very relevant while preparing for the giving of a presentation.

The information obtained from the focus group further reinforces the abovementioned point. According to the participants who were questioned, the act of being filmed lays a greater emphasis on their look and attire, leading them to allocate more attention towards these aspects compared to situations where they are not being recorded, allowing them to dress in a more casual manner. However, in the context of video recording, there is a preference for dashing appearance rather than on-site one. The participants share that they are a little bit shy why other teachers remember their untidy style when marking their recorded presentation assignment.

In a nutshell, with a thought of being marked by recorded presentation assignment induces students to boost more time on preparing for their performance. As a result, the students become more master with the things that they are in charge of. Their psychological barriers are erected and they appear quite confident, natural and fluent during presenting. Addition to this, presentation skills are applied smoothly and skillfully. Especially, some of them responded that they seemed to be join in such a professional atmosphere of the presentation day that they have never experienced before.

5. Conclusion

The research findings demonstrate a good influence of video-recorded presentations, particularly in relation to psychological factors. The act of being videotaped serves as a catalyst for students to allocate additional time towards rehearsal, resulting in a reduced frequency of psychological barriers during their presentations. Furthermore, certain groups demonstrate a higher level of excellence in their presentations when compared to their previous performances. However, the research was conducted inside the confines of a single university, with only four groups of students from the same academic year. Therefore, in order to thoroughly demonstrate the advantages of the video-recorded format, it is necessary to conduct a broader survey on a diverse range of participants.

Overall, when it comes to students' perspectives on the importance of video-recorded presentations, the majority of respondents from both the survey questionnaire and the interview agreed that the benefits of using video-recorded presentations in legal English classes outweighed the drawbacks. This finding is in line with the findings of Kulawadee and Charatdao (2012), Mohamed, T., and Nicole, M. (2020), and Shane (2012).

The most striking discovery in the level of preparation for the group presentation assignment when being recorded is the time for rehearsing. The majority of survey and interview participants stated that the prospect of being filmed on video encouraged them to practice more by themselves and in groups. They stated that they would prefer to improve their nonverbal communication skills because these films would be stored for a longer period of time than only on-site training. Furthermore, their attire and appearance drew more positive attention. This finding corresponded to studies by ivkovi, 2014; Gilakjani, 2012; Al-Hebaish, 2012; Woodrow & Chapman, 2002; and Baker, 2000, in which students overcame psychological hurdles and became more successful delivering a public speaking.

Undeniably the study has explored outstanding insights in recording the students' group presentation assignment in video form to alter their level of preparation, limitation is unavoidable. It is because the research was conducted inside the confines of a single university, with only four groups of students from the same academic year. Therefore, in

order to thoroughly demonstrate the advantages of the video-recorded format, it is necessary to conduct a broader survey on a diverse range of participants to reach a comprehensive conclusion

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Review research paper

FROM MANUSCRIPT TO PUBLICATION: MASTERING ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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Abstract. *This paper explores the pivotal role of English language mastery in the journey from manuscript creation to successful publication in academic writing. Emphasizing the significance of linguistic proficiency, the study underscores how clear and precise language contributes to effective scholarly communication and adherence to publishing guidelines. The paper delineates the impact of language proficiency on the efficient development of manuscripts, reducing the likelihood of miscommunication and enhancing engagement with reviewers and editors. Moreover, linguistic proficiency is highlighted as a catalyst for global reach, positively influencing peer perceptions, and increasing the probability of publication. Recognizing the continuous nature of professional development, the paper advocates for scholars to proactively enhance their language skills, emphasizing its crucial role in advancing academic success throughout the publication process.*

Key words: *English for scholarly publication, English for academic purposes, writing manuscripts, publication*

1. INTRODUCTION

The journey from manuscript creation to successful publication in academic settings is a multifaceted process that demands meticulous attention to detail, scholarly rigor, and effective communication. At the heart of this intricate journey lies the crucial element of language proficiency, particularly mastering English. As the lingua franca of academic discourse, English plays a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of scholarly work from inception to dissemination (Brett,1994). In this context, the importance of mastering English for academic success becomes undeniable. English has evolved into the global language of academia (Global Academic Discourse), serving as the primary means of communication for scholars, researchers, and institutions worldwide. The ability to express scholarly ideas, methodologies, and findings in clear, coherent, and precise English is paramount in ensuring that academic work resonates with an international audience. A manuscript's potential for publication and impact is intricately tied to the author's proficiency in conveying nuanced concepts within the conventions of academic English (Cargill & O'Connor, 2006). The process of transitioning from manuscript

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creation to publication involves navigating the intricate landscape of editorial requirements and publishing standards. Journals, publishers, and academic institutions often have specific guidelines regarding language use, style, and formatting. Mastery of English is essential for authors to meet these requirements, ensuring that their work aligns seamlessly with the expectations of the scholarly community and the chosen publication outlet. Academic success hinges on the ability to communicate research findings with precision and clarity (Precision and Clarity in Scholarly Communication). English proficiency enables scholars to articulate complex ideas, methodologies, and results in a manner that is accessible to a broad audience of peers. Effective scholarly communication, facilitated by a mastery of English, not only enhances the impact of the research but also contributes to the overall advancement of knowledge within the academic community (Casanave & Vandriick, 2003). A manuscript that demonstrates a high level of English proficiency stands a greater chance of garnering credibility and recognition within the academic sphere. Well-articulated research, free from language barriers, fosters a positive perception of the author's expertise and dedication to scholarly rigor (Building Credibility and Recognition). Consequently, mastery of English becomes a key factor in establishing an author's reputation and contributing to their academic success.

1.2. Objective of the paper

- Investigate and analyze the pivotal role of English proficiency in the entire process of academic manuscript creation to successful publication.
- Explore and identify the challenges faced by scholars during the various stages of manuscript development, focusing on linguistic and stylistic hurdles in academic writing.
- Evaluate how language mastery influences effective scholarly communication, with a specific emphasis on clarity, precision, and engagement with the academic audience.
- Present practical and effective strategies for scholars to enhance their English language skills, emphasizing the importance of language courses, writing workshops, and mentorship programs.

By addressing these objectives, the paper aims to contribute valuable insights to scholars/researchers, and educators seeking to navigate the intricate journey from manuscript creation to successful publication by emphasizing the importance of mastering English for academic success.

2. The Significance of Academic Publishing

Academic publishing serves as the lifeblood of the scholarly community, providing a structured platform for the dissemination of research findings, innovative ideas, and intellectual contributions. The broader significance of academic publishing extends beyond the mere act of sharing knowledge; it plays a pivotal role in shaping the landscape of academia, influencing scholarly dialogue, and contributing to the cumulative advancement of human understanding (Crystal, 2003).

- Knowledge Dissemination: At its core, academic publishing is a mechanism for the widespread dissemination of knowledge. Scholars share their research findings, methodologies, and insights with the global community, allowing for the efficient transmission of information across disciplines and geographical boundaries.

This dissemination not only informs current debates and discussions but also lays the groundwork for future research endeavors.

- Validation of Research: Publication in reputable academic journals acts as a crucial validation mechanism for scholarly work. The peer-review process, a cornerstone of academic publishing, ensures that research undergoes rigorous scrutiny by experts in the field. The acceptance of a manuscript for publication signifies that the work meets established standards of quality, contributing to the credibility and legitimacy of both the author and the research.
- Academic Reputation and Recognition: For individual scholars and researchers, the act of publishing is intricately tied to academic reputation and recognition. A robust publication record enhances an individual's standing within their academic community, establishing them as authorities in their field. The recognition gained through publication not only benefits the individual researcher but also elevates the reputation of their affiliated institution.
- Advancement of Disciplines: Academic publishing is the driving force behind the advancement of disciplines. It fosters a continuous cycle of knowledge creation, sharing, and refinement. Published research serves as the building blocks upon which subsequent studies are constructed. The cumulative impact of scholarly publications contributes to the evolution of theories, methodologies, and paradigms within various academic disciplines.
- Global Academic Dialogue: Through academic publishing, scholars engage in a global dialogue that transcends geographical and cultural boundaries. Researchers from diverse backgrounds contribute to and benefit from this shared discourse, fostering a rich tapestry of ideas, perspectives, and collaborative opportunities. The global nature of academic publishing ensures that advancements in one part of the world can influence and inspire scholars elsewhere.

2.1. The role of English proficiency in navigating the publication

The role of English proficiency in navigating the publication process successfully **(**St John, 1987)

i. Manuscript Preparation:

- Clarity and Precision: English proficiency is paramount in articulating research ideas with clarity and precision. A well-crafted manuscript, free from language ambiguities, ensures that the reviewer and editor can comprehend the research methodology, results, and implications accurately.
- Adherence to Editorial Guidelines: English proficiency facilitates a meticulous adherence to editorial guidelines. Authors who master English are better equipped to format their manuscripts, follow citation styles, and meet the specific requirements of the chosen publication outlet.

ii. Peer Review Process:

- Effective Communication with Reviewers: During peer review, clear and effective communication with reviewers is essential. Authors with strong English skills can respond to critiques, questions, and suggestions more coherently, fostering a constructive dialogue that enhances the quality of the manuscript (Hyland & Hyland, 2001).

- Addressing Revisions: English proficiency aids authors in implementing revisions suggested by reviewers. Authors who can articulate their responses and revisions clearly and concisely contribute to a smoother peer-review process (Gosden, 2003).

iii. Communication with Editors:

- Quality Correspondence: Proficiency in English is crucial for authors when communicating with journal editors. Well-written emails and correspondence ensure that editors can understand inquiries, provide guidance, and convey decisions effectively.
- Navigating Revision Requests: Authors proficient in English can navigate revision requests more adeptly. They can comprehend and implement editorial feedback, making the process of addressing editor comments and concerns more efficient.

iv. Journal Selection and Submission:

- Crafting Persuasive Cover Letters: English proficiency plays a role in crafting persuasive cover letters during the submission process. An author's ability to clearly articulate the significance of their research and align it with the aims of the chosen journal enhances the likelihood of acceptance.
- Conforming to Submission Guidelines: Authors with strong English skills are better positioned to adhere to submission guidelines, ensuring that the manuscript package is complete, formatted correctly, and meets the requirements of the targeted journal (Lee & Norton, 2003).

v. Global Impact:

- Reaching a Diverse Audience: English proficiency enables authors to reach a diverse, global audience. Manuscripts written in clear and comprehensible English have a broader impact, facilitating the dissemination of research findings to scholars, practitioners, and policymakers around the world.
- Enhancing Citations and Visibility: Well-written publications are more likely to be cited, contributing to the overall visibility and impact of the research. English proficiency, therefore, enhances the potential for a manuscript to become a recognized and influential contribution in its field.

vi. Post-Publication Impact:

- Effective Communication of Findings: After publication, authors with strong English skills can effectively communicate their findings to the broader academic community. This includes participating in conferences, engaging in academic discussions, and leveraging social media to disseminate research outcomes.
- Collaboration Opportunities: Proficient English allows authors to engage in international collaborations, expanding the potential for further research, joint publications, and participation in cross-cultural academic initiatives.

3. Challenges in Academic Writing for Publication

3.1. Identify common challenges faced by scholars in the process of manuscript creation and subsequent publication

It requires a combination of skill development, mentorship, and perseverance throughout the manuscript creation and publication journey (Gosden,1995; Flowerdew, 1999).

i. Language Proficiency:
- Non-native English speakers may face difficulties in expressing complex ideas, methodologies, and findings in English, impacting the clarity and coherence of the manuscript.
- Engaging in language courses, seeking feedback from language editors, and collaborating with proficient English speakers can help overcome language barriers.

ii. Writing Style and Academic Conventions:
- Adhering to the specific writing style and academic conventions of the chosen discipline or journal can be challenging, especially for early-career researchers.
- Reviewing published articles in the target journal, attending writing workshops, and seeking mentorship from experienced scholars can aid in mastering appropriate writing styles.

iii. Literature Review and Citation Management:
- Conducting a thorough literature review and managing citations effectively pose challenges for scholars, impacting the overall quality and credibility of the manuscript.
- Utilizing reference management tools, staying updated on relevant literature, and seeking guidance from mentors or colleagues can assist in addressing this challenge.

iv. Data Presentation and Visualization:
- Effectively presenting research data and findings through clear visualizations can be challenging, impacting the reader's understanding of the research.
- Participating in data visualization workshops, utilizing appropriate software tools, and seeking feedback on data presentation can enhance the visual appeal and impact of the manuscript.

v. Selecting the Right Journal:
- Choosing an appropriate journal that aligns with the scope and focus of the research can be challenging, especially for researchers unfamiliar with the publishing landscape.
- Conducting thorough journal research, seeking advice from mentors, and carefully reading journal guidelines can aid in selecting a suitable publication outlet.

vi. Navigating the Peer Review Process:
- Responding to reviewer comments and addressing revisions effectively can be daunting for authors, impacting the chances of successful publication.
- Understanding the feedback received, preparing comprehensive responses, and seeking guidance from mentors or colleagues can help navigate the peer review process successfully (Hyland & Hyland, 2001).

vii. Time Management:
- Balancing the demands of research, teaching, and other responsibilities with the time-intensive process of manuscript preparation can be a significant challenge.
- Developing effective time management strategies, setting realistic milestones, and seeking support from colleagues or research collaborators can help alleviate time-related challenges.

viii. Ethical Considerations and Compliance:
- Ensuring adherence to ethical standards, including proper citation, avoiding plagiarism, and addressing conflicts of interest, is crucial but may pose challenges.

- Staying informed about ethical guidelines, utilizing plagiarism detection tools, and seeking guidance from institutional review boards can help authors navigate ethical considerations (Gosden,1995).

ix. Funding and Resource Constraints:

- Limited access to resources, including research funding and specialized equipment, can impede the progress of research and manuscript preparation.
- Actively seeking research funding opportunities, collaborating with institutions, and exploring alternative resources can mitigate the impact of financial constraints.

x. Rejection and Resilience:

- Facing rejection from journals can be disheartening, impacting authors' confidence and motivation to pursue further publication.
- Developing resilience, learning from rejection feedback, and persistently revising and submitting manuscripts to different outlets can contribute to eventual success in the publication process.

3.2. Emphasize the specific linguistic and stylistic challenges associated with academic writing in English.

i. Precision and Nuance:
English demands precision, and conveying nuanced ideas can be challenging for non-native speakers. Striking the right balance between detail and conciseness may pose difficulties. Enhancing vocabulary, practicing writing with attention to nuance, and seeking feedback from proficient English speakers can improve precision (Gosden, 1992; Scully & Jenkins, 2006).

ii. Academic Vocabulary:
Mastery of specialized academic vocabulary is essential, and non-native speakers may struggle with selecting appropriate terms, impacting the overall clarity of the manuscript. Actively expanding academic vocabulary through reading, utilizing discipline-specific glossaries, and collaborating with native English speakers can address this challenge.

iii. Sentence Structure and Syntax:
Constructing grammatically correct and varied sentence structures may be challenging. Non-native speakers may face difficulties in maintaining a coherent flow in their writing. Engaging in grammar-focused language courses, reviewing well-written academic texts, and seeking feedback on sentence structure can enhance writing fluency.

iv. Articles and Prepositions:
Proper use of definite and indefinite articles, as well as prepositions, can be challenging for non-native English speakers, leading to grammatical errors. Focusing on these specific language elements in language courses, utilizing grammar checkers, and proofreading for article and preposition usage can improve accuracy.

v. Verb Tenses and Voice:
Maintaining consistency in verb tenses and selecting the appropriate voice (active or passive) can be challenging, affecting the coherence and readability of the manuscript. Practicing the correct usage of verb tenses, studying well-written examples, and seeking feedback on tense consistency can help overcome this challenge.

vi. Cohesive and Coherent Writing:
Non-native speakers may struggle to create cohesive and coherent arguments, leading to disjointed or unclear writing. Employing transitional phrases, organizing ideas logically, and seeking peer review for coherence can contribute to clearer and more cohesive writing.

vii. Tone and Formality:
Striking the appropriate academic tone and maintaining formality can be challenging, as non-native speakers may unintentionally adopt a tone that is either too casual or overly formal. Analyzing well-regarded academic articles for tone, seeking feedback from mentors, and practicing formal language use can help in achieving the right balance.

viii. Cultural Sensitivity:
Understanding and applying cultural nuances in English academic writing may be challenging, potentially leading to unintentional miscommunications. Engaging with diverse academic materials, seeking feedback from multicultural peers, and staying informed about cultural aspects of academic writing can improve cultural sensitivity.

ix. Citation Style Adherence:
Adhering to specific citation styles, such as APA, MLA, or Chicago, can be challenging, leading to errors in in-text citations and bibliographies. Utilizing citation management tools, referring to style guides, and seeking guidance from experienced researchers can assist in proper citation style adherence.

x. Revision and Editing:
Non-native speakers may find the revision and editing process demanding, as identifying and correcting linguistic and stylistic errors requires a keen eye for detail. Engaging in self-editing, using grammar and style checkers, and collaborating with proficient English speakers for peer review can enhance the quality of the final manuscript.
Addressing these linguistic and stylistic challenges involves a combination of language skill development, targeted practice, and seeking support from language experts and mentors throughout the academic writing process (Hyland & Tse, 2005).

4. The Evolution of a Manuscript: from Draft to Publication

There are several stages in the evolution of the manuscript (Swales & Feak, 2004).

I. Pre-Writing Phase:
- Research Planning: Defining the research question, objectives, and scope.
- Literature Review: Conducting a comprehensive review of existing literature.

Proficient English skills are crucial for articulating research questions clearly and concisely. Language proficiency aids in synthesizing and summarizing relevant literature effectively.

II. Manuscript Drafting:
- Introduction: Presenting the background, research question, and objectives.
- Methods: Detailing the research design, participants, and procedures.
- Results: Presenting research findings through text, tables, and figures.
- Discussion: Analyzing results, interpreting findings, and discussing implications.

Proficient writing skills ensure a coherent and logically structured manuscript. Accurate language use is crucial for conveying precise methodological details and reporting results (Hyland & Tse, 2005).

III. Peer Review Process:

- Submission: Sending the manuscript to a chosen journal.
- Peer Review: Receiving feedback from experts in the field.

Clear and concise writing aids reviewers in understanding and evaluating the research. Language proficiency helps authors respond effectively to reviewer comments, ensuring clarity in revisions.

IV. Revision and Resubmission:

- Addressing Feedback: Implementing revisions based on peer review comments.
- Resubmission: Submitting the revised manuscript to the journal.

Proficient language skills are essential for accurately addressing reviewer comments. Authors with strong language proficiency can navigate the revision process more efficiently.

V. Editorial Process:

- Acceptance: Receiving acceptance or conditional acceptance.
- Copy Editing: The manuscript undergoes copyediting for language, style, and formatting.

Proficient language use reduces the need for extensive copy editing. Authors' mastery of English ensures a smoother editorial process and minimizes language-related corrections.

VI. Proofreading and Finalization:

- Proofreading: Careful review of the final version for errors.
- Final Submission: Submitting the corrected manuscript for publication.

Proficient proofreading skills contribute to the production of error-free manuscripts. Language mastery ensures a polished final submission, ready for publication.

VII.Publication:

- Online or Print Publication: Manuscript becomes publicly available.

A well-written manuscript enhances the journal's reputation and the impact of the research. Proficient language use contributes to the effective communication of research to the academic community. Throughout these stages, language proficiency plays a critical role in shaping the manuscript's clarity, coherence, and overall quality, impacting its successful transformation into a publishable work. Proficient language skills enable researchers to effectively communicate their ideas, navigate the peer review process, and contribute valuable knowledge to the academic community (Hyland, 2006).

5. Language Mastery and Scholarly Communication

i. Clarity of Research Ideas:

Language mastery is intricately tied to the clarity with which researchers articulate their ideas. A strong command of language allows scholars to express complex concepts with precision, ensuring that their research questions, hypotheses, and objectives are communicated clearly. Effective scholarly communication begins with the ability to convey research ideas in a manner that is accessible to the audience. Language

proficiency contributes to the creation of well-structured and coherent narratives, enabling readers to grasp the significance and context of the research.

ii. Precision in Expression:

Language mastery enables scholars to choose words and phrases with precision, minimizing the risk of misinterpretation. Accurate expression is crucial for conveying the subtleties of research methodologies, results, and conclusions. The use of precise language ensures that the intended meaning is communicated accurately. Ambiguities or vague expressions can be eliminated through language proficiency, allowing the research to be understood and evaluated more effectively (Jaffe, 2003).

iii. Clarity in Methodological Descriptions:

Language proficiency is vital when describing research methodologies. Clear and concise language allows researchers to articulate the steps, procedures, and techniques employed in their studies, facilitating the reproduction and validation of the research by peers. A well-written methodology section enhances the transparency of the research process, enabling readers to evaluate the study's rigor. Language mastery ensures that methodological descriptions are unambiguous and easily comprehensible.

iv. Results Presentation:

Effectively presenting research findings requires language proficiency to choose appropriate terms and construct coherent narratives. The impact of language is evident in the way results are communicated through text, tables, and figures. Proficient language use enhances the impact of the results section, enabling readers to interpret and understand the findings accurately. Clarity in presenting results is crucial for the credibility of the research.

v. Interpretation and Discussion:

Language proficiency is crucial when interpreting research results and engaging in scholarly discourse within the discussion section. The ability to convey the significance of findings, discuss implications, and situate the research within the broader context is contingent on language mastery. The clarity of interpretation and discussion directly influences the perceived value of the research. Proficient language use enables scholars to present nuanced arguments, contributing to the scholarly conversation.

vi. Engagement with the Academic Audience:

Language proficiency is a key factor in engaging with the academic audience. Scholars who master the language can effectively communicate their research ideas, methodologies, and findings to a diverse and global audience. Engaging language not only attracts the attention of readers but also facilitates a deeper understanding of the research. The ability to convey ideas clearly and persuasively contributes to the overall impact and influence of the research within the academic community.

vii. Successful Publication:

Language proficiency plays a pivotal role in the successful publication of research. Manuscripts that exhibit mastery of language are more likely to meet the standards of peer-reviewed journals and navigate the publication process successfully (Lee & Norton, 2003). Journals seek clarity, coherence, and effective communication in submitted manuscripts. Language proficiency enhances the chances of acceptance, as well-written articles contribute positively to the reputation of the journal.

6. Strategies for Enhancing English Proficiency in Academic Writing

6.1. Present effective strategies for improving English language skills in the context of academic writing.

i. Engage in Regular Reading:

Regularly reading academic articles, journals, and books in English expose writers to diverse writing styles, vocabulary, and academic structures. Exposure to well-written academic texts provides models for effective language use, enhancing language skills through immersion.

ii. Unparticipating in Language Courses:

Enroll in language courses, specifically designed for academic writing, that focus on grammar, vocabulary, and style. Formal language courses provide structured learning, addressing specific language challenges faced by writers, and offering targeted feedback.

iii. Utilize Online Writing Resources:

Explore online writing resources, such as grammar guides, style manuals, and language learning platforms. Online resources offer self-paced learning opportunities, providing explanations, exercises, and examples to reinforce language skills.

iv. Attend Writing Workshops:

Participate in writing workshops that specifically address academic writing skills, covering topics like structuring an argument, effective paragraph development, and citation styles. Workshops provide hands-on guidance, immediate feedback, and interaction with peers and instructors, fostering a supportive learning environment.

v. Practice writing Regularly:

Set aside dedicated time for regular writing practice, such as journaling, short essays, or blog posts. Consistent writing practice helps reinforce language skills, improve fluency, and build confidence in expressing ideas in English.

vi. Seek Feedback from Peers and Professors:

Share drafts with peers or professors proficient in English for constructive feedback. External feedback provides insights into areas for improvement, corrects language errors, and offers guidance on enhancing the overall quality of academic writing (Gosden, 2003).

vii. Participate in Language Exchange Programs:

Engage in language exchange programs where writers can interact with native English speakers, practicing language skills in real-life conversations. Language exchanges provide opportunities for practical application of language skills, improving spoken and written English through interaction. (Jaffe, 2003).

6.2. Role of Language Courses, Writing Workshops, and Mentorship Programs in Manuscript Development

i. Language Courses:

Language courses contribute to foundational language skills, addressing grammar, vocabulary, and academic writing conventions. Writers equipped with strong language fundamentals are better positioned to create manuscripts with clarity, precision, and coherence.

ii. Writing Workshops:

Writing workshops provide targeted guidance on academic writing techniques, structure, and style. Workshops enhance manuscript development by offering practical insights, refining writing skills, and fostering a community of practice among participants.

iii. Mentorship Programs:

Mentorship programs connect less experienced writers with seasoned mentors who provide guidance, feedback, and support throughout the manuscript development process. Mentors offer personalized advice, share their expertise, and assist writers in navigating challenges, ultimately contributing to the successful development and publication of manuscripts.

7. Overcoming Language Barriers

7.1. Cultural and Linguistic Barriers in Academic Writing for Non-Native English Speakers

i. Language Complexity:

Non-native English speakers may struggle with the complexity of the language, leading to difficulty in expressing nuanced ideas and concepts. Simplify sentences, use straightforward language, and focus on clear communication. Peer review and feedback from native English speakers can also help identify areas for improvement.

ii. Idiomatic Expressions:

Non-native speakers may encounter challenges in understanding and using idiomatic expressions or colloquialisms. opt for plain language over idiomatic expressions. If used, ensure a clear context or consider providing explanations to prevent misunderstandings.

iii. Cultural Nuances:

Non-native speakers may unintentionally overlook or misinterpret cultural nuances in academic writing, impacting the tone and appropriateness. Familiarize yourself with cultural norms in academic writing, seek feedback from colleagues or mentors, and engage in cultural exchange programs to enhance cultural sensitivity (Hyland, 2000/2004).

iv. Academic Conventions:

Unfamiliarity with academic conventions and writing styles may hinder non-native speakers from adhering to expected norms. Attend writing workshops, review style guides, and analyze articles from reputable journals to understand and emulate academic writing conventions. Seek mentorship for personalized guidance.

v. Sentence Structure and Syntax:

Non-native speakers may struggle with constructing grammatically correct and varied sentence structures. Take language courses focused on grammar, practice writing regularly, and seek feedback on sentence structure from proficient English speakers.

vi. Vocabulary Challenges:

Limited academic vocabulary may impede non-native speakers from precisely conveying complex ideas. Actively expand academic vocabulary through reading, use of thesauruses, and language courses. Maintain a glossary for discipline-specific terms and seek feedback on word choices.

vii. Misuse of Articles and Prepositions:

Incorrect use of articles (a, an, the) and prepositions can lead to grammatical errors and impact the overall coherence of writing. Focus on the correct usage of articles and prepositions in language courses, use grammar checkers, and seek feedback during the editing process.

viii. Fear of Academic Judgment:

Non-native speakers may experience a fear of academic judgment, leading to self-doubt and hesitation in expressing ideas. Cultivate a growth mindset, actively seek constructive feedback, and recognize that continuous improvement is a natural part of the academic writing process (Scully & Jenkins, 2006).

7.2. Strategies for Overcoming Barriers and Ensuring Successful Publication

i. Engage in Language Courses:

Enroll in language courses tailored to academic writing to enhance language proficiency and address specific linguistic challenges. Language courses provide targeted support, allowing non-native speakers to refine their writing skills in a structured environment.

ii. Participate in Writing Workshops:

Attend writing workshops that focus on academic writing conventions, grammar, and clarity. Workshops offer practical insights, hands-on guidance, and opportunities for feedback, improving overall writing competence.

iii. Seek Mentorship:

Connect with mentors proficient in English who can provide guidance, feedback, and support throughout the writing and publication process. Mentorship offers personalized assistance, helping non-native speakers navigate cultural and linguistic challenges and build confidence in academic writing.

iv. Use Editing Services:

Consider professional editing services that specialize in academic writing for language refinement. Professional editors can identify and rectify language errors, ensuring the manuscript meets high standards for publication.

v. Collaborate with Native English Speakers:

Collaborate with native English-speaking colleagues for co-authorship or feedback. Working with native speakers provides exposure to proficient language use, and collaborative writing can lead to a more polished manuscript.

vi. Join Academic Writing Groups:

Participate in academic writing groups where members share experiences, provide mutual support, and offer constructive feedback. Writing groups create a supportive community, fostering a collaborative environment for skill development and overcoming language barriers.

vii. Utilize Online Resources:

Explore online resources dedicated to academic writing, grammar, and style. Online resources offer self-paced learning opportunities, serving as a valuable complement to formal courses and workshops.

viii. Practice Regularly and Set Realistic Goals:

Establish a writing routine, set realistic goals, and consistently practice writing in English. Regular practice enhances language proficiency, builds confidence, and reinforces effective

academic writing habits (Kubota, 2003). By implementing these strategies, non-native English speakers can navigate cultural and linguistic barriers, refine their academic writing skills, and increase their chances of successful publication in reputable journals (Hyland, 2000/2004). Continuous improvement and a proactive approach to skill development are key elements in overcoming these challenges.

