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JOURNAL OF TEACHING ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC AND ACADEMIC PURPOSES

Editor-in-Chief:

Nadežda Stojković

e-mail: nadezda.stojkovic@elfak.ni.ac.rs

Faculty of Electronic Engineering, University of Niš

Aleksandra Medvedeva 14, Serbia

Phone: +381 18 529 105

Telefax: +381 18 588 399

Editor-in-Chief's assistant:

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A DIVE INTO THE MUDDY WATERS OF PREDATORY PUBLISHING REVEALS THAT ALL IS POSSIBLE, BUT NORMALITY: A LANGUAGE PERSPECTIVE

Alexandru-Ionuț Petrișor

Doctoral School of Urban Planning, Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism, 010014 Bucharest, Romania; Department of Architecture, Faculty of Architecture and Urban Planning, Technical University of Moldova, 2004 Chisinau, Moldova; National Institute for Research and Development in Constructions, Urbanism and Sustainable Spatial Development URBAN-INCERC, 021652 Bucharest, Romania; National Institute for Research and Development in Tourism, 50741 Bucharest, Romania

ORCID iD: Alexandru-Ionuț Petrișor

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2159-4034>

Abstract. *Predatory publishers represent a menace for the scientific community. However, a less explored side relates to their linguistic impact, due to the fact that poor English is among their distinctive features. In order to provide more evidence helping scholars to identify the potential predatory publishers, this study analyzes some 300 calls for papers from predatory publishers, selected from among those over 1,400 received over the latest 9 months, focusing on distinctive English flaws. The results indicate that the common features include the use of boosting language without any discernment, an unusual use of names, aggressive requests for an answer, avoidance of using the term “call for papers” and its replacement, other less frequent issues, and numerous English flaws. Such features may be used as criteria for avoiding to become a prey of predatory publishers.*

Key words: *predatory publishers, call for papers, boosting language, e-mail*

1. INTRODUCTION

For 15 years since the American librarian Jeffrey Beall used the term “predatory journal” (Butler, 2013) for what we mean today by publications “that prioritize self-interest at the expense of scholarship and are characterized by false or misleading information, deviation from best editorial and publication practices, a lack of transparency, and/or the use of aggressive and indiscriminate solicitation practices” (Grudniewicz et al., 2019), predatory journals have become both a menace for the scientific community and a topic of interest for specialists from different disciplines. Many studies describe their effects, including ethical issues (Ferris & Winker, 2017; Petrișor, 2023), economic losses (Shen & Björk, 2015; Eve & Priego, 2017), and strong emotional impact against those deceived by the predatory publishers (Chambers, 2019). All these effects are summarized by Moher et al.

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Corresponding author: Alexandru-Ionuț Petrișor, Doctoral School of Urban Planning,

Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism, 010014 Bucharest, Romania

E-mail: alexandru_petrisor@yahoo.com

(2017) as a “waste of people, animals and money”. Apart from them, other authors show particular effects of predatory publishers on different disciplines, such as nursing (Raws et al., 2020), humanities and social sciences (Shehata & Elgllab, 2018), dermatology (Shamsi et al., 2024), anesthesia and reanimation (Darraz et al., 2023), or economy and finance (Prorokowski, 2021), to name only a few. At the same time, there are studies dealing with those deceived by the predatory publishers (Gogtay & Bavdekar, 2019), but also with those who deliberately choose predatory publishers as a venue for their studies (Shaghaei et al., 2018). There are few studies trying to define predatory publishers (Grudniewicz et al., 2019) or identify their key features (Cobey et al., 2018).

Despite a rich literature addressing predatory journals and publishers, but also predatory conferences (Alnajjar et al., 2020; Pecorari, 2021), and the addition of or transformation into predatory proofreading services (Petrișor, 2017), there is a limited number of studies dealing with language issues, although poor English is a common feature of predatory publishers (Truth, 2012; Bohannon, 2013; Crawford, 2014; Petrișor, 2016, 2022). Among these, Soler & Cooper (2019) and Soler (2020) show the implications on novice English writers, while Petrișor (2022) shows that researchers from countries with a short western-style academic publishing tradition tend to take the poor English of predatory publishers for a standard. There are many studies focusing on the features of a “call for papers” that may indicate a potentially predatory journal (Petrișor, 2016, 2018, 2021; Soler & Cooper, 2019; Soler, 2020), involving linguistic analyses. Markowitz (2020) uses an automated language analysis technique specific to the social sciences and the analysis of meta-linguistic properties of predatory journals websites, and identifies more discrepancy terms and positive emotions, but fewer function words. Analyzing many features of predatory publishers, including language issues, Mills and Inouye (2021) conclude that they are based in the ‘global South’, including India, China and some parts of Africa. However, other studies point out that predatory publishers copy each other, including the calls for papers, and also change their strategies over time (Petrișor, 2016, 2018); thus, particular signs may not necessarily indicate a specific location. For example, Petrișor (2018) analyzes the frequency of calls for papers from predatory publishers during each weekday and the results show that less calls are received during the regular weekends, which may be working days in the ‘global South’. The same study yields inconclusive results when looking at the claimed location and the one indicated by the e-mail server.

In order to provide more evidence helping scholars to identify the potential predatory publishers, conferences and proofreading services), this study analyzes the calls for papers received during the recent period in an attempt to point out the numerous English flaws specific to such publishers. The results may be relevant in this regard, but also from the perspective of indicating the current strategies of predatory publishers.

2. DATA AND METHODS

The data used in this analysis consist of over 1400 e-mails received during May 9, 2023 and February 27, 2024 at the e-mail address alexandru.petrisor[at]uauim.ro. It has to be stressed out that this address is an institutional address, and can be used only for institutional matters; publishing, reviewing, and editing, or answering surveys are considered private matters and cannot be handled via an institutional address. Nevertheless, there are

publishers requesting authors to provide an institutional address, and even condition the admission of a manuscript into the peer review process by the provision of such addresses, in an attempt to make sure that authors are those who claim to be, and their affiliations are correctly indicated. As a result of exposing the address, the address was overused by predatory publishers, allowing for collecting the information.

In an attempt to focus the analysis, the calls were selected based on several characteristics, and the analysis limited to the subject of the e-mail, although occasionally other parts of the message were used in the analysis. Nearly 300 out of the 1400 e-mails were actually used in the analysis, which consisted of looking up the text for specific features, and ascertain their repetition across different predatory publishers and time. The analysis includes calls for papers from predatory journals, publishers, and conferences, and, in addition, from some proofreading services. The inclusion of the latest is motivated by the study by Petrișor (2018), suggesting the transformation of predatory publishers and journals into such services, or the addition of proofreading services to their portfolio.

In the analysis, the ISSNs of some predatory journals are added if they were specified in the subject or text of the call, for a more precise identification of the journals. The study by Petrișor (2016) suggests that predatory journals may disappear and reappear under different names, or use the same name. One relatively common feature of the calls is the wrong, inconsistent, and sometimes random use of capitalization (and also of punctuation and spaces in relationship to punctuation), indicated by Petrișor (2021) as a possible indication of the ‘global South’ origin, since languages like Arabic or Chinese, to name only two, do not use capitalization. However, due to this issue, the names of predatory publishers are sometimes, perhaps purposefully, unclear. One such example is an earlier call from the “multidisciplinary WULFENIA JOURNAL” (still available on the Internet, e.g., https://vodici.fdv.uni-lj.si/assets/users/_borut.kirar/Wulfenia.pdf), which, if using the correct capitalization, “Multidisciplinary Wulfenia Journal”, indicates a predatory clone of the legitimate “Wulfenia Journal”; the different capitalization is used to hide the hijacking. Since the use of capitalization, punctuation, and spaces in relationship to punctuation is a distinctive mark, the article uses the original spelling.

3. RESULTS

The purpose of this study is to look at the “calls for papers” from predatory publishers in an attempt to prove that the wrong use of English is the first and clearest sign of potential predatory publishers. The title of article was used based on the overall indication that predatory publishers use either oversimplified English, or an abnormally verbose style. It would be unfair to say that this feature is common to all calls. Some of these calls may use relatively normal subjects, although flaws may be present elsewhere. Also, the choice of 300 out of the 1400 calls is due to the fact that many publishers send their calls repeatedly, sometimes even during the same day, and the analysis was resumed to the distinct calls. Several ‘threads’ or ‘thematic samples’ (Petrișor, 2021) were identified and used to organize the material. The results always indicate the journal name and date of call, occasionally its ISSN. To keep this article short, details are provided in Annex 1 at <http://www.environmentics.ro/Papers/2024_ESPEAP_Appendix.pdf>, referred hereafter.

1. Use of boosting language without any discernment. The use of a boosting language as a strategy for luring potential authors has been described before (Petrișor, 2016). Nevertheless, the analysis reveals that the boosting language is used without any discernment, pointing towards all possible directions, including the potential, yet unknown submission, referred in many ways, as indicated by the examples provided in Annex 1. Occasionally, some journals encourage constructions emphasizing the value of potential contributions by placing the journal in a lower position: *“Humbly invites to submit your valuable paper”*, repeating it in a different form in the message text: the Journal on Environmental Sciences uses *“Share Your Valuable Work In Our Journal”* and continues with *“Have a nice day ”Journal on Environmental Sciences,” kindly submit your significant work.”* In other cases, the boosting language is identified with the potential (yet unknown) author, using in the subject of e-mail phrases like those presented in Annex 1. In other instances, boosting language is used in the e-mail text, such as *“Honorable Alexandru-Ionut Petrisor”*, usually used to address a judge, *“Esteemed Alexandru-Ionut Petrisor”* - written mistakenly as *“Estimable Petrisor Alexandru-Ionut”*, *“Distinguished Alexandru-Ionut Petrisor”*, *“Respected Professor/Doctor. Doctor”*, or complicate wording like *“We have been closely following your outstanding research and invaluable contributions to the scientific community with the utmost admiration. Your remarkable work has made a significant impact in the area, and we are truly impressed by the accomplishments you have achieved”*. A third category uses the boosting language with reference to the conference or journal advertised. Examples are provided in Annex 1. Occasionally, boosting language is used for more categories: *“Respected Prof. Petrisor Alexandru-Ionut- Join our prestigious community of authors and publish with Clinics in Surgery”*. This is seen in most calls from proofreading services: *“Elevate Your Research with Way2Edit: Editing, Proofreading, and Language Translation Services”*, *“Meticulous Editing for Impeccable Results”*, *“Your Best Writing Awaits: Unleash Our Proofreading Prowess”*, and *“Crafted for Excellence: Your Content Deserves Expert Proofreading”*.

2. The “name” - “no name” issue. Petrișor (2016) points out that predatory journals use two strategies. One is to make their call generic, without addressing to a real person, and another to give “calls for papers” a personalized look (although the invitation remains generic). Using this typology, several categories can be identified. First, there are many generic invitations: *“Doctor | Fully accessible open access articles submission | ReliabilityTech”* - notice the senseless fragmentation of information by separators; *“Dear Professor: Mega Journal of Case Reports”*, or, in the message body, the meaningless *“Respected Professor/Doctor. Doctor”*. Sometimes, messages are sent to a generic “you”: *“invite you as a Plenary Speaker”*. A separate category includes the hilarious results of most likely using a mass e-mailing software without mastering it properly. Although the original intention might be a personalized message, the result is generic. Examples include *“Dr.[firstname]--Get booking now for Future Virology 2024!”*, *“Prof. [NAME]: Annals of Clinical Case Reports”*, *“Indexed in all major platforms now Prof. Professor: Mega Journal of Case Reports”*, or, for the e-mail text, *“Greetings, Dr. ”Doctor”*. The use of parentheses or quotation marks may be required by the syntax of e-mail software.

The calls for papers with a personalized appearance fall also in some categories. Some of them use the actual name, written correctly: *“Alexandru-Ionut Petrisor | Worldwide research submissions are open | Ecology”* - note again the fragmented, senseless phrase, *“Dear Doctor. Petrisor Alexandru-Ionut”* - note using a period after the

full word “Doctor”, a “trademark” of many predatory publishers, “*Special Invitation: Details inside Dear Dr. Petrisor Alexandru Ionut*” - note the commercial appearance of the message, “*Dr. Alexandru-Ionut Petrisor: Coming to a city near you NANO Intellects 2024*”, “*Your article Dear Dr. Petrisor Alexandru Ionut*”, “*Hi Alexandru-Ionut Petrisor, Ready to submit your research?*” - notice the familiar tone, “*Dear Dr, Petrisor Alexandru Ionut, High Priority: We Need your Support to Our Journal: Annals of Clinical Cases*”, “*Hi Petrisor Alexandru-Ionut: Call for Speakers: AGRI 2023*”, or “*Send Us Your Paper Dear Dr. Petrisor Alexandru Ionut*”. The same category includes messages built up out of two parts, merged together in a meaningless sense, giving it a begging appearance: “*Upcoming Issue Dear Dr. Petrisor Alexandru Ionut*”, “*Optimistic Response Dear Dr. Petrisor Alexandru Ionut*”, “*Anticipation Dear Dr. Petrisor Alexandru Ionut*”, “*Author Association Dear Dr. Petrisor Alexandru Ionut*”. The same may be used in the e-mail body: “*Beloved Mr/Miss/Dr/Prof. Petrişor Alexandru Ionuţ*”. In this case, it is interesting to see the mixture between a personal look given by using a name, without any effort to search for the identity, so the person is addressed in a generic way. Also, the use of “Beloved”, inappropriate in the scientific world, suggests a typical “Nigerian scam”, proving again that predatory publishers use typical spamming strategies (Petrişor, 2018). Sometimes apparently personalized messages are sent via mass mailing software, as proved by extra signs, e.g., quotation marks: “*Dear Dr. “Alexandru-Ionut Petrisor”*” or “*Greetings Dr. “Alexandru-Ionut Petrisor”*” (Archives of Palliative Care - notice the use of Palliative instead of Palliative). Also, some journals use a misspelled name of the author contacted: “*Prominent Author Dear Dr. Petrisor Alexandruionut*”, while others address the author correctly, but make it part of the subject: “*To Dr. Petrisor- [Advances in Environmental and Engineering Research] Special Issue “Advances in Environmental Research” - Submit an article for publication*”. A special category is represented by the predatory publishers who pick the names from the suggested way of citing an article, without spending time to change its format: “*Dear Petrisor, AI; Sirodov, I; Ianos, I, you are invited to submit Original Articles/Review Articles to IJFSA for consideration*”, or, in the e-mail text, “*Dear Petrisor AI*” and “*Dear Dr. Petrişor, Alexandru-Ionuţ*”.

A separate category of calls for papers uses a different name. Sometimes such names are the e-mail subject: “*Prof. Ashok Kumar Baidya*”, “*Prof. NEAL SIPARSKY*”; it is hard to say what reaction such publishers would expect from an author to whom these names do not say anything. In other cases, when authors are chosen based on publishing an article with more authors, the message is addressed to the first author or to another author, randomly chosen, but sent to all authors. Occasionally e-mails are addressed to a person not connected to the recipient: “*Dr. Kaushal Sheth :: Enter in the researcher world*”, “*Dear Doctor. Kaszta ?aneta*” - please notice the question mark, probably replacing a special character, not corrected, or “*Dear Doctor. Spagnuolo Carmela*”. In the last two cases, the specific trademark of using a period after the full word “Doctor” is visible.

A distinct category of calls use not the actual name of an author, but the e-mail address to mimic a personalized look. In such situations, the messages are composed of more parts, merged together in an incomprehensible way. Examples include “*Attention to alexandru.petrisor@uauim.ro | OJEB*” - notice the inverted message, as probably the intended message is for the potential author to pay attention to the journal, “*Statement to alexandru.petrisor@uauim.ro | AHCR*” - note the use of “statement”, more appropriate for a bank than for a journal, or “*Notification to alexandru.petrisor@uauim.ro | AEST*” - note the entirely inappropriate use of a formal “notification”, and those found in Annex 1.

This discussion on names would not be complete if omitting the names of senders. Starting, among others, from “Grace Groovy” signing the e-mail mentioned by Butler (2013), Bell (2017) sees predatory publishers as a parody of science. Among those signing the invitations used in this study, some of them are worthy mentioning: *Ms. Ada* (sender’s name), “*This is Snowy*”, or “*Greetings from Rose!!*”.

3. Aggressively requiring an answer. While answering a message is a minimum sign of courtesy, answering predatory calls (or Nigerian scams and other unsolicited e-mails) is out of question (somehow, this article answers such calls indirectly), but predatory publishers do not give up. Examples of soliciting an answer include “*Good Discounts for Quick Submissions*” - typical commercial advertisement, “*Kindly Respond*” - note, again, a typical subject for a scam, “*Needful Article*” - note the poor English: the journal may be “needful”, but not the article, “*Optimistic Support*” or, similarly, “*Optimistic Response*” - again, in both cases the journal may be actually optimistic about receiving support or a response, but the broken English suggests something different, “*Urgent response to alexandru.petrisor@uauim.ro*” - notice the broken English, suggesting that the journal is answering the author, when in fact the journal is waiting for the author’s answer, and the use of “urgent”, a typical spamming strategy (Petrișor, 2016, 2018), “*Follow up- Appreciated for your response*” - again, as if the author would have answered, “*Author Assistance*” - notice again the poor English, as the journal is not offering assistance to the author, but solicits “assistance” from the author, and the examples in Annex 1.

In other cases, the call for paper implies that the author has already submitted an article or accepted an invitation; examples are found in Annex 1. Such subjects come along with a text like “*We have genuinely emailed you quite a lot of times but received no response, so we’d like to try once more as courtesy*” or “*Despite our numerous sincere emails, we have not received a response from you. As a gesture of courtesy, we are making one final attempt to contact you*”. Also, like other spammers (Petrișor, 2018), predatory publishers give the impression of replying to a message of the author using in the subject “Re”: “*Re: Reminder towards your submission on manuscript International Journal of Nursing and Health Care Research*”, or the wrong and hard to trace “Reg”: “*Reg: Your Valuable Research for First Issue-2024*”.