8. CONCLUSION

Mastering English is not merely a prerequisite for navigating the complexities of manuscript preparation and publication; it is a cornerstone of academic success. The ability to harness the power of English language proficiency empowers scholars to communicate their ideas effectively, adhere to publishing standards, and contribute meaningfully to the global discourse that defines contemporary academia. As authors embark on the journey from manuscript creation to publication, the significance of mastering English becomes a fundamental aspect of their pursuit of excellence in scholarly endeavors. In essence, academic publishing is not merely a technical aspect of scholarly communication; it is a cornerstone of intellectual progress and community building within the academic realm. While, the broader significance lies in its ability to propel knowledge forward, validate scholarly contributions, shape academic careers, and contribute to the collective understanding of the world. As a dynamic and integral part of the scholarly community, academic publishing remains a driving force behind the pursuit of knowledge and the advancement of human intellect (Kubota,2003). Thus, English proficiency is integral at every stage of the publication process. It ensures the clarity of the manuscript, effective communication with peers and editors, successful navigation of the peer review process, and a broader global impact.

On the other hand, authors who master English enhance the likelihood of their research making a significant and lasting contribution to the scholarly community. the relationship between language mastery, effective scholarly communication, and successful publication is integral to the entire research process. Proficient language use contributes to the clarity of research ideas, precision in expression, effective results presentation, and engagement with the academic audience, ultimately impacting the successful dissemination and recognition of scholarly work. However, a combination of formal language courses, writing workshops, and mentorship programs play a crucial role in improving English language skills for academic writing and supporting scholars on their journey from manuscript development to successful publication. On the whole, English mastery is integral to academic success, influencing communication, publication outcomes, global engagement, and overall impact on the scholarly community. Proficiency in English significantly contributes to the journey from manuscript creation to successful publication, playing a vital role in every stage of the research and dissemination process.

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Review research paper

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: INVESTIGATING EFFECTIVENESS OF TRAINING VIDEOS ON MEDICAL PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION – RELYING ON SFL ANALYSIS AND POLITENESS THEORY

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Abstract. *The proposal aims to document whether training videos on medical professional communication may be effective in identifying and improving the communication skills of doctors and other healthcare practitioners with patients. The strategy may be of particular importance for LSP students, medicine students, or pharmacy students who are non-native English speakers. After following a typical educational video, and based on their knowledge of communication in healthcare, they will need to identify the key semiotic resources that develop assertiveness and empathy in communication. The investigation should rely on SFL, with an emphasis on speech act theory and politeness theory.*

Key words*: multimodality, training videos, assertiveness, empathy, healthcare.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Multiple studies have shown high effectiveness of educational videos in blended and traditional learning (Kay, 2012; Kohler and Dietrich, 2020). This paper aims to present a proposal for a research project on the impact of multimedia contents on understanding communication in healthcare. In addition, the proposal aims to foster students' capacity to identify the key skills of medical professionals relating to empathy and assertiveness.

According to traditional concepts of healthcare, developing communication skills within the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is of utmost importance for the professional education of medicine or pharmacy students, given that it puts more emphasis on the key 'pylons' of effective communication in healthcare. In order to present the complexity of healthcare and communication as a vital concept, medical training videos as a multimodal concept will be considered the most suitable way for teaching the most sensible aspects of professional communication in healthcare. This complex pragmatic approach is based on the theory of cognitive load, and a few complementary argumentative presumptions *(*Mayer and Moreno, 2003: 43 - 52):

- The theory of cognitive load implies that working memory has two channels for acquiring and processing information: the visual/image channel and the auditory/verbal channel.

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- The application of both channels can facilitate the integration of new information into existing cognitive structures.
- Learning online may help students manage the learning process, recognise learning difficulties, and find ways to overcome them by researching mental models (Schacter and Szpunar, 2015: 60–71).

1.1. The multimodal resources complementary used in a medical discourse: SFL, register, the speech act theory and the politeness theory

'Systemic functional linguistics (SFL; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) is a meaning-based theory of language that sees language as the realization of meaning in context. A language is a resource for making meaning, and meaning resides in the systemic patterns of choice. According to SFL, the grammar of a language represents system networks, not an inventory of structures (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014)'. In terms of the systemic patterns of choice, the notion of 'Register, or the realization of the context of situation, is represented by the choices of field, tenor, and mode (Eggins, 2004; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The field concerns what the language is being used to talk about. The mode concerns 'the role language plays in the interaction', whether it is written or spoken. The tenor concerns the 'role relationships [play] between the interactants' (Eggins, 2004, p. 90). These three variables determine what Halliday calls the three metafunctions in language (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014): the ideational, the interpersonal, and the textual metafunctions, and they complementary characterize the lexicogrammatical resources of every language (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014)' (Oliveira, 2019:3).

According to the language philosopher J. L. Austin ([1962]1975: 5) 'Some utterances… are not a matter of 'just saying something' but of 'doing an action'. This essential observation gave rise to the speech act theory, a theory that underpins much of pragmatics.' (Culpeper, J. and Haugh, M. (2014). Thus, a considerable attention should be paid to the wording of speech acts, and the three important types of features: the selection of speech act components, the degree of directness / indirectness, and the type as well as the amount of upgraders and downgraders. In these terms, the communication patterns in a medial discourse should be grounded on a selection of its semantic components and their in-depth analysis (Spencer-Oatey, 2008: 21-31).

'Brown and Levinson (1987) suggest that there are five pragmatic super-strategies for doing politeness as a matter of the selection of which is determined by the degree of face threat. They are ordered from least to most face threat, and include examples of linguistic output strategies:

Bald on record: The speaker performs the FTA (Face Threatening Acts) efficiently in a direct, concise and perspicuous manner, or, in other words, in accordance with Grice's maxims (1975). Typically used in emergency situations, or when the face threat is very small, or when the speaker has great power over the hearer.

Positive politeness: The speaker performs the FTA in such a way that attention is paid to the hearer's positive face wants. Includes such strategies as *paying attention to the hearer* (*Hello*), *expressing interest, approval or sympathy* (*That was so awful, my heart bled for you*), *using in-group identity markers* (*Liz, darling ...*), *seeking agreement (Nice weather today*), *avoiding disagreement* (*Yes, it's kind of nice*), *assuming common ground* (*I know how you feel*) and so on.

Negative politeness: The speaker performs the FTA in such a way that attention is paid to the hearer's negative face wants. Includes such strategies as: mollifying the force of an utterance with questions and hedges (*Actually, I wondered if you could help?*), being pessimistic (*I don't suppose there would be any chance of a cup of tea?*), giving deference, that is, treating the addressee as a superior and thereby emphasising rights to immunity (*I've been a real fool, could you help me out?*), apologising (*I'm sorry, I don't want to trouble you but ...*), impersonalising the speaker and the hearer (*It would be appreciated, if this were done*) and so on.

Off-record: The speaker performs the FTA in such a way that he can avoid responsibility for performing it. The speaker's face-threatening intention can only be worked out by means of an inference triggered by the flouting of a maxim.

Don't do the FTA: The speaker simply refrains from performing the FTA because it is so serious (Culpeper, J. and Haugh, M, 2014: 210-211).'

2. RATIONALE

Considering the complexity of healthcare, a more detailed presentation of communication between healthcare professionals and patients is needed, bearing in mind that healthcare systems are generally predicted on 'a single disease model' with a lack of collaborative work between specialities, which requires interpersonal collaborative work between healthcare practitioners and improving their communication with patients (Snaith et al., 2021: 1077-1092).

One method of understanding the core issues about patients is to use realistic rather than real consultations through the use of healthcare simulation, a common training process applied in medical training and underpinned by a number of educational theories (Ker and Bradley, 2010). The point of these simulations is to detect a wide variety of multimodal semiotic resources from verbal to non-verbal (the use of colours, images, signs, or symbols) with the aim of reviewing key communication problems with patients (The Open University, 2022, Unit 22.1, 2022).

The practical aspects of its application in a given context certainly enter the domain of applied linguistics and teaching language for specific purposes (LSP), which means not only learning technical terms but typical language registers implying the key semiotic resources used so that assertiveness and empathy, as the most significant drivers of communication, come to the fore (Cook, 2003).

The proposal for a research project investigating the effectiveness of training videos on medical professional communication with medical students whose first language is not English aims to draw attention to language registers and behaviours that may help healthcare practitioners (Culpeper and Haugh, 2014):

- To better know how to show through communication that their patient is accepted and empathised with in every situation when moral support is needed;
- To be aware that video materials based on applying different semiotic resources in communication have a special purpose in teaching medical students to give rise to empathised communication and to communicate assertively; and
- To understand that using multimodal semiotic resources is extremely important for non-native English speakers since they contain the lexical elements of interest for a non-native speaker.

3. DISCOURSE CONTENT

The medical relational discourse is a typical dialogue between a doctor and a patient. It is thematically divided into several thematic sections, which means that it should be analysed taking into account its thematic variety as well as its specific context and organisational structure. The discourse is carried out in mainly informal and plain language. Prevailing verbal communication and paralanguage are used to emphasise the mutual responsiveness and the doctor's politeness. The doctor mainly asks open-ended questions by using modal verbs that show his readiness to respond to the patient's needs. In view of gathering more information, he gradually paraphrases the request several times (Section 3) by addressing in a mainly informal style to get specific answers, and to make the patient more confident and the situation more familiar. In these terms, he even uses colloquial expression *'get up and go'* suggesting a more positive and energetic lifestyle to the patient.

As for the use of technical vocabulary, it contains only a few technical terms of general use, which actually represents the doctor's balanced approach in the co-use of professional terms and colloquial expressions, and which is often not the case in communication between doctors and patients, although it should be. Thus, the video is a good example of how to build communication according to the goals of assertive communication that builds a foundation on empathy.

The relational medical discourse between a doctor and a patient should be analysed by classifying it into a few thematic sections:

1. Initiating the session (lines: 1 to 8)

The doctor (D) outlines: his agenda consisting of a few informal general questions relating to the patient's feelings, symptoms and expectations, and endeavours to obtain the patient's consent for the interview. Accordingly, the doctor checks the patient's name using a formal confirmation question, briefly introduces himself and addresses an open-ended question relating to the consultation (lines: 1, 3, 5, 7). His strategic approach is aimed towards obtaining more information, but primarily to alleviate the patient's fear and hesitation. Due to his empathetic role, the doctor uses the bold-on-record strategy (lines: 1, 3) and positive politeness (lines: 5, 7). He also uses modal verbs '*can'* and *'would*', and more informal way of communication (informal exclamations such as '*okay'*). The patient in turn kindly apologises in long and often elliptic declarative sentences for wasting his time, and expresses the main reasons for her coming that are related to her insomnia (lines: 2, 4, 6, 8). She (P) constantly displays anxiety and distress.

2. Gathering information about the symptoms (lines: 9 to 29)

The doctor paraphrases his intention by posing another open-ended question to reveal the main reasons of the patient's visit (line: 9). The patient briefly outlines: the reasons for her insomnia by expressing deep disappointment about her husband who left the family, and consequently refers to her state of being unable to cope with the situation. She uses pauses and elliptic sentences that show her distress and hesitation (lines: 10 and 12). The doctor in turn expresses sympathy, and uses structuring again to pose new open-ended, probing questions (lines: 11, 13). He (D) pauses with exclamations (lines: 13, 15) trying to gain an insight into the patient's problems with sleeping, appetite, while the patient gives a brief narrative background of her bad habits. Her (P) thoughts are often

disjointed, so she often uses exclamations and short, declarative elliptical sentences that become understandable mainly from a wider context (lines: 12, 14, 20, 22).

In addition, the doctor addresses a few more questions about her life in general. He (D) does not stop communicating in an informal style, keeps using exclamations and even the colloquialism *'get-up-and-go'* to maintain and develop an empathetic relationship with the patient (lines: 13, 15, 17, 19, 21). The doctor poses open-ended questions relating to the patient's bad feelings by using reflection, which lead the patient to refer back to her main problem with sleeping (line: 23). She tries to relate to the problem by referring to a wide range of situations and reasons that pose a threat (lines: 24, 25). The doctor (D) in this vivid interaction constantly uses the bold-on-record strategy.

3. Social background (lines: 30 to 53):

The doctor asks many informal open-ended (lines: 30, 32, 34, 37) and yes-no questions (lines: 45, 47) about the patient's home life and work in order to reveal the circumstances within which the sleeping problems occur. He (D) also uses an empathetic declarative sentence (line: 37) and a few open-ended questions about the patient's home life to get closer to the patient's mind and feelings (lines: 37, 39, 41, 43, 45, 47, 50), while in line 52 the doctor even uses paralanguage. Their conversation is an example of 'chit-chat' that reflects the bold-on-record rapport by the doctor and a very intimate and sincere response of the patient.

4. Exploring the patient's personal expectations from the treatment and the causes of the patient's distress (lines: 54 to 59)

The doctor uses open-ended questions with negative politeness to initiate the discussion about the patient's expectations (line: 54). In order to be insightful, he (D) uses bold-on-record open-ended questions and statements. The doctor explores the patient's expectations by using multiple questions (line: 56) to help the patient make the best choice. The patient in turn responds in long, declarative statements that show willingness to overcome the crisis.

5. Negotiating treatment, explanation, and planning (lines: 60 to 74)

The doctor uses comparative questions to suggest all the options of treatment in order to avoid addiction to sleeping tablets, and negotiates with the patient about the best opportunities to get her back to normal life (lines: 60, 62, 64, 66, 68). He uses the modal verbs *'would'*, *'can'* and *'might'* to soften the suggestions.

The patient (P) agrees to see a counsellor, but points out that sleeping tablets are an inevitable option in the situations when urgent help is needed (line: 69). They come to an agreement on using sleeping tablets, but they also highlight the other available treatments if needed (lines: 70, 72). Consequently, the doctor asks the patient to fill in a questionnaire in order to understand better the feelings that impact her insomnia (lines: 72). The doctor, in this section, communicates less informally by using modal verbs and indications conveyed via positive politeness. He uses the technical term 'HADS questionnaire', but gives a very clear explanation (lines: 72, 74).

6. Summary and closure (lines: 75 to 95)

The doctor summarises the main information about the patient by highlighting the importance of working on her self-esteem and mental health (lines: 75 to 80). He informs the patient as to what will happen next regarding her therapy and reassures her that they will manage her problems together (line: 81). Although the doctor communicates less

informally in long affirmative sentences, he uses bold-on-record strategies and signposting language to highlight his empathetic approach.

4. A MULTIMODAL MEDICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS: AN EMIC AND ETIC PERSPECTIVE

The research will be considered from the angle of the LSP teacher and will imply the Systemic Functional Linguistics Analysis (SFL), taking into account the three variables as semiotic functions (Halliday and Hasan, 1991):

- The field or the ideational aspects in terms of defining the specific rapport between the medical practitioner and the patient;
- The tenor or the interpersonal aspects relating to the specific language and paralanguage that create this rapport;
- The mode or the intertextual aspects that make the text functional or the means through which the communication takes place.

These aspects become more complex when analysing communication in terms of the multimodality approach that makes communication realistic in educational videos. The excerpt used as a model is from video material that describes the key situations common in a medical check-up between a doctor and a patient. The investigation based on SFL will include both etic and emic perspectives.

4.1. The investigation: an etic perspective

From an etic perspective, the approach will imply:

a) asking the students (using a questionnaire) if they understand the lexis, the speed of delivery, the use of visual segments, and the paralanguage used in the videos; b) an analysis of the videos through discussion about verbal and non-verbal semiotic resources used to foster assertiveness through the rapport of self-esteem and politeness expressed by the health practitioner **(**The Open University, 2022, Unit 13.7, 2022**).**

Before applying this multimodal approach, the ESP students will be introduced to the most typical models of communication in healthcare. The contents are carefully systematised to foster doctors' assertiveness and empathy in communication with patients in the handbook Weatherall et al. (Eds.) (1996) *'English in Medicine',* 3rd edition, Oxford University Press. In these terms, two principal aims should be followed: 1. the patients' wellbeing; and 2. less painful psychophysical enduring of physical or mental pain (Canagarajah, 2022).

Based on their previous insight into the language patterns, students at the beginning of the course will distinguish five groups of speech-act frameworks (The Open University, 2022, Unit 11.1, 2022), and two types of questions. The lexical patterns created to highlight the specific language patterns are commonly used in medical check-ups between doctors and patients. This introductory semiotic resource implies some verbal and mental processes intended to be taken into consideration by students in their further conversation analysis. Two types of questions are also intended to be considered: 1) introductory *open-ended questions*, which aim to prepare the patients (by the doctor) for a delicate conversation about their health condition, and to attenuate their health problem; 2) *yes/no questions*, which aim to elicit positive or negative reply from the patients or to minimise the health problem. Thereby, the students are slowly introduced to the theory of politeness, which is at the forefront in medical care as refers to 'rapport management' (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). According to Helen Spencer-Oatey (2008), who proposes a model for the management of interpersonal relations, which she

calls 'rapport management' (Spencer-Oatey, 2008), it attempts to accommodate cultural and other variations bearing in mind the following norms: contextual assessment norms, sociopragmatic principles, pragmalinguistic conventions, fundamental cultural values, rapport management strategies. It is undeniable that these norms can be set as good 'pylons' within communication in healthcare, specifically for those who communicate and whose mother tongue is different.

Table 1 The language Foci characterising specific language patterns (Weatherall et al., 1996)

The Type of Language Foci	**Characteristic Assertive Patterns and Rephrasing Techniques**
Language Focus 1: Introductory Questions: 1. What **can I do for you?** 2. What **seems** to be the problem? 3. How long have they been **bothering** you?	Introductory assertive approach that includes modal verbs and assertive phrases used to attenuate the health problem and unobserved firm characteristics. The delicacy of the approach is also achieved by including mental (the verb: '*seem')* and verbal processes (the verb *'do'*) that create nuances in context (the verb *'bother')*.
Language Focus 2: Notice how the doctor asks where the problem is / what the type of pain is: 1. Is your head **affected?** Which part of your head is **affected?** 2. Where does it **hurt**? / Does it **hurt**? Is it **sore**?	The selective use of verbal and mental processes that attenuate an unobserved health problem: *affect (mental), hurt (verbal), sore (mental).*
Language Focus 3: Notice how the doctor introduces a painful procedure to the patient, clarifies the health problem and tries to alleviate the patient's fear. ▪ I would like to find out ***what's giving you these headaches.*** ▪ **I'm *going to*** take a sample. ▪ *It* ***shouldn't be painful***, ***but*** **you will be aware of a feeling.** ▪ Now I'm going to give you a local anaesthetic so ***it won't be sore*****.**	A rephrasing technique used to encourage the patient (using the modal verb '*should'*), and to endure a painful procedure (using the conjunctions '*but', 'so'*; and the phrases: *'It shouldn't be painful', 'it won't be sore', 'it will take only a few seconds', 'what's giving you these headaches'*).
Language Focus 4: Notice how the doctor often combines reassurance with warning in order to make the patient feel more comfortable. This may feel a little bit ***uncomfortable, but it won't take long***.	A rephrasing technique used to encourage the patient and give him time to endure a painful procedure (using adjectives as modifiers and suitable phrases anticipated with conjunctions to attenuate the feeling of pain: *'a little bit* uncomfortable'; '*but* it won't take long').
Language Focus 5: Notice how the doctor asks if anything relieves the pain: Is there **anything** that **makes the pain better**?	A rephrasing technique used to inspect the patient, and to lead the patient to a more comfortable feeling (using nouns and phrases that create nuances in empathetic context).

4.2. The investigation: an emic perspective

An emic perspective will be taken into account, relying on the SFL ideational, interpersonal, and inter-textual meta-functions of language (Halliday and Hasan, 1991). A conversation analysis of a typical medical check-up will be made by the first-year medical students together with their LSP teacher. The students will observe a consultation between the doctor and the patient during which they will have to take an in-depth insight into the doctor's semiotic resources.

After observing the interplay between the doctor and the patient, the students will fill in a questionnaire referring to the following aspects:

1) Their ability to understand the lexis (e.g. for non-native students it might be more difficult to understand the patient's lexis that can be characterised as verbiage, vague language or colloquial language);

2) The speed of speech delivery;

3) The use of lexical and non-lexical patterns in a given context in view of applying assertiveness and empathy in communication with patients. Some of the most relevant questions in these terms are (Frank, 2013):

1. Do you understand all the lexical patterns used by the doctor and the patient?
   a) Yes; b) partially; understood c) no;

If your answer is *no* or *partially understood*, specify the sequences that you did not understand: _____.

2. What gestures did you notice that inferred empathy?
3. How do people greet each other? Do they hug? Do they shake hands?
4. How would you describe their relationship?
5. What polite things did you notice?
6. What is the polite thing to do in certain situations in your culture?

If you notice differences, please specify them: _____.

7. Do you understand the term 'empathic listening'?

If the answer is *yes*, please define it very briefly in your own terms: _____.

4.3. A medical discourse analysis: an emic perspective

Students should analyse a medical check-up in joint sessions together with their ESP teacher and, presumably, a clinical physicist who might be a part of a medical healthcare team. The aim of this angle of research will be to re-evaluate the medical relational discourse from an emic perspective, aiming to identify the new, complementary semiotic resources (with the results from an etic perspective) and their practical impact in a particular context.

According to the thematic sections enclosed in the video, the ESP teacher will highlight the most important semiotic resources used by the doctor to demonstrate the attitude of assertiveness and empathy expected in communication with patients.

In terms of defining the cross-cultural differences, the ideatic perspective of the medical relational discourse should take into account possible varieties in verbal and non-verbal communication between British people and non-native speakers in a medical context, bearing in mind their specifics (The Open University, 2022, Unit 15.7, 2022).

E.g., the approach to a patient suffering from a psychosomatic illness indisputably implies a certain cultural awareness that needs more pragmatically structured communication that will take into account the patients' cultural background. (Butler et al., 2004)

In order to find the most adequate approach, the students, together with the teacher and the clinical psychologist, should conduct many informative interviews with patients and doctors from their country on the strategies they would apply in accidental situations in their verbal and non-verbal communication. In parallel, it would be good to record conversations that are more authentic in order to compare the characteristics in verbal and non-verbal communicative approaches, referred to as semiotic resources. Accordingly, a field investigation, i.e. a field diary should be made in order to collect a variety of information from the researchers' perspective. This means the use of recorded sequences of mainly informal conversations that will provide a real insight into lexical patterns of the participants that might belong to different cultures and physical settings, which consequently imply a wide variety of linguistic or paralinguistic responses. It should further include 'evaluating the researcher's impressions after visits, including reflections on the research process, self-evaluation of how the interview had been conducted bearing in mind the rapport between the doctor and the patient' (The Open University, 2022, Unit 13.3, 2022).

For a field investigation, it is essential for students to understand that such observation should be *systematic* and based on the guidelines: set before starting the observation in the field. Useful questions that investigators (students with ESP teachers) should ask will include aspects that should be carefully structured together with their ESP teacher and a clinical physicist (The Open University, 2022, Unit 12.2, Scenario 3, 2022):

General questions:

- *Who or what is involved, and in what language(s)?*
  This implies the cross-cultural perspective relating to the language of communication.
- *How do the interlocutors make their case?*
  This implies the use of formal or informal ways of communication, including paralanguage.
- *What do interlocutors assume or know about procedures vs. treatments in general terms, and how does the presentation of their case and possible treatments link with this?*
  This implies the use of appropriate verbal, mental, and cognitive processes in communication.
- *What does the administrator or official assume or know about the applicant?*
  This implies that different cultures and nations may 'affect' politeness and mutual understanding, and these aspects should be seen in the context of their culture and the given problem.
- *What do the applicant and the administrator assume/know about the language of communication in general?*
  This implies that 'the adjacent correlation between language and culture affects appropriate messages' delivery to the target speaker.' (Frank, 2013: 7).

Questions that imply the complementary aspects of communication used in a specific context:

- *What are the specific features of relational discourses that reveal the quality of rapport, especially in patients with vulnerable diseases (such as verbal and non-verbal feedbacks of doctors to patients' complaints)?*
- *The adjacency pairs should be identified as a part of the turn-taking system, aiming to highlight the rapport between two interlocutors of different or the same nationality* (Corbett, 2011).

According to the guidelines, the students should pay attention to the following aspects:

1. Thematic segments should be analysed separately in order to get an insight into different aspects of approaching the patient's disorder.
2. Rapport management should be considered through analysing the adjacency pairs (Ibrahim, 2017). The doctor's and the patient's sequences should be analysed separately and as a whole in each thematic unit to gain a realistic picture of verbal and non-verbal semiotic resources used in the dialogue. Specifically, it should be pointed out the genre in which empathetic rapport and assertiveness are developed.
   - E.g. In the section *Initialising the Session* (lines: 03, 05, 07, 09, 011, 013, 015, 017, 019, 021, 023, 025, 027), and in all other sections, the doctor (D) mainly communicates in an informal way to get closer to the patient. In view of this concept, the doctor (D) paraphrases the same request by using the bold-on-record strategy through declarative and imperative sentences and questions. Instead of using more modal verbs that are common to kind addressing, he often uses signposting language in order to improve communication with the patient (in the first section, in lines: 5 and 7: the conjunctions *'and'*, as well as the prolonged exclamations *'um'* and *'okay*'; and in line 9: the conjunction *'so'*). The doctor also uses the exclamation *'um'* and paralanguage (such as eye contact or giving handkerchiefs) to non-verbally infer understanding (lines: 4, 6, 10, 11). Specifically, the doctor uses a colloquialism (line: 17) to cultivate empathy. These aspects are good examples in terms of identifying the equivalent semiotic resources in students' native languages, and should be highlighted and discussed (Tannen, 1984).
3. Tannen (1984) highlights the following communicative 'levels':
   - 'When to talk (e.g., what counts as silence?);
   - What to say (e.g., how should one respond to a compliment?);
   - Pacing and pausing (e.g., what kind of pause constitutes a transition-relevance point?);
   - Listenership (e.g., should one maintain eye contact to demonstrate attention?);
   - Intonation (e.g., what kind of intonation signals a question versus a statement?);
   - Formulaic phrases (e.g., what are set conventional phrases?);
   - Indirectness (e.g., how does one communicate a negative response such as a refusal?);
4. Cohesion and coherence (e.g., how does one make clear what the main point of an argument is?)' (Tannen, 1984, cited in The Open University, 2022, Unit 15.5, 2022).

5. CONCLUSION

As Blum-Kulka (Blum-Kulka,1989a: 24) claimed, we need to test 'the possibility that notions of politeness are culturally relativised, namely, that similar choices of directness levels, for example, carry culturally differentiated meanings for members of different cultures'. This matter should be a common issue of the students' analyses, which is even more reason for multimodality in learning to be a priority.

There are also other key situations where proper approach to the patient comes to the fore, such as the strategy of communicating information about a serious or incurable disease or communication between different healthcare professionals (Snaith, 2021). Given

that these topics are very complex, this proposal will not specifically address it, and the omission of this segment should not be considered a failure. Although, one should also be aware that the 'play on words' used in other contexts can be a good model for thinking in the mentioned sense as well.

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Review research paper

BOOSTING L2 CONFIDENCE AND COMMUNICATION THROUGH THE VIRTUAL CAFÉ PROJECT

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Abstract. *Language instructors in higher education face the challenge of preparing students for the complex communication needs of the global job market. This article examines the impact of the Virtual Café, an online collaborative project, on students' confidence and willingness to communicate in L2 English in an international and multicultural setting. The participants were students from three higher education institutions in Israel, Poland, and India. All students were enrolled in the EFL course as part of their academic curriculum. The study used a pre-test and post-test research design to capture responses before and after participation in the virtual exchange project. The findings indicate that Virtual Café activities positively influence students' confidence in speaking English and increase their willingness to engage in L2 communication. The study emphasizes the importance of creating supportive environments for language practice and highlights the effectiveness of virtual exchanges in fostering language skills and intercultural communication. However, despite improvements in several areas, concerns about being understood and the need for more encounters that promote speaking emerge as areas for further exploration. The results underscore the potential of virtual interactive activities in enhancing language learning and intercultural communication.*

Key words: *virtual exchange, confidence, L2 willingness to communicate, online learning, multicultural setting*

1. INTRODUCTION

English language instructors in higher education institutions face a persistent challenge in equipping their students with the necessary language skills tailored to the increasingly intricate communication demands of the global job market. With the rapid advancement of digital and communication technologies, educators and learners now have access to resources and environments that extend beyond the limitations of local capabilities. These contemporary approaches promote the acquisition of communicative

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competence in internationalised settings and foster an environment conducive to effective language learning. Research indicates that online language exchanges, also known as telecollaborations or virtual exchanges, promote learners' confidence in speaking a target language (Zhou, 2023) as well as increase their willingness to communicate (WTC) in L2 (MacIntyre & Charos, 1996; Zhou, 2023). In addition, telecollaborations and virtual exchanges provide learners with authentic linguistic input and situations, increasing their motivation to engage in second-language conversations (O'Dowd, 2018; 2021).

The present article reports on the research aiming to understand how learners' L2 WTC and confidence in using the English language for international communication developed during a series of online collaborative activities called the Virtual Café. The project's main objective was to help students boost their L2 confidence and willingness to communicate with people from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds in L2 English. This is based on the understanding that confidence in L2 communication positively influences learners' willingness to engage in communicative tasks (MacIntyre & Charos, 1996), while supportive and immersive learning environments also enhance learners' willingness to communicate in a second language (Darasawang & Reinders, 2021). To bring to light the effectiveness of the Virtual Cafe activities for developing confidence and WTC in English in an internationalized context, the following research questions are addressed:

How do activities, such as Virtual Cafe, contribute to developing higher education students' L2 English confidence while communicating with people from various cultural backgrounds?