4. All but a “Call for Papers”. It seems that predatory publishers avoid the term “call for papers”, replacing it with a different phrasing, sometimes impossible to understand or wrong, e.g. “*Letter for the Article Submission*” - see the wrong use of definite article, “*Inquiry for an article to be published in Publishing Research - Publishing process*” - see the repeated “publish”, “*Manuscript Submission Request*” - also written as “*manuscript submission request*” or (wrongly) “*Manuscripts Submission Request*”, “*Notice*” (calls from “*Obesity, Diabetes and Metabolic Syndrome*” and “*Global Journal of Obesity, Diabetes and Metabolic Syndrome*”, both with same ISSN, but a name changed in 6 days), “*Possible Submission*”, “*Your Transcript*” - note the confusion with the paperwork related to a degree, and the examples in Annex 1. If using the term “call for paper”, predatory publishers seem not to understand it, e.g., “*Call for paper invitation*” - also “*Call for Paper invitation*” or “*Call for Paper Invitation*”, and “*Call For Paper Request*”.

Predatory publishers are often very inventive, and show endless possibilities to replace “call for papers” by subjects with more or less complicated phrasing, like “*Infectious life*,

drugs as a saviour” - note the nonsense, “*Submit Your Surgery Research Now - Call for Papers Open!*” - strangely included between quotation marks, “*Fallow Up Email : You Can Publish Your Any Kind Of The Manuscript Such As - Journal on Environmental Sciences*” - “fallow” used instead of “follow”, “*Flow Up Remainder: Get Published: Submit Your Article to Journal of Clinical Cases*” - “flow” used instead of “follow”, “*Follow-Up: I Am Announce Submit Your Article To International journal Of Gastroenterology And Hepatology*” - see many English mistakes, confusions and random use of capitalization, “*Present your work at our Journal*” - looks more like a conference invitation, “*Globalize your work with us*”, “*Participate in Upcoming Issue*” - again, suggests a conference invitation, “*Remainder: We Accept All Types Of Manuscript For Its Upcoming Issue*” - “remainder” used instead of “reminder”, “*Warmly invite you to contribute new works to journal REIE. Thanks*” - note the verb use, correlated with a lacking agent, “*We Request for Your Support*”, “*has sent a request for article submission-ACEE*” - agent lacking: who has sent?, and the examples presented in Annex 1.

Predatory conferences and proofreading services rarely use simple and straightforward phrasing, such as “*Gentle Reminder as Speaker: 2023*” - note the common subject of two invitations received the same day, and the examples in Annex 1. Most often, complicated phrasing is preferred, occasionally wrong, and/or looking like commercial advertisement: “*Let's Join and Promulgate your Knowledge at NUTRIFORUM2023*” - notice the wrong use of “promulgate”, appropriate for a law or decree, and the examples included in Annex 1. The same way a “call for papers” is everything else but a “call for papers”, predatory conferences are called in strange ways: “*Global Meet*”, “*Physics Experts gathering*”, or “*NEURO Conclave 2024*”. Do the organizers of the latest event know that the Oxford Dictionary of English defines a “conclave” as a private meeting, with the most common use as the assembly of cardinals for the election of a pope? Most likely, they don't know.

5. The analysis of the “calls for papers” reveals other **less frequent issues**. One of them, mentioned by Petrișor (2021) is found in calls as “*One Article for Accomplishment Dear Dr. Petrisor Alexandru Ionuț*”, “*Single Manuscript Dear Dr. Petrisor Alexandru Ionuț*”, or “*One paper*”, all pointing out to requiring a single manuscript, but also in subjects like “*Please Submit Case Reports to our Journal*”, “*Opinion/Mini Review Dear Dr. Petrisor Alexandru*”, “*Short Communication Submission Request for Current Issue*”; in this case, the “innovation” is that predatory publishers request a shorter article, as indicated by the text “*We are in shortfall of one article for the newly launched issue i.e., Volume 5 Issue 5. Is it possible for you to support us with your article for this issue release on or before 6th October? If this is a short notice, please do send 2-page opinion/mini review/research article. We hope you wont disappoint us.*” - note the wrong spelling of “won't”.

Messages from predatory proofreading services are usually written in high-level English to trigger the curiosity of a potential recipient opening them: “*My Paper Was Rejected – What Do I Do Now*”, “*The Positive Aspects of Negative Feedback in Academic Publishing*”, or “*Checklist for Publishing a Scholarly Journal Paper*”. However, such messages show the connection with predatory publishers: “*Is a Pay To Publish Journal and Is There a List of Them?*”.

Predatory journals advertise in strange ways: “*Peer-reviewed DOI - Google Scholar Journals*” - a DOI is an object identifier and not a journal, and Google Scholar a search engine, not abstracting and indexing service, “*Journal valid as per nmc february,2022*” -

it is not clear what “nmc” means, and how does it “validate” a journal. Others are not selective at all: “*We Are gratefully Accepting All Kinds of Articles - Gastroenterology And Hepatology*”, or do not charge some fee (while probably increase others) - “*No Page Charges - Asian Journal of Biological Sciences*”. Some journals perceive themselves as a club: “*Join as a member of potential Authors in JSciMed Central*”, “*Author Association Dear Dr. Petrisor Alexandru Ionut*” or “*Join our prestigious community of authors*”.

Finally, there are several elements which do not repeat, but are certainly worthy of being mentioned. An invitation to review becomes a “*Requisition to Handle a Manuscript*”. Another call replaces the Latin alphabet with special characters: “*Invite You to Submit Your Proposal for a Special Issue to Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning -- Assessing public opinion using self-organizing maps. Lessons from ur..*” - a strategy used by spammers to make their messages passing the spam filters. Finally, the text of a call attempts to put a smile on the recipient’s face: “*Make every day a great day by smiling*”.

6. Poor English as rule. The wrong, inconsistent, and random use of capitalization, punctuation and spaces in relationship to punctuation were already pointed out - e.g., “*International journal Of Gastroenterology And Hepatology*”. While presenting the results, such examples were indicated; in some cases, mistakes were present without being pointed out, especially for small flaws. Many of these concern the use of prepositions, used when not needed: “*Enter in the researcher world*”, “*Encourage with your Contribution*” or “*We Request for Your Support*”, “*Welcome to Join at AnalytiX-2024, Nagoya, Japan*”, lacking when required: “*Submit Your Valuable Manuscript [to] IJOAG*”, or confounding them: “*Please share your thoughts on 2024 Recycling Congress*”, “*Reminder towards your submission on manuscript*”. There are also many cases of inappropriately using the plural: “*Manuscripts Invitation*” or “*Requesting For The Manuscript Submissions*”. Mistakes include also subject-verb disagreements, article use, word confusions, and subtle mistakes, such as an inappropriate tone or vocabulary. Occasionally calls contain gross mistakes: “*Follow-Up: I Am Announce Submit Your Article To International journal Of Gastroenterology And Hepatology*” and “*Fallow Up Email : You Can Publish Your Any Kind Of The Manuscript Such As - Journal on Environmental Sciences*”, or text which, even if properly spelled, make no sense: “*Have a nice day "Journal on Environmental Sciences," kindly submit your significant work*”.

4. CONCLUSION

The analysis revealed that predatory publishers, conferences, and proofreading services write their “calls for papers” in a different language, striking through its low quality in the case of publishers and conferences, and high level in the case of proofreading services. Nevertheless, such messages are never credible, and the language issues may be used as an indication that the messages hide potential deceptions if given course, and the findings of present study may serve as defense against predatory calls.

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FOSTERING AUTONOMY THROUGH REFLECTION AND SELF-STUDY

David Sandeman

Kobe Kaisei University, Japan

ORCID iD: David Sandeman

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8497-6371>

Abstract. *The importance of empowering students to take charge of their learning and become active participants in their own education cannot be overemphasized. Developing student autonomy should be a primary objective not only in language learning but also in any educational context. Reflecting critically on one's study and the ability to set learning goals are frequently lauded as the cornerstones of developing autonomy. This small-scale study examines the impact of utilizing a set format for low proficiency students to reflect on their lessons, identify weaknesses, and set their own individual study goals. The study found that implementing this approach over a fifteen-week semester saw an overall improvement in student autonomy, with positive feedback received from the students. While there is certainly room for improvement and refinement of the method, given the ease of implementation and small-time commitment of the activity, behooves teachers to consider implementing similar activities in their own classroom.*

Key words: *autonomy, self-study, reflective learning*

1. INTRODUCTION

Even the most motivated and dedicated students will struggle to achieve linguistic mastery if they are unable to pursue learning above and beyond what they encounter in the language classroom. It is almost certain that students who have the ability to set and pursue their own study goals will perform better than those reliant solely on the support and directions of a teacher. This observation has led to an increased awareness of the need to empower students to take control of their own learning habits and foster them in becoming lifelong learners, able to pursue their own independent studies beyond the classroom.

This statement is particularly true in Japan, where it has been noted that, despite government policy emphasizing the development of communicative competence (MEXT, 2003), high-school level language classrooms tend to focus on knowledge acquisition for the sake of passing exams (Matsuzaka et al., 2004; Nishino & Watanabe, 2008). It has been theorized that this process of rote learning has led to students viewing learning as a teacher-driven process, leaving them reticent to take charge of their own learning, and, even when motivated to do so, uncertain where to begin (Nowlan, 2008). It has been

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Corresponding author: David Sandeman, Kobe Kaisei University, Japan

E-mail: sandeman@kaisei.ac.jp

pointed out, however, while numerous language teachers fall into the trap of assuming their students are passive due to a lack of external activity, Japanese students may often be *internally* active and seeking to take control of their own learning (Murase, 2012).

In order to facilitate students in developing the ability to look beyond the classroom and aid them in making the move towards become autonomous learners, this study seeks to examine the effect that incorporating reflection on lessons and the setting of self-study goals has on student autonomy.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

While the essence of what is meant by learner autonomy seems easy to grasp, it is particularly difficult to accurately define. Little (2005) sums up the concept by stating that “the essence of learner autonomy is the ability to take charge of one’s own learning.” (p. 5). This involves taking responsibility for a range of decisions regarding a variety of aspects of the learning process, such as determining objectives, defining content and progression, selecting methods and techniques, monitoring the acquisition process, and evaluating acquired knowledge (Holec, 1979). Autonomy is not a process that occurs in isolation, as it “entails a capacity and willingness to act independently and in co-operation with others, as a socially responsible person” (Dam, 1995, p. 1). It is through the collaboration with other, more capable learners that one develops the capacity for self-regulation that is necessary for a learner to become autonomous (Shin, 2021).

One major predictor of learner autonomy is the use of language learning strategies by learners in their pursuit of language expertise (Oxford, 2017). These language learning strategies consist of a number of metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, and affective strategies (O’Malley and Chamot, 1990). Metacognitive strategies involve the setting of learning goals and planning one’s own learning, monitoring learning while it is taking place, and reflection and self-evaluation post learning. Cognitive strategies include strategies such as note-taking and grouping that allow students to mentally manipulate learning material. Affective strategies are those strategies that involve interacting with others such as cooperation and self-reinforcement.

There are a number of compelling reasons for why promoting learner autonomy is of utmost importance. In general students autonomous learning has been shown to be more effective in developing linguistic abilities than non-autonomous learning (Sakai and Takagi, 2009). In addition, in a review of the literature on learner autonomy, Dickinson (1995) found a strong correlation between motivation and autonomous learning, concluding that there is “substantial evidence from cognitive motivational studies that learning success and enhanced motivation is conditional on learners taking responsibility for their own learning, being able to control their own learning and perceiving that their learning successes or failures are to be attributed to their own efforts and strategies rather than to factors outside their control” (p. 174).

The question is what exactly is the best approach to fostering autonomy in learners. A vast majority of learning strategies utilized by autonomous learners are metacognitive in nature, and it has, in fact, been argued that these metacognitive aspects form the central core of autonomy (Benson, 2011). Prior research has established that metacognition can be acquired and enhanced through guidance and socialization (Uebuchi, 2007). Given this,

stimulating learner's metacognition through classroom activities should enable learners to develop autonomy.

This capacity has been demonstrated repeatedly. Nguyn and Gu (2013) conducted 9 seminars focused on metacognitive strategies, each lasting one hour, over the course of a 36-hour academic writing course. The seminars were designed to introduce a broad spectrum of strategies to the learners, ranging from planning through monitoring to reflection and self-evaluation. They found that the learners who participated in these seminars reported developing significantly higher levels of self-regulation when compared to control groups who did not participate in these seminars. Furthermore, learners reported that since undergoing the metacognitive training, their approach to writing an essay had changed fundamentally.

While Nguyn and Go focused on a wide-range of strategies, a number of studies have shown improvement in autonomy via using a more specific focus. Of particular notice is the improvements related to incorporating reflective techniques into learning. Reflective learning is particularly important in autonomy as contemplation works to enhance learner's insight into their strengths and weaknesses, promotes an understanding of one's learning goals, and aids in the contextualization and understanding of knowledge (Farrell, 2016; King and Kitchener, 1994; Mezirow, 1998). These reflective mediations typically involve writing, whether that is in the form of a logbook, reflective diary, journal, or reports, and it has been shown that reflective writing has a number of benefits such as enhancing learner's sensitivity to the process of learning (Nunan, 1997) and promoting positive changes in learner beliefs and attitudes (Klimas, 2017).

Studies that have examined whether reflective writing leads to increased autonomy in the field of language learning have tended to show positive results. Menegale (2020) asked students in a Master's program in Language Sciences at an Italian university to keep a learning logbook tracking the language learning processes they encountered over a period of seven days, alongside any difficulties, strengths, or other relevant information they wished to add. They were then asked if they enjoyed the task, and if they believed it to be useful, and in what ways. They found that not only had the students generally enjoyed performing the task, but the process of reflecting on their language learning had "had helped them reflect on the way they were learning and the vastness and usefulness of the language inputs they were immersed in. This had activated an "awakening" process, which made them understand the value of personal active involvement in the language learning process" (Mengale, 2020, p. 116). While overall the feedback was positive, students did comment that the process of keeping regular logs was time-consuming and required perseverance and organizational skills, and only half indicated that they might continue to keep logs after the activity was finished.

Within the Asian context, Kaneda (2022) investigated the use that keeping regular logbooks has on developing high school student's metacognitive strategies. They asked high level students to keep a regular logbook planning their learning, describing what they learned, and giving a self-evaluation of their learning, with the allowance for students to add or remove sections as they saw fit. These logbooks were to be submitted to their teacher on a weekly basis over an eleven-week period. Alongside this, students were asked to complete a weekly writing task designed to improve their metacognitive skills, alongside asking each student to set three goals for the month at the beginning of each month – though these could include non-learning related aspirations. At the end of the eleven weeks, Kaneda concluded that the process of recording their learning in logbooks had helped students improve their metacognitive strategies, though this improvement

varied based on the frequency that logs were kept and how engaged the learners were in the process,

Similar findings have been found throughout a number of other studies. The process of writing reflective reports on extensive listening outside the classroom was found to increase awareness of how to study outside of the classroom and develop the initiative and enthusiasm to pursue those opportunities (Kobayashi, 2020). The use of reflective writing in foreign language studies at a tertiary institute in Australia found that students believed the activity to be useful in promoting independent study (Absalom and Léger, 2011). Additionally, a study into the use of learning diaries in an English language class at an Argentine university, while primarily focused on their use in providing insights into the students' perceptions of the class, found that the act of recording their reflections worked to raise learner autonomy (Porto, 2007).

While the majority of these studies have found that the student's reaction to keeping learning diaries to be mainly positive, that was not universally the case, with students frequently focused on the time commitment required. Studies specifically focused on examining the perceptions of students towards keeping a logbook or diary have echoed this as many learners commented that the activity was repetitive, time-consuming, and tedious (Litzler, 2014; Litzler and Bakieva, 2017; Vajirasarn, 2014).

An additional point to be made about the majority of the studies is that they have been conducted using comparatively advanced level students who are, ostensibly, highly motivated. The majority of studies have taken place at a tertiary or post-graduate level, with highly proficient students. Even the study that was conducted at a high school made note of the level of the students, commenting that reflective diaries may not be as successful with the majority of high school question. Which begs the question, would reflective diaries be successful with less capable students.

As such this study sought to explore the following questions:

1. Could a streamlined, less time-consuming version of reflective journals enhance autonomy in low proficiency students?
2. Would low proficiency students perceive reflecting on their studies as useful?
3. Would low proficiency students find the task arduous or enjoyable?

3. METHOD

The study was conducted over a one semester period with 12 first- and second-year students enrolled in the English and Tourism department at an all-women university in Japan. English oral communication is a compulsory subject for all students in their first two years, with both years being at approximately a CEFR A1 to A2 level. Each semester lasts fifteen weeks, and the students have one 90-minute Oral English class per week.

At the beginning of the semester the nature of the study was explained to the students, who gave their written consent to partake in the research. It was carefully and clearly explained to the students that, while keeping a reflective diary and setting self-study goals was a component of the course and expected of all students, participation in the study was not compulsory and would have no impact on their grades for the course. In addition, it was stressed that students who consented to participate in the courses should endeavor to answer any questions as honestly as possible, without fear of their answers affecting their performance in the course.

The streamlined reflective journal (Appendix A) was designed around the core items for reflection as outlined by Ghanizadeh et al. (2020) in their exposition on reflective journals. The journal was hosted online so the students could access it with ease. It consisted of five questions reflective questions centered around what the students learnt in the class, what they thought they did well, what they found difficult, and what areas of English they felt they needed to improve. In addition, students were asked to decide and record their plan for how they would improve English in their own time that week, and how many hours they would endeavor to spend doing so. Finally, the students were given the optional opportunity to provide any extra thoughts or feedback on the week's class.