How do activities, such as Virtual Cafe, contribute to higher education students' willingness to communicate in English as L2 with people from various cultural backgrounds?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Virtual Exchange in Intercultural Language Learning

Virtual exchange, also known as telecollaboration, online exchange, globally networked learning environments, e-tandem, or teletandem, has been used in education since the 1990s (Warschauer & Healey, 1998) with the primary purpose of engaging groups of learners in the distance task-based interaction with partners from other cultural contexts or geographical areas, mostly synchronously (Leone & Telles, 2016; Lewis & O'Dowd, 2016; O'Dowd, 2018).

In language learning and intercultural communication, the opportunity to supplement learning inside the classroom with learning outside of classrooms has spurred the development of collaborative, technology-mediated learning environments, bringing students into international classrooms (Dooly, 2023) where they are exposed to situations of peer-to-peer collaboration that simulate authentic work environments in a globalised society (Stefanova & Gomez Jimenez, 2018). Virtual exchanges have been found to positively impact general foreign language competence (Helm, 2013), the development of oral skills, and students' willingness to communicate while increasing learners' L2 motivation (Zhou, 2023). In a study on Spanish university students learning EFL through a virtual exchange program, O'Dowd (2021) reported that "[t]he experience of online intercultural communication was also seen to help learners gain confidence as communicators in their second language and to reconceptualize English as a tool for communication rather than as an abstract academic activity" (p.11).

The intercultural context of virtual exchanges improves students' verbal and non-verbal communication skills, can surface and challenge their culturally embedded beliefs and practices, and allows them to "develop a sense of cultural competence that enhances their academic and social lives toward their future" (Petropoulou, 2020, p.59). Virtual exchanges are pivotal in developing broader humanistic values, such as intercultural dialogue and understanding (Helm, 2013). The online learning environments where they occur also impact cognitive, behavioural, and affective aspects of intercultural communication skills and effectively improve learners' engagement and interactional confidence (Lee & Song, 2019).

2.2. Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in L2

The concept of Willingness to Communicate (WTC) was first introduced in the context of L1 communication. Factors such as introversion, self-esteem, communication competence, communication apprehension, and cultural diversity have been identified as affecting an individual's predisposition to communicate (Darasawang & Reinders, 2021; McCroskey and Baer, 1985; Pawlak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2015). MacIntyre (1994) further contends that communication anxiety and perceived confidence constitute the central pillars of one's willingness to communicate; more substantial perceived confidence positively correlates with higher WTC, and as communication anxiety diminishes, the readiness to communicate generally increases.

Within the L2 context, WTC refers to an individual's inclination and eagerness to communicate with others while using L2 (MacIntyre et al., 1998). Irrespective of one's perceived proficiency level, WTC encompasses the urge to initiate conversations and the openness to sustain interactions in the target language (MacIntyre et al., 1998). Based on the conceptual pyramid-shaped model developed by MacIntyre et al. (1998), a scope of possible linguistic and psychological variables impacting L2 WTC 2 could be recognized (Khajavy et al., 2018). It is believed that various interconnected intrapersonal and interpersonal factors, such as the degree of familiarity between interlocutors, the number of participants, the formality of the context, a speaker's self-confidence, and a conversation topic, can influence one's willingness to engage in conversation or withdraw from it (MacIntyre et al., 1998; Pawlak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2015; Piechurska-Kuciel, 2018). Pawlak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak (2015) further argue that learners' WTC might change even throughout the same conversational event while diminishing due to "inability to find the necessary vocabulary on a moment-by-moment basis [which has] led to a loss of focus and growth of anxiety" (p. 8).

Anxiety also plays a significant role in learners' WTC in L2 and readiness to engage in L2 conversation (Dewaele, 2019; Khajavy et al., 2018). Learners with previous negative experiences in L2 communication or those who find the learning environment intimidating might refrain from future L2 communication (Dewaele, 2019; Khajavy et al., 2018).

Additional studies exploring factors affecting L2 WTC have established that foreign language enjoyment (FLE) might positively affect L2 WTC since learners who find L2 conversations enjoyable will be more willing to engage in future L2 interactions. (Dewaele, 2019; Khajavy et al., 2018; Wu et al., 2011).

Research in L2 education has shown that L2 WTC holds notable significance in language learning environments, directly shaping learners' engagement, active participation, and overall language mastery (Darasawang & Reinders, 2021). L2 WTC is essential for language acquisition and proficiency development (Yashima, 2002), and to become fluent in L2,

learners should be willing to communicate in that language (MacIntyre & Doucette, 2010). Therefore, comprehending and nurturing WTC among L2 learners becomes essential in establishing adequate language learning settings that cultivate linguistic confidence and mastery (Cao & Philp, 2006).

Research also substantiates that student with high WTC levels, influenced by self-confidence and motivation (MacIntyre & Charos, 1996), have a greater chance to enhance their L2 proficiency (Pawlak et al., 2016; Wu et al., 2011). Moreover, learners' increased perceived communicative competence and reduced communication apprehension form the foundation for WTC in L2 (Cao & Philp, 2006; MacIntyre, 1994). Additionally, one's international posture and attitude toward the global community influence one's motivation to acquire L2, further fostering L2 proficiency and self-confidence in L2 communication and resulting in L2 WTC (Yashima, 2002). Notably, findings of a study conducted in a General English programme at a university-based language school in New Zealand reveal that while situational elements, such as time, place, and topic of conversation affect L2 WTC (Cao & Philp, 2006; Cao, 2014), they may not necessarily predict it (MacIntyre et al., 1998). Another study within the New Zealand English for Academic Purposes programme highlights the intricate interplay of individual, situational, social, and linguistic factors as the basis of WTC within foreign language classrooms (Cao, 2014). Also, studies from Thailand produce numerous accounts that highlight the cultural aspect as one of the factors affecting learners' WTC. For instance, Thai students were reticent and thus tended to exhibit more reserved and passive behaviour than learners from other backgrounds (Darasawang & Reinders, 2021).

However, the L2 WTC in a virtual environment can differ from face-to-face contexts in terms of learners' confidence, learning environment, and level of familiarity between interlocutors, factors that have been identified as the most influential ones in virtual settings (Chaisiri, 2023; Freiermuth & Jarrell, 2006). Research suggests that individuals may perceive online environments as more comfortable and less intimidating than face-to-face encounters, enhancing their willingness to communicate (Chaisiri, 2023; Freiermuth & Jarrell, 2006).

2.3. Self-confidence in Language Learning

The role of learners' self-confidence in second language acquisition has been a prominent subject of investigation within the field of language education (Edwards & Roger, 2015; Ghafar, 2023; Wu et al., 2011). Self-confidence, defined as low anxious affect and high self-perceptions of L2 competence (Clement et al., 1994), is a significant predictor of academic achievement and is affected by one's personality and cognitive abilities (Burns et al., 2018). It is often considered a crucial factor that impacts various aspects of the language learning processes, including motivation, persistence, and willingness to engage in communicative activities (Ghafar, 2023; Wu et al., 2011). Research indicates that learners with higher levels of self-confidence tend to exhibit increased participation in classroom discussions, a greater willingness to take linguistic risks, and a more favourable attitude toward language learning challenges (Wu et al., 2011; Garcia-Sanchez & Gimeno-Sanz, 2022).

Moreover, findings highlight the complexity of confidence as a construct and its relationship with age, personality traits, and cognitive abilities (Burns et al., 2018). Clement et al. (1994) assert that pleasant and frequent communication with L2 speakers might contribute to fostering L2 learners' confidence, while classroom activities, teacher-student interactions, and the establishment of rapport with peers might be seen as potential factors influencing

language anxiety and, consequently, negatively affecting one's self-confidence in the L2 classroom. In a Turkish EFL context, it was found that self-confident students do not usually feel anxious about using English, and positive beliefs about language learning may reduce anxiety and boost one's confidence (Aslan & Thompson, 2021).

Numerous studies suggest a strong correlation between learners' levels of self-confidence and language learning outcomes (Edwards & Roger, 2015; Wu et al., 2011). For instance, individuals with high self-confidence in their English language skills are more likely to learn a second language and speak it well (Ghafar, 2023). The same author argues that self-confident learners typically possess superior vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation skills, which are essential for efficient English communication (Ghafar, 2023).

As educators strive to optimize language learning environments, understanding the nuanced relationship between self-confidence and language proficiency becomes essential for developing effective instructional strategies. While attitudinal factors are key to L2 motivation, direct contact with the L2 community highlights the prominence of a self-confidence process in shaping attitudes and effort in L2 learning (Clement et al., 1994). In multicultural settings, positive attitudes, in addition to extracurricular activities, drive individuals to engage in L2 communication, fostering self-confidence marked by low anxiety and high perceptions of L2 competence (Clement et al., 1994). Wu et al. (2011) also noticed the beneficial effect of video conferencing sessions on learners' confidence among Taiwanese EFL students enrolled in a technical university business school. The authors argue that the positive experience gained during even the shortest interactions in English made students more confident and comfortable in applying their language skills (Wu et al., 2011).

While the existing literature highlights the positive impact of virtual exchanges and telecollaborations on learners' L2 confidence and L2 WTC, the extent to which online collaborative activities can be effective in the case of a limited number of encounters between participants remains unknown. The present study aims to contribute to further understanding of factors affecting learners' L2 confidence and L2 WTC in multicultural online contexts, fully acknowledging these limitations.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Participants and Research Context

The study participants enrolled in the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programme arrived from three higher education institutions in Israel, Poland, and India. These students had various educational backgrounds (i.e., life sciences, social sciences, or engineering), were at different stages in their education (i.e., undergraduates and postgraduates), and had mixed abilities (i.e., B1 or a B2 CEFR level of proficiency) when it came to the English language proficiency. The project was conducted for three consecutive academic years. However, only the project's last academic year (2022-2023) was considered for the present study.

The Virtual Café project shares many features with a long tradition of telecollaboration and virtual exchanges for language learning and intercultural communication. However, it also differs in certain aspects. As opposed to the traditional intercultural exchanges, which are "usually short and intensive affairs (usually 6-8 weeks) where students engage in a series of carefully designed pedagogical tasks related to their subject area with a limited number of international partners and with the support of their teachers or facilitators" (O'Dowd, 2021, p.212), each student took part in 3 to 5 sessions overall. Also, as the project was designed to

simulate real-life, theme-based communication scenarios while offering a unique platform for learners to practise their English skills and overcome communication barriers, teachers were not part of the discussion groups. In addition, all students participating in the project were non-native English speakers from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

The project's main objective was to help students boost their self-confidence and willingness to communicate in L2 English with people from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The English language curricula in the three participant institutions differ in content and teaching approach. The common ground teachers identified while sharing their experience was the need for more opportunities for their students to practise using English in multicultural environments on topics of general interest for their generation, which faces globalisation trends in almost all employment areas. The Virtual Café project stemmed from the understanding that virtual collaboration actions could facilitate the creation of the much-needed multicultural environment for language practice and intercultural communication (Helm et al., 2023; O'Dowd, 2021; Roarty & Hagley, 2021).

The activities designed for the Virtual Café took place in weekly sessions over ten weeks, during the curricular hours for Indian and Polish students and after the curricular hours for the Israeli ones. Each session lasted 45 minutes, during which participants were split into breakout rooms, with 3-4 students per room. Teachers did not participate in students' conversations to ensure a more relaxed environment; they only facilitated the meetings. The international teaching staff prepared a list of topics for discussion in advance. The list comprised such themes as holidays, careers and studying, sightseeing and tourism, books, and films. The week's topic did not strictly bind the loosely structured, student-driven conversations and often included self-introductions and exchange of personal experience with topics or ideas presented. The students could choose to speak or get involved in the discussions as much or as little as they wished, with no pressure other than the dynamics of the conversation. This activity design was conducive to developing WTC and confidence to use English to communicate in a multicultural context.

The following hypotheses were formed to investigate learners' confidence and WTC in L2 English:

(H_{o1}): There is no significant difference in the mean confidence scores before and after participating in the Virtual Café project.

(Ho_2): There is no significant difference in the mean WTC scores before and after participating in the Virtual Café project.

3.2. Research Design

The present study utilised a pre-test and post-test research design to investigate the impact of the Virtual Café project on learners' confidence and L2 WTC. Data was collected from English language students utilising a Google survey form, capturing their responses before and after participating in the Virtual Café project. The survey questions were designed using a 5-point Likert scale, allowing participants to rate their confidence levels and willingness to communicate in English. This research design enables the examination of changes in participants' perceptions. It provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of the Virtual Café project in enhancing learners' confidence and L2 WTC.

3.3. Sample Design

The study employs a sampling design that combines stratified and purposive sampling for enhanced representativeness and diverse perspectives. Stratified sampling is used based on respondents' countries, namely Poland, India, and Israel, to ensure proportional representation, while purposive sampling considers criteria like age and gender. Random sampling within each stratum is used for participant selection. A preliminary analysis was conducted to determine an appropriate sample size that ensures sufficient statistical power to detect significant relationships. The pre-activity sample size was 225, of which 11 responses were discarded as they declined to participate in the survey or their responses were illegible, so the final pre-activity sample size was 214. The post-activity sample size was taken as 150, out of which nine responses were discarded as they declined to participate in the survey or their responses were illegible; thus, the final post-activity sample size was 141 (Table 1).

Table 1 Sample Description

Pre/Post Virtual Café Activity		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Pre -Virtual Café Valid Activity	Israel	126	58.9	58.9
	India	28	13.1	72.0
	Poland	53	24.8	96.7
	Others	7	3.3	100.0
	Total	214	100.0	
Post -Virtual Café Valid Activity	Israel	91	64.5	64.5
	India	30	21.3	85.8
	Poland	20	14.2	100.0
	Total	141	100.0	

3.4. Research instruments

The survey instrument (Appendix 1) divided questions into two sections, while the first part caters to confidence (C), and the second one addresses WTC in English as L2 (W). Of these survey questions, two questions (i.e., C3-W3 and C4-W4) cater to confidence and willingness. Each statement was measured on a 5-point Likert scale with response choice ranging from *Strongly Disagree* (1) to *Strongly Agree* (5) for positive statements (C2, C3, C4, C5, C6, C10, C11, and C12). Similarly, response scores were *Strongly Agree* (1) to *Strongly Disagree* (5) for negatively worded statements (C7, C8 and C9). This was done to calculate the *confidence* score as a total sum of C1 to C12, including C3-W3 and C4-W4. For the construct *WTC*, all were positive statements, and their sum was the total score, which included W1, W2, C3-W3, and C4-W4.

3.5. Data collection and procedures

The link to the questionnaires was placed on the course Moodle for Israeli students and emailed to the selected participants from Poland and India during college hours. Participants were given detailed explanations regarding the purpose of the survey. They were also given clear instructions on completing the questionnaire and sufficient time to respond. Confidentiality and anonymity of responses were ensured. It was also made

clear that participation in the research is voluntary, and students do not have to complete the survey if they do not want to.

3.6 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions, were calculated for learners' confidence and L2 WTC using a 5-point Likert scale. Two sample 't' tests were conducted to test hypotheses, given the interval scale nature of the variables. The study ensured internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.82, indicating high reliability. Microsoft Excel facilitated data entry and basic statistics. At the same time, PASW/SPSS handled advanced analyses on the impact of the Virtual Café project, adept at managing large datasets and generating comprehensive output tables for interpretation.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Descriptive Analysis

The participants' responses regarding their confidence and willingness to communicate in L2 English were assessed through a pre-and post-Virtual Café activity evaluation. The mean scores and standard deviations were compared before and after the Virtual Café activity, shedding light on participant attitudes and perception shifts.

Table 2 Responses on Confidence and Willingness to Communicate in L2 English: Pre-Post Virtual Café Activity

Variables	Pre Virtual Café Activity		Post Virtual Café Activity	
Sub Variable of Confidence and Willingness (Pre-Virtual Café Activity)	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
I am willing to ask questions when I don't understand something.	4.05	.82	4.05	.805
I am not afraid of making mistakes while speaking in English.	3.53	1.15	3.89	.934
I feel comfortable sharing my ideas/feelings/opinions with others in English.	3.21	1.01	3.65	.949
I enjoy communicating in English.	3.55	1.11	3.98	.967
I think participating in activities, such as the Virtual Cafe, help me develop my fluency.	3.99	.94	3.84	1.00
I mainly use English to communicate with people from other cultures or countries.	2.72	1.08	3.44	1.11
I find it difficult to communicate in English.	2.91	1.13	2.86	1.11
I am worried that I will not understand what others say in English.	3.11	1.07	2.80	1.04
I feel nervous about using English when I need to speak with people from other cultures.	2.92	1.18	2.98	1.16
I am always able to say what I want to say in English.	3.08	.95	3.69	.87
I think others cannot understand me because of my poor English.	3.27	1.11	3.25	1.16
I know enough words to communicate in English.	3.74	.95	3.44	1.11
I am willing to talk about myself and my interests with other participants	3.75	.86	4.01	.78
I am willing to talk about my culture and my country.	3.81	.93	4.05	.84

Participants maintained a consistent willingness to ask questions ([Pre-Mean = 4.05, SD = 0.82], [Post Mean = 4.05, SD = 0.805]), indicating a sustained engagement in inquiry. Notably, there was an improvement in the fear of making mistakes ([Pre-Mean = 3.53, SD = 1.15], [Post Mean = 3.89, SD = 0.934]), reflecting a reduced apprehension in expressing themselves in English. The increase in comfort in sharing ideas, feelings, and opinions ([Pre-Mean = 3.21, SD = 1.01], [Post Mean = 3.65, SD = 0.949]) suggests a positive impact of the Virtual Café on fostering a supportive environment for open communication. Participants exhibited increased enjoyment in communicating in L2 English ([Pre-Mean = 3.55, SD = 1.11], [Post Mean = 3.98, SD = 0.967]), indicating a more positive and enjoyable language learning experience post-activity. Despite a slight decrease, the perception of fluency development remained relatively high ([Pre-Mean = 3.99, SD = 0.94], [Post Mean = 3.84, SD = 1.00]), suggesting a continued positive outlook on language proficiency. A significant increase in using English while communicating with people from other cultures or countries ([Pre-Mean = 2.72, SD = 1.08], [Post Mean = 3.44, SD = 1.11]) demonstrates a notable shift towards cross-cultural communication. The perceived difficulty in communicating in English showed a marginal decrease ([Pre-Mean = 2.91, SD = 1.13], [Post Mean = 2.86, SD = 1.11]), indicating a subtle improvement in participants' confidence. A decrease in worry about understanding others in English ([Pre-Mean = 3.11, SD = 1.07], [Post Mean = 2.80, SD = 1.04]) suggests reduced anxiety, contributing to a more relaxed language learning environment.

Similarly, a decrease in nervousness about using English with people from other cultures ([Pre-Mean = 2.92, SD = 1.18], [Post Mean = 2.98, SD = 1.16]) reflects a positive impact on participants' comfort levels in cross-cultural communication.

Regarding the ability to express oneself in English, there was a substantial increase in post-activity ([Pre Mean = 3.08, SD = 0.95], [Post Mean = 3.69, SD = 0.87]), highlighting a significant improvement in participants' confidence to articulate thoughts. This highlights the project's positive impact on participants' communicative competence.

The perceived understanding due to poor English remained relatively stable ([Pre Mean = 3.27, SD = 1.11], [Post Mean = 3.25, SD = 1.16]), suggesting a consistent perception of others' comprehension. The knowledge of a sufficient number of words allowing learners to communicate in English showed a nuanced shift with a decrease in mean post-activity ([Pre Mean = 3.74, SD = 0.95], [Post Mean = 3.44, SD = 1.11]). However, the willingness to talk about oneself and interests exhibited a substantial increase ([Pre Mean = 3.75, SD = 0.86], [Post Mean = 4.01, SD = 0.78]), indicating enhanced openness in personal communication. Similarly, a notable increase in the willingness to talk about culture and country ([Pre Mean = 3.81, SD = 0.93], [Post Mean = 4.05, SD = 0.84]) suggests a positive impact on participants' readiness to engage in cross-cultural discussions.

Overall, the decrease in standard deviations across various variables ([Pre SDs] to [Post SDs]) indicates a more consistent and homogenous shift in participants' perceptions post-Virtual Café activity. These findings collectively underscore the positive influence of the Virtual Café project on students' language confidence and willingness to communicate.

Table 3 provides a comprehensive analysis of participants' confidence and willingness in English language learning, both before and after the Virtual Café activities. The descriptive statistics include minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation for scores in confidence and willingness to speak in English.

Table 3 Responses on Comprehensive Confidence Score and Comprehensive Willingness in English Language Learning Pre-Post Virtual Café Activity

Pre/Post Virtual Cafe Activity		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-Virtual Cafe Activity	Score in Confidence in English Language Speaking	214	16	60	40.8	8.10
	Score in Willingness to Speak in English Language	214	4	20	14.33	3.10
	Valid N	214				
Post Virtual Cafe Activity	Score in Confidence in English Language Speaking	141	18	60	41.87	7.27
	Score in Willingness to Speak in English Language	141	7	20	15.70	2.91
	Valid N	141				

In the pre-activity phase, the mean score for confidence in English language speaking was 40.8 (SD = 8.10), and the WTC in English was 14.33 (SD = 3.10), indicating a moderate level of confidence and willingness among participants. Post-Virtual Café activity, there was a slight increase in the mean L2 confidence score to 41.87 (SD = 7.27), suggesting a positive impact on participants' overall confidence in English language speaking. The WTC in English also experienced an uptick in the mean score, reaching 15.70 (SD = 2.91), indicating an enhanced willingness to engage in English communication. The decrease in standard deviations post-activity suggests a more uniform shift in participants' comprehensive L2 confidence and WTC scores, reflecting a cohesive positive influence of the Virtual Café project on the participants' overall language confidence and WTC in English.

The mean score for confidence in English language speaking increased by approximately 4.35 points after participating in the Virtual Café activity. The mean score for WTC in English increased by approximately 2.23 points after participating in the Virtual Café activity.

These findings indicate that the Virtual Café activity positively affected participants' comprehensive L2 confidence and WTC in L2. Both the confidence and L2 WTC scores showed an increase after the activity.

4.2 Testing of Hypothesis of Difference

Based on the results of the t-tests for the equality of means and considering a significance level of 0.05, the following summary can be provided for the hypotheses (Table 4).

Table 4 Independent Samples 't Test ((Responses on Comprehensive Confidence Score including its sub-variable and Comprehensive WTC including its sub-variable (Pre-Post Virtual Café Activity)

Statements on Comprehensive Confidence	t-test for Equality of Means			
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Score in Confidence in English Language Speaking	-2.109	353	0.036*	-1.781
Score in Willingness to Speak in English Language	-4.165	353	0.000*	-1.368

H01 is rejected with the t-test results (-2.109, p = 0.036), indicating a significant decrease in mean confidence scores post-Virtual Café. H02 is rejected with the t-test results (-4.165, p = 0.000), suggesting a significant increase in mean willingness scores post-Virtual Café. This underscores the overall positive impact of the project on participants' willingness to engage in English communication.

Creating a supportive and encouraging environment that motivates participants to ask questions, practice fluency, and actively seek understanding might positively impact learners' willingness to ask questions and enhance learners' L2 proficiency. This can be achieved through targeted language practice activities (Belz, 2006; Godwin-Jones, 2017), group discussions, and feedback sessions (Vinagre & Muñoz, 2011). Group activities, cultural exchange projects, and collaborative tasks can be implemented to promote self-expression and cultural exploration (Byram & Wagner, 2018; Chun, 2015).

Addressing the sub-variables where significant improvements were observed may enhance L2 Confidence and L2 WTC. For example, creating a supportive and non-judgmental environment is crucial for reducing the fear of making mistakes (Ho2: Rejected). Studies, such as Helm's (2015) and Lewis & O'Dowd's (2016), also show that providing peer support and constructive peer feedback can build confidence in speaking English and enhance language uptake.

VC activities proved beneficial for the sub-variables related to the comfort level of sharing ideas, feelings, opinions, and enjoyment of communicating in English. Students involved in the VC project seemed to be able to co-construct their online relationships so that they felt at ease sharing ideas, feelings, and opinions enjoyably, similar to students in other telecollaboration projects for language and intercultural learning (Ware, 2005).

6. Conclusion

This research paper focused on the impact of the Virtual Café project on learners' Confidence and WTC in English in a multicultural context of L2 learning. The results indicated significant improvements in several areas, including reduced fear of making mistakes, increased comfort in sharing ideas, and enhanced enjoyment of English communication. Participants also showed greater willingness to talk about themselves, their interests, and their cultures. However, there were no significant differences in the willingness to ask questions, perception of fluency development, and concern about being understood by others. These findings might suggest that the number of speaking-promoting encounters was insufficient. At the same time, to be more willing to ask questions, students must feel more confident regarding their ability to do so.

Moreover, learners remained concerned about being understood by others, which might stem from their lack of self-confidence and/or d low perception of their ability to communicate in L2 efficiently. In intercultural contexts, this concern ties in with linguistic and pragmatic competencies pertaining to learners' ability to use contextually appropriate language (Chun, 2011). Asking questions and being understood by others are also aspects of appropriate turn-taking in communication, and these were areas that students did not perceive as improved after the VC activities. Even if moderate interactional opportunities can contribute to improving communicative self-confidence and L2 WTC (Cao & Philp, 2006; MacIntyre, 1994; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996; Wu et al., 2011), these results indicate that the

number of encounters between the VC participants was probably not high enough to effect a perceived change.

The findings in this study highlight the effectiveness of virtual interactive activities in facilitating language learning and promoting confidence and willingness to communicate in L2 among learners. Further efforts can focus on addressing specific areas, such as pragmatic competence, where virtual exchanges can create opportunities for language learning and intercultural competence outcomes.

It is important to acknowledge the study's potential limitations, such as the survey's inability to capture hidden feelings, missing values, and inappropriate responses to specific questions. Efforts were made to mitigate these limitations by ensuring the validity and reliability of the measures used and providing a comprehensive interpretation of the results within the study context.

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APPENDIX:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/16Jbq83zoxWBvdSVfT9yyI48V9RboGvl1/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=103172063640494008534&rtpof=true&sd=true

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Review research paper

LANGUAGE PLANNING AND ITS EFFECTS ON POSTFOUNDATION STUDENTS' PROFICIENCY IN INCLUSIVE VOCATIONAL TRAINING ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract. *The aim of this study is to examine language planning and its potential impact on students' learning experiences in Omani vocational colleges that support inclusive learning environment in the context of English as Medium of Instruction (EMI). In particular, it focuses on the barriers to learning that Salalah Vocational College post foundation students experience when faced with studying technical English or English for vocational purpose (EVP). Data were gathered using a three-part questionnaire. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was utilized for the statistical analysis, and a descriptive analysis was used to analyze the data. Based on quantitative data collected, post foundation students' opinion in Salalah Vocational College about EMI and EVP is negative. The study reveals that inadequate English language skills are a significant hindrance to understanding course content and acquiring marketable skills. Students prefer to learn in Arabic due to practical reasons, which calls for reconsideration of language planning policies in vocational institutions. Using the native language as the medium of instruction can help students understand the concepts and skills needed to prepare them for the labor market. By overcoming linguistic barriers, the scope for integrating a group of individuals with special needs becomes open. It also becomes conceivable to discuss inclusive education at vocational colleges. Such adjustments would more effectively enable the desired national growth.*

Key words: *language planning policy, English as medium of instruction, educational language policies, inclusive education, students' opinion*

1. INTRODUCTION

The primary goal of technical and vocational education is to give students skills and hands-on experience for them to secure jobs, start businesses and be productive members of society. While emphasizing the importance of technicians in sustaining national development, Professor James Flolu explains: "We want to enjoy electricity, we want water to flow through our taps, we want our telephones to work constantly… the question is where will the technicians who are in the majority of industries come from to provide these services. Without technicians and vocational skilled workers, the nation's development would come to a standstill" (as cited in Adogpa 2015, p. 2). Oman, like other nations, integrates Technical Vocational Education and Training into its economic framework,

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aiming to empower citizens and contribute to "Omanization" of vocational jobs (Al-Wahaybi and Goli, 2022). Vocational colleges in Oman, according to Minister Al Mahrooqi, align programs with regional demands and industry trends, playing a pivotal role in innovation and creativity (Plan to realize, 2022). With over 400 private institutions and eight vocational colleges, Oman seeks to meet the growing demand for skilled candidates in an expanding economy. The objective is to provide employable skills, enabling graduates to secure positions in government or private sectors or start their own businesses. However, despite these efforts, challenges persist. Practical skills acquired during training often do not align with market needs, as indicated by Ministry of Labor. Upon graduation, vocational students face significant challenges, as highlighted by Adogpa (2015). The first issue is unemployment, and even when they secure jobs, the pay is often inadequate, indicating a mismatch between acquired skills and market needs (Adogpa 2015). Currently, there exists a weak connection between industry and vocational education, leading to a lack of necessary abilities among graduates and difficulty in finding employment. Adogpa (2015) questions whether the challenges stem from concepts and knowledge or linguistic skills, emphasizing the need to prioritize either learning new skills or comprehending ideas in an inadequate language. Vocational students grapple with a language that is used "as a measure of their fate of progression to the next level" (Adogpa, 2015, p.2). To address this, a study at Salalah Vocational College investigates students' perceptions, particularly focusing on linguistic challenges. The goal is to enhance vocational education quality by selecting a language that aids students in grasping concepts and acquiring technical skills, aligning with market demands. This study aims to pave the way for a positive trajectory and improve the overall learning experience at Salalah Vocational College.