During the first class of the semester, students were introduced to the research. It was explained that reflection on the course and engaging in self-study, in addition to any homework specifically set by the teacher, were core components of the course and expected of all students, regardless of participation in the study. Before being introduced to the reflective diaries, students were asked to fill out a survey designed to gauge their learner autonomy, which was based on the Measuring Instrument for Language Learner Autonomy (Murase, 2015). While the survey results are presented in English, to avoid possible misunderstandings, the students were presented with a version translated into their native language. Once the survey was complete, the students were asked to access the reflective journal. It was explained that they could answer each question in as little or as much detail as they chose, and that, while the self-study was to be done in the student's own time, the reflective journal would be written in the last five to ten minutes of each class. A further fifteen minutes of the class were spent with students brainstorming and discussing various methods of study to improve different English skills, and the results of the discussion, alongside additional study methods, was collated and hosted online for easy reference.

In the final class of the semester, students were asked to once again take the learner autonomy survey. Additionally, they were asked to fill out a feedback sheet to garner their perspective, and additional feedback was gathered during in-class discussions during the final class.

It should be noted that there are a number of limitations presented by this study. The most notable being, given the complexity of learner autonomy, the difficulty in accurately measuring a learner's autonomy. This is a widely recognized issue in the field of learner autonomy, due the incredible number of variables involved. Some studies utilize teacher observations to assess autonomy, some measure it through discussions with learners, and others, as this study does, utilize self-rated surveys. However, while such measures do offer us some insight into a learner's autonomy, the results may be colored by numerous other factors. This particularly applies to studies, such as this one, where the small sample sizes could lead to misleading results. Additionally, while students were requested to be forthright and the importance of honesty was constantly underlined, the nature of the teacher-student dynamic may have led to students skewing their feedback to align with what they believe the teacher expects or desires, though this is a limitation that applies to most classroom-based research.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Effect on Learner Autonomy

The results of the survey pre- and post-semester can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1 Analysis of Individual Items

Item	Pre-semester mean	Post-semester mean	P
I set long term goals and plans for learning English.	2.818	3.417	0.046
I make study plans for that day before I start to study English.	2.909	3.333	0.144
I set achievable goals in learning English.	3.182	3.750	0.241
I organize my study to make the best use of my time	3.364	2.917	0.366
I assess how much of my goal I have achieved	2.818	3.583	0.035
I keep records of what kind of methods I used for my English study	2.455	3.333	0.014
I keep records of what I learned from my English study.	1.636	2.167	0.095
I ask my teacher and other students for advice about my English learning.	2.636	3.250	0.158
I am aware of the goals of the English class I take.	3.364	3.667	0.368
I reflect upon what I learned after I finish studying English for the day.	3.636	4.083	0.336
I evaluate the improvement in my ability to use English effectively.	3.182	3.833	0.149
I revise my English study plans if they don't work well.	2.818	3.250	0.377
I assess how much of my goal I have achieved.	3.182	3.917	0.062
I am able to decide my own goals in learning English if given the freedom to do so	2.909	3.250	0.306
I am able to study English without guidance from a teacher.	3.182	3.417	0.569
If I study English with other students, I also learn from them.	3.727	3.917	0.561

As can be seen, there was a slight increase in learner autonomy across the majority of items, the only outlier being related to time organization. Yet, while a general increase can be observed for nearly all the items, the majority of these changes were not statistically significant. The only exceptions being related to the setting of long-term goals, the recording of study methods, and the assessment of how much of their goal they had achieved, where a significant increase was apparent. As these were the major focus of the reflective diaries and self-study that the students were asked to perform, it is not surprising to see a significant increase in these elements. However, it is surprising that there wasn't a larger increase regarding reflecting on what they have learned, as all students had, to some extent, performed reflection at the end of the class.

While the majority of items did not see a significant change, the larger impact can be seen if the individual activities are categorized into behavioral patterns. Following in the footsteps of Kaneda (2022), the items were grouped into four overall categories: preparation (items 1-4), monitoring (items 5 -9), reflection (10-13), and overall beliefs about autonomy (items 14-16). The results can be seen in Table 2 below.

Table 1 Analysis by Behavioral Category

Autonomous Behavior	Pre-semester mean	Post-semester means	P
Preparation	3.021	3.354	0.068
Monitoring	2.567	3.200	0.001
Reflection	3.250	3.771	0.013
Beliefs	3.250	3.528	0.235

Here, we can see a significant increase in terms of the preparation, monitoring, and reflection conducted by the students. It would seem that the process of reflection and goal-setting has, in general, resulted in the development of learner autonomy. As for why there has been comparatively little effect on the student's overall beliefs on autonomy, one plausible explanation could be a function of time. While the student's actions have been impacted via the reflection process, it is possible that there has been insufficient time for their increase in autonomy to be reflected in their belief systems. An equally plausible explanation could be that as the research focused purely on developing the metacognitive strategies regarding monitoring, reflection, and to a lesser extent preparation, no significant impact was had on the student's underlying beliefs regarding autonomy.

It must again be noted that these results should be taken with a grain of salt. There is significant difficulty in measuring autonomy, and a number of external factors could have influenced the students' responses to the survey, which is exacerbated by the small sample size. Having said this, on a purely observational level, there was a noticeable difference in students' behavior and attitudes towards classes as the semester progressed. Students were better prepared for classes, tended to be more motivated and attentive during class, and there was a marked improvement in their overall English ability. While again, this cannot and should not be completely attributed to increased reflection, it would appear that the process of keeping a reflective diary, even in a shortened form, has had an overall positive impact on the student's learner autonomy, echoing the findings of Mengale (2020) and Kaneda (2022).

4.2. Effect on Learner Autonomy

The students' perceptions of the activity were gauged through written and verbal feedback given during the last period of the class. To begin with, the students were asked to respond to a set of questions hosted online. After a twenty-minute guided discussion on their enjoyment of the activity, and perspective on the benefits they felt they gained was conducted.

The vast majority of students (91%) seemed to believe that keeping a reflective diary was overall a worthwhile pursuit. One point that was mentioned in particular was that reflection aided them in memorizing aspects of the lesson, making it easier to recall details of the class at a later point. This was universally agreed on, with every student adding that they found it had helped them to some degree. One student explicitly commented that "the process of remember what was learnt and thinking about it meant I was able to retain the information even more," with another adding that "I typically find it easy to forget things, so I've come to believe that reflecting on the lesson is vital." A number of students specifically mentioned were surprised with the degree to which it had helped them remember certain parts of the lessons, as they had not expected it to have much of an effect.

In addition, several students pointed out that the process of reflecting on each lesson made them better prepared for the next class, as identifying areas that they struggled with in one class helped them think about and set goals for how to approach the next class. This, in the words of one student, "enabled me to approach the next class with a fresh goal in mind and an eagerness to attend the class." This was echoed by other students, who agreed that it helped them "smoothly think about how to take classes", with one specifically stating that they were setting goals and that had helped them become more conscious of their learning. This aspect of reflection leading into the setting of goals for future classes is reflected in the increase regarding autonomous behavior associated with preparation as shown in Table 2. Despite the relatively short time period in which students were asked to reflect on their learning, it is apparent that a number of students went beyond identifying weaknesses and areas in need of improvement, and started setting goals for future classes and their own learning.

Perhaps the most telling point in favor of the activities perceived usefulness is the student's desire to continue the activity in the future. When asked if they would like to continue completing a reflective diary at the end of class in future semesters, 83% of students replied with a desire to do so. One student went so far as to say, "I actually plan to study English this way at least once a week from now on." Another student wrote that she felt the experience would be particularly useful for her in the future, stating that "through self-analysis and planning I have become better able to understand what methods of study suits me best." Finally, a number of students commented that they found the process helped them "gain some confidence in my self-study."

In many ways these comments are similar to those made by students in Mengale's (2020) study, where he references an "awakening ... which had led to increased language learning awareness" (p. 113), expounding that an awareness of "language inputs beyond the classroom not only helps them notice affordances and seize learning opportunities, but also fosters engagement in new and self-directed language learning" (p. 113). Likewise, in this study, the students seemed to have developed a deeper consciousness of their language learning process, and developed a corresponding appreciation for the wealth of opportunities

for language study above and beyond the classroom, hopefully enabling them to pursue independent learning well beyond their university years.

Not all the feedback was entirely positive, however. One student said that she found it pointless, because she never, “really thought about it after class, and usually forgot what I decided to do for self-study, so ended up studying the same way I always do.” Another student also said she struggled with the study component as she often felt her weakest point was conversation, noting that, “it might have been more useful if it was a reading or writing class.” Given this feedback it might have, in retrospect, been better to encourage students to physically write information rather than using an online tool, as, though they could access the online version at any time, the tactile sensation of writing combined with having a physically present copy to refer to could have aided in their self-study. Additionally, extra time spent mid-way through the course to continue to discuss possible study methods, as this could have helped open student awareness to the myriad of opportunities they have to practice the full range of language skills outside the classroom.

4.3. Student Enjoyment

Again, like in most other studies on reflective writing, the majority of students (82%) stated that they found the writing process relatively enjoyable. It didn't seem to spark the same level of joy and memories of childhood diary writing that were found in Mengale's (2020) study, perhaps because the more rigid format lacked the feeling of personalized writing that Mengale's more open format provided. Students did, however, comment that they particularly enjoyed the reflective process, saying that it was “fun to think about what I did well in class and how I can do better,” and that they “enjoyed thinking about different ways to study to help overcome their weaknesses.” When asked, none of the students found the process particularly difficult to do or time-consuming.

It should be noted that two students admitted that they did not particularly find the process that enjoyable, touching on the fact that the process was repetitive and rather dull, similar to findings in prior studies (Litzler, 2014; Litzler and Bakiev, M. 2017; Vajirasarn, 2014). This may have been compounded by the very set process of these reflective diaries. In designing the process to greatly reduce the time required and make it easier for lower-level students to focus on specific points of reflection, the activity asked students to consider the exact same questions lesson after lesson. It might be possible that changing the specific points students are asked to reflect on over the weeks could result in a less repetitive process.

5. AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The majority of studies investigating the effects of reflective writing have clearly indicated that it fosters learner autonomy. However, there is still far more research to be done to gain a fuller understanding of the relationship. While this study suggests that reflective writing is effective even in a simplified form and with lower-level students, further exploration comparing the effect of formulaic reflective writing versus a more open style, where the learner is free to explore their reflection as their desire takes them, is required. The insights provided by such a comparison could help fuel pedagogical practices for teachers of all levels, and the strength of the research will only continue to improve as our understanding of autonomy and our ability to accurately measure it increase.

There is also a pressing need to engage in longitudinal studies on the effects of reflective writing. The current research has all been conducted over a period of several weeks or, at most, a semester. To my knowledge no research has examined whether the development of autonomy gained from reflective writing would continue to increase over a lengthier period of time or if the gains would plateau after a learner “awakens” through their insight into their personal learning process. Nor has any research studied the permanency of the effect on learner autonomy to gauge if the effects seen through reflective writing and developing metacognitive strategies continue long term, or is simply a temporary boost. Investigation into these areas could provide critically important information that would have significant ramifications for pedagogy.

6. CONCLUSION

This study has worked to further our understanding of the relationship between reflective writing and the development of learner autonomy. Using a mixed methods approach incorporating both quantitative data from surveys and qualitative data from discussions with students and written feedback, the study suggests that learner autonomy can be enhanced with lower-level students by utilizing a simplified, quick form of reflective diary. The process of reflection and contemplating self-study seems to have helped students become cognizant of their individual learning processes and exposed them to the myriad of learning opportunities available outside of the world, helping them become better prepared students, more capable of monitoring their own learning, and better able to engage in reflection and evaluation on their own studies. Furthermore, while some found the task repetitive, the overwhelming majority of students enjoyed the process of contemplating their own learning, and found it stimulated their confidence and interest in their personal studies and in future lessons.

Given the clear benefits to be gained through incorporating reflection into the classroom, it strongly behooves teachers of all levels to consider to what extent their lessons can utilize reflection. While many may consider reflective writing to be a lengthy task, or one requiring highly developed language learners, this study shows that even a small amount of reflection can go a relatively long way towards fostering autonomy in learners of any ability.

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IMPACT OF TRAINING ENGLISH FOR TEACHING AS ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES FOR EFL TEACHERS

Nguyen Thi Ngoc Uyen¹, Pham Thi Hong Nhung²

¹Gia Lai Province Department of Education and Training

²English Department, University of Foreign Languages & International Studies,
Hue University, Vietnam

ORCID iDs: Nguyen Thi Ngoc Uyen
Pham Thi Hong Nhung

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9662-842X>
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9621-8482>

Abstract. *Since the English language the teacher uses in EFL classrooms has a number of particular functions and features which are not always shared by general English, English-for-teaching has been considered as a type of English for specific purposes (Cullen, 1998; Freeman et al., 2015; Freeman, 2016, 2017; Pham, 2018). While much research has been conducted on developing general English proficiency for nonnative EFL teachers, little on the training of English-for-teaching proficiency for EFL teachers and its impact has been found. This study investigates secondary EFL teachers' perceptions of the changes they made as a result of English-for-teaching proficiency training. It also explores how these teachers maintain English-for-teaching proficiency in a context where resources required for substantiable professional development are scarce. Drawn on the data provided by means of questionnaire from 150 EFL teachers at CEFR-C1 level, 58 reflective reports and 24 interviews, the findings have revealed that the training has led to practical, meaningful changes to the language the teachers used in their classrooms. The study also shows that despite obtaining a high level of general English proficiency, the teachers still find English-for-Teaching useful to their teaching tasks and it is more likely for them to maintain this type of English. On the basis of the findings, relevant implications to teaching-job-related language proficiency training are made.*

Key words: *English for teaching, general English proficiency, professional development, classroom language function, teacher language competence, CEFR*

1. INTRODUCTION

In foreign language classroom, teacher language plays a critical role. It works as a means of communication helping teachers communicate instructional contents to learners and also gives the linguistic model for students, providing them with main source of target language input (Littlewood & Yu, 2011). Given the special functions of the language that EFL teachers use in their classroom, English-for-teaching is considered as English for specific purposes (Cullen, 1998; Freeman et al., 2015; Pham, 2018). In Vietnam, since the implementation of the National Foreign Languages Project, school EFL teachers have

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Corresponding author: Pham Thi Hong Nhung, English Department, University of Foreign Languages and International Studies, Hue University, Vietnam

E-mail: n.pham@hueuni.edu.vn

been sent to training workshops to enhance both their general English proficiency levels which are based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and pedagogical skills (Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training - MOET, 2017). Recently, the Competency Framework for Foreign Language Teachers in Vietnam has been issued by the MOET at Dispatch No. 2069/BGDĐT-NGC/BGDĐT (MOET 2020b), which describes the competences foreign language teachers must develop and maintain for their teaching profession. In accordance with this document, foreign language teachers including EFL teachers are required to develop five distinct competences among which the competence to use English to teach English is ranked as top one. Accordingly, various large-scale trainings have been provided to help EFL teachers improve both general English proficiency and English-for-teaching proficiency. The English-for-teaching curriculum used in this training is provided through ELTeach program of Cengage National Geographic. This program is developed to help teachers to use English for a specific purpose, which is for teaching English, especially to fulfil 3 main functions EFL teachers often have to do in their classrooms, namely: English for pedagogical purpose, English for classroom management and English for delivering assessment feedback to language learners (Freeman et al., 2015). This paper reports the findings of a study on the changes that secondary EFL teachers perceived associated with the English-for-teaching training they received through the ELTeach program.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. The role of teacher language proficiency in language classroom

The English language proficiency of EFL teachers has been of considerable interest in many non-native English-speaking countries (Elder, 2001; Tsui, 2003; Butler, 2004; Kim & Elder, 2008; Littlewood & Yu, 2011; Richards, 2017; Luo, 2021; Tseng, Chen & Huang, 2023). EFL teachers' language proficiency includes the ability to maintain the use of the target language in classroom, to give correct feedback on learner language, and to provide input at an appropriate level of difficulty (Freeman et al., 2015; Richards, 2017; Pham, 2017). According to Freeman (2017), English proficiency is important for non-native English-speaking teachers to facilitate effective language learning in the classroom. Teachers with limited English proficiency may find it difficult to communicate with their students, which could lead to a lack of language input, lower language output, and insufficient feedback, and create a negative impact on students' language learning. Additionally, the proficiency level of EFL teachers will also allow them to use different methods for their teaching practices (Farrell & Richards, 2007).

As language is used as a valuable means of communication in all classrooms, the English EFL teachers use in their classroom is no exception. They use English to deliver the knowledge and develop the skills required for their students. However, unlike the language the teachers of other subjects use in their class, in foreign language classes the language the teacher uses becomes not just a tool for communication but also a content itself as it actually provides meaningful, comprehensible input of the target language to learners (Littlewood & Yu, 2011, Pham, 2017) and serves as both "the medium and the object of learning" (Tsui, 2003, p. 136). In this sense, language use in the language classroom is widely viewed as both the means and the objective of instruction (Richards & Lockhart, 1996; Richards,

2010; Freeman, 2016). That is why it is necessary to have a threshold proficiency level for EFL teachers to reach so that they can teach effectively in English.

2.2. English-for-teaching as english for specific purposes

Christine (1995) and much research in classroom discourse (e.g. Ferguson, 2009; Inbar-Lourie, 2010; Forman, 2012) has confirmed classroom language is not the same as the discourse used in real life. While general English proficiency is “the extent to which an individual possesses the linguistic cognition necessary to function in a given communicative circumstance, in a given modality (listening, speaking, reading, or writing)” (Hulstijn 2011, p. 242), English for teaching purpose refers to the proficiency of using English as “a specific subset of language skills required to prepare and teach [language] lessons” (Freeman et al. 2015, p. 129). It also covers the abilities to use the target language fluently and confidently in classroom and to give appropriate feedback on students’ spoken and written tasks (Le & Renandya, 2017). English-for-teaching has its own characteristics and features, which help it serve well the pedagogical purpose of teaching a foreign language. This is why research needs to focus more on the quality of language foreign language teachers use in their classrooms, not just on how often and how much they talk (Walsh, 2002).