2. Background

As explained by Scatolini (2020), in Oman, English is the main language of instruction in most colleges and institutions of higher education. Consequently, high English proficiency is required for admission. Students take an English placement test, leading to placement in different levels of the English foundation program. The program lasts four trimesters with 20 hours per week, resulting in a diploma. English is the MI within the college, especially during practice and training. The college offers the Post Foundation Programme in Electrical Wiring, Electronics Engineering, and Business Studies, along with short courses in Cosmetology and programs for males in welding, mechanization, and automotive electrification. English and IT are part of the training, and exams for the program are conducted in English. Although not intended for international appeal or preparing for the global job market, most graduates are trained for employment within Oman. The use of English raises concerns about teacher proficiency, student understanding, and the potential impact on program quality and outcomes.

3. Literature Review

Many countries, including Oman, have realized the importance of providing skilled workers to meet local demands (Cochrane, 2009; Heckadon &Tuzlukova, 2021). This has led to the introduction of vocational education with the aim of producing graduates who can contribute to the workforce in areas such as plumbing, electronics, carpentry, welding, and

engine repair. To reduce youth unemployment and supply skilled workers, governments have enacted policies to emphasize vocational education. Reforms have been implemented in the curriculum, teaching methods, training strategies, and medium of instruction. There is an ongoing debate in Oman among academics and stakeholders about the use of English as the designated medium of instruction in vocational institutions. Al-Wahaybi and Goli (2022), state that "the students in vocational colleges must master English as an international language to communicate efficiently and effectively with the employers, employees, and customers in the vocational job arena" (p. 66). Consequently, English is regarded as a focal point in vocational colleges in Oman, mandated by the Oman Qualification Framework (QOF) regulations for graduates of vocational diploma programs. English proficiency is crucial for vocational graduates seeking good employment as it is seen as a gateway to academic and social success, influencing access to education and job opportunities. Vocational education must be tailored to meet local labor market demands and prepare students to enter the workforce. Language proficiency is the primary criterion to enter the job market and a critical factor for determining competency. Al-Issa and Al Bulushi (201) opine that English as a global language is extremely useful for several purposes. Al-Hinai (2018) assert that vocational students need a lot of technical lexis to express them. Graduates must have strong communication and presentation abilities in today's competitive market. Similarly, scholars advocate the idea that vocational students must acquire technical lexis and oral presentation skills. Students should be able to tackle this issue and develop oral presentation skills. Marianthi and Charilaos (2018) maintain that "especially for vocational students, who are preparing to enter the workplace, English is considered very important as a lingua franca and a basic means of communication in the world market" (p.2). Widodo (2016) adds that English for Vocational Purpose (EVP) is a program "which equips students with English competence that supports their vocational expertise" (p.280). Thus, English language skills are essential for vocational students to learn. On the other hand, some experts in education disagree with this approach. They claim that most students in vocational colleges are low-achievers, making it difficult for them to master English and vocational skills. This has sparked a debate among experts, as some worry that emphasizing English may be unfair and act as a barrier to acquiring technical skills. Adogpa (2015) emphasizes that "technical and vocational trainers and trainees need a language that can best convey the instructional concepts. L1 brings about creativity, creativity brings success… What technical and vocational graduates need are skills that are self-fulfilling and not the grammar of an imposed language that inhibits technological advancement and national development" (p. 4). Due to language deficiencies, students experience second language anxiety and even academic stress, especially concerning the spoken aspect. The difficulties Omani students have in vocational education when English is the language of teaching in a non-English-speaking country need to be more studied, whereas this issue has been extensively researched in English-speaking nations; and it has been a major concern for researchers for years. Olson (2012) divides the causes of the nursing students' frequent struggles into four categories, with "English language inadequacy" being the most significant of them (Rabea et al., 2018). Similarly, students in vocational programs at Salalah Vocational College often face language barriers in both general and technical English, hindering their academic progress. The question arises as to whether the main goal of vocational education is to produce qualified staff with practical skills or to graduate trainees with strong language abilities. This predicament leaves students unable to acquire either language or practical skills, especially considering that weaker students often choose vocational education. It is

twin difficulty that impedes vocational educational principal goal of supplying the job market with trained workers and reducing unemployment. Al-Mahrooqi & Denman (2018) contend that "while government policy and education institutions largely recognize the importance of English to Omani society, the country's citizens are often reported as having low levels of English communicative competence" (p. 184). As a result, vocational college graduates have been characterized as having limited English skills to the extent that this negatively affects upon their levels of employability as highlighted by Al-Mahrooqi and Denman (2018) "lack of English proficiency and communicative competence is commonly cited as one of the major causes of the high levels of unemployment among Omani graduates" (p.1). According to Dilini and Sreemali (2020), vocational students in Oman often lack necessary English language skills for employment, limiting their job opportunities. This impacts Omanization policies that aim to replace foreign workers with nationals. Further research is urgently needed to identify practical solutions for vocational education. This study was conducted to comprehend Oman's vocational education, specifically at Salalah Vocational College, and to address this problem. The focus of the research is to ask a key topic question in order to address this problem, and that is the focus of this research.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study aimed to address the following research questions:

1. Does vocational training lack high-quality training and a supportive learning environment? Or are the training concepts not fully grasped due to a language barrier?
2. Has the language policy in vocational training succeeded in providing qualified cadres to meet the needs of the labor market?

4.1. Research Instrument and Data Collection Method

The language policy in post-foundation and vocational training programs at Salalah Vocational College was investigated in a case study to determine its impact on students' comprehension of concepts and acquisition of practical skills. According to (Dilini and Sreemali 2020), vocational students' lack of vocational English-speaking skills limits their employment chances. Data were collected through a three-part questionnaire. The first part aimed to collect background information on linguistic challenges students face due to using English as a medium of instruction. The second part delved into students' linguistic attitudes toward English. The third part explores the students' assumptions about the importance of English for employment. It is a 9-item self-report questionnaire utilizing a Likert-type scale with scores ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The scale's reliability in indicating consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, and statistical analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). A descriptive analysis was utilized to interpret the data. To enhance accessibility for respondents whose L1 is Arabic, the survey was orally translated. The researcher supervised the survey to prevent copying among respondents, and teachers did not intervene to maintain the objectivity of the responses. This methodological approach ensures a comprehensive exploration of students' linguistic challenges and attitudes in an English-medium instruction setting.

4.1.1. Population and Sample

During data collection, a random sample of students from Salalah Vocational College in various vocational programs completed a survey. The programs included electrical wiring, electronic engineering, and business studies, with students from different levels. Out of 491 students, only 143 responded, resulting in a response rate of approximately 29.12%. Table 1 displays the demographic profile of the sample.

Table 1 Demographic attributes of respondents

Variable	Attribute	No. of Participants	Percentage %
		142	100.0%
specialization	Electronics	48	33.8%
	Electrical wiring	49	34.5%
	Business studies	45	31.7%

4.1.2. Reliability of the Instrument

The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was utilized for the statistical analysis. The reliability of the scale was tested using Cronbach's alpha.

Table 2 Students' responses

No of respondents	Q No	Questions	Mean	Std Deviation	Mode
128	1	I fully understand the course content taught in English only.	2.24	1.148	1.00
128	2	I find it easy to understand and answer the exam questions in English.	2.68	1.278	1.00
128	3	I sometimes cannot answer just because I don't understand the meaning of the question in English.	3.72	1.296	5.00
128	4	Studying my major in Arabic is better than in English.	4.21	1.133	5.00
128	5	I understand the subject matter more from an Arabic-speaking teacher.	4.25	.947	5.00
128	6	I use English in the daily conversations with my colleagues in the college premises.	2.15	1.118	1.00
128	7	English helps to get a job.	4.25	.947	5.00
128	8	I will use English after graduation when I set my own project.	2.67	1.184	1.00
128	9	I feel that English is a hindrance against getting a job after graduation	3.90	1.180	5.00

The analysis of the first axis of the questionnaire reveals that the primary challenge for post foundation students in Salalah Vocational College is associated with the instructional medium, hindering them from fully grasping the course and specialization materials. A

notable percentage of students struggle with understanding the training material due to language barriers (mean=2.24). A considerable number find it difficult to comprehend questions posed in English (mean=2.68). Particularly noteworthy is the observation that some students are unable to answer exam questions not because they lack the knowledge, but simply due to a lack of understanding of the questions presented in English (mean=3.72). This leads to two possible conclusions: either students can understand the curriculum but struggle with the meaning of English questions, or they resort to memorization as a strategy to pass exams. Consequently, post-foundation students encounter challenges in comprehending materials written in English, possibly due to a lack of proficiency in the language. Moreover, their reliance on memorization as a study method poses difficulties, as they may not fully grasp the technical language and struggle when faced with changes in question formats. The common belief that proficiency in English lesson content equates ease in understanding English-language questions may contribute to these challenges. The analysis of the second set of three questions in the questionnaire reveals important insights into students' linguistic attitudes towards English, forming a distinct axis of inquiry. Students express a strong preference for learning in their mother tongue (mean=4.21) and indicate a preference for teachers who speak their native language (mean=4.25). These preferences suggest that students believe learning in Arabic increases their likelihood of comprehending courses and training programs. The data raises questions about the effectiveness of the foundation program, considering that students spend significant time (three months for each of the four levels, averaging twenty hours per week) but still encounter difficulties. The challenge may stem from the language of instruction, prompting questions about the curriculum, duration of the foundation program, and other potential factors impacting knowledge acquisition and practical skill development. Question 6 provides insights into students' attitudes toward the second language (L2), revealing their reluctance to use English in either daily life or within the college environment, despite encouragement from instructors. This reluctance, even in English-speaking classrooms, poses a significant challenge and contributes to a negative attitude toward L2. This unfavorable perspective hampers students' mastery of English, a crucial requirement in the labor market. The analysis of the first and second axes of the questionnaire collectively suggests that the challenge may not stem from the quality of training or the overall environment. Instead, according to students' responses, the underlying issue seems to be the medium of instruction, with students studying in a language they do not fully comprehend. The final axis of the questionnaire focuses on students' perceptions of English and its importance in the workplace, with the responses to the last three questions revealing interesting insights. There appears to be a disconnect between graduates' willingness to use English after graduation and the prevailing belief that mastering a foreign language is essential for employment. The response to Question 8 indicates that graduates, especially those planning to launch private projects, are not interested in continuing to use English in their work after graduation. This seems reasonable, considering that these students are expected to be skilled workers launching small projects to serve the local community in Oman, particularly in the Dhofar region. Their belief that they will not need a foreign language for small projects aimed at the local community aligns with their future roles, such as opening a workshop for electronic machine repair or starting businesses like selling abayas, incense, cosmetics, or running a restaurant or sweets store. Questions 7 and 9 complement each other, emphasizing the importance of English in securing employment. Despite most students strongly agreeing (mean=4.25) that mastering English is crucial for

job opportunities (Question 7), a significant portion also feel that the English language can be a barrier to finding employment, particularly when communicating with company officials whose mother tongue is English (mean=3.9 for Question 9). This presents a paradox, as it might be more logical for the minority to speak the language of the majority, representing the actual citizens, rather than the opposite. In summary, the responses in this axis highlight the nuanced relationship between English proficiency and employment prospects, showcasing the complex interplay between language skills and practical skills in the workplace.

5. How are Easing Linguistic Challenges and Inclusion Correlated?

Population to Disability Ratio

	2003	2006	2009	2012
Population	*2,341,000	*2,577,000	*3,174,000	3,357,000
Growth Rate	NA	10.08 %	23.17%	NA
Annual Growth Rate	NA	3.36%	7.72%	**1.92%
No. of Disabled People	41,303	45,467	56,002	59,228

Source: *(Ministry of National Economy, 2010b), **United Nations, 2008

The table above illustrates that the population of individuals with special needs in Oman steadily increased between 2003 and 2012. In 2003, there were 40,303 people with disabilities, increasing to 59,228 by 2012. Integrating this group into vocational education is becoming necessary, as vocational education presents fewer obstacles to integration than regular university education. Integrating individuals with special needs into vocational education is challenging. However, it is feasible once the language barrier is resolved. Salalah Vocational College specializations like Cosmetology offers a pathway for inclusive education. Female students with speech and hearing impairments can be integrated into programs like hairdressing and esthetics, while males can enroll in welding, mechanization, and automotive electrification specialties. Integrating individuals with special needs aligns with vocational education primary goals, which can foster societal integration and break down barriers.

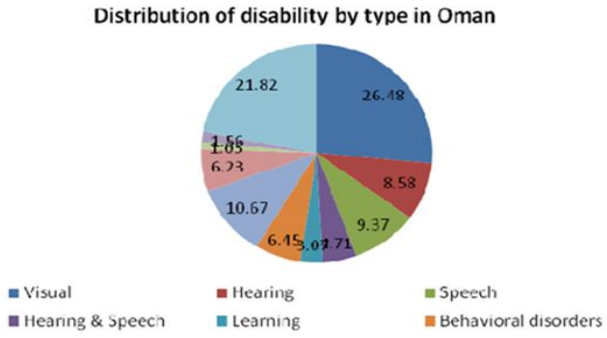

Fig. 1 Distribution of disability by title in Oman

The figure above shows the percentage of people with different disabilities. Speech or hearing disabilities affect around 22.66 percent of the disabled population in Oman,

9.37% having a speech disability, 8.58% experiencing hearing problems, and 4.71% having both speech and hearing difficulties. This constitutes approximately one-fifth of the impaired population. Integrating this group into vocational education could be a potential solution. The Ministry of Labour mandates that government and public sector employers must hire a minimum of 50 disabled individuals, constituting up to 2% of their workforce, with a disabled worker counting as two individuals toward Omanization quotas for the private sector. The government is committed to supporting disabled individuals in the workforce by using VE to refine their skills and meet labor market requirements. Legislation has been implemented to address their employment.

6. Benifits of the Inclusion of Disabled People into Vocational Education

Disability has been recognized as a major social issue internationally, and the World Health Organization (WHO) is putting together great efforts to assist countries in developing policies for people with disabilities, ensuring early identification and treatment, providing equal opportunities, and promoting rights of the disabled people" (Disability, n.d.). According to the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (2006), "people with disabilities suffer from discrimination throughout the world, especially in the developing countries, and are frequently excluded from social, economic, and political processes in their societies. Disability was long considered an individual problem that was treated from a medical and charitable viewpoint, but neglected in terms of equal rights for disabled persons". Students with speech and hearing impairments face challenges in transitioning into vocational education programs and achieving their professional goals. To facilitate their learning and development, vocational institutions may create an inclusive and supportive environment (Tuzlukova et al., 2023) by collaborating closely with organizations and students themselves. One solution is VE, which offers significant benefits for these students in various ways.

6.1. On the Personal Level

Participating in vocational education can bring about many personal advantages. Completing such a program can significantly boost students' self-esteem and confidence as they acquire skills highly valued by employers. Vocational education also provides a platform for individuals with speech impairments to improve their communication skills, instilling confidence in their ability to interact effectively with colleagues, managers, and clients. Educational journey promotes independence, equipping students with disabilities with the knowledge and skills to foster greater self-reliance. Lastly, vocational education can pave the way for career growth, providing opportunities for individuals to advance within their chosen sector or explore related roles, contributing to their professional development and aspirations.

6.2. On the Social and Economic Level

Vocational education (VE) is highly beneficial for students with disabilities, providing them with strong interpersonal skills and valuable networks that foster social contacts, teamwork, and collaboration. VE also promotes workplace inclusivity and diversity, minimizing barriers for students with hearing and speaking difficulties and facilitating their

entry into chosen professions. Certain VE programs equip students with disabilities to manage their projects, encouraging entrepreneurship and freelance work. VE graduates are more likely to secure jobs and earn reasonable incomes, leading to economic independence and an improved quality of life. Beyond workforce success, VE champions inclusion, independence, and personal growth, contributing to a more empowered and inclusive society.

7. Discussion and Limitations

The English language presents a challenge to Salalah Vocational College's post foundation students, hindering their understanding of lessons and exam questions. Although the students are well-prepared with terminology memorization, they struggle to comprehend instructions and may fail to answer exam questions. Teachers must intervene to clarify questions for them so that they could answer with ease. The issue is not with students' comprehension abilities, but with the language as an impenetrable barrier to understanding. The use of EMI is a major factor contributing to academic failure for post-foundation program students at Salalah Vocational College. The language issue obstructs understanding, passing exams, finding employment, and inclusion. The issue is worsened by having the students doing assignments in a language they are not proficient in. A study carried by Al-Wahaybi & Goli (2022) supports this finding. The researchers claim that "EVP teachers' perception and students' perception of the acquisition of vocational English knowledge is encouraging and positive" (p.71). However, according to Al-Wahaybi & Goli (2022), "some expressed difficulties and challenges in teaching and learning vocational English. The negative perceptions outweigh the positive perceptions as per the study" (p.71). The students' inability to learn English, the language used for teaching and learning, hindered their ability to acquire practical skills and enter the job market. This raises several questions. Is the defect in training per se or in language formation? Or in both? Is the ability to communicate in another language the most crucial skill for the job market? Is linguistic proficiency a gauge of economic prosperity? As stated by (Al-Whaybi and Goli 2022, p 66) "The accelerated economic growth demands the need for qualified vocational aspirants who are well-versed in vocational English, i.e., English for Vocational Purposes (EVP). The students in vocational colleges must master English as an international language to communicate efficiently and effectively with the employers, employees, and customers in the vocational job arena." The study is a critical perspective on the language requirements in Gulf nations like Oman, where fluency in English is mandatory for employment opportunities within their own country. This dilemma affects vocational graduates whose mastery of vocational skills is not enough to secure jobs without English proficiency. This raises questions about the fundamental purpose of vocational education, whether it aims to train professional cadres or workers proficient in English. The paper also questions the relevance of English for business studies students creating ventures to meet local needs. An answer to these questions is summarized by Adogpa (2015), stating that "technical and vocational education needs a new face. A face that can ease the mind of the learner from linguistic harassment, an L1 as a medium of instruction to enable learners grasp concepts properly and acquire skills that can match the job market" (p.5). In summary, the language policy and English as a medium of instruction could pose potential issues for vocational institutions that provide hands-on training in businesses. This heavy reliance on English may cause difficulty in

understanding and applying concepts, leading to a crisis. Short course students may also face challenges as they require passing English language tests to receive certificates. This poses a dilemma for deaf and mute individuals and renders the notion of inclusion meaningless. English acts as a barrier not only to comprehending course material but also to post-foundation students at Salalah Vocational College in their pursuit of employment. The study's findings may not apply to other situations due to flaws. The limited setting and sampling of the study, which only included one vocational college out of eight and 128 post foundation students, could affect the results if the research were conducted in other vocational colleges.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's findings, vocational education needs a fundamental change. Arabic should become the primary language for instruction in vocational colleges, while English should only be taught as a foreign language in the foundation program. High-quality vocational education must be delivered in the native language with a focus on practical training to enable students to gain in-depth knowledge in their subjects and practical vocational skills. This approach aligns with modernization objectives of countries like Oman. Additionally, groups for disabled individuals whose disabilities align with vocational education requirements should be formed to ensure their integration into society and active participation in the economic cycle.

9. CONCLUSION

The study conducted at Salalah Vocational College examined the effectiveness of using EMI at the post-foundation stage. The study investigated if students benefited from learning English both knowledge-wise and for job prospects. The results were contradictory. Firstly, language proved to be challenging, hindering the acquisition of practical skills and inclusion of disabled students. Secondly, despite a lack of need for the language, it has become a criterion for recruitment and entering the labor market. Further research is necessary to understand these academic challenges and the importance of vocational education in resolving unemployment and contributing to economic growth.

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APPENDIX

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Review research paper

LEVERAGING CASE BRIEFING TO FOSTER CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS OF LEGAL ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS

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Abstract. *Critical thinking is a quintessential 21st century skill for individuals to thrive in the rapid evolving world where information is abundant and discerning its validity is increasingly troublesome. Inculcating strong critical thinking abilities for the next generations has therefore never been more crucial. This study was conducted to examine the effectiveness of case briefing on fostering legal English-major students' critical thinking capacity. A quasi-experimental research time series design was utilized to gauge the development of students' critical thinking skills at different time points. The participants included 63 fourth-year legal English-majors who were divided into 15 groups to practice briefing three cases in groups at equally spaced intervals over the period of 15 weeks. The written summaries of the assigned cases were collected and marked using the researcher-made scoring rubric. Students' scores were treated using IBM SPSS 26.0, where General linear model - repeated measures was run to compare the results within groups at each point of time. The findings reveal that the implementation of case briefing had positive effects on students' critical thinking abilities. The worth-noticing improvement is the students' capability to critically evaluate the cases through challenging the court's reasoning, detecting biases and suggesting alternative solutions to the legal issues. The most difficult part is the reasoning which is complicated and requires labour to cut through. The pedagogical implication of the research is the advocacy for using case briefing technique to elevate students' critical thinking skills in legal English classes.*

Key words*: critical thinking, case briefing, legal English*

1. INTRODUCTION

In a world grappling with information overload and intricate challenges, critical thinking (CT) is of profound importance and is considered to be one of the quintessential 21st century skills that each individual needs to possess. Basically, CT is not just a single skill, but a complex set of cognitive processes that involve reasoning, questioning, evaluating, synthesizing and applying knowledge (Lai, 2011). Marques (2012) considers it as an essential requirement for responsible human activities. Abrami et al. (2008) asserts the widely recognized importance of CT for the 'knowledge age' (p.1102) since it empowers individuals to direct themselves through a sea of information, rationally and objectively discern fact from fiction and make autonomous, informed decisions. CT skills

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are even more vital for practising lawyers whose work often involves making or contributing towards making decisions for their clients. They have to navigate the complexities and intricacies of legal rules, identify legal problems, devise strategies for addressing them and recommend effective solutions. Therefore, equipping law students with the abilities to engage with ideas, consider different perspectives, analyze information and make better decisions for their personal growth as well as for their future employers and wider community is what universities should aim at.

Albeit a soft skill, critical thinking can be cultivated and fostered through quality educational process (Anjarsari, 2014). Misnawati et al. (2023) assert the vital role of higher education institutions in the development of critical thinkers. Collier and Morgan (2008) stress the inseparability of CT from educational institutions, especially those of higher education. Bezanilla et al. (2019) call for universities to include CT in their classes, programs and syllabi. While many researchers agree that CT skills could be taught and learnt, others disagree about how they could be taught and assessed. Some advocate for the method of enhancing CT by teaching its theoretical background (Alwehaibi, 2012; Bensley et al., 2010). However, many other researchers opine that CT must be integrated into any course (Hatcher, 2006) because it is not adequate to teach students on a course on CT theory and transform them to become critical thinkers (Gelder, 2005). Paul and Nosich (1993) maintain a shared stance, positing that critical thinking instruction should not be assigned to one or two majors but should be overtly incorporated into all courses so that students' CT skills are developed and enhanced across the curriculum. Practising CT skills in various contexts would achieve better outcomes compared to teaching CT as a stand-alone course (Hatcher, 2006; MacKnight, 2000; Paul & Elder, 2006). Legal English courses, therefore, should play a part in honing these skills in students and contribute towards achieving the overall learning outcomes of the whole curriculum.

Previous researchers have proposed various strategies to develop cognitive abilities for learners across different disciplines such as case study (Rippin et al., 2002; Mahdi et al., 2020), problem-solving (Nokes et al., 2007; Kumar & Natarajan, 2007), work-based learning (Brodie & Irving, 2007), etc. In legal education, case briefs – short summaries of the main points of a judicial decision or case law - are the long-used Socratic method to concurrently teach law and CT skills in many law schools. However, the potential of using case briefing technique in legal English classes to boost language learners' intellectual capacity is underexplored, particularly in the Vietnamese context. No research has ever been conducted to explore the different facets of using case law to teach legal English in general and to improve learners' CT skills in particular.

The impetus for the current research has come from the need to develop learners' CT skills, especially in the fast-changing, media-dominated world, the importance of integrating CT component into legal English courses and the paucity of studies on the application of case briefing approach in legal English classrooms. It primarily aims to examine whether practicing summarizing cases could actually enhance students' CT capability. For this purpose, a principal research question is formulated:

Is case briefing effective in developing English-major students' critical thinking skills?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Case briefing

Case briefing basically means isolating the significant elements a judicial opinion (which is also referred to as case law) and producing a short written summary of that decision. While case briefs are commonly used by law professors as a 'Socratic' method of teaching law in a meaningful and interactive way, it is rarely employed by language teachers to teach legal English. There are a number of factors that may restrain the use of case law to teach legal English: the intricacies of the case, the linguistic complexity of the legal language (Ariffin, 2014), students' language competence, the limited legal knowledge of both legal English teachers and students (Huong, 2020), time constraint, etc. These obstacles might have impeded language teachers from exploiting these huge sources of authentic materials which are highly relevant to their academic pursuit as well.

Given that reading and understanding judicial opinions are particularly difficult for language learners, case law is beneficial to students in various dimensions. From linguistic perspectives, judicial decisions provide students with authentic materials to read and acquire lexical and syntactic resources. Reading these cases is an effective way to learn legal terminologies related to different areas of law such as civil law, criminal law, contract law, real property law, etc. Xhaferi (2010) argues that in this (ESP) sphere of teaching vocabulary is crucial. Furthermore, sentences in legal texts in are often long and complicated (Veretina-Chiriac, 2012), hence understanding case law requires readers to understand complex grammatical structures used in legal texts. From the contents perspectives, through case-based reading, law students expose themselves to real-world cases which are more relevant and practical to them compared to learning things in a more theoretical way from textbooks. This does not only motivate students to actively engage in the learning process but also broadens their horizon of knowledge about the law and legal system. From cognitive perspectives, case briefing is an effective tool for "fostering students' critical reading and critical thinking abilities while concurrently teaching course content" (Morgan-Thomas, 2012, p.75).

2.2. Critical thinking skills and their indicators

CT is a widely studied concept and defined differently in various contexts. CT in education was first concisely defined by Dewey (1916) cited in Kuhn (1999) as a process that commences with students' engagement with a problem and ends with a solution and self-determination. Facione (1990) delineates CT as "purposeful, self-regulatory judgment which results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference, as well as explanation of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological, or contextual considerations upon which that judgment is based" (p. 2). Sharing similar view point, Rhodes (2010) opines that CT is a mental habit that is typified by the acceptance or formulation of an opinion or conclusion resulting from the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts and events. Pithers and Soden (2000) view CT as a cognitive process in which an individual possesses the ability to identify questions worth pursuing, pursue such questions by conducting independent, self-directed search and interrogating knowledge, and present evidence to support their arguments. In Trilling and Fadel's (2009) definition, CT is the capability to gather, analyze, interpret, evaluate and summarize information.

Sharing the similar context of legal education, this study adopts the definition proposed by James and Burton (2017) cited in Misnawati et al. (2023) who view CT as

"careful and thoughtful questioning of a legal statement, claim, argument, decision, position or action according to an explicit set of criteria or standards" (p. 422).

Many researchers have attempted to formulate the indicators of CT skills. Ennis (1995) puts forward five components of critical thinking ability including focus, reason, inference, situation, clarity, and overview or FRISCO for short. Halpern's (1997) taxonomy of CT skills includes five main domains: verbal reasoning skills, argument analysis skills, skills in thinking as hypothesis testing, likelihood and uncertainty and decision-making and problem-solving skills. Taylor (2002) opines that CT is a person's ability to communicate their reasons for their judgments in a clear manner. A critical thinker is able to commit to their own stance and change it when facing convincing evidence. Facione's (2015) CT skills taxonomy comprises of six indicators, namely interpretation, analysis, inference, evaluation, explanation and self regulation.

Bloom's (1956) put forward six levels of cognitive abilities which were then revised by Krathwohl (2002) to consist of the ability to know (C1), understand (C2), apply (C3), analyze (C4) evaluate (C5) and create (C6). According to Bloom's (1956), cognitive skills are divided into two levels: low-order thinking skills (C1-C3) (LOTS) and higher-order thinking skills (C4-C6) (HOTS). CT skills are essentially HOTS, therefore, this study adopts HOTS as guidelines for assessment of students' CT abilities to brief cases. HOTS are delineated by the researcher to fit the context of the study as follows:

Table 1 Students' CT skills reflected in case briefing

Level	Cognitive ability	Description
C4	Analyze	Students are able to break the judicial decision into constituent parts, namely case name, facts, procedural history, legal issues, rulings and reasoning, and determine how these parts relate to one another and to an overall structure through differentiating, organizing and attributing.
C5	Evaluate	Students are able to make judgments regarding what key facts are important for the outcome of the case, what key legal issues arise from the facts that the court decided, what decisions were rendered by the lower courts, what pre-existing rules the court interpreted and applied to the facts of the case, what reasons the court gave are the majority opinion.
C6	Create	Students are able to reorganize and put all the elements of a case brief together to produce a succinct summary of the case

2.3. Previous studies on strategies to develop law students' CT skills

Teaching CT at academic institutions has become a central focus and captured the interest of researchers and educators for several decades. While many researchers advocate for teaching CT skills in specific courses to impart to students the theoretical frameworks, concepts and skills (Bensley et al., 2010; Gelder, 2005; Alwehaibi, 2012; Kuek, 2010), others claim that CT skills should be a part of any course as students should practice the skills in depth in different contexts and situations in order to gain more comprehensive understanding of theory and application (Hatcher, 2006; Gelder, 2005; Halpern, 1999). Several strategies have been proposed by previous researchers to enable students to think more critically such as Socratic questioning technique (Yang et al, 2005), case study method (Mahdi et al., 2020), legal case-based reading (Misnawanti et al, 2023).