It is widely accepted that the language EFL teachers use in their classroom has 3 main functions: English for pedagogical and instructional functions, English for classroom management and English for delivering feedback to language learners. The pedagogical function involves the use of language to explain the lesson, to provide instructions on learning activities, to illustrate the teaching points, to paraphrase abstract contents whenever relevant, to provide support to learners (e.g., providing hints or prompts) and so on (Forman, 2011). Teachers also use language to manage the classroom as classroom management involves the teacher using language to discipline learners, to keep the class in order, to make sure the activities completed within the time scheduled, to give learners relatively equal opportunity to participate in learning activities and so on. Teacher language in classroom management therefore, plays an important role in students’ English language learning (Tsui, 2003; Kim & Elder, 2008). The language EFL teachers use to provide feedback can either directly and constantly facilitate or obstruct language learner’s performance and their efforts to communicate in the target language both in oral form (Walsh, 2002; Jelínková, Petrus & Laue, 2023) and written form (Anđelković, 2022). The language used to give feedback information can be provided with different levels of complexity, in different volumes to support learners’ leaning of language. For all of these teaching-bound functions, English-for-teaching proficiency is viewed as a type of English for specific purposes, serving the goal of teaching language, and as such it needs to be developed for EFL teachers.

On the implementation level of the National Foreign Languages Project of Vietnam, secondary EFL teachers from different provinces and cities countrywide are sent to general English workshops to achieve the required level of proficiency requested of them, specially the CEFR-C1 level. They are also sent to English-for-teaching program to improve their competence to use English to teach English. This program is provided in a blended mode with roughly 60 hours of face-to-face training when the participants were taught about the significance of the language they use in the classroom, its functions and impact on language learners. Also during this offline phase of the training workshop, they were introduced to ELTeach online application, which was developed to help them improve their English-for-teaching use for 3 main functions: teaching, classroom management, and

providing assessment feedback to language learners. In the online, self-paced learning stage of the training workshop, each participant was given an account on ELTeach platform and they were encouraged to access the training contents and complete the tasks available to them at their most convenient time. The participants were expected to spend at least 120 hours in this platform. At the end of the course, they were asked to take an end-of-training-course test.

Given the current large-scale training of English-for-teaching for EFL teachers in Vietnam, this study aims to answer the following research questions: 1) What changes in teaching practices are perceived by secondary EFL teachers as a result of their English-for-teaching training? and 2) What do the teachers do for maintaining their English-for-teaching proficiency?

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Participants

The participants of the study include 150 Vietnamese EFL teachers who attended English-for-teaching training workshops provided by universities authorized by the MOET in Vietnam, using the ELTeach program by Cengage National Geographic. They teach at different secondary schools in provinces in the Central Highland of Vietnam, which are often considered as remote, disadvantaged areas of the country. The teachers and students of these provinces are often reported as facing various challenges due to limited access to resources, shortage of teaching staff and poor teaching and learning conditions (MOET, 2018). It has also been recorded that the teachers in these provinces find it difficult to maintain their general English proficiency in post-training period (MOET, 2020a).

The demographic information of the participants is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Demographic data of the participants

Category	Subcategory	Number	Percent
Provinces	Gia Lai	96	64%
	Kon Tum	54	36%
Gender	Male	22	14.7%
	Female	128	85.3%
Teaching experience	2-5 years	12	8%
	6-10 years	19	13%
	11-15 years	46	31%
	>15 years	73	48%
Qualifications	College	18	12%
	BA	90	60%
	MA	42	28%
	PhD	0	0%
General English level	CEFR-C1	150	100
Average student no. per class	< 35	32	20.9%
	36-40	33	22%
	41-45	68	46%
	>45	17	11.1%

All of the participants had obtained the CEFR-C1 level as certified by the authorized universities before attending the English-for-teaching program. This study was conducted roughly 6 months after the participants had completed the ELTeach program and passed the final test on their English-for-teaching proficiency.

3.2. Data collection and analysis instruments

Since the questionnaire could not reveal the full nature of the research phenomenon (Creswell, 2005, 2009), reflective reports and semi-structured interviews were also used for the purpose of this study. These methods provided flexible ways to collect, analyze, and interpret data, as well as to interact with research subjects in their professional development and teaching practices. The instruments were developed based on Hulstijn's (2011) and Freeman et al.'s (2015) framework of classroom language proficiency.

3.2.1. Questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed into 3 main parts (See Appendix 1 for the full form of the questionnaire). Part one collects the participants' demographic information, including gender, age, workplace/school, teaching experiences, professional qualifications, the number of students in their classroom, and their weekly teaching hours. Part two contains both closed and open-ended items to explore teachers' perceptions of the changes in their teaching practices as impact of English-for-teaching training and things they do to maintain their proficiency. Part three seeks agreement of the participants for further contact for reflective report and interview stages of the study.

3.2.2. Reflective report

As professional development can be seen as "a result of gaining increased experience and examining his or her teaching systematically" (Glatthorn, 1995, p. 41), it is important to give teachers opportunities to reflect on their own performance as an essential aspect of professional growth. Without a clear understanding of why certain activities do or do not take place in their classroom, teachers cannot efficiently and productively shape other classes accordingly (Hoban, 2002). Therefore, teachers' reflection is a useful practice to support their professional development and their efforts to improve students' learning (Fendler, 2003).

The reflective report consists of prompts to assess the participants' perceptions of changes in their teaching practices, strategies and activities implemented to maintain the level of English-for-teaching proficiency (see Appendix 2 for the full form of the Reflective report).

The teachers were given up to six weeks to complete their report properly. They were also encouraged to elaborate as much as they thought was relevant in their responses.

3.2.3. Interview

Interview was used to provide more information about changes in teaching practice they perceived after training and activities related to maintaining English-for-teaching during post-training phase. A semi-structured interview was employed to elicit more comprehensive information and explore unexpected issues that might arise from the reflective report. The predetermined questions in semi-structured interviews also helped

keep interviews “on track”, but the flexibility of the structure allows the interviews to flow like natural conversations and better gain insights into what interviewees perceive as important (Bryman, 2008) (see Appendix 3 for main interview questions).

3.2.4. Data analysis

The data were gathered from the three collection instruments, including 150 completed questionnaires, 58 reflective reports, and 22 interviews. The quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 20 and coded with Cronbach's Alpha to check for internal consistency. The online survey administration was chosen as the quickest way to collect data and allowed respondents to answer questions on their own schedule. The data collected from the open-ended questions in the completed questionnaires, reflective reports, and interviews were analyzed qualitatively using content analysis. This involved creating codes and identifying themes and patterns in the text data for interpretation (Creswell, 2009).

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Teachers' perceptions of general changes in classroom language use

Teachers' perceptions of general changes are described in 5 items numbered from 1 to 5 in terms of (1) improvement in accuracy in language use; (2) variation in English use (the ability to say the same things in different ways); (3) fluency in English use in classroom; (4) the ability of using English to teach English, and (5) improvement in conveying English knowledge to learners more comprehensively. Their responses are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Teachers' perceptions of general changes in their classroom language use

Scales	TD	DA	NS	A	TA	Mean	SD
After the English-for-teaching training, I have...	1	2	3	4	5		
Seen improvements in accuracy in my class language use (e.g. in pronunciation, word choice, or grammar).	0 0%	1 0.7%	6 4.0%	81 54%	62 41.3%	4.36	.59
Varied expressions I use in my class (e.g. saying the same things in different ways).	0 0.0%	2 1.3%	10 6.7%	91 60.7%	47 31.3%	4.22	.62
Improved fluency in my classroom English in general.	0 0.0%	2 1.3%	6 4.0%	96 64%	46 30.7%	4.24	.59
Improved my ability of using English to teach English (e.g. to explain to students, to manage the class, to provide assessment feedback).	0 0.0%	3 2.0%	7 4.7%	94 62.7%	46 30.7%	4.22	.62
Had improvements in my general ability to convey the required knowledge and/or develop relevant skills to students.	0 0.0%	4 2.6%	10 6.7%	90 60%	46 30.7%	4.19	.67

Table 2 presents the general positive impact of the English-for-teaching training on the teachers' ability to use English in the classroom. The results indicate that the majority of the teachers experienced an improvement in using classroom language after attending the training workshop, with means ranging from 4.19 to 4.36. Respectively 54% and 41.3% of the participants agree and totally agree that they have seen improvements in the accuracy of

their language use in the class, leading to a total of and more than 95.3% of the teachers noticing positive changes in their word choice, grammar use and pronunciation.

Similar results are found for all other statements about the positive impact of English-for-teaching. More than 90% of the teachers also confirmed the changes they made by either agreeing or totally agreeing with those statements, from the ability to use various expressions in the classrooms (92 %), to improvement in fluency (94.7%), to the ability to use English to fulfil teaching functions including explaining to students (93.4%), managing class and providing feedback to the ability to convey instructional contents clearly to learners (90.7%). Qualitative data also show similar impact of the English-for-teaching training. The participants frequently describe the changes they see in their classroom language as being “*obvious*”, “*practical*”, “*daily*”, “*clear*”, “*undeniable*”, “*easy to see*”. However, there are still a number of teachers who are either uncertain about the changes they make in their classroom language or do not see those changes at all. Noticeably, 9.3% of the teachers showed in their response to the questionnaire items that they do not really see improvements in their general ability to convey the required knowledge and/or develop relevant skills to their learners.

The sections below will present in more details the changes in language use reflected by the teachers in 3 different functions they have to fulfil in classroom.

4.2. Teachers’ perceptions of changes in their English use for specific functions

4.2.1. Changes in using English for teaching purposes

These changes mainly relate to the teachers’ ability of providing good language models (i.e. mainly accurate language use), of giving accurate explanations of the lessons (e.g. meaning of English words, structures), and of providing short but clear and simple instructions for learners. The teachers noticed improvements in the language they use for teaching purpose in terms of pronunciation, planning and modifications in lexical difficulty.

The improvements in language pronunciation are reflected in the account below.

I made some changes in the pronunciations of some words and expressions I often use in classroom. Before the training, I didn’t really know that I pronounced these words incorrectly as they were too close to me [I used them very often]. Now I am more aware of the accuracy of the language I use. [...] For example, I used to forget pronouncing the ending sounds in words like “absent”, “false” or sound /z/ in “example” [that I used to pronounce /s/, or the sound /s/ in “basic” [that I used to pronounce /z/] I use them for years without knowing that I pronounced them incorrectly. [...] I also paid more attention to the pronunciation of things I said in my class. For example, even when I read a question or a passage out of the textbook, I tend to look up in the dictionary to pronounce correctly words whose pronunciation I am not so sure about because I know it may influence my students’ language too. (Participant 4).

The account by Teacher 4 on one hand shows her observation of her own self-correction when it comes to the pronunciation of familiar words she uses in teaching. This tendency is reported frequently among the qualitative data and is not just applicable to the language the teachers use for teaching purpose. It is also found in the language the teachers use for classroom management and feedback delivery. On the other hand it also suggests the teachers’ increasing awareness of the impact of her language as input on her

students' language output. This awareness is important because what EFL teachers do in the language classroom is influenced by what they think and respond to in their teaching routine tasks (Lee, Schutz & Vlack, 2017).

Various entries in reflective reports and accounts found in interview data show the participants learnt to intentionally plan their teaching language and readily modified levels of lexical difficulty to suit learners' language learners. The entry below is representative of many other entries from reflective reports.

The [English-for-teaching] training helped me understand more clearly about the role of the language I use everyday in my classroom. Before that, my language use was mainly dependent on spontaneous decisions and my personal experiences. For example, when I gave instructions for some activities, I observed students' reactions [mainly non-verbal]. If I felt like they didn't understand what I said, I would decide to say [the instructions] again and added some modifications to help students understand better. But now, for those activities, I planned my instruction language in advance to make sure my students would not have much trouble understanding it. I prioritize simple expressions and structures comprehensible to my students. I also break down long instructions and long sentences into smaller parts whenever necessary. It would also be more time-saving for us. (Participant 17).

In the entry above, Teacher 17 made it clear that the training helped him understand better the significance of the language he uses in the classroom and also encouraged him to establish a new practice of planning it before official teaching. The choice of words and structures used in his language is also made with pedagogical intentions, instead of spontaneously as before. The complexity level of the language they used didn't receive much attention from the teachers until the English-for-teaching training.

There are still 7 accounts by the teachers reflecting their choice to switch to Vietnamese from time to time when explaining complicated concepts or structures to learners. One common reason for this choice is given below:

When the grammatical point is too complicated, I cannot explain it all in English. If I do [explain it all in English], then I will end up using complicated structures and words, so my students will not understand it anyway. [It will also take a lot of time and will not be helpful]. So in these cases [for example, when I teach If-clause in conditional sentence type 2], I go to Vietnamese. This is not because I cannot express myself in English. This is mainly because my students' language level is low. They can't understand complicated English.

While being exposed to much target language input enhances language learners' motivation, confidence, and communicative competence, as well as their cultural and global awareness (Krashen, 1982; Swain, 1985), it is practical to acknowledge that in foreign language classrooms, "given the appropriate environment, two languages are as normal as two lungs" (Cook, 2002, p. 23).

Although improvement in fluency and frequency of the language used for teaching is reported, it is not reflected as often as in the language used for providing feedback and classroom management.

4.2.2. Changes in using English for delivering feedback information to learners

With respect to teachers' perceptions of changes in teaching practice, their responses through both open-ended items in the questionnaire and reflective, interview qualitative data indicate they employed a great variety of expressions to deliver assessment feedback to learners.

A teacher of 28 years of teaching experience reported:

The [English-for-teaching] training helped me realized that previously my expressions for delivering feedback to my students were very limited. [I tended to say "Is it right or wrong, class?" "Yes, it's right" "Good job! Well done! Good boy!" "Are you sure?]. Now I can choose among a wider range of expressions such as "Yes, that's right. Why do you think so?" "It's a good guess, but maybe somebody else has some more ideas?" or "Who wants to add more to this?" or "Great answer! I'm proud of you!" "Thank you for trying. Who else can help here?". I feel good when using these expressions [that I didn't use before] because I feel like I have more choices for doing routines tasks now. They are simple and my students understand them very well. (Participant 79).

The teacher above illustrated how she varied the language for giving feedback to her students. She also mentioned the good feelings this change has brought to her.

A good number of narratives from the data collected indicate the teachers realized their English is more fluent when doing classroom routine teaching tasks, especially for delivering assessment feedback and also for managing class. As one participant explained:

Because I used these expressions everyday, they soon come out of my mouth easily and fluently after just sometime. It was just a little bit hard at the beginning [to remember them]. But then I can use them naturally and automatically [without spending much time recalling them]. They are simple, so it's not really hard to use them (Participant 3).

In another words, as the teachers used these expressions frequently, they became fluent in using English for giving feedback to learners.

Additionally, there are emerging accounts which suggest that thanks to the use of these new expressions, the teachers started to change their approaches to dealing with students' performance. For instance, a teacher explained how her choice of particular expressions gave her students the opportunity to use more language and encouraged them to self-correct their mistakes.

When my students made a mistake [for example, they mispronounced a word, pronouncing "jail" for "gel"] I would correct them right away to save time [like, not "jail", but "gel"]. But now I can say "Do you mean "gel"? The students would say the word more correctly. When the students gave an incorrect answer, I can choose to say, for example, "So is that all the passage says? Does it say anything else in the last sentence?" That often encourages the students to go through the passage one more time and complete the answer. If I have time, I can also ask students to give me examples about what they have just said too. (Participant 5).

It is likely that at the beginning Teacher 5 was not so aware of the fact that her choice of new expressions allowed her students to use more language or to self-repair when they make a mistake. However, by her making use of the language she learnt from the training, her students benefit from the pedagogical values embedded in these expressions.

The finding confirms when teachers start to initiate language change in their classroom, the effectiveness of their teaching is enhanced. This finding is in accordance with Banno (2003), who maintains that teachers with good language proficiency, have higher confidence in delivering their lessons and that this attitude is passed on to their students, causing them to have a more positive attitude toward the target language. This result is also in line with the common observation that when teachers can use language well in classroom, they are able to assess students and provide good quality feedback (Tsui, 2003; Farrell & Richards, 2007).

4.2.2. Changes in using English for classroom management

The change concerning the teachers' use of English for managing classrooms was illustrated most frequently with narratives which indicate the participants used more accurate, fluent language and a wider range of expressions as seen in the data of English for teaching and feedback delivery functions. But it is worth pointing out that the teachers noticed they had a higher frequency of opting for English for classroom management than before the English-for-teaching training.

Now I can use more English and also more often to manage my class, for example to practice disciplines on my students, [for instance] to tell them to do things or not to do things to interrupt their classmates. I can say "Keep silent, focus on your task or I'll move you here [to the front]" or "Stop interrupting your friends and focus on your exercise". Before [the training], I often said those things in Vietnamese because I thought it is more effective and my students would not understand if I said in English. Now. I know it was just a habit. (Participant 11).

Like Teacher 11, many other participants showed through their narratives that they used to go to English to manage their classroom as a habit since they started teaching English. The training helped them realize that there are still different but simple expressions they can use for effective classroom management. Despite a perceived higher rate of English use for classroom management, there are 2 teachers who said in cases where the students violate the class rules seriously, they would opt for Vietnamese right from the beginning to indicate to the students the seriousness of their violations and to explain the actions the teachers are going to take to punish the unwanted behaviors of the students.

In general, the results indicate that the teachers tended to maximize classroom language use in classroom as a result of their participation in English-for-teaching training. They also became more aware of the role their own language use plays in language classroom. The changes reported are encouraging as when EFL teachers maximize opportunities for target language input in classroom, it is beneficial to language learners (Turnbull, 2000; Turnbull & Arnette, 2002).

4.3. English-For-Teaching Proficiency Maintenance

As anticipated, the participants have a consensus view that English-for-teaching is easy to use and to maintain. Their confirmation about the sustainable maintenance of English-for-teaching proficiency is unanimous. Commonly listed reasons include frequent use, practicality, low linguistic complexity, and observable impacts as seen in the narratives below.