Socratic questioning is the "well-established instructional method across disciplines most notably in law education" (Stojkovic, 2023, p.558). Yang et al. (2005) look into the correlation between using Socratic questioning and students' CT skills in distance learning courses at a tertiary education. Their findings reveal that teaching and modeling of Socratic questioning help students demonstrate a high level of CT skills and be able to maintain such skills after the courses.

Mahdi et al. (2020) explored the use of case studies as a teaching strategy to enhance students' CT skills in an applied sciences university in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The research employs both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection through tests and questionnaire. Based on the results, they reach a conclusion that the use of case study method has resulted in inculcating students' CT skills.

In teaching legal English, Misnawati et al. (2023) examined the impact of legal case-based reading (LCbR) on students' CT abilities of first semester law major students in the Indonesian context. The findings reveal that the application of LCbR significantly improved the participants' thinking skills, particularly from low level to high order thinking skills.

In the Vietnamese context, legal English has increasingly grabbed the attention of domestic researchers over the past few years. However, previous studies focused mainly on the difficulties in learning legal English (Huong, 2022) and demotivating factors in learning legal English (Tuan et al., 2023), or the use of L1 in legal English classes (Minh, 2022). There is virtually no research into the use of case briefing method to teach legal English and enhance English-major students' CT skills in legal English classes. The present study, therefore, aims to bridge the gap in the literature and to shed light on case briefing method, ultimately improving the teaching and learning quality of legal English training program at a tertiary institution in Vietnam.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research design

This study employed a quasi-experimental research design to explore the causal relationship between pedagogical method of teaching legal English through case briefing and students' CT capabilities. Instead of using pretest-posttest design, the researcher adopted time-series design, i.e., measurements are taken multiple times to observe changes over time. This research design was opted as it allows the researcher to test her new teaching methods and identify students' strengths and weaknesses.

3.2. Setting and participants

The study was conducted at Hanoi Law University where legal English is taught to students majoring in different disciplines. The population selected to participate in this study was the final year English-majored students whose specialism is legal English. In their bachelor's degree of Legal English, they have to study four compulsory modules of legal English - two basic and two advanced ones, and one optional subsequent advanced module titled Advanced Legal English 3 (ALE3). It is also the highest-level legal English course in the legal English training program. This research was conducted during the time the participants took the ALE3 in the second semester of the school year 2022-2023.

Regarding the demographic information of the population, 63 fourth-year students consisting of 19 male (30%) and 44 female (70%) from two classes participated in the study. They were divided into 15 groups (12 groups of 4 and 3 groups of 5) to read three cases assigned by teacher and write correspondingly three case briefs. Their legal English competence based on the results of the Advanced Legal English Module 2 is demonstrated in the following table.

Table 2 Students' legal English competence

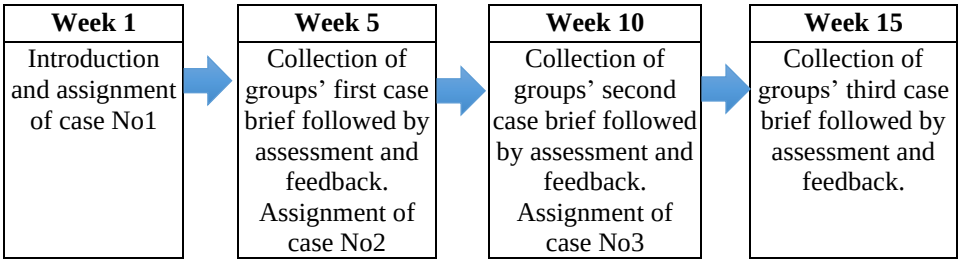
Letter grade	Grade point	N	Percentage
A-A+	3.70-4.00	7	11.1
B-B+	3.00-3.69	39	61.9
C-C+	2.00-2.99	12	19.0
D	1.00-1.99	5	8
F	<1.00	0	0

As can be seen from the table, the majority of participants (nearly 62%) gained solid accomplishment and goodness level (B-B+) and just over 1/10 (11.1%) achieved outstanding distinction and excellence level (A-A+). Nearly 1/5 (19%) of the participants attained average level (C-C+). Only a small number (5 out of 63 students) got a pass (D). None of the involved students failed the previous legal English end-of-term exam.

3.3. Data collection instruments and procedure

The instrument used to collect data in the present research is the case briefs written by groups of students at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the course. Each case brief is between 600-800 words and is in the form instructed by teacher which is described in detail in Table 3. The written summaries were then assessed by teacher to determine students' ability to think critically when dealing with each case. The experimental period lasted 15 weeks, paralleling the entire course. The whole process can be illustrated in the following diagram:

Diagram 1 Experimental process



The teacher selected three cases covering three broad areas of law instructed during the course, namely tort law, contract law and criminal law, then assigned them to all the groups subject to the timeframe set out. To promote students' CT while briefing cases, the researcher applied the Socratic questioning techniques, which, according to Stojković and Zerkin (2023), "centers upon active guidance of the professor who by asking students sequences of broad, open questions related to the required topic (content material), makes them engage their higher order thinking and cognitive skills by which they arrive at their own unveiling, discovery of the content knowledge" (p.557). To encourage students to follow a systematic approach, students were provided with an outline of the case brief and a set of Socratic questions to guide them through their briefing process.

Table 3 Outline and Socratic questions for case briefing

Sections of a case brief	Socratic questions
Case name	Who are the involved parties?
Facts of the case	What facts are presented?
Procedural history	What happened in the lower court(s)?
Legal issue(s)	What is the issue raised? Is there a law that has allegedly been violated?
Ruling	What did the court hold?
Reasoning	How is the matter analyzed? What facts are considered in the analysis? Are there any comparisons or contrasts discussed? Is there one fact weighted more heavily than the others? Should the application of the rule or principle apply to only this limited set of facts or should it apply generally?
Critical evaluation	Do you agree with the court's ruling? Is it fair in light of facts and the law? Has the court considered all the relevant facts? Do you agree with the court's reasoning? Would you resolve the matter differently? What would the implications of that conclusion or outcome be?

Because no standard, universally accepted and all-inclusive framework or set of criteria have been developed to describe or evaluate CT skills (Myrick, 2002), the researcher consulted the assessment rubric established by Burton (2017) as and the Holistic Critical Thinking Scoring Rubric developed by Facione and Facione (1994) to create her own rubric a means to evaluate students' CT reflected in their written assignments. The following table shows the content and constructs related to the core learning objective of CT that are expected in the final assignments produced by students.

Students' case briefs are assessed on a marking scale of 0 to 10 by adding up the marks for each criterion which will be then divided by seven. The participants' strengths and weaknesses reflected in their case briefs were well-noted by the researcher for feedback and further scaffolding.

Table 4 Critical thinking assessment rubric for case briefing

Criteria	Poor (1-4 points)	Average (>4-6 points)	Satisfaction (>6-8 points)	Exemplary (>8-10 points)
Case name	Not done or omits parties, or citation is not in the correct format.	Identifies the parties but not conforms to the citation format	Identifies the parties and citation in the correct format	Identifies the parties and citation in the correct format
Facts	Not done or simply copies details from the case	Includes some key facts	Includes most of the key facts	Includes all relevant facts
Procedural history	Not done or simply copies details from the case	Identifies some of the procedural elements correctly	Identifies most of the procedural elements correctly	Identifies all procedural elements correctly
Legal issue(s)	Uses the key words in the relevant law as the relevant legal issues.	Identifies the legal issues but fail to states them in the form of a question	Identifies some of the legal issues and states them in the form a question	Identifies all of the legal issues and states them in the form a question
Ruling	Incorrectly identifies the court's decision or fails to identify the reasons for the court's conclusion	Properly identifies the court's decision but omits the reasons for the court's conclusion	Properly identifies the court's decision and partially provides reasons for the court's conclusion	Properly identifies the court's decision and provides brief reasons for the court's conclusion
Reasoning	Incorrectly determines the rules of law applied to resolve the legal issue(s)	Correctly provides the rules of law applied to resolve the legal issue(s)	Properly identifies the applicable laws and partially explains how the court applied them to the facts to resolve the legal issue(s)	Properly identifies the applicable laws and clearly explains how the court applied them to the facts to resolve the legal issue(s)
Case critical evaluation	Simply restates the case details	Clearly expresses personal opinions with little support	Clearly expresses personal opinions with sufficient support	Clearly expresses personal opinion about the outcome and reasoning supported convincing arguments

3.4. Data analysis

SPSS v.260 was utilized to test the effects of case briefing on students' CT capabilities at three different time points. For such purpose, general linear model - repeated measures was run. This procedure provides analysis of variance when the same measurement is made several times on each subject or case. The results were then tabulated and analyzed accordingly.

Students' scores can be interpreted as follows:
0-4 points: low level of CT
>4-6 points: moderate level of CT
>6-8 points: high level of CT
>8-10 points: very high level of CT
The classroom observations were carried out in eight weeks from early March to early

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Research results

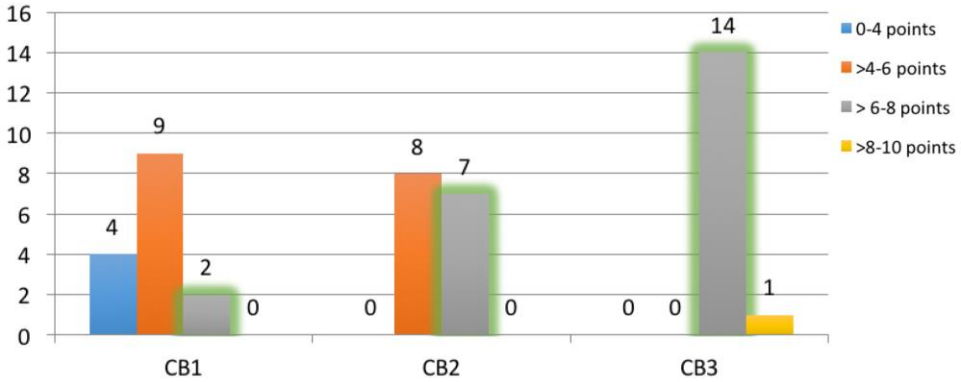


Chart 1 Scores of students' case briefs
NB: CB1: case brief 1 (Time 1); CB2: Case brief 2 (Time 2); CB3: Case brief 3 (Time 3)

Chart 1 shows the scores of each case brief on a marking scale of 0-10. Overall, the students scored higher in the second and the third assignment. To be more specific, in the first case brief, nearly 1/3 of the groups (4 groups) scored 4 or under, and 60% (9 groups) scored between 4 – 6 points. This means that the majority of students show a low or moderate level of CT. Approximately 14% reached a high level of CT. In the second case brief, well-over a half of groups scored between 4-6 points and just under a half scored between 6-8 points, showing a moderate and high level of CT respectively. In the last assignment, one group outstandingly scored from 8-10 points, reaching the highest level of CT while the remaining groups scored between 6-8, revealing their high level of CT abilities. From these data, it can be concluded that students' CT skills has increased from mostly low and average level to mostly high level.

The above data reveal a positive change in students' CT skills in at each phase of the study. However, to ascertain whether such development is statistically significant, the data obtained by running general linear model - repeated measures are prepared and tabulated for analysis as follows.

Table 5 Comparisons of students' mean scores at different time points

Mean scores of three case briefs

	Mean	Std Deviation	N
CB1	4.740	1.07	15
CB2	6.167	.51	15
CB3	7.400	.39	15

Mauchly's Test of Sphereicity[a]

					Epsilon[b]		
Within Subjects Effect	Mauchly's W	Appro. Chi-Square	df	Sig.	Greenhouse-Geisser	Huynh-Feldt	Lower-bound
Time	.524	8.396	2	.015	.678	.725	.500

Tests of Within-Subjects Effects

Source		Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Time	Sphericity Assumed	53.160	2	26.580	115.335	.000	.892
	Greenhouse-Geisser	53.160	1.355	39226	115.335	.000	.892
	Huynh-Feldt	53.160	1.449	36.675	115.335	.000	.892
	Lower-bound	53.160	1.000	53.160	115.335	.000	.892
Error (Time)	Sphericity Assumed	6.453	28	.230			
	Greenhouse-Geisser	6.453	18.973	.340			
	Huynh-Feldt	6.453	20.293	.318			
	Lower-bound	6.453	14.000	.461			

In the Mauchly test the Mauchly'W is significant, W(2) = .524, p=.015>.005, so the sphericity has not been violated, allowing the researcher to interpret the result in the "Sphericity assumed" row without having to modify the degrees of freedom. However, given that Mauchly test has shortcomings when dealing with small sample sizes, the results of Greenhouse-Geisser, Huynh-Feldt and Lower-bound are consulted for more stringent conclusion. In either case, the F and p are the same with F=115.355 and p=.000<.05, meaning that the scores of students' case briefs at three different points of time are significantly different.

Pairwise Comparisons

					95% Confidence interval for Difference[b]	
(I) Time	(J) Time	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.[b]	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	2	-1.427	.173	.000	-1.896	-.957
	3	-2.660	.222	.000	-3.265	-2.055
2	1	1.427	.173	.000	.957	1.896
	3	-1.233	.113	.000	-1.541	-.926
3	1	2.660	.222	.000	2.055	3.265
	2	1.233	.113	.000	.926	1.541

Based on estimated marginal means

b Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni.

Pairwise Comparisons table compares the mean scores of students' case briefs by pairs (CB1-CB2; CB1-CB3; CB2-CB1; CB2-CB3; CB3-CB1 and CB3-CB2) to track students' progress and determine at what time the change in their CT ability was significant. Obviously, all the mean differences do not include 0 and all the p values equals .000<0.05, showing that there are discrepancies between each pair of tests and such differences are statistically significant.

Students' scores of each criterion were also compared to deeply examine what part(s) of the students' case briefs they made the most significant progress at different intervals, and what they did the best at the end of the course. The results are presented in Tables 7 and 8.

Table 7 Students' mean scores of each criterion at different time points

Criteria	N	CB1		CB2		CB3	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Case name	15	4.533	.68	6.467	.29	8.200	.14
Facts	15	4.200	.39	5.800	.14	7.067	.15
Procedural history	15	4.467	.35	6.200	.17	7.800	.14
Legal issues	15	5.933	1.38	6.600	.63	8.000	.65
Ruling	15	5.333	1.34	6.600	.91	7.200	.56
Reasoning	15	5.200	1.26	5.866	.74	6.933	.45
Critical evaluation	15	3.466	1.88	5.333	.97	6.466	.74

Table 8 Difference between mean scores of each criterion at different time points

Criteria	CB1-CB2		CB2-CB3		CB1-CB3	
	Mean difference	Sig.	Mean difference	Sig.	Mean difference	Sig.
Case name	-1.933	.008	-1.733	.000	-3.667	.000
Facts	-1.600	.001	-1.267	.000	-2.867	.000
Procedural history	-1.733	.000	-1.600	.000	-3.333	.000
Legal issues	-.667	.058	-1.400	.000	-2.067	.000
Ruling	-1.267	.002	-.600	.042	-1.867	.000
Reasoning	-.667	.021	-1.067	.000	-1.733	.000
Critical evaluation	-1.867	.000	-1.133	.002	-3.000	.000

Looking at Table 8, all the mean differences of each criterion between CB1-CB2, CB2-CB3, CB1-CB2 were under 0 and the p values of each criterion in the pair CB1-CB3 were .000<.05. Hence, the improvement in students' scores was statistically significant. The most significant progress achieved by the participants were recorded in their ability to analyze, evaluate and create the case name, procedural history and critical evaluation (the mean differences between the first and the third case brief ranging from -3.667 to -3.000). These are followed by their capacity to deal with the facts and the legal issues (mean differences being -2.867 and -2.067 respectively). The findings suggest that overall, students were able to think more critically the more they practiced case briefing.

Table 7 elaborates students' mean scores of each criterion of case briefing at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the course. It enables the researcher to measure which skills are present, to what extent, and which skills require further development.

In the first case brief, none of the criteria was scored greater than 6. It means that the participants' CT skills were at or lower than the average level. The lowest score was critical evaluation of the judicial decision with a mean score of 3.466 showing that their ability to make judgments about the case was limitedly low. The mean scores of the remaining 6 out of 7 criteria ranging between 4.200 and 5.933 indicate an average level of students' CT.

Teacher's feedbacks of students' first assignment highlight a number of weaknesses and the aspects students need scaffolding. The biggest problem concerns students' ability to critically evaluate the case by contemplating all of its aspects and expressing their thoughts on the court's outcome and reasoning. Most groups simply recapitulated the case rather than judging it. Besides, students' analytical thinking at this point was not adequate because they could not differentiate details and organize them into constituent parts appropriately and logically. Relating to the 'Case name', some groups encountered difficulties identifying involved parties, citing the case in the right format and/or included irrelevant information. In the 'Facts of the case' section, many groups were not able to distinguish between facts and arguments or procedural history. Some wrote too long and failed to separate important facts from those less important. Regarding the 'Procedural history', some noticeable mistakes are either missing one court's ruling, including the final court's decision or enunciating the sentences rather than mentioning the decision of previous courts. The 'Legal issues' were better identified by the participants compared to other sections though some groups were unable to formulate them in the question form or include some unnecessary details such as ratio or opposing views. Pertaining to the 'Ruling', most groups simply pronounced the court's answer to the legal issues questions without stating whether it reversed or upheld the previous decision or briefing the main reasons for such ruling. Finally, in the 'Reasoning' section, many omitted the applicable laws.

In the second case brief, the mean scores of 7/7 criteria range from 5.333 to 6.660, thus falling under the second category of CT measurement – average. Although the statistics show little growth of students' CT skills based on the CT measurement, the score improvements at the second time compared to the first one were mostly significant except the 'legal issues' section ($p=.58>.05$).

The biggest improvements at the second attempt were witnessed in students' ability to correctly identify the parties, procedural history, legal issues and ruling and brief them properly in the form required. Their critical evaluation of the case was also improved to the extent that they could reflect their ideas about the case but with limited convincing arguments. However, some problems persisted regarding the capacity to isolate facts from arguments or outcome-determinative facts from unimportant ones, and the long-written reasoning.

In the last case brief, 5 out 7 criteria were marked at high level with the mean scores of between 7.067 and 8.200. They are case name, facts, procedural history, legal issues, and ruling. The two remaining sections reasoning and critical evaluation remained at average level ($M=6.933$ and $M=6.466$ respectively).

The overall increase in the score of the final case brief indicates the development of students' CT skills. The most important improvements are witnessed in students' ability to correctly identify parties involved, the legal issues and the critical evaluation of the case. This is evidenced by the overall concise, well-organized and quite precise case brief

and students' confidence in challenging the court's reasoning, detecting biases and suggesting alternative solutions to the legal issues by applying governing laws and judicial precedents. The area experienced less progress over the entire course compared to the rest is reasoning.

4.2. Discussion

The most important conclusion can be drawn from the results is that students' CT skills can be leveraged by applying case briefing approach. The marks the participants gained for each case brief increased significantly over time demonstrating that the more case briefing practice, the higher intellectual development they showcase. This finding closely aligns with previous studies. According to Morgan-Thomas (2012), case brief tasks are an effective approach for developing both critical reading and critical thinking of law students. Misnawati et al. (2023) claim that the use of legal case-based reading has considerably changed students' CT skills from LOTS to HOTS.

An important step of case briefing is reading the case and dealing with CT questions. In this respect, the current study shares similar findings with other studies which reveal the correlation between critical reading and CT skills. Specifically, Fadhilla (2017) points out that students' CT abilities improved as a result of critical reading method. The study by Yildirim and Soylemez (2018) also reveals that reading activities with CT reading questions have a statistically significant effect on students' CT abilities.

Thinking and writing are compatible, synergistic processes (Schmitdt, 1999), so teaching students to write means teaching them how to think, and writing is the manifestation of thinking. Case briefing is not merely the simplified version of a case, instead, it reflects students' cognitive capacity to understand the case, analyze and evaluate information, and make judgement about it. Writing a case summary contributes to the development of students CT skills. This finding is in line with Hooey and Bailey's (2005) who state that writing encourages students to become active learners and critical thinkers. Husna (2019) also claims that by including some critical thinking activities as part of students' required assignments, their ability to elaborate ideas is promoted.

The students' improvements in each criterion of the case brief over time is a concrete and strong indicator of the development of their mental capacity to recognize recurring patterns and connections between different pieces of information included in the case. That students' ability to analyze and evaluate of the court's reasoning progressed less than other aspects is not beyond expectation because the reasoning may be the most difficult part of writing a case brief. The court often goes back and forth and cites cases throughout, so students have to make efforts to cut through all the dicta.

5. CONCLUSION

The current research is undertaken aiming to figure out whether the application of case briefing in legal English classes can promote students' CT skills – a crucial ability for legal practitioners to navigate through the complexities of legal rules and real world situations. A semi-experimental research design was adopted to measure changes in the participants' intellectual capabilities at three different points of time. The findings reveal that students' CT skills increase from average level at the beginning to high level at the end of the course. The study, therefore, affirms the effectiveness of using case briefing technique to leverage

students' CT abilities. The gradual increase in students' scores over time indicates the importance of frequent practice of skills involving CT activities such as reading and writing. The pedagogical implication of this study is to encourage legal English teachers to use case law to facilitate students' intellectual growth. Careful selection of judicial opinions is well-advised to make sure they are pertinent to the course content and students' domain knowledge. Designing scaffolding such as case brief format with Socratic questioning technique and criterion-referenced assessment is essential to support independent, higher-level thinking in students.

This research is not without limitation. The absence of a true experimental research to a certain extent limits the ability conclude the causal link between an intervention and an outcome. This implies a suggestion for further researchers with interest in the field to carry out a true experimental research with randomized control and treatment group to measure the effect of the manipulation.

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Review research paper

INVESTIGATING ENGLISH MEDIUM INSTRUCTION PROVISION IN A KAZAKHSTANI UNIVERSITY: THE IDEALS AND REALITIES OF EMI LEARNING

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Abstract. *As one of the many non-Anglophone countries where English is taught as a foreign language, Kazakhstan is actively involved in the processes aimed at internationalising higher education. One way to achieve this is by increasing the number of English-taught courses, i.e. introducing English Medium Instruction (EMI) for non-linguistic courses. However, there are concerns about how effectively this process is provided in practice and how students and teachers themselves perceive it. This research paper explores some aspects of EMI provision in one private Kazakhstani university, examining the alignment and differences between the theoretical ideals and practical realities of EMI. Specifically, it aims to examine the students' and teachers' perceptions of EMI provision in terms of reasons of EMI choice, English proficiency, translanguaging, and personal concerns. Through this investigation, the paper sheds light on the challenges and opportunities faced by both instructors and students in navigating EMI provision within the context of higher education in Kazakhstan. The online survey among 176 students and 31 teachers, analysed in a quantitative way, reveals some discrepancies between teachers' and students' perceptions regarding EMI reasons, language competence and translanguaging practices. This indicates the need for revising and clarifying existing institutional and national policies regarding EMI provision taking into consideration the voiced challenges on the part of the teachers and students.*

Key words: *English as a medium of instruction, EMI provision, higher education, content teachers, students' perceptions*

1. INTRODUCTION

To date, a considerable amount of research has been conducted worldwide on English Medium Instruction (EMI) and its implementation and provision in higher education (Byun et al. 2011; Dearden 2014; Goodman et al. 2022a, 2022b; Macaro and Aizawa 2022; Kováčiková and Luprichová 2023). In this paper, EMI is defined as "the use of the English language to teach academic subjects in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English" (Dearden 2014). This growing

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phenomenon is also referred to as EME (English Medium Education) in higher educational institutions (HEIs). (Dafouz and Smit 2016).

Across the world, EMI has become one of the central pursuits of education since English proficiency, coupled with knowledge and skills in the specialty, open up broader opportunities for university graduates, including wider career perspectives, successful functioning in the international labour market, being confident multilinguals as well as access to an abundance of scientific and subject-specific literature (Curle et al. 2020, 3). As a result, in an attempt to pursue these goals and provide these opportunities, many countries have joined international organizations aimed at integration into a global world. Kazakhstan, a non-English speaking country in Central Asia, was no exception. By entering the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in 2010, it became one of the first countries in the region to sign the Bologna declaration (Analytical Report 2022). From a national perspective, EMI in Kazakhstan is a means to develop the country economically and politically (Dearden 2014, 15).

Since the introduction of the EMI format of delivering courses in non-linguistic majors, Kazakhstani HEIs have started adopting relevant policies, designing and launching numerous English-taught educational programs and developing various methodologies for the appropriate implementation. Moreover, the number of HEIs with EMI has grown considerably, from 42 in 2015 to 70 in 2020 (Tajik et al. 2022a). Given that the academic subjects are taught by content teachers who are not language specialists and for some part do not have an appropriate level of English language proficiency, this, in turn, along with the opportunities, resulted in the emergence of challenges that needed to be urgently addressed. Accordingly, a number of Kazakhstani studies emerged that sought to explore various issues related to EMI, such as opportunities and challenges of EMI adoption (Seitzhanova et al. 2015), the impact of EMI on academic outcomes of students (Nurshatayeva and Page 2019), translanguaging practices in EMI settings (Goodman et al. 2021), graduate students' struggles with academic English reading and writing and coping strategies (Tajik et al. 2022b), teachers' and students' perceptions of their EMI practices by focusing on the interplay between language management, language practices and language ideology (Yessenbekova 2022), multilingual graduate students' identity in EMI universities (Zhunussova et al. 2023), overview of institutional EMI policies (Gaipov et al. 2024). Some of the earliest studies described the measures implemented by Kazakhstani government to internationalize the higher education sector and suggested using the best practices of other countries for efficient implementation of EMI in local HEIs (Oralova 2012).

Notably, despite growing research into EMI, in Kazakhstan this issue is still in its infancy. This point was also highlighted by Tajik et al. (2022a) who explain that although EMI has become a popular topic of investigation worldwide, "there is a lack of systematic investigation of EMI practices in Kazakhstani universities" and "...very little empirical evidence on the effectiveness, quality, and practices of EMI" (Tajik et al. 2022a, 100). Therefore, it is believed that exploring the students' and teachers' perceptions of EMI provision at their university might assist in addressing the aforementioned problems and indicate the efficacy of current policies in terms of EMI. There is a need for a bottom-up approach to the EMI-related policies, hence, the experiences and perceptions of students and faculty can highlight the inadequacies and point to areas for further improvement of the current national, institutional, and departmental policies, mainly suggested by top-down initiatives.

Thus, this study aims to examine the students' and teachers' perceptions of EMI provision in terms of reasons of EMI choice, English proficiency, translanguaging, and personal concerns in one of the private universities in Kazakhstan, where most of the educational programs for non-linguistic majors are delivered in English.

2. Literature Review

As a theoretical framework guiding the current study we refer to the "[d]riving forces behind EMI" by Rose et al. (2019), according to which certain aspects lead to success in EMI. The first force that drives the students is choosing the educational program or a university for a number of reasons in order to become a competitive and highly qualified specialist. The second driving force is their English language proficiency that will help them to be successful. Another aspect of EMI is translanguaging that can facilitate the learning and teaching process if utilized appropriately. Finally, identifying personal challenges and concerns in EMI can assist in overcoming them by informing the stakeholders responsible for EMI provision.

As a rule, the goals of EMI universities align with the reasons of students' choice both globally and locally and are closely associated with the national ambitious aims in pursuit of developing highly qualified human capital. For example, Korean universities view EMI implementation as "a major instrument for innovation in terms of internationalization" and as a "means of raising Korean universities' competitiveness in an increasingly global higher education market" (Byun 2011, 432). Similarly, Ball and Lindsay (2013) mention a number of primary objectives of EMI courses at the University of the Basque Country, among which "greater access to academic source material in their subjects" (Ball and Lindsay 2013, 44) and "subsequent possibilities in the labour market". Likewise, for Kazakhstan, EMI is sought after to prepare competitive specialists in various disciplines with the added bonus of linguistic competence based on proficiency in English: this then helps them to become mobile in the international educational space and in the labour market (Analytical Report 2022).

However, the proper provision of EMI requires appropriate command of English on the part of both teachers and students. Despite introducing English language education from the primary stage, Kazakhstan is among the countries with the lowest level of English proficiency. As of 2022, it was reported that 95% of Kazakhstani university applicants had low English proficiency of A1, A2 levels (Analytical Report 2022). These statistics suggest that secondary schools provide only basic foreign language skills, which are not enough at the tertiary level with its cognitively demanding academic tasks.

As a result, the EMI environment poses formidable challenges for non-English speaking stakeholders (Kováčiková and Luprichová 2023). For example, Tajik et al. (2022a) identified students' challenges of personal-psychological and sociological nature including various subcategories such as understanding content, language issues, academic reading. As for disciplinary faculty, along with similar problems which are partially rooted in the relatively "older age" of content teachers and inability to teach in English (Oralova 2012; Yessenbekova 2022), they also experience pedagogical challenges and a lack of resources (Seitzhanova et al. 2015).

In this regard, English for Specific/Academic Purposes (ESP/EAP) courses become crucial in assisting students to gain appropriate levels of academic language competence. As Williams (2015) states, universities should scaffold EMI through EAP courses. Likewise, Jinghui (2023) suggests collaborative work of ESP/EAP and EMI teachers as one of the

solutions to overcome the pedagogical and linguistic difficulties of content teachers. Such collaboration would benefit teachers in designing the lesson components and considering the issues of feedback as well as "in producing learning outcomes, assessment strategies and material that combine equally the teaching of language and content" (Alhasani 2023, 424).

Another driving force to support EMI is developing clear guidelines concerning the proportion of using English and L1 (native or dominant language) in the EMI classroom. The latest study reported deficiencies in clear articulated institutional policies regarding EMI at a number of HEIs, with both full and partial EMI implementation (Gaipov et al. 2024) thus indicating an urgency of developing more explicit and practice-wise ones. This is crucially important to regulate the amount of languages the students are exposed to for achieving the ultimate goals of EMI stated above. Although there is an "English-only belief" among students and content teachers (Jinghui 2023), using L1 within reasonable limits and for certain purposes seems to be the right decision. This phenomenon is currently referred to as "translanguaging" which is defined in pedagogy as "the act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages, in order to maximize communicative potential" (García 2009, 140). The latest research emphasizes that L1 should be used as a scaffolding tool in EMI classes (Goodman et al. 2021; Yessenbekova 2022), yet, clear guidelines and a detailed understanding of how translanguaging is used are still needed (Kim 2011; Pun 2021).

A recent study by Zhunussova et al. (2023) draws attention to multilingual graduate students' identity in EMI universities in Kazakhstan. Such studies recommend "to consider the local context rather than importing EMI without any adaptation" (Zhunussova et al. 2023, 2). The importance of local context is stressed in a number of studies (Rose et al. 2019; Jinghui 2023). In view of that, exploring undergraduate students' perceptions of EMI provision can inform policymakers and other stakeholders of the state of things and possible limitations in certain settings. The unique nature of each HEI should be taken into account when institutional policies are designed in order to adequately adapt them according to the needs of the particular context.

3. METHOD

In this regard, the current paper seeks to address the following research questions:

RQ 1. To what extent do students' and teachers' perceptions align or differ regarding the reasons to study in EMI programs?
RQ 2. What are the students' and teachers' perceptions of English proficiency in EMI classrooms?
RQ 3. What are the students' and teachers' perceptions of translanguaging?
RQ 4. To what extent do students' and teachers' perceptions align or differ regarding personal concerns in EMI?

Study Context

The research was carried out in a Kazakhstani tertiary context, specifically in an English-medium university offering a range of English-taught bachelor's and master's degree programs in education, social sciences, IT, humanities, and economics. The University under study strives to take a leading position in the international arena of higher education through teaching in

English, as well as training highly qualified specialists with all the necessary skills, knowledge, and competence to strengthen their position in the global labour market. The University operates a trilingual education system, according to which 82% of its educational programs are taught in English, 18% in Kazakh and Russian. The University employs graduates from leading global universities, including: Cambridge University (UK), Harvard University (USA), University of Southern California (USA), Columbia University (USA), and many others. The University has a confirmed EMI policy available for the faculty and students. Further, there are incentive schemes for the holders of international professional (TKT, TESOL, EMI, CLIL) and language proficiency certificates (IELTS, TOEFL).

Research Design, Tools and Sampling

In order to answer the above-mentioned research questions, the present study employed a survey design by collecting and analyzing quantitative data.

The surveys with two target audiences (teachers and students) were designed to elicit information on their perceptions regarding reasons for choosing EMI programs, command of English, translanguaging experiences and challenges they faced while teaching and studying EMI programs. The surveys were administered from December 2022 to February 2023. The University Ethics Committee validated the survey questions. Non-probability convenience sampling was used to recruit the survey participants. The total number of respondents was 207 comprising 176 students and 31 teachers. Participation was voluntary and anonymous.

The data was analyzed via SPSS version 29 to enable frequency and inferential analysis. In order to determine whether there is an association between two categorical variables, the Chi-square test of independence was conducted. Table 1 shows the demographic analysis containing the respondents' information:

Table 1 Respondents' Profile Statistics

Variable	Students (n=176)			Teaching staff (n=31)		
	Item	Q-ty	%	Item	Q-ty	%
Gender	Male	66	37.5%	Male	14	45.2%
	Female	110	62.5%	Female	17	54.8%
Age	18-20	161	91.5%	20-29	10	32.2%
	21-25	13	7.4%	30-39	11	35.4%
	26-30	1	0.6%	40-49	6	19.3%
	31+	1	0.6%	50+	4	12.9%
EMI Learning/Teaching experience	1-2 years	83	47,2%	1-2 years	13	41,9%
	2-4 years	47	26,7%	2-4 years	4	12,9%
	4-8 years	25	14,2%	4-8 years	5	16,1%
	8-12 years	10	5,7%	8-12 years	3	9,7%
	13+ years	11	6,3%	13+ years	6	19,4%

The data reveal a relatively fair gender distribution among teaching staff, whilst the student body comprised more female representatives. Age is often a pivotal variable in considering various EMI aspects; it can be seen that two-thirds of the teachers are under the age of 40, while the majority of students (91.5%) are between 18 and 20. These indicators are important to consider in conjunction with another significant variables,

namely EMI learning and teaching experience, which is depicted in Table 1. The data analysis indicates a logical connection between the age group of 18-20 and the duration of EMI learning experiences, with most students falling within this age range. Specifically, the results suggest that the majority of students in this age bracket have accumulated less than five years of EMI learning experience, highlighting a potential relationship between age and the duration of English-based instructional methods. On the other hand, it may be possible that the respondents might not have factored into the response time they spent on learning the foreign language.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. To what extent do students' and teachers' perceptions align or differ regarding reasons to study in EMI university?

Table 2 below illustrates a convergence of perspectives between teachers and students on the importance of the reasons associated with attending an EMI university. Both teaching staff and students highlight the significance of EMI in enhancing English proficiency and preparing students for the international job market, as evidenced by high mean ratings (M=0.74, 0.66 and 0.77 respectively) and substantial agreement percentages (SD=0.425-0.498 range). The data suggests that 92 students (86.8%) view achieving confidence as a multilingual individual as the primary motivation for selecting an EMI university, whereas 114 students (83.2%) regard English proficiency as a more crucial factor. Additionally, 80 students (81.6%) are motivated by the desire to become international/global citizens, although teachers attribute slightly less importance to this reason with a (M= 0.58) compared to (M=0.47) by students. For instance, 18 teachers (18.4%) acknowledge this reason, indicating a lesser consensus among educators. On the other hand, both teachers and students recognize the importance of preparing for the international labour market, with 26.1% of teachers and 73.9% of students agreeing. However, while teachers rate this reason significantly high with a mean of (M=0.77), students assign it a lower importance rating of (M=0.44), suggesting a divergence in perceived significance. Even though these reasons still depict notable agreement percentages from both teachers and students, indicating their relevance, there are variations in mean ratings and percentages, suggesting varying degrees of emphasis placed on the reasons.

Moreover, in order to determine whether there is an association between two categorical variables (in our case variables are represented by reasons and respondents' status), the Chi-square test of independence was conducted. The findings indicate that the first three reasons are not statistically linked to respondents' preferences. However, concerning the desire "to enhance prospects of becoming an international/global citizen," although the significance level does not fall below .05, it suggests a moderate association, albeit not meeting conventional statistical significance criteria.

The last item stands out with a Chi-square statistic of 16.056 and a significance level of less than .001, denoted by an asterisk (*), indicating a highly significant association. This suggests that attending an EMI university to prepare for the international labour market strongly correlates with the respondents' preferences.

Table 2 Respondents' perspectives on the reasons students choose an EMI university

Items		Teachers	Students	χ^2	p
To become a confident multi-lingual	%	45.2%	52.3%	.533	.465
	Mean	0.45	0.51		
	SD	0.506	0.501		
To raise English proficiency level	%	74.2%	64.8%	1.045	.307
	Mean	0.74	0.66		
	SD	0.445	0.474		
To attend a university with global recognition and ranking	%	51.6%	43.2%	.759	.384
	Mean	0.52	0.44		
	SD	0.508	0.498		
To improve chances of becoming an international/global citizen	%	58.1%	45.5%	1.681	.195
	Mean	0.58	0.47		
	SD	0.502	0.501		
To prepare for the international labour market	%	77.4%	38.6%	16.056	<.001*
	Mean	0.77	0.44		
	SD	0.425	0.498		

4.2. What are the students' and teachers' perceptions of English proficiency in EMI classrooms?

The data in Table 3 below reflects several ideals that the University aspires to achieve in EMI environments. For instance, the majority of teachers (83.9%) believe that students do become more proficient in English by the end of their courses, indicating an alignment with the goal of enhancing English language skills among students and with a mean score of (M=0.84) indicating strong agreement among respondents. Similarly, a significant percentage of teachers (87.1%) express confidence in their own proficiency to deliver courses in English, albeit with a slightly lower mean score (M=0.81) compared to the previous question, highlighting an ideal scenario where educators possess the necessary linguistic skills to effectively impart knowledge through EMI. However, the data also reveals certain realities that exist within the EMI framework. Despite the optimistic outlook, there are notable proportions of respondents who express reservations. For instance, while the majority believe in student proficiency growth, around 16.1% of teachers disagree or are uncertain about this improvement. This suggests that there may be challenges or limitations in the actual outcomes of English language instruction. Additionally, while the majority of teachers express confidence in their own proficiency, there are still significant percentages who have reservations, indicating that not all educators feel fully equipped to deliver content in English.

Table 3 Command of English

Respondents	Question item	Yes	No	Mean	SD
Teachers	Overall, do the students at the University become more proficient in English by the end of their courses?	83.9%	16.1%	0.84	0.374
	Overall, do the students at the University have a suitable command of English to be active class members?	80.6%	19.4%	0.81	0.402
	Overall, do you have a suitable command of English to confidently deliver your courses in EMI?	87.1%	12.9%	0.87	0.341
	Overall, has your level of proficiency in English improved since you first started teaching through EMI?	80.6%	19.4%	0.81	0.402
Students	Overall, do you feel you have become more proficient in English as your courses at the University progress?	68.2%	31.8%	0.68	0.467
	Do you feel confident making contributions to class in English?	79%	21%	0.79	0.409

Conversely, in Table 3 it is evident that 68.2% of students feel they have become more proficient in English as their courses progress, with a slightly lower mean score of 0.68. There is a discrepancy between teachers' perceptions of student proficiency growth (83.9%) and students' self-reported perceptions (68.2%). While both groups generally agree that proficiency improves, teachers seem to have a more optimistic view compared to students. Moreover, 79% of students feel confident about making contributions to class in English, with a mean score of (M=0.79). To conclude, both teachers and students generally express confidence in English language participation, with teachers being slightly more confident in their own abilities. However, there is still a high level of confidence among students with a (M= 0.68) and (SD=0.467) indicating a generally positive perception of their own English proficiency and participation in class discussions.

4.3. What are the students' and teachers' perceptions of translanguaging?

Table 4 Percentage of course content in English

% of content in English	Under 50%	51% to 70%	71% to 80%	81% to 99%	100%	Mean	SD
Teachers	9	4	2	5	11	3.16	3.28
Students	12	35	41	67	21	1.715	1.121

The responses of both teachers and students regarding the proportion of course content conducted in English at the University are shown in Table 4 above. On average, teachers reported a higher proportion of courses conducted in English (M= 3.16), with a relatively higher standard deviation (SD=3.28), indicating more variability in their responses. A considerable number of teachers reported conducting all their courses in English (100%), suggesting a strong presence of EMI in their teaching practices. Conversely, students

reported a lower average proportion of courses conducted in English (M=1.715), with a lower standard deviation (SD=1.121), indicating more consistency in their responses. To conclude, in reality, there is a discrepancy between the perceptions of teachers and students regarding the proportion of courses conducted in English. This suggests a potential gap between the intended EMI practices by teachers and the actual experiences reported by students. The variability in teacher responses indicates that while some teachers conduct all courses in English, others adopt a more mixed approach. On the other hand, students' responses show more consistency, with the majority experiencing a significant portion of their courses in English (Table 4).

According to Table 5 below, which depicts the responses to the question “Do you make use of translanguaging?” teachers reported a moderate utilization of translanguaging (M=2.74), with a relatively higher standard deviation (SD=1.390), indicating variability in their responses. The most common responses were "Yes, quite often" and "Rarely," suggesting that while some teachers use translanguaging regularly, others do so infrequently or not at all. In contrast, students reported a higher level of translanguaging utilization (M= 3.44), with a lower standard deviation (SD=1.035), indicating more consistency in their responses. Since the University does not have a policy on the degree of translanguaging that is (im)permissible within EMI provision, it is quite possible and acceptable to be flexible for students to use either L1 or English in the same classroom. In this way, lecturers' and students' responses may differ.

Table 5 Translanguaging

Respondents	Yes, very often	Yes, quite often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Mean	SD
Teachers (n=31)	3	10	1	10	7	2.74	1.390
Students (n=176)	32	49	63	28	4	3.44	1.035

3.4. To what extent do students' and teachers' perceptions align or differ regarding personal concerns in EMI?

Table 6 below presents an overview of the concerns related to EMI respondents. Specifically, it highlights the percentage of responses and the results of Chi-square tests conducted to assess if there are significant differences in items provided.

According to the data, the Chi-square test reveals a significant association between respondents (teachers and students) and concerns about fluency in speaking ($\chi^2 = 5.161$, df = 1, p = .023). This indicates that there are differences in the levels of concern regarding speaking fluency among respondents. Moreover, significant associations were detected about overall proficiency in all four skills areas ($\chi^2 = 7.194$, df = 1, p = .007), low confidence ($\chi^2 = 14.264$, df = 1, p < .001). On the other side, there is no significant association between respondents and concerns about written English proficiency ($\chi^2 = 2.195$, df = 1, p = .138), suggesting that both teachers and students have similar levels of concerns in this area. The same is true of subject-specific vocabulary ($\chi^2 = 2.332$, df = 1, p = .127), comparisons with other students ($\chi^2 = 3.501$, df = 1, p = .061), as well as with “none of the above” option as an item ($\chi^2 = .040$, df = 1, p = .841).

Table 6 Respondents' perceptions on concerns and struggles

Items	Teachers			Students			χ^2	p
	N	%	% of cases	N	%	% of cases		
Overall proficiency in all four skills areas	8	15.7%	25.8%	35	19.9%	20.2%	7.194	.007*
Subject-specific vocabulary	3	5.9%	9.7%	60	34.1%	34.7%	2.332	.127
Low confidence	3	5.9%	9.7%	39	22.2%	22.5%	14.264	<.001*
Concerns about comparisons with other students/teachers	6	11.8%	19.4%	45	25.6%	26%	3.501	.061
Written English	8	15.7%	25.8%	66	37.5%	38.2%	2.195	.138
Fluency (speaking)	11	21.6%	35.5%	86	48.9%	49.7%	5.161	.023*
None of the above	12	23.5%	38.7%	31	17.6%	17.9%	.040	.841

* The Chi-square statistic is significant at the .05 level.

4. Conclusion

As this study has shown, there are some discrepancies between the ideals and realities of EMI provision at the private Kazakhstani University under investigation. On the one hand, the University, as a major driving force behind EMI, provides strong support by developing institutional policies, employing graduates of the world's leading foreign universities, setting high admission criteria for students and suggesting incentive schemes for the holders of international professional and language proficiency certificates. On the other hand, although the overall results reflect these endeavors, there are slight differences in how teachers and students perceive EMI provision in several aspects. Some important findings regarding EMI reasons are that while students aim to raise English proficiency, teachers perceive that preparing for the international labour market seems to be the most important reason for their students. Both teachers and students believe that students become more proficient in English by the end of their courses, which in turn aligns with the reasons they choose EMI. There is a variability of teacher responses in regards to translanguaging in delivering the classes, whereas students reported higher instances of translanguaging utilization. As for challenges, both teachers and students expressed concerns surrounding fluency in speaking.

These results indicate that in this particular context, in reality, there are ongoing challenges and potential gaps between the intended EMI practices by teachers and the actual experiences reported by students. In addition, the results point to the need for further improvements in this institutional context and offer some important insights into how this process is implemented in Kazakhstani HEIs. This also indicates the need to strengthen EMI support by revising and clarifying the existing institutional and national policies regarding EMI provision taking into consideration the voiced challenges on the part of the teachers and students. This paper reports preliminary findings of a larger research project aimed at exploring the practices of using English-medium instruction in the context of internationalization of HEIs in Kazakhstan**.**

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Review research paper

ESP AS A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO EDUCATION - CLASSROOM PRACTICE ILLUSTRATION

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Abstract. *The authors advocate major change in the conceptualisation of English for Specific Purposes courses. While the foundational premise of any ESP instruction is highly focused on a particular professional/scientific field and thus narrow as opposed to the concept of language as an ontology, we hereby claim that an ESP course can be successful in its preset outcome and at the same time significantly upgraded towards the notion of language as a tool for not only expressing the fullness of being, but also as a language instruction methodology that significantly improves mental capabilities and social awareness in students. ESP understood and practiced as a narrow, focused approach to language teaching does not necessarily pay attention to the development of any other intellectual or psychological aspect of a student. Authors disagree with the educational policies that proclaim particularised knowledge output of language studying process. We show that with appropriate teaching methodology the teaching of ESP can be (re)turned to holistic education that is the innate nature of language.*

Key words: *English for Specific Purposes, teaching methodology, holistic education, intellecual capacities enhancement, culture*

1. LANGUAGE AS ONTOLOGY

Language is the expression of the highest mental powers of a human. It is at once the expression of those and the very essence of thought, for there is no thought without language. This is a general formal-logical theory of language, referred to as ontology (the nature of reality in philosophical terms) due to this causal role of language which at once reflects ontology and ontology reflects the totality of the world. The expressions of language have therefore dual ontological nature due to the functional aspect of language itself (descriptive, representational and referential functions of language) and the logic of the extra-linguistic ontological counterparts (the objects it refers to). This is the knowledge – language – reality relationship where all three segments are at once present and one cannot exist without the others. This means that what we learn, know about our reality is at once thought and expressed in language. Language at once represents human

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knowledge that is obtained in the process of cognizing reality, and is a means of description of such cognized reality. Getting to know the world around us necessarily involves logic and rational thinking processes – mental capabilities at the same time lying in the core of language structure and use. To describe the reality, language reflects its structure within its own structure which is undoubtedly related to that of the cognized world. Language we use is conditioned by the formation of knowledge that is obtained in the process of getting to know, interpreting the reality.

This referencing to philosophical concepts of ontology and language interdependence serves to make a contrast with the idea of English for Specific Purposes (and any Language for Specific Purposes for that matter) which is considered to be a form of "restricted" language. The founding theorists of ESP, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) explained that this approach to language teaching is determined solely by students' reasons for learning, their needed professional linguistic environment. This being the primary rationale for any given ESP course, it follows ESP is directly related to the professional requirements of a job market economy where a participant, employee, needs to excel in the given profession and its communicative aspect. The restricted side of this form of instruction becomes obvious. Unlike language as a whole which relates to the totality of human experience ('reality'), here only one fragment is worked on and developed.

This focused output in turn is confirmed as desired by numerous higher education (HE) policies (e.g. Bologna declaration). These state confirmed policies require HE institutions to clearly state and of course vouch their output will be specialized knowledge and the related skills in a clearly and precisely delineated domain. This certainly is commendable as the graduated students will be highly equipped for work in that particular domain and will have adequate communicative means to express and transfer the expertise. The authors do not challenge these assumptions, for they are in truth aligned with the contemporaneity. *Our intention is to demonstrate these goals can be achieved in a way that surpasses them and opens up even this type of educational setting and instructional process towards wider, non restricted education that at once fulfills preset educational goals of the given HE institution and bears characteristics of holistic education*. By this we mean education that is not confined to one particular field of human knowledge and professional activity. *The methodology we propose aims at developing mental potential of students.* While indeed working on the content of a single domain, by making students conscious of the intellectual benefits of that particular methodological approach, it develops transversal skills and wider awareness that are needed for any field of human existence and not restricted to the given profession for which students are preparing. Thus this methodology at once implies work on the given professional and scientific communication setting, but in intellectual gains it is a form of holistic education.

Rather than explain theory of this approach we will illustrate it through concrete examples of classroom work. *Each practice will showcase that while working on appropriate linguistic expression of particular ESP domain content knowledge students simultaneously work on enhancing a particular transversal, intellectual capacity*. The authors believe, and prove this in their teaching practice that development of intellect, cognizance, expression, appropriate social responses and interaction, constitute holistic education. By holistic education we mean thorough preparation in terms of knowledge for the future job, and work on the mental, psychological, cultural traits of the students, making them aware that one's improvement in all these fields is a life-long process and that it should be an inherent and also life-long need. In other words, we believe that

within the rather focused educational aims of the higher education institutions, there is enough space to develop essential capacities in students which delineate them as truly educated, socially attentive and aware. We propose that this need to be the next stage in the theory and practice of teaching languages for specific purposes.

The method of instruction that we advocate is Socratic (Stojković, Zerkin 2023). It directly stimulates deep understanding of the existing knowledge in students, making connections with the new knowledge presented by various ways – deduction, referencing, making analogies, and alike, all serving as great potential for intellectual growth. This is accompanied with other insights, mainly related to social interaction and knowledge of culture.

2. Classroom Practice

2.1. Self research skills and independence

We begin the course by an introductory self presentation on where and what student study. Professor asks what the English official name of the university is, then faculty, department. Students mostly guess by translating directly from their mother tongue. In order to come up with the correct example, they are told to do the web search. Students do not expect that as they are used to tacit prohibition of using any auxiliary resources other than their own knowledge. However, we continue this practice in further classes. Thus, for example, students may search for words, for proper pronunciation of new terminology, and alike. We explain to them that unlike what may be conditionally called traditional class where that would not be allowed, we much rather believe in the benefits of simulating a real life, outside classroom situation, where they would naturally look for assistance performing websearch. Students practice websearch, learn where to find plausible information, and begin to be able to rely on themselves in a novel or challenging professional situation. We are aware these example practices are on a small scale, yet we are positive that instilling the feeling of safety in students, their knowledge that they can be sure they would find a proper answer, is satisfactory.

Another instance when students (further) acquire these characteristics and competencies is a class on discourse analysis. Students are shown how to use AntConc software. The simulation situation is that they have obtained a prestigious job in a company that deals with some specialized equipment which they are unfamiliar with and so do not know the relevant terminology. They are advised to obtain all textual material on it, starting from company's brochures to in-house documentation. Then, they should run it through the AntConc. The terminology, phrases, collocations, examples of use within sentences that the software returns would be enough for them to appear an informed novice at their new job. Here again students are not only taught professional related lexis, but also self confidence, knowing they have a retreat in case they find themselves lacking certain vocabulary and/or the use of it and where to resort to if such a case occurs. Students are aware of the high probability of this scenario and appreciate this practice.

2.2. Social interaction

A few times during the course, we have discussion classes. We agree on simulating the classroom is a company meeting room. The professor withdraws and is only a silent

observer. The simulation can be a discussion on applying a new software solution or alike. As the class unfolds, the professor does not interfere in any way, but after the practice is over, there is a joint, professor guided reflexion, discussion, assessment of the performance. The first class is most relevant as then the issues that need most attention working on show in their fullest.

In the beginning professor sets the topic together with the students. It is important that the simulated situation is the one they are all intellectually comfortable with, and they are told this. Such exercise does resemble those of debating, yet in our case that is not the highlight. Instead, here students need to apply the discourse, genre, rhetoric of the science they study in the formulation of domain content loaded arguments. This is a language practice that on the linguistic level combines stylistic and logical argumentation. This is one layer.

There is a huge gap between passive knowledge of scientific and professional English in these students, which they show in writing, and their spoken performance of it. When practice like this begins this shows in all its starkness. Professors intentionally begin students speaking practice in this group format. When it has been practiced enough, highlights of it internalized by students, then we proceed to individual speaking practice.

Collective speaking practice is important to observe from every aspect. Students usually sit scattered around the classroom. Professor announces the beginning of the practice and withdraws. The simulation of company employees talk is begun by the most self confident, most communicative student, aware that their language mastery is sufficient for them to feel free in such an environment. He/she initiates and then leads the conversation, prompting other students to state what they think. Then a few other students become more active, while the majority remains very passive and even do not say anything during the whole class.

After the work is done, we together analyse the performance. Practice has shown that this reflection phase is better done on the next class. When asked to assess the overall performance and to analyse it, the majority begins by commending the student who established themselves a leader of the group, and then those who also took part in the exchange. They admit the majority was passive and that therefore they would underscore in actual circumstances.

Professor then focuses questions on the leader and the rest, asking students to elaborate on this relationship that was established. This requires a string of coveted leading questions for students to realize that following may, and often does mean – submissiveness. This is an example how a work on language leads to insights into social dynamics, recognition of its nuances and reflection on its profound meaning. Students received practice into higher order thinking and social skills. They internalize this lesson and make decisions for themselves on their own behavior.

This type of class is repeated after a short while for both the professor and students to observe if and how the lessons learned at the initial class are adopted. This practice is done towards the end of the first semester.

2.3. Simulation of giving a professional talk

Second term is largely dedicated to students' work 'instead' of the professor. This means simulations are now more vivid as most of talk is done by students. That includes lecturing – when new textual unit is to be done, we turn it into students' presentation,

imagining they are delivering a talk about a professional issue/topic to audience of a certain kind. They may be company fellow employees, executive board, convention presentation, and alike. The choice of 'audience' is up to students. They decide whom they need for audience according to what they believe and desire to be their future professional setting. Authors claim that this practice is far richer in benefits than what is commonly referred to as 'presentations practice'.

Students have previously been taught that the organization, structure of their talk and the choice of terminology directly depends on whom they talk to. In other words, they should have internalized rhetoric and genre in the first term and are to apply now in their presentations - lectures.

The new text unit thus is to be delivered orally, in front of the class – audience. The available technology is used, lap top and projector. After the presentation, the whole class analyses it in every aspect, the content, communication of it, communication with the audience, behavior, posture. The rare pieces of advice previously given by the professor relate to how to keep the voice articulate in a large space and how to keep the attention of those present focused. This is done also with the Socratic method – professor asks students – can you all hear me well? Always? To which the answer is positive. Then the professor asks – yet do I shout? How do I achieve this in a space that is this large? Students then realise that articulation is the key. Then, questions relate to if the professor has students' full attention at all times, and again the answer is yes. When asked how, students have difficulties to pinpoint the reason. Professor then praises them for being well mannered and kind, but discloses what they do not realise – looking each and every student in the eye while lecturing. This is what makes them feel they would be rude to look away or down in their phones – and they listen to the lecture. This psychological maneouvre is valuable knowledge for their future profession.

Like previously described practice, this one is also done twice by the same students. When first time presenting, a friend of the student records their performance on their phone. This is for their own reflection and often does lead to students being willing to repeat the practice. In situations like this they realize, most likely when reviewing the video, that their posture is inadequate (moving, fidgeting), that their clothes largely influence that (girls in jeans and sport shoes), and alike. Then, questions and comments of colleagues help them realize their weak and strong sides in relation to the topic in question. Students admit, more importantly, realize fully, that coming in front of the audience is a complex intellectual and psychological challenge. Thus, second time students lecture we witness different clothes, still latest fashion of that generation, but more appropriate for a professional environment, firmer body postures, adequate articulation, eye contact with every colleague present in the room, and more profound preparation of the topic. Most importantly, all learning happens in the form of peer learning and self reflection, thus inherent students' qualities are improved. In addition to a significant extent they overcome stage freight of speaking before expert audience. With this practice we as professors rest assured they are ready for the real professional situation of this kind.

2.3.1. Attentiveness to others

Previous exercise is extended to include attentiveness and responsiveness to others. In the group there is a boy with severe issues with his legs, he walks with the help of an

assistant, and once he sits for the class, he does not get up. He agreed to give a lecture of the kind described in the previous subchapter. As he does not move he opened his laptop and the presentation slides could only be seen on his screen as the projector could not be connected. He started his talk. Students were sitting, as usual, scattered round the classroom, some in front, some aside and some behind the boy talking. Professor did not interfere. This was all intentional and pre-designed. Then, as the talk started to unfold, students realized something was not adequate. That could be seen in their inquisitive looks directed at the professor, as if for help or clarification. So, then professor, in the Socratic manner, stopped the talk and asked students about their reaction to the given situation – if they hear well enough, see the illustrations, if all is adequate. Then they realized the essence of this particular practice – and they moved to sit close and around the boy so as to hear and see his screen.