Unlike [the CEFR] C1 we have, we use English-for-teaching frequently in our teaching, so we can maintain it with no trouble. I don't have to go out to talk to native speakers or to do [C1] practice tests to keep it [English-for-teaching] from dropping down. When we use it on daily basis, we cannot forget it. The classroom is already an environment for using it [English-for-teaching], so I don't have to go anywhere else. (Participant 17).

Most of the expressions we learnt [from the English-for-teaching] are simple, so it easy to remember and to use. The words and the structures are familiar to me and my students. No complicated words, so it is not like vocabulary and grammar at C1 level. Even if there is a difficult word, but you use it many times in your class, the students will understand. (Participant 23)

The language [English-for teaching] is straight forward and very practical. I can see my students understand me better, more quickly when I change my [classroom] language. They also respond better. That makes me feel relaxed and comfortable when teaching (Participant 14).

As seen in the accounts above, while giving the reasons to explain for low maintenance English-for-teaching proficiency, the participants at times spontaneously made some comparisons with the maintenance of their general English proficiency. In these comparisons, the participants naturally referred to the complexity of the general English proficiency level they have obtained and of the hardship and challenges involved of maintaining it. Although general English proficiency is compulsory for a teacher to be able to teach English, having the chance to develop English-for-teaching helps the teachers realize more clearly the conditions required for maintaining each time of proficiency. In the account below, reference to general English competence is made but the participant also highlighted the value of English-for-teaching proficiency that a solely high general English proficiency level may not offer to EFL teachers.

I have more freedom and flexibility in my class when I know English-for-teaching because it helps me do what I have to do in English more easily and because sometimes my previous English [C1] cannot help me do those tasks as well. (Participant 12).

Teacher 12 actually both describes the usefulness of English-for-teaching to her and points out the necessity of training this type of English to even teachers with high general language competence.

5. CONCLUSION

The findings of the study have suggested that English-for-teaching training has been perceived to have positive impact on the language they use in their classroom. It is illustrated in changes made in the choice of language teachers for different classroom functions. Apart from having access to a rich pool of useful, teaching-related expressions, insights into the significance of their classroom language also helped the teachers become more willing in using these expressions in their daily practice. The changes made as sustainable impact of professional development are valuable when the teachers start to see the positive impact of their changes on their learners (Guskey, 2002). The natural references to and comparisons with the general English competence made also shows the teachers' awareness of the fact that despite their CEFR-C1 level in general English, English-for-teaching have its own characteristics and useful to their teaching. The desirable changes and the likeliness to maintain English-for-teaching competence found in this study are even more meaningful in contexts where the teachers have rare access to resources necessary for their language proficiency maintenance.

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APPENDIX 1

Questionnaire

Please take your time to answer these questions. All the information you provided will be kept confidential. It will only be used for the purpose of the current study on your perceptions of the changes you made in your classroom and things you do to maintain your English proficiency since you completed the English-for-teaching training.

Your participation in this survey is voluntary and you can choose not to continue at any time. Thank you.

I. PERSONAL INFORMATION: Questions 1-8

Question 1. Your current general English proficiency level is CEFR-C1 or above:

- Yes No

Important: If you choose **No** to Question 1 above, you don't have to complete this questionnaire. Please return it to the researcher. Thank you.

Question 2. Your full name:.....
(Optional)

Question 3. Your school is in

- Gia Lai KonTum province

Question 4. How long have you been teaching English?

- 2-5 years 6-10 years 11-15 years > 15years

Question 5. Your age:

Question 6. Your gender: Male Female

Question 7. Choose the highest degree you received:

- Junior college graduation degree Bachelor's degree
 Master's degree Doctoral degree

Question 8. The average number of students in your classroom is.....

- < 35 35-40 41-45 >45

II. YOUR ENGLISH-FOR-TEACHING PROFICIENCY: Questions 9-11

Question 9. Changes you have seen/made in your classroom language. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? Tick (✓) the right column.

No.	After the English-for-teaching training, I have...	Totally disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Totally agree
1	Seen improvements in accuracy in my class language use (e.g. in pronunciation, word choice or grammar).					
2	Varied expressions I use in my class (e.g. saying the same things in different ways).					
3	Improved fluency in my classroom English in general.					
4	Improved my ability of using English to teach English (e.g. to explain to students, to manage the class, to provide assessment information).					
5	Had improvements in my general ability to convey the required knowledge and/or develop relevant skills to students.					

Question 10. *Things you do to maintain your English-for-teaching proficiency.* In the space provided below, please write down things you often do to maintain your English-for-teaching proficiency.

.....
.....

Questions 11. *Difficulties you encounter during English-for-teaching maintenance.* In the space provide below, please write down at least 2 difficulties/challenges you face while trying to maintain your English-for-teaching proficiency after the training completion.

.....
.....

III. FURTHER CONTACT FOR INTERVIEW/REFLECTIVE REPORT

We would like to:

- Invite you to write reflective reports on your classroom English use: Yes No
- Interview you about your classroom English use: Yes No

If YES, please kindly complete the information below, so that we can contact you.

Your name:

Email address:

Phone number (optional):

Thank you.

APPENDIX 2

Reflective Report

Participant’s code (*leave this blank*):.....

1. Please write about the changes you have made since you completed the English-for-teaching training. Whenever possible, please provide examples.

If you don’t notice any changes, it is alright to leave the relevant section(s) blank.

- In the language you use for teaching English:
.....
.....

- In the language you use for delivering assessment feedback to learners:
.....
.....

- In the language you use for classroom management
.....
.....

2. Write down what helps you maintain English-for-teaching proficiency.

.....
.....
.....

3. Write down the challenges you face while trying to maintain the level of proficiency you have achieved.

.....

APPENDIX 3

Interview Questions

General questions

Tell me about yourself.

Specific questions

1. In your opinion, is it significant to maintain your classroom language proficiency you have achieved? Why and why not?
2. You have mentioned in your questionnaire response / reflective report that you have made some changes in the language you use for teaching, such as [...]. Could you be more specific? Could you provide some examples on this?
3. You have mentioned in your questionnaire response / reflective report that you did [...] to maintain your English-for-teaching proficiency. Could you be more specific?
- (4. You have mentioned in your questionnaire response / reflective report that you have encountered some challenges maintaining your English-for-teaching proficiency. Could you explain more clearly about these challenges?)

COLOUR IDIOMS IN BUSINESS LANGUAGE

Błażej Prusak¹, Giedrė Valūnaitė-Oleškevičienė²

¹Gdańsk Tech (Gdańsk University of Technology), Faculty of Management and Economics, Poland

²Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania

ORCID iDs: Błażej Prusak

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6526-0407>

Giedrė Valūnaitė-Oleškevičienė

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5688-2469>

Abstract. *Globalisation and the growth of e-business and e-commerce have fuelled the need for English as the lingua franca for business communication worldwide. Business internationalisation means that language learners should be prepared to communicate with native speakers who often use rich idiomatic language in business communication. Non-native speakers have a need to master business idioms not to be at any disadvantage in business communication. Colour idioms are an important part of business vocabulary as they carry certain colour symbolism which enhances business communication. Knowledge of colour idioms also helps to build cultural awareness of certain differences, especially between foreign language users and native speakers. The current study focuses on idioms that incorporate specific colours and are related to the broad area of business (economics, finance and management). The main aim of the paper is to focus on colour idioms and colour symbolism in business language, to provide contextual analysis of the symbolism of colours in business by providing an extensive resource for the learner of Business English.*

Key words: *Idioms, Colour Symbolism, Business Communication, Finance, Economics, Management, Learning*

1. INTRODUCTION

Colour symbolism plays an important role and is an essential element in human life. It has found application in many fields and disciplines of science, in particular literature, anthropology, art, architecture, psychology, cartography and linguistics. Increasingly, it is possible to see the interpenetration of these research areas and the connection of, for example, matters of colour symbolism in linguistics and business.

Successful interactive business communication requires building awareness of cultural differences, especially between foreign language users and native speakers. Learners need to acquire both linguistic competence and cultural awareness. The use of idioms in business communication should be given special attention in the teaching and learning process of a foreign language, as it equips learners with the necessary knowledge to improve communicative skills in business environments where English has become lingua franca. The English language is particularly rich in idioms and English has become an essential

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Corresponding author: Giedrė Valūnaitė-Oleškevičienė, Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania

E-mail: gvalunaite@mruni.eu

language in business communication. Learners need to be equipped with English knowledge for working in multinational companies or abroad and the ability of proper use of idioms may enhance learner possibilities to build relationships, join discussions, understand the nuances of conversations, etc. To ensure full functioning in an English-speaking business environment, it is essential to grasp the benefits of teaching and learning idioms to be able to improve personal and professional lives.

The study's primary objectives are to: 1) identify idioms containing a particular colour used in business language, i.e., in finance, economics and management, 2) to provide their definitions, and 3) to determine the symbolism of colours in business based on colour idioms providing learners with knowledge resources.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The popularity of Business English courses offered by many universities all over the world has been fuelled by globalisation. Business English course often involves the language of a high technical content featuring common business terms and business-related idioms. To ensure effective business communication, it is necessary to acquire business terms, collocations and idioms used in business environments. The significance of idioms in business communication has interested international community of researchers (Nishiyama, 2000; Ward, 2012; Sim and Pop, 2015).

Sinclair (1987) indicates two main principles working in the language discourse construction. The first one represents the open-choice principle, based on the prerequisite that language in communication is constructed relying on free choice while arranging words into phrases and sentences, constrained only by grammaticality. The other one indicated by the scholar is the idiom principle, which is based on the presumption that language users have an available repertoire of semi-preconstructed expressions including collocations, idioms and etc. providing resources the language user single choices. Idioms have the potential of enhancing and enriching communication, and often are considered as the characteristic of mature written or spoken discourse.

Liu (2008) characterizes idioms based on three main criteria. The scholar observes that idioms represent a semantic unity, which means that the whole unit of an idiom acquires only one meaning. Idioms also demonstrate structural stability because the lexis is not interchangeable within idioms, except the rare cases when the language user chooses to apply creativity in order to sound novel. Finally, some idioms demonstrate ungrammaticality; however, they still remain recognizable. Thus, an idiom is a combination of a number of words with a firmly fixed structure and the fixed meaning. As idioms represent impressionistic delineations of some aspects of the physical, social, and emotional worlds of a language community (Hrdličková, 2017), they allow the language user to represent the matters of a certain area in an image related, impressionistic way and metaphorical ways. The use of idioms make communication more convincing and effective by awakening an interest of the recipient, because due to the use of idioms the linguistic expression acquires humour, irony, etc., as idioms are much more expressive and make the language of expression more intense (Sim & Pop, 2015). Idioms intensify and augment of expressivity of the text and serve as synonymic variants of lexemes and also allow communication progression. Idioms are culture specific elements which may cause certain problems in intercultural communication so it is vitally important to master idioms for

successful communication, especially in business domain. Geographical location of a culture plays an important role in idiom formation because people use language to speak about their life realities including behaviour specifics of that particular group of people, knowledge facts, ideas, beliefs and norms (Yang, 2010).

Colour symbolism goes back many years and changes over time, influenced by socio-cultural processes, which means that the same colours can take on entirely different meanings in various countries, regions, or even communities. The literature on the subject has formed three main theories of colour association, i.e. 1) colour-emotion association theory; 2) colour-object association theory and 3) colour-in-context theory (Tham et al., 2019). According to the first theory individual colours are associated with the perception of a particular type of emotion and influence psychological functioning (Gil and Le Bigot, 2016). Based on the second theory, it can be stated that people join given colours with objects, whereby their meaning can, among other things, be culturally conditioned or colour preferences arise from people's average affective responses to colour-associated objects (Ecological Valence Theory) - people like/dislike colours associated with objects they like/dislike (Palmer and Schloss, 2010). Following the third theory, the meaning of colours changes with a specific context.

Zettl (1999) stresses a powerful role of colour in everyday life by identifying that colour has a strong visual code to help people in everyday situations, proving an example of map colour code to guide map reading. Many scholars carried out colour-related scientific research based on the classification provided by Berlin and Kay (1991) identifying 11 basic colour terms by observing the main characteristics of the colour terms: a) The meaning should be easily recoverable from the meaning of its part (for example greyish - grey); b) The term cannot be used for signification in any other colour term; c) The term is applicable to an unlimited number of objects; d) The term must be psychologically easily recognizable.

Colour primarily is as part of visual perception thus, it could be assumed that different cultures perceive colours differently (Segall, Campbell, and Herskovit, 1968). Colours may reveal a lot about the culture the language user belongs to. The evidence of the fact that colour is a culture-specific element could be supported by the fact that the same colour may demonstrate different meanings across different geographical locations. Yu (2014) discusses non-European understanding of colour by focusing on colour symbolism in Asian countries. Bortoli and Maroto (2008) provide an extensive study of colour perception comparing various cultures. The scholars discuss the meanings of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple and brown, also including black and white colours. Red colour is associated with positive emotions like love, luck, success or passion in many cultures (Bortoli and Maroto, 2008; Yu, 2014). However, the cultures of Western Europe, South Africa, Latin America, and Mexico associate red to negative phenomena such as death, evil or warning and danger. Orange colour, according to Bortoli and Maroto (2008), is often associated with harvest and creativity. It may also be related to religion, especially in Asia (Yu, 2014). Yellow is mostly a positive colour associated with joy, royalty, and wisdom; however, it may denote treason in such European countries as Spain and Portugal (Bortoli and Maroto, 2008). Green is described by the scholars as representing positive concepts in most of the cultures. It is usually associated to life, hope, and money. Speaking about the blue colour scholars indicate the colour mostly acquires a positive meaning of heaven, mystery and love; however, the meaning of it varies from culture to culture (Bortoli and Maroto, 2008). It could acquire the meanings

of mourning, judging, unfriendliness, and coldness. The colour purple in Europe is related to royalty and nobility but in Brazil is referred to the colour of mourning (Bortoli & Maroto, 2008). Yu (2014) observes that brown is viewed as undesirable colour related to uncleanness in European cultures; however, in business it may represent seriousness and reliability (Ohtsuki, 2000). White colour in Western cultures is almost always related to purity; however, in Japan or China white acquires the meaning of mourning. In European cultures black is related to death and mourning; however, in business it may also represent glamour, sophistication, security (Ohtsuki, 2000). It is evident that colours acquire different meanings across different cultures and business-related colour idioms become an important element for successful business communication and an essential part of teaching and learning goals.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study identified idioms that incorporate a specific colour and relate to the broad area of business (economics, finance and management). A selection of 11 primary colours in English was made (black, white, red, green, yellow, blue, brown, orange, pink, purple, grey), and additionally, based on the long experience of those who have carried out research in the business area, the colours silver and golden were also added. Some of the identified idioms directly relate to the area under study, while for some of them, in specific contexts, their use can be found.

After a preliminary analysis, the authors concluded that relying solely on a single source, such as a single dictionary of idioms, was ineffective. This was due to the fact that in some sources, the number of idioms is limited, or the vocabulary is universal rather than business-related. In addition, the authors also wanted to take into account possible differences found in British and American English. Consequently, analysing more sources and applying additional methods in the search for idioms containing colour and referring to business can lead to a more extensive base of idioms. Thus, the following data sources and tools were used to search for these idioms:

1. Online idiom dictionary - The Idioms, which describes itself as the largest idiom dictionary (<https://www.theidioms.com/>). For this dictionary, there is an option to search for idioms with the possibility of selecting those idioms that contain colour in the content (<https://www.theidioms.com/topics/>). The authors used this option. As of the analysis date, i.e., 1.02.2024, there were 46 idioms containing colours in the database, 10 of which, according to the authors, are directly or indirectly applicable to the business area.
2. Idioms & Phrases Proverbs application, hereafter abbreviated as I&PP (https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.app.englishidioms&hl=en_US), which was used to search for idioms as of 10.02.2024.
3. McGraw-Hill's Dictionary of American Idioms compiled by R.A Spears (2005), which contains more than 24,000 phrases and expressions.
4. Oxford Business English Dictionary for Learners English edited by D. Parkinson and assisted by J. Noble (2005), in which 50-million-word corpus of business English was used.
5. ChatGPT 3.5 version (OpenAI, 2024). For this tool, a search was conducted as of February 12, 2024, asking the following questions:

- What are the idioms in business containing colours?
- What are the idioms in finance containing colours?
- What are the idioms in economics containing colours?
- What are the idioms in management containing colours?

After identifying idioms, those that directly apply to the business field and are used commonly in various areas but are also reflected in business were singled out. Based on the sources mentioned above, their definitions were then presented, and in the next step, contextual analysis was carried out to determine the symbolism of colours in business.

4. RESULTS

Based on the research process indicated in the earlier section, results were obtained in the form of idioms containing colours and referring to the business area, along with their definitions. They are presented in Tables 1 through 12, considering the alphabetical order of colour names. Idioms that directly relate to business are shown in bold, while those that relate indirectly are shown in italics. No idiom was identified for the colour orange.

Based on the identified idioms, it can be deduced that the symbolism of the colour black in business can be varied and depends on the given context, i.e.:

1. The colour black has a negative meaning concerning the economy and the market and signifies actions against the law and accepted rules. With specific days in the past, it signifies a crash, that is, a significant drop in the prices of the financial assets. In this regard, the only exception is “Black Friday”, seen as a time of shopping, when retailers significantly reduce the prices of products and offer various types of promotions. This is a day that customers positively perceive, but analogously, as it was for other days, it is further associated with price reductions. Also, in relation to other economic and financial objects and processes, it is perceived as a danger or threat. For example, a “black knight” is viewed negatively from the point of view of a company that may be taken over. In this case, it refers to a so-called hostile takeover, an unwanted takeover by the entity being purchased. Similarly, negative connotations are associated with the idioms “black hole”, “blacklist” or “blackleg”.
2. It can mean unknown about the processes being performed when the end result is given (see “black box”).
3. In accounting and banking, black signifies a positive result, i.e., profit generation, solvency or lack of debt.
4. A specific term is “the black swan event”, which refers to a specific concept proposed by Nassim Taleb (2008) and refers to rare events that generate significant costs. The occurrence of a black swan in the environment is much rarer than swans of other colours. Hence, this author used just such a reference to describe events.