In the ensuing reflection conversation upon this they said they then realized it is their responsibility to be attentive to others and respond adequately to make them feel well. All were happy to have adopted this.

2.4. Rewriting the unit

Providing good teaching material in the form of relevant, up to date texts, is of utmost difficulty for most ESP courses. There is a limited availability of material, of texts or teaching units in textbooks, provided either by publishing houses or written and published by universities with ESP courses for which those textbooks have been prepared. The list of textbooks used by the authors is the following:

- *Basic English for Science*, Oxford University Press, 2000
- Emmerson, Paul, *Email English*, Macmillan, 2004
- Esteras, Santiago Remacha, *Infotech – English for Computer Users*, Cambridge University Press, 2009
- Gitsaki, Christina, Taylor, Richard, P., *Internet English – www-based communication activities*, Oxford University Press, 2000
- Glendinning, Eric, H., Glendinning Norman, *Oxford English for Electrical and Mechanical Engineering*, Oxford University Press, 1997
- Glendinning, Eric, H., McEwan John, *Oxford English for Electronics*, Oxford University Press,1996
- Glendinning, Eric, H., McEwan John, *Oxford English for Information Technology*, Oxford University Press, 2002
- Kovačević, Darko, *English Language for Electrical Engineers 1: General Concepts*, Elektrotehnički fakultet Univerziteta u Istočnom Sarajevu, Akademska misao, 2021
- Kovačević, Darko, *English Language for Electrical Engineers 1: ICT*, Elektrotehnički fakultet Univerziteta u Istočnom Sarajevu, Akademska misao, 2021
- Krasnenko, Oksana, Kucheriava, Liudmyla, Rebenko, Marina, *Professional English in IT – B2-C1 – Textbook for Students of Information Technology*, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, 2019
- Rebenko, Marina, *English Proficiency in Cybernetics – B2-C1 – Textbook for Students of Computer Science and Cybernetics*, Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, 2017
- Ricca-McCarthy, Duckworth Michael, *English for Telecoms and Information Technology*, Express Series, Oxford University Press, 2009

- White, Lindsay, *Engineering – Workshop*, Oxford University Press, 2003
- Živković, Slađana, Stojković, Nadežda, *English for Students of Information and Communication Technologies*, Univerzitet u Nišu, Elektronski fakultet, 2012

While admittedly huge effort is invested in writing such material, it can be used in a different HE institution only to a certain, limited extent, due to the basic premise that it is written to suit the exact profile of the given institution. In our case of shared experience of Harbin Institute of Technology, China, and Faculty of Electronic Engineering, University of Niš, Serbia, we use parts of the same textbooks, same units. However, while the topics are adequate, the very structure of the text – information organization is not. Namely, in both institutions, profound attention is paid to appropriate, genre specific rhetoric. And that is lacking from almost all textbooks the authors have examined.

The following strategy has been adopted. We work with units from various sources, having chosen them for their topic and relevant vocabulary. In the second half of our worktime with one generation of students, when we focus on students' independence, we practice what is most valued as material design in ESP – students creating the teaching material. This is done in the second semester as in the first they have learned the typical information flow, the rhetoric of the hard sciences genre. Now they can combine the relevant vocabulary and phraseology they find in the given unit and the structure they have learned previously.

This practice is highly motivating for students. It comes when they have grasped the genre, its essential qualities, and have realized what kind of English they are studying – the proper tool for expressing, transferring their expertise. Here they are invited to showcase their domain knowledge. Unlike domain courses where they are assessed in everything they do or say by a professor who knows incomparably more, in this setting they have a professor who knows incomparably less – and all their hindrances disappear. They exhibit sincere joy in immersing into the topic and modeling it as now they are true experts with complete freedom.

The regulatory force here is peer monitoring, and at the same time, independent and group work at the same time. This practice is most profound, all encompassing regarding all the work done in the course. It combines their domain knowledge expressed in English using scientific vocabulary, typical syntactic structures. Then, all the information is presented in an orderly way according to relevant rhetorical models.

Very often, the practice starts from rewriting the unit with the aim to actually reorganize the given information, but develops into writing a fully new piece. This new text is written by mutual intellectual effort, all information is assessed together, each definition and explanation made perfectly clear and correct. For all these reasons, this practice is the test of what has been achieved in the course.

And it can be enriched even further. Certain topics can be viewed from the perspective of their influence on the society, thus raising issues of psychology, sociology, ethnography, responsibility.

Finally, a text produced by students substitutes the initial unit and becomes a mandatory text for the exam.

2.5. Reading books

In order to expand the scope of the course further, to include topics related to students' personalities, societal issues, and alike, and yet remain within the professional and scientific domain, and work on the communication improvement, the authors introduced reading books.

Here, we come most closely to achieving holistic education. The book we first practiced with is Edward Snowden's *Permanent Record*. It is also appropriate to use science fiction books, as is the further plan of the authors.

The book *Permanent Record* is in part an autobiography and in part a critique of the misuse of surveillance by the government of USA. The biographical part prior to narration of his work for the intelligence office is easy to read. The second half centers on Snowden's highly classified work and there are the two major reasons for having students read this particular book. One is the explanation of the surveillance software and Snowden's bypassing it leaving no electronic traits when he decides to steal the evidence in order to disclose it to the public. The other concerns his mental turmoil and the effect his deed has for the humanity.

Students work on this book on multiple levels. Firstly, they read, mark and learn new words. This they do on their own, without professor reminding them it would be good. For the professors this is an indicator they are interested in the task and that the learning discipline and learning habits have been well established. Secondly, there is a period of about month and a half given for them to read this. During that time, they are invited to office hours as they progress through the book to present what they have read and what their impressions are. Finally, there is a discussion in the classroom, much like analysis of a literary piece. Students' reactions are profound and original and the conversation is much enjoyed by everyone. Some comment on the fact that no one teaches them how what they do can be misused against the common good, some point to the fact that the main protagonist is truly torn between signed loyalty to the agency he works for and his beliefs and ideals. Points are made about the inner, psychological battle of Snowden, but also of his girlfriend and other members of his family. A large portion of the discussion centers upon disentangling how he actually succeeded in downloading the information without leaving an e-footprint, and this is where students' domain issues are considered.

Before assigning the book, professors explain that this activity brings extra points for the final grade, to acknowledge the work and to motivate students. However, once this whole work has been completed, there is an obvious satisfaction in them with what they have achieved. This goes beyond exam and grade motivation, this relates to nourishing enthusiasm and pleasure for independent work, this is holistic education.

3. CONCLUSION

The overall teaching approach of both authors is to fulfill preset syllabus outcomes, namely to prepare students for active communicative involvement in the professional and scientific environment of their chosen domain. In that, we pursue the tenets of ESP. Having studied the theory and practice of this approach to language teaching and compared and contrasted it with our teaching setting – the actual needs and potentials of our students, both as future professionals and personalities, we have found out that ESP can and should be much more than a 'restricted language'. We do teach professional language, but at the same time practice transversal skills, a form of non verbal way of communicating one's personality and attitudes. With this, we transform and transcend mere ESP towards holistic education, and we advocate it as adequate for tertiary educational setting in particular. Rather than prepare students to possess only proficiency of professional language, we strive to educate them to be complete individuals, able to

perceive environment and respond to it, join it creatively. It goes without saying that 'pure' ESP would also result with students able to actively and productively join their surrounding – yet relying on their own personality formed not so much at ESP classes but elsewhere. In addition, we fear years of higher education without holistic approach can 'silence' the students in their enthusiasm and need to express their potentials, to contribute more to their surrounding. We emphasise enriching ESP towards holistic approach to education in general as the teaching practice that produces individuals who are better prepared to enjoy their future work, giving their maximum, but also taking pleasure from the interaction. It is our belief that in the time of sometimes harsh competitiveness taking pleasure in one's capabilities, success, ease at work, does contribute to the overall advancement of a society.

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Review research paper

NEGOTIATING HIERARCHY: A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE ON ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES IN HEALTHCARE

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Abstract. *Although English is widely regarded as the medium of communication in India's hospitality and tourism sectors, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has been largely overlooked in academic or occupational spaces. Despite facing an unprecedented shortage of healthcare workers following a new wave of mass migration, India is one of the top favored destinations for medical tourism worldwide. The present paper aims to critically explore and comprehensively understand the linguistic needs of nurses in the state of Kerala, India. Additionally, the paper investigates the impact of India's migration patterns on the use and changing perception of English in healthcare settings. It considers how these factors influence the role of language within the medical context and the lives of nurses. Critical analyses reveal the prevalence of generalized language training and inconsistencies in the perception of needs between two levels of stakeholders. This qualitative inquiry magnifies the transformative potency of the English language in conferring agency upon the marginalized nursing demographics within the Indian healthcare milieu. As such, it staunchly champions the imperative formulation and execution of a meticulously customized ESP program, serving as an instrumental catalyst for engendering empowerment and emancipation.*

Key words*: Critical ESP, Qualitative Inquiry, English for Nurses, Medical Tourism, Migration*

1. INTRODUCTION

Until recently, debates on providing a culturally inclusive environment in nursing education were focused on immigrant and international students. Language-specific need analysis (Cameron 2008; Bosher & Smalkoski 2002) and ESP course design (Bosher 2006; Huang & Yu 2023; Choi 2021; Yulan et al. 2021) make up the majority of ESP research in this area. Several studies highlighted the need for cross-cultural awareness in nursing education (Brown 1996; Hussin 2002; Staples 2019), aspects of pronunciation (Cameron 1998; Hussin 2002), vocabulary (Yang 2005), and grammar (Cameron 1998; Hussin 2002). Beyond immigrant and international students, researchers have now detached the scope of ESP from anglophone surroundings and localized the use of

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English in countries where it is spoken as a Second or Foreign Language (Mazdayasna & Tahririan 2008).

This leads to research possibilities in South Asian countries, especially in India, where English occupies a place of prestige and necessity. India is promoted under the "Heal in India" campaign as a medical and wellness tourism destination while trying to strengthen its ecosystem through systematic standardization and capacity-building programs for the service providers. Indeed, some of the steps proposed to enhance this sector of tourism propose that "…capacity building programs (to be) undertaken to train paramedical and non-medical staffs of the service providers for cross-cultural sensitivities (and) focused language training for select countries from where tourists are coming in larger numbers" (Ministry of Tourism 2022, 19). The Medical Tourism Association has ranked India tenth position out of forty-six destinations in the Medical Tourism Index (MTI) for 2020–2021.

Parallelly, at this critical juncture of care-labor migration, India has become one of the most significant contributors to the "global nursing care chain" (Yeats 2010). The southern state of Kerala produces the largest share of nurses working in India and abroad. Factors influencing migration include insufficient remuneration, avenues for professional development, the possibility of a better life, thence of recognition, overt discrimination, and unregulated privatization (Kumar et al. 2022, 12), among others. Many studies indicate that nurses in India are burdened with work, have a poor nurse-to-patient ratio, and work in pathetic conditions (Nair 2012, 75). Hence, migration is strategic in the case of nurses, and undeniably, nursing for them is not merely education or occupation; it is a larger-than-life plan, a "life strategy". Their choice of nursing and the decision to migrate are taken together (Nair 2012, 103).

Both migration and promoting medical tourism have one concern in common: the linguistic barrier impeding professional growth, isolating them from being members of a specific discourse community. With sufficient research in nursing especially concerning health policy and practice (S.L. Garner et al. 2015), factors responsible for migration (Thomas 2006), a profound nursing shortage (Hawkes et al. 2009; Gill 2011), the status of nursing in India (Walton-Roberts 2012), and the retention of skilled workers in healthcare settings (Ramani et al. 2013; Sundararaman & Gupta 2011), the present research addresses a bridgeable gap as it places specific English language training as possible recourse to their current predicament; it facilitates mobility and retention of healthcare workers simultaneously. While being critiqued for its "subtle aspect of linguistic dominance" (Master 1998, 720), which is "fostered erroneously by a pedagogy founded on native speakers"' (Chandran 2009, 307), this paper explores English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in the context of nursing as an indispensable aspect, assuring emancipation and recognition to an otherwise marginalized community.

2. Language in Nursing: Developments and Current Status of Research

English was first introduced as the medium of instruction for nursing courses under the recommendations made by the 'Health Survey and Planning Committee' (1959-1961). The committee emphasized the necessity of delivering degree courses solely in the English language. However, the widespread use of English in India had been contested by many scholars, who were against teaching the rudiments of a culture that was praised

as superior to their own. Indeed, the function of English in India differed from its function in English-speaking countries. In India, the intent behind learning English was, in fact, to understand and to be understood, which interestingly paved the way for the development of Indian English, although standard English was being taught concurrently. Examining the role of the English language in nineteenth-century India, Syed. A. Rahim (1986) observed the development of Indian English on account of cultural appropriation. He critiqued English in India as a power apparatus of the whole society, which is utilized as a symbol of "elitist, professional, and administrative power and authority" (286). English speaking in India is thus considered directly proportional to social class and power. In spite of the growing popularity and use of English, as per Census of India (2011) data, a mere 260 thousand people, or 0.02% of the population, listed English as their first language.

English was recognized as an official language in India soon after independence, and has since been positioned as a crucial gatekeeper to social and economic progress. Since its inception, "biomedicine has existed solely in the realm of English, (which) is a legacy of British colonial rule in India" (Narayan 2009, 236). Parallel to the research highlighting the effect of language barriers on patients with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) in the United States (Jacobs et al. 2006), Katherine Douglas et al. (2021) conducted a study on the impact of language diversity in emergency departments of several private hospitals in India and concluded that communication in healthcare settings is stymied by language diversity. The former provided evidence to design and implement language-based services to LEP, while the latter encouraged policy intervention in the diverse, multilingual nature of Indian medical practice. Although scholars emphasized the significance of clinician-patient communication, a search in Google Scholar, PubMed, Scopus, and reputed nursing journals on keywords such as 'English for nursing,' 'English for Medical Purposes,' 'English in Healthcare,' and others yielded no results in the Indian context. The insufficiency of research regarding language barriers faced by practitioners in the healthcare sector is also reflective of the lack of efforts to address similar concerns in nursing education and practice.

3. Critical Perspectives: a Theoretical Overview

In contrast to the discourse on the consequences of English language imperialism in ELT (Phillipson 1992) and ESL education (Freire 1970; Auerbach & Burgess 1985), the implementation of ESP has been proclaimed to be far more sensitive to the contexts in which it serves. Additionally, "ESP has the advantage of having limited objectives for learners who have completed general education and have mother tongues that are not at risk" (Philipson 2010, 263). The field has responded actively to the consequences of a lack of awareness of power and inequality in language education. At its outset, Widdowson (1981) critiqued the limitation placed on learners when provided with minimal language training as it inhibits their choice of occupations. Discrediting the language-centered and skill-centered models of learning, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) presented the 'learning-centered' approach, which focused attention on the learner in the process of learning. Similarly, Alderson (1994) advocated considering local aspects of any language program by rejecting the evaluation of ESP programs solely based on the convenience of experts.

Such concerns suggest that “ESP practitioners (aim to) reduce the effects of linguistic imperialism when given the opportunity than their ELT counterparts” (Master 1998, 719). Criticality in ESP is undoubtedly fostered by the foundational works of Paulo Friere (1970; 1994), which entail the learner's ability to take every day “ideological constructions of social relations of class, race, and gender relations” (Luke & Dooley 2011, 856) into deciding their own purposes in language and literacy studies. ESP thus considers learners as agents of discourse, aiding critical negotiation by repositioning the learner's role and use of English not diffidently or mechanically but 'creatively and critically.' English becomes pluralized in the hands of these learners through the rapid empowerment of minority communities and the democratization of access to the language (Canagarajah 1999,175). For instance, Long (2005) presented a workforce-inclusive method for needs assessment by expanding the scope of need analysis in ESP to less public occupations that have the capacity to greatly influence "federal, state, or local government language policies, with far-reaching consequences" (6).

Besides, critical ESP is of great relevance in need analysis (Woodrow 2022, 39). While problematizing needs, Benesch (2001) suggests a more critical approach that includes the addition of ‘rights,’ which is much more than a “reactive determination of learner needs based on institutional or expert expectation” (Belcher 2009, 9). Precisely, rights analysis is a theoretical way of interpreting power relations to consider unfavorable social and institutional conditions such as authority, control, participation, resistance, and ancestry, which are often ignored concerning target situations. Dialectically related to need analysis, rights analysis allows for the possibility of transforming and challenging the status quo, realizing that an entrant has the right to be included and accommodated.

Critical ESP questions the historical assumption that language communication is neutral. “It considers ESP in terms of issues such as race, gender, identity, and power relations. According to this perspective, discourse may be socially, politically, racially, and economically motivated” (Woodrow 2022, 37). Rooted in the idea that views critical theory as a problematizing practice, it analyzes power relations within interaction, thereby making applied linguistics more politically accountable (Pennycook 2001, 7). In *Assessing English for Professional Purposes (*2019), Ute Knoch and Susy Macqueen point out that skilled workers who come from diverse backgrounds may not be equipped to deal with what they call "language-associated risks," and a high-cultural-capital language such as English offers a competitive possibility of mobility in order to gain employment or avert other sorts of risks such as “pollution, discrimination, poor healthcare, or conflict” (14). Critical perspectives in ESP also look at these risks and enable learners to mitigate, avert, or manage language-associated risks in employment and migration.

4. The Study

4.1. Rationale

This paper is a part of a larger research project undertaken to provide a specific English course for the paramedical practitioners of medical and wellness tourism in Kerala, India. In January 2022, the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, formulated a ‘National Strategy and Roadmap for Medical and Wellness Tourism,” which revealed that southern and western states of India have greater concentrations of

Medical Value Travel (MVT) service providers, as is apparent from the number of JCI-accredited hospitals. Analyzing the key strategic pillars to strengthen the ecosystem for medical and wellness tourism, the center encouraged addressing language barriers by delivering focused language training to the service providers. It is undisputedly a pragmatic approach, as "countries promoting medical tourism will have to devote time and resources to constantly retraining their workers, so they stay up to date" (Bookman 2007,103). Confirming the need for language-oriented education, a report by the World Health Organization titled "Review of International Migration of Nurses from Kerala, India" (2022) identified English language incompetency as the key barrier to migration along with other socio-political factors. The study also places India as one of the countries accounting for the largest shortages of its nursing workforce, which is strongly associated with their depleting income levels and substandard working conditions.

It is necessary to state that ESL education in India has been quite promising in the last few decades. The National Education Policy (2019) shed light on the functionality and fluency of the English language and emphasized the need for English training for students who intend to pursue scientific subjects at the graduate and postgraduate levels. Attempts to make English the medium of instruction have been successful in nursing education since the 1961 committee recommendations. Despite exposure and continued education in English during the early years and undergraduate studies, language remains the one factor that the nurses lack and dread. At this disjuncture, the study aims to deduce the underlying factors responsible for their plight and understand language barriers in light of the obligation of the government and educational institutions to guarantee the enfranchisement of people by providing specific language training, equipping them to meet the requirements of the healthcare sector, and encouraging social mobility. Considering the grave disregard for apt measures and research in this area, the study was motivated by the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the different communicative needs and challenges nurses encounter at the workplace? What factors contributed to their predicament?

RQ2: What are the attitudes of administrators towards the exigency of specific language training for nurses?

RQ3: What are the practical solutions to the pertinent impediment to effective communication?

4.2. Methodology

The first phase of this study included a detailed literature review along with a secondary data search. Most of the articles found were within the scope of migration and sociopolitical aspects of nursing in India; and secondary data was insubstantial. The second phase of the study used purposive sampling techniques to select participants from both stakeholder groups based on their convenience and willingness to participate in the research. This was followed by a snowball sampling method, where the researcher gained more participants from the same group. A pilot study was designed to include unstructured interviews with a select population to gain an in-depth understanding and obtain data based on insider knowledge. Following the pilot study, interview tools were modified.

Altogether, 34 participants, including 30 nurses, two administrators, and two English language trainers, were interviewed in the final stage during April and May 2023.

Twenty-seven nurse participants demanded the interview be taken in their L1 (Malayalam here). Consent forms were signed by the participants before the interview, and they were explained the purpose of the research prior to the interview. The interviews were recorded with consent and transcribed (or translated) into English. The subjective aspect of qualitative research was considered during the entire research period, and steps were taken to avoid false interpretations and biases by two methods; conducting a pilot study and gaining information from different levels of stakeholders. Data saturation was considered achieved after 20 interviews, as no new information emerged (Guest et al. 2006). However, the interview continued for another ten participants to make up for the nurses who were reluctant to give sufficient information. Accuracy and credibility were ensured during translation (Cypress 2017) and by rigorous cross-examination of data by the authors. Moreover, only applicable sections of the remaining stakeholder interviews were transcribed for this study.

4.3. Data Analysis

Qualitative analysis was conducted inductively on a corpus of 44,390 words using ATLAS. ti 23 qualitative data analysis software (Sampson & Wong 2023). Depending on the underlying research questions, aim, and methodology, the aim of the first phase of coding was to develop a "code list that describes the issues, aspects, phenomena, and themes that are in the data" (Friese 2019, 3). The text was coded into 857 codes and 490 appropriate quotations, starting with open coding (Corbin & Strauss 2015), and later grouped into thematic families. Considering this particular study, the codes have been reduced into relevant categories.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1. The Role of English in Contemporary Nursing Practice

5.1.1. Necessity or Burden?

The introduction of the English language into previously "non-English sociocultural contexts" (Bhatt 2001, 529) in India has not only perpetuated but also reinforced an existing "English-related inner-outer power dichotomy," wherein those who have access to the language have assumed a position of relative power (Ramanathan 1999, 212). The assertion of the status of English, and the challenge of ensuring language alignment in a multilingual healthcare environment in India has been an unsought result of globalization of the healthcare marketplace (Horowitz & Jones 2006)

> (English) is really important. I have only worked in Kerala. That does not mean that we get patients only from Kerala. Patients may be foreigners or speakers of different languages. Most of the time, we have no choice other than to speak in English. (Nurse 4)

The problematic nature of "the notion of choice" (Pennycook 2017) is observed when examining whether working-class individuals in the healthcare sector are genuinely free from economic, political, and ideological constraints that would enable them to freely opt for English. The celebratory accounts of global English, which perceive the language not as a product of global power structures but rather as a matter of individual choice, or the "colonial celebratory position of English" (Pennycook 2021; 1999), hold significant sway

in the medical context where English has expanded as an "instrument of communication and education in medicine" (Meher 1986, 284). Although there have been incremental changes at the microlevel in penetration of English to the high-class section of India, it is identified that “those who were once oppressed, climb higher in the ladder created by that particular social order and, therefore, find themselves in a better position to then oppress others” (Friedrich et al. 2013, 128)

> We have to talk in English while talking about procedures… most of the patients are of high social class. Although they understand Malayalam, they prefer to speak English. If we make any mistakes, they will notice. Procedures are explained to us in English. We do have translators. We need their help. Whenever we face any issue, we call them—even at night. (Nurse 6)

The fault lines of class and race that divided colonial society are evidently reflected in Indian nursing, along the lines of gender-based discrimination within this female-led profession. Nair and Healey (2006) consider the interaction between colonial and post-colonial modernities, by describing nursing as “a profession on the margins” and nurses as “menial and morally dubious low-class individuals” which is the aftermath of colonial legacy. English as a lingua franca in Indian medical context, cannot be thus, understood as a neutral medium but in the very sense the “fetishism of ELF, a historico-social dimension of how speakers in the world are possessed of various forms of capital- social, cultural, linguistic and economic- which depending on their distribution, afford differential access to English and its prestigious forms” (O’regan 2014, 539). The internalized identity of ‘low class’ and the opposing ‘high class’ (non-native patients here) is fundamentally an economic division (Block 2014) reflecting the elements of class consciousness resulting from engagement with “social class articulating with the material base of human existence” and the resultant “social relations emerging from this material base”.

5.2.2. Breaking Down Language Barriers

Power operating at individual level from patient-nurse interaction is socially constructed and maintained in the workplace through the existence of an overwhelming hierarchy within the hospital structure which in turn implies a system of apparent discrimination against the sections of hospital that are lower in hierarchy (Nair 2012). Insistence on the use of English in the workplace along with the need for equitable provision of healthcare in multilingual societies require inquiry not only into the relatively overt dimension of linguistic interaction, but also a covert dimension that pertains to their respective epistemic standing. Adopting Fricker’s (2007) idea of testimonial and hermeneutical injustice respectively as intralinguistic and interlinguistic communicative challenges, Peled (2017) expands the complex relations between language and healthcare, “the manner in which they are impacted- by the reality of English as global political and scientific lingua franca” (361). Testimonial injustice, arising from credibility deficit is the consequence of false belief prejudice on the hearer causing them to give the speaker less credibility than they would otherwise have given which is equated in the context of healthcare as ‘intralinguistic’ taking example of practitioners and patients who do not share the same first language:

> If we are talking to patients, it does not give a good impression. I usually say, "Sorry, that's not what I meant." But I have seen patients look at me, probably thinking that we

> are not educated enough to treat them. Because of that, I avoid these situations. Otherwise, I ask someone else to talk to the patient. (Nurse 23)

> Even if the staff knows beginner-level English, it is extremely challenging for them because they are tense. If a patient comes in with a headache, some nurses can't even ask them, "Do you have a headache?". That's the sad reality of nursing community. (Nurse 1)

Testimonial injustice is persistent and systematic; it operates by constantly attacking the intellectual confidence and excluding the practitioners from trustful conversation with the patients. Linguistic prejudice, unequal linguistic competence, and power asymmetries arising from these intralinguistic interaction marginalize the practitioners in their participation of the very activity of care giving by perpetuating their role as "salient by-product of residual prejudice in liberal society" (Fricker 2007, 58). Hermeneutical injustice on the other hand is when the "gap in collective interpretive resourced puts someone at an unfair disadvantage when it comes to making sense of their social experiences" (1) which occurs in health contexts when there is an attempt to neutralize particular elements of culture and language:

> I work in the Cardiology department. Patients come for different procedures, either a pacemaker or an angioplasty. We have to give procedure instructions, including how to bathe, medications to be taken, food intake, and others. We are educating them about the procedure. If they speak Malayalam, we explain it in detail. But if they are foreigners, we reduce what has to be said. (Nurse 18)

> Sometimes, the patient is from Arab countries. We don't know their ways. If the patient is a woman, she might not want us in the room or explain details of the treatment in front of a man. They can be hostile towards the way we work. (Nurse 21)

For Peled (2017), diverse interpretations of health and sickness in various cultures can lead to a form of epistemic injustice rooted in hermeneutics, where concepts from another culture may not be acknowledged as valuable insights that can enhance the healthcare journey. Credibility deficit when coupled with conceptual void work in both ways; it could lead to patients being seen by physicians as irrational ultimately leading to a reduced level of understanding of their illness, or the practitioner's language limitations may hinder their ability to provide thorough explanations, understand nuanced patient concerns, and establish a sense of trust and rapport leading to serious disparities in information exchange.

5.2. Factors Contributing to Language Incompetence

5.2.1. Insufficiency of Nursing Education

Seen as the vehicle of upward mobility, English education in nursing could offer a possible reduction in social marginalisation and disenfranchisement that the nurses increasingly suffer in their lives for "not knowing English, or for not knowing it well in specific contexts" (Faust & Nagar 2001). Yet, English as a subject is only offered in the first semester of a four-year Bachelor's Degree program in Nursing with unspecified number of hours in the syllabus:

> We did not have a specific course for English. During the first year, we had English as a subject. We have two subjects which are not related to Nursing in our first year–IT and English. They did not teach us anything in detail other than reading up the basics (Nurse 5)

Analysing the educational evolution of ESP and its contemporary relevance necessitates a discerning and thorough investigation. At its outset, Pennycook's (1997) critiqued of ESP in academic settings for its "vulgar pragmatism" and promotion of "discourses on neutrality" regarding English as a global language, contributes to the conception of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) as a pragmatic discipline and calls for a shift towards "critical pragmatism", emphasizing the inherent political nature of language at both local and global levels. Responding to him, Benesch (2001) presented a model of EAP that offers "right analysis" as a critical alternative to need analysis which attends to "possibilities of more informed democratic participation in academic institutions, in the workplace, and in daily life. It assumes that each academic situation offers its own opportunities for negotiation, depending on local conditions and on the current political climate both inside and outside the educational institution" (60).

> The medium of instruction was in English. But that has no use when we come to the workplace. Communication is entirely different in the workplace (Nurse 18)

Critical EAP recognises the constraints of time within EAP contexts and advocates content teaching to be "more responsive to non-native speaking students" and adopt a "self-reflective stance" (Pennycook 1999). Successful integration of EAP in nursing education offers a critical advantage by empowering students to challenge workplace inequalities and make informed career choices. This approach, rooted in Freire's (1998) ideology of bridging theory and practice, could equip nursing students with the linguistic and cognitive tools to dissect disparities within the healthcare system. By fostering critical thinking and encouraging questioning, EAP enables them to recognize and confront issues of gender, race, and socio-economic bias in healthcare settings.

5.2.2. The 'Other' in Health Care

Social attitudes towards nursing in India reflects a stereotype: "the unskilled, morally suspect women doing work similar to that of servants, subservient to everyone, including the patient and everyone else in the hospital" (Nair 2012. 55). The concept of 'otherness' centered in the postcolonial discourses also accommodates social identities and struggles arising from internal line of cultural difference within the 'same culture' apart from the usual mechanisms of class formation (Spivak 2003). Indeed, formerly conceived as 'liberating womanhood into public spaces', nursing is more than an occupation for a distinct social class; it is more clearly, a 'judgement of worthiness':

> The major issue is how people view nursing as a profession. Although there are a handful of people who understand our hard work, most people consider our job as worthless. Both inside and outside the hospital, we are not regarded as a good profession. During the time of the pandemic, we were considered as angels. But now, we are thrown back to the same situation. Whenever people need us, they revere us. It has become normal for me. I know how people treat us, and sometimes I hate to go to work to receive such treatment. The wages are also minimum here. The maximum salary here is INR.25000 (Approximately 305.06 USD) per month after endless

> struggles and strikes. We work endlessly day and night, and we are paid INR.25000, which does not even make up for our basic needs (Nurse 1)

Rendered as subalterns in the face of systemic oppression, it is evident that they "cannot speak" which is in fact gesturing to the impossibility of speech to an audience that refuses to hear (Spivak, 1988). Disadvantaged across various levels (economic, social and political), Lukes (2005) characterizes this phenomenon as the 'third dimension of power' focusing on the ability to influence people's perceptions, thoughts, and desires to the extent that they willingly conform to the established societal structure, effectively avoiding any grievances. This silent compliance with the existing status quo can become deeply rooted, often giving rise to bodily emotions like shame, timidity, and guilt:

> Here, there is no respect or consideration for nurses. We studied BSc Nursing for four years. Although our knowledge cannot be equated with that of doctors, we do have enough knowledge. That's how we take care of patients. No one values these aspects. We don't have enough leave. Nurse patient ratio is also critical here (Nurse 2)

In the last decade alone, India witnessed an eruption of protests against institutional exploitation, which were met with strong resistance from government and hospital managements. As opposed to general belief, it is not medical expertise, but cultural and organizational hierarchy that dictates communication in workplace. Due to the inability to confront the oppressors, nurses' resort to horizontal violence using non-physical hostility such as devaluation, disinterest, and conflict regarding the continuation of traditional roles in nursing practice. Nurses have become ensnared in the economic structure of a society that relies on capital creation, which must continuously perpetuate conditions of subalternity to sustain itself, all the while facing a lack of access to discursive spaces (Hegel 1991).

5.2.3. Sustained Organizational Neglect

Nursing education and practice has indeed become a lucrative business in India (Tsujitha & Oda 2023). However, there exists a great disparity between working conditions of nurses in private and public hospitals in India. In private hospitals, student nurses are victims of cheap labor, which acts as an impetus for many hospitals to start nursing schools that cancel shortage of nurses and make the nursing students work for the benefit of hospitals. This also sustains the "resistance shown by the hospital management against improvements in salary structures and service conditions" (Nair 2012, 120). This disregard not only perpetuates social stratification, but also underscores a troubling pattern of negligence that demands meticulous investigation:

> We are not supposed to have any contact with the media. If there is any issue that happens within the hospital, we should not connect with the media (and) subside it within the hospital. There is no gap for language learning. They do not recognize language as a barrier for nurses. They are focused on the money; it is a business. They do not understand difficulties of the nurses. (Nurse 29)

At its core, the essence of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) necessitates scholars to address a foundational question: Whose needs are we concerned with and how are they determined? (Chambers 1980, 26). Moreover, within the context of a critical needs analysis, it is presupposed that institutions inherently operate within hierarchical structures, and those

situated at the lower rungs of the hierarchy possess a latent capacity for greater influence (Benesch 1996). Against this backdrop, it becomes imperative to scrutinize the management's stance regarding the linguistic prerequisites of nurses. According to management, language proficiency is viewed through the lens of a skill-based attribute, and they contend that their existing linguistic competencies are sufficient for their professional roles, with interpreters as a contingency if needed. Their stance is encapsulated in the following statement: "Language occupies the lowest tier of our list of priorities" (Employer, personal communication).

> The hospital management focuses on how to utilize a person to the maximum. Focus is on the work. They should provide some time for educational purposes. In an 8-hour shift, we are forced to work for 10 hours. So how will we learn? We won't get enough time to learn. Especially during night duty, we have to work for prolonged shifts of 13 or 14 hours. (Nurse 16)

The crux of this dissonance in the perception of need extends beyond mere ignorance and represents a protracted pattern of disregard and marginalization at the organizational level, which consistently tilts in favor of the employer. Language, within this organizational paradigm, functions as a tool for perpetuating the existing hierarchical structure, and by restricting access to language, the established status quo remains unchallenged. The deliberate neglect of nurses' concerns perpetuates the system's seamless operation, thereby facilitating the continued exploitation of those occupying lower strata within the hierarchy.

5.3. Reclaiming Identity through Language Learning

Ability to claim the right to speak is certainly an integral part of an expanded notion of communicative competence. Examining the relationship between learners and the social context which they occupy, Peirce (1995) explored language learning as an investment guided by motivation which presupposes that "when language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with target language speakers but they are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world" (16). In this light, investing in the acquisition of the target language becomes synonymous with investing in the learner's social identity. In workplace contexts, this investment is often directed by instrumental motivation, signifying the pursuit of practical goals:

> I used to watch YouTube videos and learn English using that. When I was studying, I was unaware of the importance of English in my career. Only after I started working, I came to know about the necessity of language in my workplace, and I worked towards it (Nurse 28)

Nurses are inherently motivated to opt for simulation-based Occupational English Test (OET) training for migration and career advancement. The cost of the examination ($87) presents critical risk factor for nurses who are earning as little as INR.7000 (Approximately $84.54) per month on an average. Language tests which determine adequate language ability for the professional world considers proficiency threshold at which "someone is considered to have the minimum language ability which would enable them to cope with language demands of the professional world" (Knoch & Macqueen 2019, 10). In the age of globalization, complex mobilities have pushed English into non-traditional spaces, giving rise to new identities and intensifying the intricate interplay between wealth and risk, wherein the underprivileged have fewer chances to mitigate or

avert risks. Fear of communicative incompetence in the workplace and the ridicule following it forces the idea that the "lack of proficiency in professional language is a risk to be managed through testing" (15) while in reality, it should be managed by specific language training:

> I think it is up to us to improve our language proficiency. We have to be focused. Grammar was extremely challenging when I started off. I have no other option but to study. That's the reason we opt for exams like OET (Nurse 26).

While the primary responsibility for language acquisition doesn't fall on the nurses themselves, it squarely rests with the institutions they are part of. Nevertheless, it's intriguing to note that many nurses willingly engage in the process of mastering English and their motivation stems from a profound understanding that successful ESP acquisition is a crucial prerequisite for gaining entry into a larger discourse community. Moreover, this pursuit is considered a highly relevant element in shaping their self-identity and constructing their professional identities (Weyreter & Viebrock 2014, 153). The deliberate attempt of language learning and subsequent acquisition of a language that had been intentionally withheld from individuals, even when ostensibly pursued for instrumental or professional motives, ought to be acknowledged as a profound act of resistance in itself. This holds particular significance within hierarchical frameworks, as observed in the context of the Indian healthcare system.

5.4. Language, Mobility and Opportunities- Overcoming the Divide

> If you ask about migration to any nurse, they want to have a good future. They want a good salary. They are concerned about the well-being of their family and children which is why they learn English and move to countries in Europe and elsewhere. (Nurse 30)

In the complex vision of transnational uses of English as lingua franca, Pennycook (2007) observes that English is a language of "threat, desire, destruction, and opportunity" while contributing to social mobility of individuals. Although nurses' migration has been criticized from the perspective of "brain drain" within the context of global health inequality and "care drain" from a gendered-migration perspective (Adhikari & Plotnikova 2023), the increased employment opportunities of the global south has forced a "prudent family strategy" (Tsujitha & Oda 2023) wherein, for migration purposes, individuals encounter no barriers other than the requirement to speak in English. Due to juxtaposition of considerable resources, nurses often exhibit "stratified distribution patterns" in which "particular language resources are deployed on particular scale-levels and not on others; what is valid on one situation is not valid in another" (Blommaert 2010, 12).

The opportunity for healthcare professionals in India to migrate represents a profound transformation in their lives, encapsulating the amalgamation of their shared challenges, a fusion of "despair and hope", and a pivotal moment in the narrative of their quest for liberation (Giroux 2022). In this intricate process, the role of English language acquisition emerges as a purposeful intervention, conceived as an integral component of a wider framework of political, societal, and economic equity. It plays a crucial role in rejuvenating their capabilities and signifies a collective act of resistance by enabling them to bridge the gap. This journey fosters the acquisition of a 'language of hope', empowering them to surmount obstacles and fostering unity in their pursuit of better opportunities.

6. Limitations

The present study acknowledges that its scope is limited to nurses employed in prominent private hospitals catering to medical tourism in the southern and central regions of Kerala. While rigorous efforts were made to ensure the credibility of the findings through triangulated sources and a commitment to unbiased reporting, it is conceivable that a more comprehensive range of themes could have surfaced had a more diverse population been included. The research is descriptive and exploratory in nature, concentrating solely on speaking skills, and does not encompass a broader range of nursing competencies or factors. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the study's findings and conclusions.

7. Implications and Conclusions

In his work Second Language Need Analysis, Micheal. H Long (2005) urges educators and researchers to consider learner's "academic, occupational, vocational, or 'survival' needs for functional L2 proficiency" by developing courses that are consulted and informed by specific learner requirements (20). He argues for triangulation of perceived and/or objective needs among learners by “presenting workers’, management’s, and the observer’s own perspectives on the causes of a labor dispute and on changes needed to the parties involved” (28). Accordingly, interviews with representatives from the management proved a dichotomy between the perception of language-based needs. Comparable to the observation by Jasso Aguilar (2005), this study presents a possible contradiction in the institutional attitudes towards limited language proficiency of nurses, as the managers believed that English language training is unnecessary and insignificant in this context. The internalized identity of the employees until recently had been reflective of the views that the employer had of them, invariably what Paulo Freire explains as a 'culture of silence' wherein the oppressed remained ignorant “rather than being encouraged and equipped to know and respond to the concrete realities of their world, they were kept "submerged" in a situation in which such critical awareness and response were practically impossible” (Freire 1970, 30). Due to emerging opportunities of migration and career development, the nurses are presented with a new and unparallel juncture where liberty of choice is instilled through the process of language attainment.

As an ESP practitioner attempting to intervene or expose inequitable linguistic relationships through the non-negotiable line of exclusionary policies and systemic discrimination, the planning and implementation of a particular language program faces considerable challenges. The introduction of new materials must take into consideration the relative ease or difficulty of introducing changes, as well as concerns about time, resources, practicality, and commitment to work toward a common goal in spite of power struggles and internal disagreements. The need for specialized language instruction in the nursing field, whether in education or in the workplace, is of paramount importance for a robust healthcare ecosystem. To begin with, institutions should work with ESP practitioners to proactively infuse linguistic modules into the nursing curriculum, meticulously structured to imbue students with linguistic competence alongside clinical proficiency. Concurrently, healthcare organizations could invest in an in-depth ESP need assessment to implement tailored language programs at workplace, recognizing them as pivotal investments rather than ancillary endeavors. Such strategic investments engender a workforce primed to traverse linguistic barriers and harness the transformative potential of linguistic inclusivity.

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INTERVIEW WITH DR. ELENA BAZANOVA – CONVERSING ON EXPERTISE, INSPIRATION, LEGACY

This journal is devoted to spreading the expertise, best practices, and enthusiasm for teaching English in many of its approaches. For that reason we occasionally have interviews with outstanding colleagues who have already created a huge legacy of supreme expertise, very special projects, have truly educated students to boldly and safely start their professional paths.

Now I wish to present Dr. Elena Bazanova. Through a series of questions on basic principles, beliefs of her work, she demonstrates rare insight, originality, humanism and scholarship. It is my firm belief this interview will be a pleasant and encouraging peace to read and reflect on one's own practice.

Dr. Elena Bazanova specializes in Higher Education pedagogies in TESOL contexts and has published widely in the field, with research articles in academic journals, in addition to 17 published books. One of her books won the All-Russia competition in the nomination: "The best TESOL textbook for non-linguistic universities". She holds a PhD in TESOL and a Diploma in Educational Management from IHLondon. Elena is the author of the COURSERA Specialization *English for Research Publication Purposes*, which contains four MOOCs: Academic Literacy, Scholarly Communication, Grant Proposal, and Technical Writing (rating 4,6/5; over 135000 active learners, 2021). Elena is especially interested in promoting the global flow of Higher Education innovations in the practice and theory of teaching and learning across all disciplines in higher education.

Elena Bazanova is an alumna of the International Visitor Leadership Program "Developing Academic Writing Centers," USA, 2016. In 2017, Elena Bazanova did a Business Rhetoric course at Harvard University. Dr. Elena Bazanova is a member of the International Association of Writing Centers (IAWC), USA; European Association for the Teaching of Academic Writing (EATAW), and the Association of Science Editors and Publishers, Russia. She is the President of the Association of Academic Writing Centers "National Writing Centers Consortium" established in 2018.

Nadežda Stojković: *Prof. Bazanova, you are a well experienced professor, with a significant record of outstanding achievements in your work. How would you define yourself – a professor, educator, project leader, innovator? What is the crux of your work?*

Elena Bazanova: For many years I regarded an old saying "Jack of all trades" as a compliment for a person who is good at fixing things and has a good level of knowledge in many areas. Until one day when a student of mine shattered my self-beliefs that guided my actions and influenced my goals, strategies, and accomplishments. I don't think that he meant to hurt my feelings or undermine my self-confidence, he just wanted to flaunt his brilliant knowledge of British sayings and proverbs. Nevertheless, the full version of that saying – "Jack of all trades, master of none", which I decided to prove wrong, determined the fundamental principles of my work – to hone my skills and competencies to succeed as a competent researcher, an educational innovator, and a motivating language teacher.

Many within higher education believe that one cannot become a good university teacher without a solid theoretical basis of teaching, and as a teacher one needs to be aware of what's going on in the education world and how this affects teaching and learning.

With this in mind, in 2010, when I was already a mature language teacher with a few published textbooks designed for English language learners in an academic English program, I applied for a PhD program in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) to do research into an area that was entirely new to me – the application and integration of Internet technologies in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) contexts. My PhD dissertation comprised three different domains – lexicology, which is a branch of linguistics that has its own aims and methods of scientific research, internet-based teaching methods, and management consulting.

You may wonder why I chose to investigate such a weird combination of topics. In fact, there were several reasons: to explore innovative technologies to immerse STEM students in real-world professional settings; to gain first-hand experience in management consulting to become an efficient project leader, and what's more important, to reflect on the beauty and power of the smallest meaningful unit of a language – the word – to approach the level of expertise and intelligence of my mum, who was a student of such great lexicologists of the English language as A.V. Kunin, R. S. Ginzburg, S. S. Khidekel, G. Y. Knyazeva, A. A. Sankin, Y.D. Apresyan, I.V.Arnold.

It was my dissertation research that awoke my now never-ending passion for science and transformed me from an 'old school traditional teacher', though a very good one, to a non-conventional and open-minded teacher and researcher who welcomes the challenge of transforming higher education through innovative ideas and technology insights.

Soon after I was awarded my PhD from the Maurice Thorez Moscow Institute of Foreign Languages (now the Moscow State Linguistic University), I was commissioned to establish a language training and testing center at the Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology (MIPT). I did not know any nitty-gritty of management, but I was absolutely sure that the success of the center and the fate of all those who would have to work in it would depend on my professional competencies and experience. In those days I was not a manager. As Henry Mintzberg, a Canadian academic and business management expert, said in a 2004 interview with CNN: "You can teach all sorts of things that improve the practice of management with people who are managers. What you cannot do is teach management to somebody who is not a manager … you cannot teach surgery to somebody who's not a surgeon." So, I set out to obtain a diploma in Educational Management and Leadership at the International House London and a certificate of Business Rhetoric at Harvard University.

A couple of years after the center was established it was acknowledged the best TOEFL iBT center in Russia.

And then a few more years later, I was appointed head of the department of foreign languages at the institute where I had worked as a faculty member for more than 30 years.

When I reflect on my work over the course of the past thirty-something years, I feel proud and extremely grateful for the variety of projects, small and large, in different industries and domains. I'd say no matter what I've been through, I am the enchanted soul (as in the novel by Romain Rolland), and my life is full and built on the foundation of love for my work, enthusiasm and inspiration that I always try to share with others. I am still struggling to become the best version of myself to make a difference in global education as a professor, educator, project leader, and innovator. … Jack of all trades but oftentimes better than master of one.

N. S.: *Let us focus on education first. What is education for you? How is it performed, what is needed for it, how long does it last?*

E. B.: For me, education is the edifice of growth, development, and empowerment of humanity, the world around, and self. It is commonplace to say that the essence of education is learning new ideas, making new connections, and gaining fresh perspectives. But education is not just about learning new things from books; it involves gaining real-world experience beyond the classroom and applying this experience to create a holistic society of compassionate human beings, intellectually developed, professionally skilled, and socially committed. But the question how to achieve this lofty goal is a conundrum that I have yet to resolve for myself.

John Dewey, an American philosopher, psychologist, and educational reformer known for his progressive ideas on pedagogical method, strongly believed that education is not preparation for life; education is life itself. It takes place throughout our life – 'from cradle to grave.' Recent research into early learning offers clues to what babies comprehend in utero and what they learn before birth, and how that information prepares them for the world outside the womb. The Guinness Book of World Records features an article about the oldest student in the world: 91-year-old Leonardo Altobelli, who graduated for the 15th time in 2023 with a degree in criminology. Prior to this degree, he had degrees in medicine and surgery, law, political science, literature, philosophy, pedagogy, agronomy, food science and technology, tourism science, history, biotechnology and archaeology, and investigative science. And that's not all: he also obtained seven diplomas in social medicine, sports medicine, health law and general medical tutoring. This is truly incredible when you think about almost limitless capacity of the human brain for learning. Learning… Is it the same as education?

Albert Einstein admitted that the only thing that interfered with his learning was his education. Abraham Lincoln, William Shakespeare, Konstantin Tsiolkovsky, Steve Jobs, Henry Ford are the few examples of people who were college dropouts and became globally known for their invaluable contributions to the world. However, they represent only a handful of success stories as opposed to the 'nobody' status of the majority of college dropouts in reality.

I suppose they quit formal education because they did not want to be taught, with other people developing, structuring, and directing their process of learning in a systematized way. Being self-motivated and knowing their own true potential, they wanted to gain knowledge through real-life experience rather than trained educators. Formal education is vital but it's not the only path to success. Yet, we cannot ignore its obvious benefits, such as interpersonal communication, sociocultural experience, character building, to name but a few.

Despite my considerable experience, I still strive to find a univocal definition of the meaning of education and consider it from various perspectives that incorporate myriad false dichotomies: individual vs. society, freedom vs. discipline, memorization vs. understanding, knowledge vs. skills, education for employment vs. liberal education, collaboration vs. competition.

N.S.: *Still focusing on education – what is your personal guiding principle?*

E.B.: In fact, there are three guiding principles that I formulated for myself years ago. I "borrowed" these principles from physics, which is no surprise as for almost three decades, I've been teaching English in the Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology (MIPT) founded by the Nobel laureates Pyotr Kapitsa, Lev Landau, and Nikolay

Semenov. These are MY interpretations of physical laws and principles that guide me in my teaching career.

Principle 1. Absolute Infinity of Knowledge (based on the uncertainty principle). This principle was formulated by the German physicist and Nobel laureate Werner Heisenberg in 1927. The principle states that we cannot know both the position and speed of a particle, such as a photon or electron, with perfect accuracy; the more we nail down the particle's position, the less we know about its speed and vice versa.

I assume A. A. Milne in his children's book "The House at Pooh Corner" meant the same uncertainty principle when he described Pooh Bear's visit to Piglet:

> One day when Pooh Bear had nothing else to do […] he expected to find Piglet warming his toes in front of his fire, but […] the more he looked inside the more Piglet wasn't there.

The more we learn about something, the more we realize there's a lot more we don't know. I always tell my students that they should not arrogantly believe that they already know everything about their subject matter … and the world around. How naïve of them! No matter how much knowledge they have acquired, it is still superficial. I encourage them to develop the habit of going the extra mile to learn more than required by their curriculum.

Principle 2. Interpersonal Energy Exchange (based on the Second Law of Thermodynamics) The law means that hot things always cool unless you do something to stop them. In my humble opinion of a person who knows little in physics but is fascinated by it, interpersonal relations are a perfect manifestation of this law – not to lose your energy and pass it to others, you need to constantly replenish it. Otherwise, you will suffer from emotional, physical, or mental exhaustion. The state that I metaphorically explain as 'professional or personal entropy' – unavailability of restoring your energy even by an external engine.

As an educator and a teacher, I made it an absolute rule for myself, my central guiding principle, to find inspiration and motivation in new things (this might be a professional development course, a hobby, a concert, no matter what) that learn on a daily basis, and what's more important to share what I learn with others to boost their energy.

Principle 3. Human-Human Entanglement (based on Quantum Entanglement Theory). Alain Aspect, John F. Clauser, and Anton Zeilinger won the 2022 Nobel Prize in Physics for exploring a phenomenon where particles exist in an entangled state. The researchers experimentally proved that an action on one particle can predict the behavior of other particles. More precisely, if an observer determines the state of one such particle, its entangled counterparts will instantly reflect that state—whether they are in the same room as the observer or in a galaxy on the opposite side of the universe.

The Dalai Lama also reinforced the impact of our actions on others. Thus, he said: "Just as ripples spread out when a single pebble is dropped into water, the actions of individuals can have far-reaching effects."

For me, this principle means that what I do affects my students, colleagues, all people around no matter how close or far away they are. And this influence must always be positive and encouraging.

N.S.: *How do you approach your students? What is the relationship between you?*

E. B.: I must admit that these days my approach is hardly applicable on a large scale. I'll try to explain what I mean. Most educational institutions have proclaimed student-

centered learning, also known as learner-centered education, as the foundation of personalized learning. Teachers are required to create connections with students' interests and the things students previously learnt. In other words, the ultimate goal is to make the educational process more meaningful to students. I very much doubt that this approach is effective.

Describing the ideal education, Winston Churchill wrote in his book *My Early Life*:

> By being so long in the lowest form [at Harrow] I gained an immense advantage over the cleverer boys…. I got into my bones the essential structure of the ordinary British sentence–which is a noble thing. Naturally I am biased in favor of boys learning English; I would make them all learn English: and then I would let the clever ones learn Latin as an honor, and Greek as a treat.

Why do you think learning "dead languages" might be the very thing that gives learners the edge they need to succeed in life? The answer is obvious: learning Latin and Greek require abstract thinking, curiosity, and hard work. Students are likely to become more disciplined, have a stronger basis for further learning, [and] be a little more creative toward intellectual pursuits than most.

As educators, we need to prepare our students for life after graduation. Life is not always a bed of roses: in the workplace they will need to be disciplined, meet strict deadlines, do work that matters but not to their liking, think outside the box, and simply obey the rules. And there will probably be no special google-algorithmic-magic-recipe for getting a dream job.

Though I am a demanding teacher, my approach is based on clear communication, integrity, hopefully, mutual respect, and acknowledgment of the value and contributions of each student. Sometimes students resist when their preferred approach to learning is at odds with how this or that course is organized, or information is presented. In this case, I place myself in their situation of having to learn something they find confusing, irrelevant, or difficult. To experience what my students have to go through firsthand, I find a challenging course (of course, not a language course), get enrolled, and study. Such approach is quite sobering as it makes me more serious and thoughtful about my requirements to students. They value my commitment, and acknowledge the efforts to encourage and motivate them to continue their hard journey of learning.

N.S.: *Why did you choose to teach a foreign language? What is its value today? Has anything changed in its relevance?*

E. B.: Honestly, I had no other choice. I was doomed to become an English language teacher. Why? My mum was my first language teacher, and she is still my role model today! She is an outstanding person – in her youth, she went to a ballet school and played the piano, finished high school with a medal, and entered the Mendeleev University of Chemical Technology to become a chemist. A couple years after entering, she dropped out of university as she realized that her real calling was linguistics. She was absolutely great at teaching, and she was a brilliant lexicologist.

I was lucky not only to have my mum as a faculty colleague but also as a co-author of a wonderful book "Practice in Lexicology" in which we showed how to apply lexicology in English language teaching. Perhaps this is the book I am most proud of. It is dedicated to my first teacher and friend – my mother.

It’s hard to overestimate the power of language learning, any language, in fact, including one's own. Let me just name a few values of language learning that are universal regardless of politics, religion, and ideology: it improves memory, boosts brain power, improves performance in different academic areas, enhances the ability to multi-task, improves knowledge of the first language, keeps the mind sharper for longer, enhances decision-making, increases networking skills, and as Winston Churchill said, it develops abstract thinking, curiosity, and makes a learner more disciplined.

Apart from these obvious values, there’s another critically important value of language learning for the current world and even more vital for the future of our world – the use of the English language "as a global means of intercommunity communication.”

N. S.: *How do you conceive of the educational system as a whole? What is your overall assessment regardless of the geographical differences?*

E. B.: The purpose of higher education has long been divided between liberal education, which is a wide, general knowledge base, and specialized training for particular professions. Specialized curriculum has been the predominant global norm. Surprisingly, though, given this persistent tendency, liberal education is becoming more and more important in higher education across the globe.

Many factors influence the success of the educational system as a whole. Psychological factors, which include motivation, intelligence, and personality. Social factors, such as socioecomomic status, ethnicity, and gender. Other factors include access to educational technology, teacher quality, and parental involvement.

Speaking about tertiary education, technical higher education institutions in particular, I have a firm belief that curriculum should not revolve around or be defined by subject matter knowledge and a pre-determined set of skills, but rather the realization of one's full potential and the ability to use those skills and knowledge for the common good. With all the emphasis these days on STEM disciplines, and the focus on “practical” training for careers, it is important that students also study liberal arts and find identity, meaning, and purpose in life.

It's a dream but Martin Luther King also had a dream. We all know that his dream came true because he had the courage to pursue it. So do I!

N. S.: *In which way do you educate yourself in your work? Who do you learn from, what do you read?*

E. B.: I read a lot, though the books I read are mostly non-fiction. I read them with the intent to learn and discover new ways of thinking, managing, and teaching, to understand myself more and get to grips with all the complicated decisions I very often have to make. Books I read are written by successful educators, great thinkers, prominent scholars in various fields, and certainty, by famous writers. Such books help me change and develop my overall personality, learn about people and remain at the forefront of hard science and humanities, as well as education and innovation.

My personal collection of books is an escape, a shelter, a place of pleasure, inspiration, and reflection. Of many books I have I’d recommend these few:

"What Does Your Fortune Cookie Say?: 80 Important Life Lessons the Universe is Trying to Share with You" by Adam Albrecht
"How the Mind Works" by Steven Pinker
"A Brief History of Time" by Stephen Hawking
"Man's Search for Meaning" by Viktor Frankl

N. S.: *How do you get inspiration for your projects and how do you approach the colleagues whom you invite to join you? What is the desired outcome of those projects on the whole?*

E. B.: I guess I'm lucky to have a well-developed intuition that guides me through daily challenges and helps me solve problems. All my projects, which were initially rather difficult to launch as they are far ahead of their time, have turned out to be successful not only at the level of a single university, but also at a national level for the overall higher education system.

For example, I am currently developing two very ambitious projects that require the perspectives of different academic disciplines: the creation of a series of textbooks for the English language curriculum for undergraduate students as an alternative replacement for textbooks by leading international educational publishers, like Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, and Macmillan.

The other large-scale project is the creation of AI-based testing system (ISTOK – Intellektual'naya Sistema Testirovaniya Obshcheyazykovyh Kompetencij) as a substitute of TOEFL iBT, IELTS, or Cambridge tests. The project team includes famous testologists, linguists, TESOL teachers, mathematicians who deal with mathematical statistics, neurolinguists, AI experts, and many others. ISTOK is an adaptive testing system deployed through neural network solutions. It provides assessment of receptive and productive language skills (reading, listening, speaking and writing) by using artificial intelligence and/or neurolinguistic models. The new approach to language skills testing can be used for various purposes in academia and industry, and the principles of AI training, validation, and test datasets can find wide application in various fields of applied research.

N. S.: *What is the area that you wish to explore next?*

E. B.: Digital Neuropedagogy, which is a recent discipline that draws on the fields of neuroscience, psychology and pedagogy to improve learning. I desperately need to acquire expertise in this field to further advance the AI-based testing system (ISTOK) project.

N. S.: *Are you satisfied with what you have done so far and what lies ahead of you?*

E. B.: Find a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life. I love my job, all its components: teaching, creating new courses, making strategic decisions, writing books, doing research, identifying development goals for my faculty members, organizing conferences, launching new projects. The scope is systematically expanding, and the emerging new tasks allow for the implementation of changes and innovation needed for improvement of work and … life as well.

Here, I cannot help but agree with *Steve Jobs*, who once said: "Those who think they can change the world are the ones who do." I want to be the one who changes the world.