Table 1 *Black* idioms in business

<i>black box</i>
<p>1) A complicated piece of equipment or process that you know produces particular results, but that you do not completely understand: The decision-making process is seen as a black box—things go in and decisions come out [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].</p> <p>This concept is often used in complex economic or financial models, in which it is difficult to determine the mechanism responsible for the end result. Such an example would be some models for corporate bankruptcy prediction.</p>
black economy
<p>1) Business activity or work that is done without the knowledge of the government or other officials so that people can avoid paying tax on the money they earn [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].</p>
Black Friday
<p>1) A day of a financial disaster.</p> <p>2) The day after Thanksgiving Day that is also known as the first day of the Christmas holidays and shopping time of the year when sellers provide attractive sale offers and huge discounts on items (theidioms.com).</p>
<i>black hole</i>
<p>1) In commerce it is used to describe an organization into which large quantities of money is poured but no profit is shown (theidioms.com).</p> <p>1) Something that costs you a lot of money or effort but does not provide any real benefit [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].</p>
black knight
<p>1) A company that tries to buy (take over) another company that does not want to be bought or offers too low a price [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].</p>
<i>blackleg</i>
<p>1) An offensive way of referring to a worker who refuses to join a strike or who works instead of sb. on strike [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].</p>
<i>blacklist</i>
<p>1) Noun - a list of the people, companies, products or countries that an organization or a government cannot trust and tries to avoid.</p> <p>2) Verb - to put a person, company, product or country on a blacklist [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].</p>
black market
<p>1) An illegal form of trade in which goods that are difficult to get or foreign money are bought and sold [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].</p> <p>2) Describes illegal or unofficial trade outside of regulated channels (OpenAI, 2024).</p>
Black Monday
<p>1) Monday 28 October 1929, when prices on the New York Stock Exchange fell to a very low level.</p> <p>2) Monday 19 October 1987, when there was a sudden large decrease in the prices of shares (a crash) on the New York Stock Exchange [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].</p>

Black swan event
1) An extremely rare and unpredictable occurrence with severe consequences (OpenAI, 2024).
Black Thursday
1) Thursday 24 October 1929, when there were signs that a severe crash (= a sudden large decrease in the prices of shares) was about to occur on the New York Stock Exchange [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].
Black Wednesday
1) 16 September 1992, when the British pound stopped being part of the Exchange Rate Mechanism and decreased in value by a large amount [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].
in the black
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) To not be in debt. 2) To be in a profitable condition (usually referred to businesses). 3) To be making more (money) than spending. 4) To be solvent or have money (theidioms.com) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Not in debt. 2) In a financially profitable condition (Spears 2005). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Having positive net worth (I&PP). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Refers to a business making a profit or being financially successful. Describes a <u>financial situation where there is a profit or positive balance</u> (OpenAI, 2024).

Source: own elaboration based on the data sources in the table.

Blue in business phraseology is associated with strictly defined objects like “blue-collar” and “blue books”. For example, the phrase “blue-collar” stems from the image of manual workers wearing blue denim or chambray shirts as part of their uniforms [Lynch and Strauss (Eds.) 2014, p. 68], while “blue book” dates back to the past, when large blue velvet-covered books were used for record-keeping by the Parliament of the United Kingdom (Fickers, 2012). The phrase “blue chip,” on the other hand, was initially used by Oliver Gingold in 1923 or 1924 to refer to high-priced stocks (Prestbo, 2008) and refers to the game of poker, where blue chip means the highest value among all chip colours (Saikrishna and Rahul, 2022). The phrase “blue-sky laws” originated in the United States, and most likely, the term referred to the fact that the fly-by-night operators in Kansas operated so blatantly that they would “sell building lots in the blue sky in fee simple.” (Mulvey, 1916, after Macey and Miller 1991, p. 359). Finally, the word “blue-sky” refers to ideas or manager, which means something or someone out of the box and creative. In the field of management, it is associated with the implementation of innovations.

Table 2 *Blue* idioms in business

blue book
1) A report on the economic state of the UK that is published every year [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].
blue chip / blue-chipper
1) The shares of the best-known companies on the stock market, which are considered to be a safe investment. / A blue-chip company [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].
1) High-quality, stable, and financially sound stocks from well-established companies (OpenAI, 2024).
blue-collar
1) Relating to industrial work, especially the semiskilled and unskilled (theidioms.com).
1) The lower class or working class; a job or a worker, having to do with manual labour (Spears 2005).
1) Connected with workers who do physical work in industry [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].
1) Describes manual labour or industrial workers (OpenAI, 2024).
blue-collar economics
1) Pertains to economic policies and considerations that primarily affect manual labourers or industrial workers (OpenAI, 2024).
blue-sky laws
1) State laws in the US that prevent the dishonest buying and selling of shares [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].
1) State regulations designed to protect investors from securities fraud (OpenAI, 2024).
blue-sky manager
1) A manager who encourages creative thinking and innovation (OpenAI, 2024).

Source: own elaboration based on the data sources in the table.

The colour brown has only been identified in one idiom, and its meaning is associated with using conventional energy sources. In business, it is often associated with producing so-called "dirty energy" i.e., coming from conventional sources. In this view, it is the opposite of the meaning of the colour green, i.e., depicting different kinds of environmentally friendly investments.

Table 3 *Brown* idiom in business

brown power
1) The production of electricity made from conventional sources, such as coal, oil, natural gas and nuclear power (I&PP).

Source: own elaboration based on the data sources in the table.

The colour golden in many idioms means a high amount of money. It is seen through the prism of wealth, prosperity, and the right to make key decisions. In addition, it can mean something is important and should be strictly adhered to. Such a meaning is found in the word formula.

Table 4 *Golden* idioms in business

golden formula
1) In the UK, a rule that says that strikes organized by unions are only legal if they are about matters that are connected with employment rather than about political matters, and that workers involved in legal strikes should not lose their jobs [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].
golden goodbye [also golden fare well]
1) A large amount of money given by a company to a senior employee when they are forced to leave their job before they want to [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].
golden goose
1) Something that generates much profit or gives great advantages (I&PP).
golden handcuffs
1) Any arrangement or agreement designed to provide extremely favourable benefits or pay, so as to discourage a participant from wanting to leave it, especially to retain a choice employee (I&PP).
1) A large amount of money and other financial benefits that are given to sb. to persuade them to continue working for a company rather than leaving to work for another company [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].
golden handshake
1) A generous severance payment, especially as an inducement to leave employment (I&PP).
1) A large amount of money given by a company to an employee when they retire or when they are forced to leave their job [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].
1) A generous severance package or financial benefit offered to an employee upon retirement or departure (OpenAI, 2024).
golden hello
1) A payment offered to an employee as an inducement to join, especially if currently working for a competitor (I&PP).
1) A large amount of money or other financial benefits given by a company [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].
golden key can open any door
1) Sufficient money can accomplish anything (Spears 2005).
golden parachute
1) An agreement between a company and an employee, usually an executive, specifying that the employee will receive certain significant benefits if employment is terminated (I&PP).
1) A part of a contract in which a company promises to give a large sum of money to a very senior employee if they have to leave their job [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].
1) A financial arrangement in which executives receive substantial benefits if the company is taken over (OpenAI, 2024).
golden share
1) A share in a company that gives the holder, usually the government, the power to stop any changes to the company that they do not approve of [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].

kill the goose that lays the golden egg(s)
1) To destroy something that is profitable to you (Spears 2005).
1) To seek short term gain at the sacrifice of long-term profit (I&PP).

Source: own elaboration based on the data sources in the table.

The meaning of the colour green is multi-contextual, i.e.:

1. It is associated with the colour of USD currency bills. It is worth mentioning here that the phrase “greenmail” also refers to the US dollar. It is a neologism created from the words “blackmail” and “greenback” (Carlisle 2014, p. 5).
2. It refers to any environmentally friendly activities and initiatives. In this view, the colour green is the opposite of brown.
3. Denotes positive changes in the economy. Green is often equated with increased value and price quotations of securities and other economic metrics.

Table 5 *Green* idioms in business

green audit
1. An official examination of the effect of a company or an industry on the environment [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].
greenback
1. An American dollar note or other note; the dollar when it is traded on currency markets [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].
green consumerism
1. When customers choose to buy and use products that cause the least harm to the environment [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].
greenmail
1. The act of buying a significant amount of a company's stock to pressure the company into buying it back at a premium to avoid a hostile takeover (OpenAI, 2024).
green marketing
1. Marketing that tries to present a product or company as not harmful to the environment [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].
the Green Revolution
1. The dramatic increase in the quantity of crops such as rice and wheat produced, which happened in the second half of the twentieth century as the result of more scientific methods of agriculture
2. A dramatic rise in concern about the environment in countries with developed industries [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].
green shoots
1. Refers to early signs of economic recovery or improvement (OpenAI, 2024).
green stuff
1. Money; U.S. paper money (Spears 2005).
long green
1. Money, especially in the form of cash (I&PP).

Source: own elaboration based on the data sources in the table.

The colour grey, also in business, is seen as an intermediate between white and black; that is, it is not unambiguously positive or negative. In addition, the second meaning refers to the elderly and is related to their hair colour. In this view, it refers to any economic process or finances of people most often referred to as 50+. The focus of this research area includes creating a pension system and employment issues for the elderly and their spending.

Table 6 *Grey* idioms in business

<i>grey area</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An area of a subject or question that is difficult to put into a particular category because it is not clearly defined and may have connections or associations with more than one category (Spears 2005). 1. A topic that is not clearly one thing or the other, that is open to interpretation (I&PP). 1. A situation with unclear or ambiguous rules (OpenAI, 2024). <p>Among other things, the concept of <i>grey area</i> is used in financial and economic models and denotes the absence of an unambiguous forecast result. For example, in bankruptcy forecasting models, it denotes the result when it is not possible to clearly determine whether a company is or is not at risk of insolvency.</p>
grey knight
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A third company or person that is a possible buyer for another company. They are 'grey' because it is not known if they will be good or bad for the company [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].
grey market
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. (Stock Exchange) The buying and selling of new shares before they are officially issued on the stock market. 2. (Economics) The buying and selling of goods that have not been obtained from an official supplier, usually at a lower price than the official price. 3. (Also, silver market) Older people, when they are thought of as customers for goods; the goods that are produced for them or that they buy [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005]. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Refers to the trading of goods through unofficial or unauthorized channels (OpenAI, 2024).
grey power
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. (chiefly Britain, Canada, Australia) The collective political, economic, and social influence of senior citizens, especially when they are mobilized by a common interest (I&PP).

Source: own elaboration based on the data sources in the table.

The colour pink refers to objects and has different meanings depending on the context. The stereotype is that it is a feminine colour (Kaniol 2011, Clarke and Costall 2008). This meaning is associated with the origin of the phrase “pink collar”, which was proposed by sociologist W.J. Baumol in the 1960s and popularised by L.K. Howe in the 1970s. The term “pink collar” workers refer to occupations that are dominated by women and at the same time are low-paid and of low social prestige, i.e., teacher, florist, child care, secretary, nurse, domestic helper, etc. (Pink Collar Jobs), while it is worth mentioning that with time in many countries, some of them, such as teacher and nurse have changed

status to white collar jobs (Basu et al. 2015). Another idiom “in the pink” most likely comes from the Dianthus plant, a favourite flower of Queen Elizabeth I. At that time, the trend was to imitate everything the royal family preferred, so the colour pink and the idiom symbolised the pinnacle of perfection (Meleod). The idiom is rarely used in business and denotes an excellent financial situation. The notion of “Pink Sheets” dates back to 1913, when the National Quotation Bureau began presenting daily inter-dealer quotes of OTC stocks on pink paper (Jiang et al. 2016). Similarly, the idiom of “pink slip” is rooted in the past, when employees were given a white or pink piece of paper at the end of the workday. The former meant a job well done and an invitation to come to work the next day, while the latter meant that they were fired (Mofit 2003, p. 297).

Table 7 *Pink* idioms in business

pink- collar
1. (especially American English) Connected with jobs, with low pay that are done mainly by women, for example in offices: pink-collar workers [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].
<i>in the pink</i>
1. This is an informal expression that denotes the peak of one’s health or an optimal state. You may also use the phrase to show a situation where an economy or an investor is in a favourable financial position. It shows that there is a good reason for optimism (theidioms.com).
1. In very good condition (Spears 2005).
Pink Sheets™ (also spelled pink sheets)
1. In the US, a list of the latest prices of over-the-counter shares (shares that do not appear in an official stock exchange list), that is published every day [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].
1. Refers to a daily publication listing over-the-counter (OTC) stocks that do not meet major exchange listing requirements (OpenAI, 2024).
pink slip
1. A letter given to sb. to say that they must leave their job [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].
1. Represents a notice of termination or layoff (OpenAI, 2024).

Source: own elaboration based on the data sources in the table.

The colour purple is relatively rarely used in business idioms. The idiom “purple patch” was originally used by Horace (Lysyk 1980, p. 50; Canfield 1994). However, its message evolved, and in the 20th century, it was used in a positive sense, i.e., as a “colourful period” or a “run of good luck or success” (Leyang and Lijiao 2019, p. 59; Hamilton 2014, p. 158; Hamilton 2016, p. 207). This is how it is currently understood in business, while it is worth mentioning that it is also often used in other areas of life, including sports.

Table 8 *Purple* idiom in business

<i>purple patch</i>
1. A period of exceptional success or good fortune (OpenAI, 2024).

Source: own elaboration based on the data sources in the table.

The meaning of red in idioms used in business varies, with three areas that can be distinguished here:

- 1) It is most often seen through the prism of debt, the losses and danger generated, that is, in very negative terms.
- 2) In one idiom, there is a reference to the colour of a pure copper coin. The cent is characterised by being the lowest monetary unit in the US. Hence, the phrase is exclusively negative (Lisowska and Kucharska 2023, pp. 96-97, 111).
- 3) The “red tape” idiom comes from the ribbon used to tie up legal documents in England. Lawyers wishing to use these documents very often spend much time resolving and tying up these documents. This is where the current meaning of the phrase came from (Kaufman 2015, p. XV).

Table 9 *Red* idioms in business

haemorrhage red ink
1) (often used in newspapers) To lose a large amount of money [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].
in the red
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. More money going out than coming in. 2. Spending more than you earn. 3. Owing money to the bank. 4. In debt. 5. Negative bank balance (theidioms.com). <p>1) Losing money (Spears 2005).</p> <p>1) Having net losses, in debt (I&PP).</p> <p>1) To be operating at a loss; to be spending more than you earn [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].</p> <p>1) Describes a business operating at a financial loss.</p> <p>2) Indicates a financial situation with losses or a negative balance (OpenAI, 2024).</p>
not worth a red cent
1. Worthless (Spears 2005).
out of the red
1. Out of debt; into profitability (Spears 2005).
red- circling
1) The situation when a job has been moved to a lower grade with a lower rate of pay, but the people who are already doing that work are still paid the old rate [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].
<i>red flag</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A sign of a particular issue requiring attention (theidioms.com). 1) A sign or signal that something is wrong cue, it is a warning, or alert (I&PP). 1) A warning sign or indicator of potential issues (OpenAI, 2024). <p>The term is often used in business, for example, defining problems and risks that may occur in investment projects, financial reports etc.</p>

red ink
1. Debt; indebtedness as shown in red ink on a financial statement (Spears 2005). 1) A euphemism for financial loss (I&PP). 1) Used to talk about a situation in which a business is losing a lot of money [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].
redline
1) To refuse to provide loans, insurance or other financial services to people or businesses in particular areas [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].
red tape
1. Over excessive or time-consuming rules and bureaucracy that hinder progress (theidioms.com). 1. Over-strict attention to the wording and details of rules and regulations, especially by government workers (Spears 2005). 1) Time-consuming regulations or bureaucratic procedures (I&PP). 1) Official rules that seem more complicated than is necessary and prevent things being done quickly [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005]. 1) Represents excessive bureaucracy or administrative procedures that slow down decision-making. 2) Excessive bureaucratic procedures or administrative obstacles (OpenAI, 2024).

Source: own elaboration based on the data sources in the table.

Concerning the market, in one sense, the colour silver is considered synonymous with the colour grey and is seen as all kinds of financial and economic activities concerning the elderly. The phrase “born with a silver spoon in one's mouth” comes from the English language and is related to the tradition of God-parents giving a silver spoon with images of apostles to God-children. The silver spoon was synonymous with wealth compared to a plastic spoon or wooden ladle, which signified poverty (Tréguer; Turaev 2023). And the phrase “cross someone's palm with silver” refers to the old practice of placing silver coins across a gypsy fortune-teller's hand before having one's fortune told (dictionary.com).

Table 10 *Silver* idioms in business

born with a silver spoon in one's mouth
1) Born into wealth and privilege (Spears 2005). 1) Born rich or in a wealthy family (I&PP).
cross someone's palm with silver
1) To pay money to someone in payment for a service (Spears 2005).
silver market
1) Synonym to grey market described above [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].

Source: own elaboration based on the data sources in the table.

The colour white appears in many business idioms and takes on different meanings. It occurs as the opposite of the colour black, such as in the idiom “white knight”. It forms an antonym for “blue-collar”. In addition, it means to stay with nothing. The origin of the idiom “white elephant”, on the other hand, refers to the successive kings of Siam who gave

a white elephant to any courtiers they disliked. It was so expensive to maintain such an elephant that it led them to bankruptcy (Poluzhyn 2020, p. 240). The phrase “white paper” was originally used in the 1920s by the British government and referred to an authoritative report made on white paper (Malone and Wright 2017). Finally, the term “white sale” was coined by John Wanmaker in 1878. The entrepreneur, in an effort to encourage customers, mainly hoteliers, to buy his surplus bedding, which at the time was only produced in white, offered them vast discounts (Lovett and Miranda 2014, p. 3; Lisicky 2010).

Table 11 *White* idioms in business

bleed someone white
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) To take all of someone’s money. 2) To extort money from someone (Spears 2005).
1) To take away all one's money [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].
white collar
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Antonym to blue collar (theidioms.com). 1) Working in an office rather than in a factory, etc. 2) Connected with work in offices [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].
1) Pertains to professional or office-based work, typically in administrative or managerial roles (OpenAI, 2024).
white elephant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) An expensive item with no use or purpose (theidioms.com). 1) Something that is large and unwieldy and is either a nuisance or expensive to keep up (Spears 2005). 1) A thing that is useless and no longer needed although it may cost a lot of money to keep it [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].
white knight
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) A person or an organization that rescues a company from- being bought by another company at too low a price [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005]. 1) A person or company that comes to the rescue of another company facing a hostile takeover (OpenAI, 2024).
<i>white paper</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Official report. 2) Guide concise. 3) Complex information of changes future planned laws. 4) Government policy (detailed and authoritative) (theidioms.com).
1) A government report or authoritative guide that provides information or proposals on a particular economic issue (OpenAI, 2024).
This term refers to documents devoted to various areas, such as politics, artificial intelligence, law but also economics and finance.
white sale
1) (especially American English) An occasion when a shop/store sells goods at a much lower price than usual [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].

Source: own elaboration based on the data sources in the table.

The colour yellow is very rarely used in business idioms. Like the idiom “red flag”, “a yellow flag” means warning. In the case of the “yellow flag”, this danger is described as less than it is for “the red flag”. The term “yellow sheets” has a similar origin to the previously described “pink sheets”, with bond quotes being presented on yellow sheets.

Table 12 *Yellow* idioms in business

<i>yellow flag</i>
1) A cautionary signal or warning in financial or investment contexts (OpenAI, 2024).
Yellow Sheets™ (also spelled yellow sheets)
1) In the US, a list of the latest prices of bonds and other information about them, that is published every day [Parkinson (Ed.) 2005].

Source: own elaboration based on the data sources in the table.

In addition to the idioms identified above from the research, it should be noted that other phraseological funds are used in business language that contains colours. Below, based on the authors' knowledge and experience, the meaning of the most frequently used ones is presented, i.e.:

1. “Grey rhino” was coined by Wucker (2016). In analogy to a “black swan event”, “grey rhino event” is a highly probable, high-impact yet neglected threat.
2. “Purple squirrel” was invented in the 1990s, refers to the recruitment process and means a super-talented candidate with a multifarious mix of core skills - education, competencies and experience. Such a candidate is as challenging to find in practice as a purple squirrel, hence the reference (Austen Lloyd 2023; Dumeresque 2014, p. 42).
3. In the economy, various types of colours are used to convey different messages. In many cases, the same meanings are also used in finance. As mentioned above, the “silver economy” concerns economic processes related to the functioning of older people (including issues such as shaping the pension system and providing products and services for people 50+). “White economy” refers to those products, services, and activities related to health care and care, including dependent, disabled and the elderly (OECD 2014, pp. 89, 166). In 2015, thanks to D. McWilliams (2015), proposed by the term “flat white economy” became popular, which means the financial recovery that's being powered by startups, entrepreneurs, small businesses and co-workers. In addition, according to the meaning of colours described above, “grey, black, brown, green economies” are distinguished. “Grey economy,” also known as the “informal or shadow economy,” refers to economic activity conducted beyond the purview of official regulations (Etim and Daramola, 2020; Chen and Carré, 2020, p. 14). Some authors view “black economy” and “grey economy” as synonymous (Koufopoulou et al. 2019). Others point out that grey signifies an intermediate state between white and black. This means that actions taken in the “grey economy” are not as negatively perceived as in the “black economy.” In this view, the “grey economy” refers to, among other things, trading in legal products and hiring people without entering such information in business records, resulting in under-taxation. The “black economy” is characterized by, among other things, the circulation of prohibited products (e.g.,

drugs, weapons, and human organs without the required authorization) or trafficking in people and children (Canna 2020). "Green economy," on the other hand, is all kinds of economic activities aimed at protecting the environment and achieving the goals of a socially responsible economy. Its opposite is the "brown economy," which is an economy that uses fossil fuels that have an impact on environmental degradation. On the other hand, the term "blue economy" has a twofold meaning, which depends on the context. The first relates to water, i.e., economic activities to protect the marine ecosystem or coastal areas (Smith-Godfrey 2016). The second meaning opposes the so-called "red economy" and simultaneously shows the differences from the "green economy." Between these three types of coloured economies, there are differences in the relationship between natural resource use and consumption. In the case of „red economy” is no concern for the excessive consumption of natural resources to support the production of energy and manufactured goods. Green one is an economy that is intended to be resilient, but which does not offer a definitive and permanent solution. And the “blue economy” as defined by Gunter Pauli is that of the regeneration of ecosystems in a logic of abundance and autonomy. Drawing inspiration from nature in order to take what is necessary and to function in symbiosis with it (The Blue Economy does not recycle, it regenerates; Pauli 2010, 2017). In addition, in another context i.e., historically, the "red economy" is seen as the communist economy, where the red is associated with the two central communist countries, i.e., the Soviet Union and China (Buheji and Ahmet 2021). In contrast, the "orange economy," also known as the "creative economy," includes cultural and creative industries and refers to economic activity where creativity, talent and intellectual capital play a crucial role (Sandri and Alshyab 2023; Restrepo and Márquez 2013). A relatively new economic trend is the "purple economy," sometimes called the "care economy." Purple is the symbolic colour of women's movements in many countries, which often fought for gender equality. The main focus areas of this trend are gender equality, caring, life sustainability and social order, while the fundamental four pillars are: 1) Investing in a universal social care services infrastructure; 2. Regulation of labour markets and social protection for work-life balance, decent jobs and gender equality; 3. Investing in time-saving and sustainable physical infrastructure and ecological agriculture in rural settings; 4. Creating an enabling macroeconomic environment for inclusive and sustainable economies (İlkkaracan 2023). A relatively infrequently used phrase is "golden economy," whose synonyms are "solar economy" or "sunshine economy." This is a component of the "green economy," which includes economic activities for applying renewable energy sources, such as wind, solar, hydro, geothermal, and tidal (Khutorna and Herasymenko, 2023, p. 31). However, in the context of using energy from the sun, the more fitting and associated colour, in this case, should be yellow. Another trend related to sexual diversity is the "pink economy," also known as "pink capitalism," "pink money," "pink market," or "rainbow capitalism. Pink is associated with the LGBTQ+ community, so this form of economics deals with the study of economic processes, including consumer behaviour, purchasing power and spending, adaptations of marketing campaigns, business models, and the labour market to the people mentioned above (Ramirez 2011, Yeh 2018, Del Río 2012). Yellow, combined with economy, is rarely used in practice. Referring to colour psychology, the term "yellow economy" has been proposed. It applies creativity, innovation, and new technologies to utilize resources better, improve competitiveness, optimize production

processes, etc. (Santander 2022). Another meaning of "yellow economy" is identified with the concept of "attention economy," initiated in the second half of the 1990s (Davenport and Beck 2001, Crogan and Kinsley 2012, DeltecBank 2023, United Nations). Yellow also has a regional dimension in economics and refers to Hong Kong. "Yellow economy" or "Yellow Circular Economy" is a movement advocating support for a pro-democracy, pro-free market economy and was created in opposition supporting by the pro-Beijing and pro-police businesses, called blue (Chan 2022, Kane and Lee 2022). In this context yellow referred to the colour of the umbrellas people used in the 2014 democracy protests to protect themselves against teargas but blue relates to the colour of police uniforms (Batha 2023).

4. In management in the first decade of the 21st century, the concept of "blue ocean strategy", which was proposed in opposition to "red ocean strategy", has gained popularity. As written by the creators of this concept, Chan Kim and Mauborgne (2005, pp. IX-X), they used the metaphor of red and blue oceans because red oceans seemed to capture the reality that organizations increasingly face, while blue oceans captured the endless possibility that organizations could create. Thus, while the red ocean strategy refers to existing markets, the blue ocean strategy refers to future markets that companies should create independently. In both strategies, therefore, different mechanisms of action should be used (Iruthayasamy 2021).

5. CONCLUSION

The knowledge of colour idioms and colour symbolism they carry is essential for learners in building their linguistic competence and cultural awareness for business communication. Advanced learners of English preparing to operate in international business environments should be able to use a wide repertoire of vocabulary for switching between speaking and writing and choosing the right words or expressions depending on the communicative context. Business idioms compiled from a wide range of sources and carefully analysed for colour symbolism could serve as a resource both for students and teachers ensuring effective access to contextual analysis and explanations of the latest international business colour idioms. Expanding learner business vocabulary would provide more confidence and ensure more effective functioning in international business situations by improving learner Business English communication skills.

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ASSESSING EMPLOYABILITY FACTORS IN ESP EDUCATION: A MIXED-METHODS STUDY FROM CHINA

Xinling Wang

Beijing International Studies University, China

ORCID iD: [Xinling Wang](#)

 N/A

Abstract. *Employment problem has increasingly become a concern in higher education in today's economic situation. This study examines core questions about the employability of university graduates who major in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) like business English. To identify the critical competencies or skills needed for ESP graduates to succeed in China's employment market today, the study builds a new employability framework based on audit tests and semi-structured interviews. Internship experience and business skills are highly valued in the workplace, according to the audit experiments, which evaluate the actual responses of possible employers. "English Skills," "Business Skills," and "Critical & Innovative Thinking" are among the major themes extracted from the interview notes coded by python. While less critical, self-learning and adaptability are still regarded as essential factors. The article offers practical recommendations that could enhance curriculum development in ESP education, aiming to narrow the gap between business requirements and academic preparation so that graduates could better meet labour market demands.*

Key words: *ESP education, employability, audit experiment, interviews*

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's unpredictable and challenging global economic environment, graduate employability has emerged as a major concern in higher education. The instability, fueled by various factors including the past global pandemic, has led to significant job market fluctuations, impacting numerous industries and, as a result, the career opportunities for many graduates, especially in language-related fields (World Bank 2022). This situation calls for higher education institutions and practitioners to rethink their educational models, aiming to boost the competitiveness of their graduates in a tough job market.

The field of language studies constitutes an important part of higher education in China. The role of English related majors, especially English for Specific Purposes (ESP) education is central to this discourse. As of 2024, at least 426 universities in China offer Business English programs. Majors like business English is a specialized program expected to offer students with English language skills and business knowledge, enhancing their employability in multinational corporations and global markets. Despite the rapid growth, these institutions face significant challenges. First, ESP graduates struggle to secure employment. Second, many find it is much

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Corresponding author: Xinling Wang, Beijing International Studies University, China

E-mail: wangxinling@bisu.edu.cn

more difficult to land jobs that match their area of expertise than before. Third, employers frequently report a mismatch between graduates' academic training and the skills required in the workplace, leading to extended training periods. This study aims to address these issues by examining the key competencies and skills needed to enhance graduates' prospects in the competitive job market. Current research mainly focuses on teaching methodologies and curriculum design to improve the learning process of ESP education (Agustina 2014; Paltridge and Starfield 2012; Gatehouse 2001). Some research methods on employment issues are relatively single or outdated, which may lead to a lack of reliability. However, there is a noticeable research gap regarding the specific skill needs and career positioning of ESP students in higher education. This highlights the necessity for more targeted research to develop graduates whose skills are in line with the real market demands. Besides, considering China's rapid economic growth and surging cross-border business activity, China's experience in the field of higher education may provide valuable insights for other cultures around the world.

Therefore, using a mixed-methods approach, this research attempts to perform a comprehensive assessment of the employability factors for ESP graduates. This method includes semi-structured interviews and a quantitative audit experiment. From the perspectives of human resource (HR) and business professionals, the goal is to gain a thorough understanding of the competencies required of ESP graduates and assess how well these competencies perform in the current global economic environment. This study aims to offer higher education institutions some information about improving the employability of ESP graduates as well as practical guidance for graduates who strive in a crowded job market.

The thesis is organized as follows. It begins with a short overview of the literature, followed by a detailed introduction about the methodology, which includes quantitative audit experiment and semi-structured interviews. The results and discussion part then present resume response data from pseudo resume audit experiment and interviews analysis coded from semi-structured interviews with business representatives, offering insights into the implications for ESP education and graduate employability. The study concludes with a summary of practical suggestions for educational institutions and educators to best prepare ESP students for a competitive labor market.

2. EMPLOYABILITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Employability, a key concept in higher education and career development, involves more than just getting a job (Clarke 2018). It addresses a person's capacity to find and maintain a job by integrating professional abilities with soft skills like problem-solving, collaboration, and communication (Yorke 2006). Yorke highlights that employability is not just job attainment; it also involves excelling at work and adapting to career changes. Previous studies explore the measurement of employability, showing its multifaceted nature (Harvey 2001). Graduate employability includes a mix of skills, knowledge, and career management, enriched by internship experiences (Lorraine and Sewell 2007). Besides that, Billet (2011) also explores the value of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) and internships in shaping graduate outcomes. According to Clarke (2018), the concept of graduate employability has evolved to contain factors such as human and social capital, individual attributes, and personal character. Despite some efforts done by universities who have already adopted a range of generic skill-based learning, employers still report graduates lacking basic skills necessary for successful employment (Tymon 2013).

3. EMPLOYMENT FACTORS FOR ESP GRADUATES

In the current study on ESP education and employability, the majority of studies concentrate on defining it (Ruiz-Garrido, Palmer-Silveira, and Fortanet-Gómez 2010; Paltridge and Starfield 2012; Hyland 2000), creating curriculum, educational programs (Agustina 2014; Mulyah and Aminatun 2020), and exploring methods for teaching (Gatehouse 2001; Kormos 2017), as well as specific linguistic characteristics of ESP education (Nagy 2014). The employment prospects of ESP graduates are affected by a variety of factors. Internships are essential for language majors, offering vital hands-on experience and enabling the practical application of language, cultural, and linguistic skills in real-world settings (Tran and Trang 2020). They are proven to be instrumental in fostering students' personal and professional growth, significantly contributing to their overall development. Meanwhile, ESP education, tailored to language use in specific professional domains, enhances not only linguistic proficiency but also cultural and vocational understanding pertinent to various industries, thereby augmenting employment opportunities (Rosser 2008). Wang and Stojković (2024) argue that ESP education should integrate a more comprehensive approach, viewing language not merely as a tool for professional communication, but also as a means to foster intellectual development, enhance critical thinking skills, and promote social awareness among students, thus contributing to their overall personal growth. Skills such as leadership, critical thinking, and innovation are increasingly recognized as pivotal in equipping graduates to excel in a dynamic work environment and evolve into versatile professionals. Jackson (2013) assessed the employability of business graduates, pinpointing the educational system's shortcomings in nurturing graduates who align with market needs. Presently, a consensus is yet to be reached regarding the key factors that most significantly impact the job-seeking challenges of graduates from ESP related majors in higher education. Furthermore, the precise requirements that businesses have for language professionals with varied backgrounds, particularly those from ESP education, remain insufficiently explored and understood in existing research.

To conclude, the exploration of ESP education in relation to market demands necessitates a more profound investigation. This article contributes in the following aspects. First, to assess the importance of internship on employability of ESP education, this study uses two graduates' pseudo resumes to conduct audit experiments to track the real response in the labour market. Audit experiments identify bias in real, as opposed to hypothetical, settings, providing insights beyond self-reported data. Meanwhile, this study also employs semi-structured interviews to do a more detailed and concise exploration of factors affecting ESP graduates. The main topic and sub-topic are then presented according to the interview decoding by python, and the influencing factors are ranked in order of importance at last. Compared with the general description in previous studies, it gives an accurate ranking. Consequently, from a demand-driven perspective, this article tries to analyse the discrepancy between the current training of ESP professionals in higher education institutions and societal needs.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND PROPOSED HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis 1: Relevant internship experience has a positive effect on the employment prospects of ESP graduates, especially when it is aligned with their area of specialization.

The first hypothesis suggests a positive correlation between internship experience and a graduate's chances of receiving job offers upon graduation, based on Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT). SCCT, which is originally derived from Albert Bandura's Social

Cognitive Theory, developed by Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994) is a model for understanding career development. This theory emphasizes the significance of outcome expectations (perceptions of the benefits associated with particular career paths), personal goals (individual aspirations and accomplishments), and self-efficacy beliefs (confidence in one's abilities to perform specific career tasks). It also considers the profound influence of environmental factors, such as socio-economic background and cultural norms, on career choices and development. External environment like internship experience can help to shape career interests and decision-making.

Similar to this theory is the essential role of experiential engagement in Experiential Learning Theory. The learning cycle, as proposed by Kolb, includes four stages: engaging an activity (concrete experience), reflecting on it (reflective observation), abstract conceptualizing (drawing lessons from the experience), and applying the lessons to new situations (Kolb 1984; Sims 1983). Therefore, we propose that an enriching and quality internship experience can boost a graduate's self-efficacy, subsequently enhancing job acquisition prospects.

Hypothesis 2: Specialized language proficiency positively influences the employment prospects of ESP graduates.

The second hypothesis proposes that there is a positive correlation between proficiency in language for specific purposes (ESP) and graduates' employment opportunities. According to Pierre Bourdieu's theory (1986) of linguistic capital, language skills can be seen as a kind of capital that can be translated into economic and social benefits in social and occupational contexts. Special language abilities (such as English for special purpose) may enhance an individual's employment prospects, particularly in a globalized job market. Consequently, graduates' competitiveness especially for certain industries can be directly impacted by their level of ESP proficiency.

Hypothesis 3: Personal skills positively affect the employment prospects of ESP graduates.

The third hypothesis suggests that personal skills, including self-management, self-study and communication abilities, significantly affect employment opportunities. It incorporates insights from both theories. Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) emphasizes the role of self-efficacy and outcome expectations in career pathways, while Experiential Learning Theory focuses on the acquisition of skills through active practice and reflection. Recent research highlights the increasing importance of soft skills in a rapidly changing environment (Succi and Canovi 2020).

Thus, this study seeks to address two central questions: 1. What are the corporate expectations for ESP Professionals in higher education? This question explores the specific skills and qualities that employers in the business sector seek in ESP graduates. 2. Is there a gap between business English graduates' skills and current market needs? The focus here is on identifying any discrepancies between the competencies of business English graduates and the actual demands of the job market, aiming to pinpoint areas for curriculum improvement. 3. On average, what is the typical order of importance for factors influencing employability of ESP graduates?

5. METHOD

5.1 Audit Experiment

Audit experiments, mostly seen in the social sciences, are often used to assess the degree and existence of discrimination, mainly in the housing and labour markets (Bertrand and Mullainathan, 2004). An audit experiment's basic idea is to send out fake employment

applications or pseudo resumes that are the same except for one important factor, such as race, gender, age, or ethnicity. This approach aims to identify the impact of this variable on the probability of obtaining a positive response. One of their greatest benefits is its potential of audit experiments to identify discrimination in real-world contexts as opposed to hypothetical, with information beyond self-reported statistics or fictitious scenarios.

Conducting an audit experiment mainly need the following four steps: (1) Design phase: The initial steps include carefully crafting the experiment. This step is very crucial as it involves creating two or more profiles (such as resumes) that are identical except for characteristics that need to be scrutinized (such as names that suggest race or gender). (2) Implementation phase: These profiles or resumes are then submitted to real job openings or real estate listings. To achieve statistical significance, the experiment often requires sending out a substantial number of applications, potentially in the hundreds or thousands. (3) Response Monitoring: The experiment tracks and records responses to these applications. This encompasses not just the receipt of a response but also its nature (e.g., interview invitation, further information request, direct rejection). (4) Data Analysis: The gathered data is analysed to discern any notable differences in response rates or types between the various profiles. Statistical methods are typically employed to control for confounding variables and validate the findings.

Table 1 Snapshot of resumes of tester 1 and tester 2

Resume of Tester 1	Resume of Tester 2
<p style="text-align: center;">Resume of Li Ran</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Information Name: Li Ran Email: liran@email.com Phone: 18810566566 Address: No. 103, Zhichun Road, Haidian District, Beijing, China • Educational Background Beijing International Studies University Major: Business English Bachelor's Degree, September 2019 - June 2023 GPA: 3.7/4.0 Relevant Courses: International Business Communication, Translation Studies, Intercultural Communication, Advanced English Writing • Internship Experience Standard Chartered Bank, Intern, Business Operations Department July 2021- December 2021 Conducted comprehensive customer satisfaction surveys, developing analytical abilities and customer service insights. Help to craft business plans, enhancing strategic thinking and problem-solving proficiencies. Analyzed financial reports, demonstrating proficiency in financial analysis and data interpretation. Unilever, Beijing Marketing Intern February 2022 - August 2022 Aided in the strategic planning and execution of promotional campaigns, showcasing creativity and project management skills. Analyzed consumer data, strengthening data analysis and consumer psychology understanding. Worked closely with the sales team to amplify product visibility, improving teamwork and communication skills. • Skills and Certifications Languages: Native Mandarin, Fluent in English Certificates: Test for English Majors-Band 8 (TEM-8), College English Test Band 6 (CET-6) Technical Skills: Proficient in MS Office Suite, experienced in CAT tools • Extra-Curricular Activities Member of the Student Finance Association, organized guest speaker events and workshops Volunteer at local community center, providing English tutoring to children • Hobbies Football: Member of the university team, participated in intercollegiate tournaments Photography: Enjoy landscape and portrait photography, with a focus on cultural Travel: Passionate about exploring new cultures and languages Enjoy writing short stories and blogs, particularly focusing on travel experiences 	<p style="text-align: center;">Resume of Zou Tianhua</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Information Name: Zou Tianhua Email: zoutianhua@email.com Phone: 18810566576 Address: No. 102, Zhichun Road, Haidian District, Beijing, China • Educational Background Beijing International Studies University Major: Business English Bachelor's Degree, September 2019 - June 2023 GPA: 3.7/4.0 Relevant Courses: International Business Communication, Translation Studies, Intercultural Communication, Advanced English Writing • Internship Experience Global Translation Services, Beijing Intern Translator June 2021 - November 2021 Translated a wide range of business documents between English and Mandarin, showcasing fluency and precision in both languages. Delivered professional interpretation services during online international conferences, demonstrating the ability to convey complex information accurately and concisely. Collaborated closely with senior translators on translation projects, gaining valuable experience in team dynamics and knowledge transfer. • Skills and Certifications Languages: Native Mandarin, Fluent in English Certificates: Test for English Majors-Band 8 (TEM-8), College English Test Band 6 (CET-6) Technical Skills: Proficient in MS Office Suite, experienced in CAT tools • Extra-Curricular Activities Member of the Student Finance Association, organized guest speaker events and workshops Volunteer at local community center, providing English tutoring to children • Hobbies Soccer: Active participant on the university team, competing in intercollegiate tournaments. Photography: Enthusiast of landscape and portrait photography, with a cultural perspective. Travel: Driven to explore diverse cultures and immerse in new linguistic environments. Writing: Enjoys penning short stories and blogs, with a focus on travel experiences.

In this study, we adopt a modified approach by designing two ESP graduate profiles that are similar in most aspects but differ in key variables (detailed in table 1). By engaging these profiles with market entities, we aim to uncover how such differences impact market responses. Initially used to study discrimination in labour markets, such as the exploration of racial biases in resume screening by Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004), the audit

experiment here is tailored to assess the employability factors, especially the attractiveness of internship experiences and business skills to potential employers for ESP graduates. As Lu (2014) notes, the success of audit experiments hinges on three critical aspects: (1) maintaining homogeneity and differentiation, ensuring that non-key information is consistent across testers, except for the specific variable being tested; (2) concealing the experimental nature to elicit genuine market responses; and (3) effectively collecting and analysing feedback to draw informed conclusions about differentiated treatment.

5.2. Design and Implementation

In this study, we carefully designed two resumes, respectively named as Li Ran and Zou Tianhua¹, to make sure they are identical in terms of their educational background, educational courses, academic performance, extra-curricular activities and technical skills, with the exception of a few crucial areas to assess market reactions. Both candidates are displayed as Business English undergraduates from Beijing International Studies University (BISU). Business English is a specialization or discipline within ESP education. The past ten years has witnessed an increasing number of undergraduates enrolled in ESP education, particularly Business English related programs across various universities in China. Among these institutions, BISU stands out, with its Business English program recognized as a “National First-Class Program”. This program serves as a representative example of the quality and scope of ESP education in China. This study focuses specifically on the graduates of BISU, providing valuable insights into the employability factors of ESP graduates in a leading institution. Business English major aims to cultivate interdisciplinary talents who can master an economy, management and other specialized fields on the basis of mastering English. Li Ran’s resume highlights his business-related internship experience, especially his marketing internships at Standard Chartered Bank and Unilever. On the other hand, Zou Tianhua’s resume emphasizes his language skills, highlighting his TEM-8 certification² in English and his translation experience. In order to make the experiment (resume) look more real, a minor variation was added to each resume’s “Hobbies and Interests” section, making sure that the difference would not have a major impact on the applicant’s chances of getting an interview. Through this design, we want to test whether quality business internships or business skills really have a statistically positive correlation with job acquisition for an ESP graduate.

In this experiment, we select 200 companies based on job search keywords from a top job recruitment website³ for graduates. The required majors are listed as “English major, Business English Major or other related major”. The screening time is set to be from 2023 March 15 to May 30, as this is the spring recruitment season in China.

We email these two resumes from different email address to targeted companies every five hours, especially during peak hiring periods (8 a.m. and 1 p.m.), to mitigate potential suspicion from recruiters regarding the similarity of the resumes. Then we collect and record resume response rate mainly by business HR’s notification, either by email, short messages or phone calls. This approach allows for a quantitative assessment of the impact of internship experience and skills on the employability of ESP graduates in the real job market.

¹ Both are typical Chinese male student names.

² Passing the TEM-8 indicates a higher level of English proficiency in China than CET-6, especially in an academic context.

³Famous Job-hunting website for fresh graduates in China <http://www.yingjiesheng.com/>, is currently the most visited job recruitment website for fresh graduates and recruiting companies.

5.3. Qualitative Analysis

In this study's mixed-method approach, semi-structured interviews play a crucial role in enriching and deepening the insights gleaned from the quantitative audit experiment. These interviews, conducted with corporate HR personnel or representatives involved in their recruitment, aim to explore the effects of internship experience and comprehensive skill development on the employability and market success of these graduates. The open-ended nature and depth of interviews provide rich qualitative data, capturing participants' personal experiences and perceptions for a more nuanced understanding of the research question.

At present, with the progress of science and technology and the high popularity of the Internet, more and more enterprises have their own customized online recruitment systems. For example, the four top largest banks and four top famous accounting firms in China have their own recruitment systems on their respective official websites. "Sending resumes" is no longer as simple as sending traditional resumes by e-mail. It is necessary to register companies' online system and complete all personal information and experience according to the requirements. However, it is time-consuming to fill in the recruitment system one by one. It takes about 6-7 hours to complete a complete system of the company (take the famous consulting firm KPMG as an example), and it is difficult to simulate the effect of differentiation and homogenization of tester content in the resume, because the recruitment system of many companies requires the submitting of personal ID number. And there are great differences in the design of the recruitment system of each enterprise. In this case, the way of sending resumes through the above audit experiment alone is not enough to obtain comprehensive and unbiased information about the needs and preferences of enterprises.

Qualitative research can make up for the above deficiency effectively. One of the advantages of the semi-structured interview method used in this study is that it allows researchers to flexibly process the interview questions according to the actual interview situation, which helps to deeply understand the intention of the interviewed enterprises. The main questions of the interview include, (1) "From the perspective of the enterprise, what skills or qualities should the business English talents recruited by your enterprise have?" (2) "How much do you think the students' business internship experience has an impact on getting the job?" (3) "What level of foreign language ability do you think students need to reach to meet the needs of enterprises?" (4) "To what extent do you think students' skills and credentials have an impact on getting a job?" (5) "What credentials do you prefer for new job candidates?" (6) "From the perspective of the past enterprise recruitment experience, what are the main aspects of the gap between the fresh graduates cultivated by colleges and universities after the recruitment and the needs of enterprises?"

Thus, key interview topics include: (1) Corporate expectations of skills and qualities in Business English talents. (2) The impact of business internship experiences on job acquisition. (3) The level of foreign language proficiency desired by companies. (4) The influence of skills and certifications on employment, and preferred certifications. (5) The discrepancies between university-trained graduates and actual corporate employment needs.

BISU held a large job fair in March 2023, with about 100 companies attending it. We selected 57 recruitment booths who had job openings for ESP related specialties according to the recruitment request form; after that, we went to each booth and conducted face-to-face interviews.

By encouraging open-ended responses and allowing for follow-up inquiries, these interviews provide a wealth of detailed information. To ensure the reliability and validity of the data, all interviews are recorded in the form of notes. The subsequent analysis involves familiarizing with the text, coding, identifying key themes, and interpreting these findings

(detailed in Figure 1). This process not only uncovers central themes and patterns in graduate employment but also ensures the thoroughness and comprehensiveness of the research outcomes.

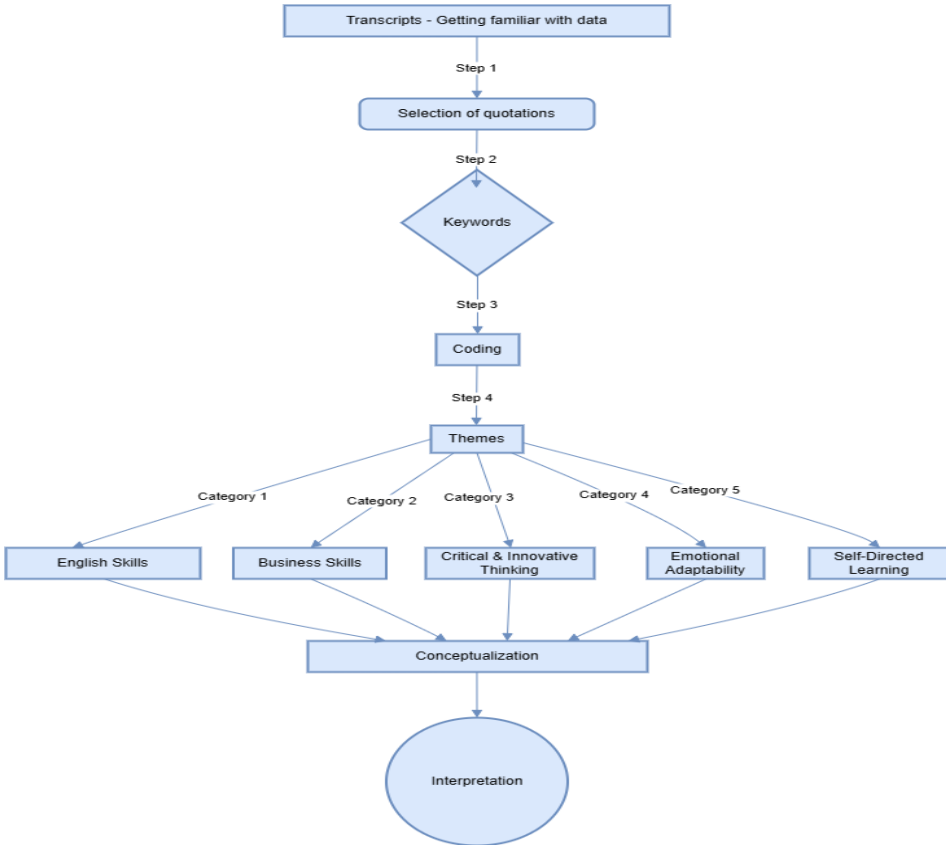


Fig. 1 The process of qualitative analysis

In this study, the coding process of qualitative data utilized the Python to enhance efficiency and accuracy. The key to this approach lies in employing Python for the identification and categorization of key terms and phrases within interview texts. To ensure the consistency and reliability of the coding, the study involved two experienced coders (both post-graduate students in English studies) who conducted the coding independently. They initially read and coded the transcripts independently, and then resolved any coding discrepancies through discussion meetings to reach a consensus.

To verify the reliability of the coding process, we use the Kappa coefficient to check the consistency between two encoders, which is a statistical measure used to assess the consistency between different evaluators. In our case, the calculated Kappa coefficient is 0.697, indicating a high level of agreement between the coders. The closer the Kappa coefficient is to 1, the higher the consistency among coders. Through this method, we ensured the scientific nature of the coding process and the reliability of the coding results, providing a solid foundation for subsequent data analysis and research findings. Additionally, using Python for automated

preliminary coding not only increased efficiency but also reduced the likelihood of human error, offering additional assurance for the precision and reliability of qualitative research.

Combining quantitative findings from the audit experiment with qualitative insights from interviews, this study aspires to present a well-rounded, multidimensional perspective on the employability of ESP graduates in higher education. This combined method aims to capture the full range of important factors influencing ESP graduates' employment and yield robust conclusions and recommendations related to graduate employment in the ESP field.

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

6.1. Audit Experiment Results

The data from the audit experiments reveal that internship experience plays a pivotal role in enhancing job application success rates. Out of 200 resumes sent, Tester 1 received positive responses or further invitations from HR in 47 cases, resulting in a response rate of 23.5% (47 out of 200). In the same way, Tester 2 received positive feedback 23 times, making a response rate of 11.5% (23 out of 200). Either 23.5% or 11.5% is relatively low response rate, indicating the challenging job market that current graduates are facing in the higher education sector. Meanwhile, there is a statistically significant difference in response rate between Tester 1 and Tester 2. Tester 1's response rate was 23.5% (47 out of 200), whereas Tester 2's 11.5% (23 out of 200). The results of the Chi-square test revealed a value of 9.16, with a p-value less than 0.005 ($p < 0.01$). This suggests that testster1's resume is likely to be more attractive to most corporate HR or potential employers than tester 2's. Moreover, we can also observe that there is a relatively stable preference in specific industries. In international construction and financial services related companies, test1 has a response rate of 23% and 20%, respectively, which is higher than tester 2's 15% and 13% in the same industry. These findings highlight the value of internships in the hiring process.

Table 2 Response rates of tester 1 and tester 2 in different industries

Industry	Tester 1 response rate (47/200)	Tester 2 response rate (23/200)	HR main feedback
International Construction	23%	15%	Feedback confirms that knowledge in the constructional sector is favored and internship experience is a plus
Education	12%	14%	Responses stress the importance of educational background and language ability
Financial Services	20%	13%	Feedback highly values internships and related skills
Information Technology	15%	10%	Responses emphasizes on technical skills and internship experience
Marketing	20%	30%	Feedback highly stress marketing internship experience
Health Care	10%	18%	Responses emphasizes the value of health care internships and knowledge in the health domain

These results show that candidates with internship experience (tester 1) generally receive higher response rates across industries. Table 2 above provides a detailed breakdown of the response rates received by tester 1 and tester 2 in different industries, as well as the

feedback obtained from contact HR as validation. Feedback from HR further highlights the importance of internship experience in hiring decisions, especially in industries such as international marketing and financial services. In addition, specific industry preferences for other qualifications can be observed. For example, the education sector prioritizes educational background, while non-educational institutions, particularly business and financial institutions, focus on technical skills that value internship experience.

Through contact with HR professionals, we also gained insight into the criteria used to evaluate potential job candidates in different industries. At international construction companies, HR departments clearly prefer candidates with industry-relevant internship experience. While the education sector prioritizes educational background, internship experience is also seen as a vital complement. The financial services and information technology industries highly value relevant skills, such as financial analysis and technical competence, as well as internship experience. Similarly, in the fields of marketing and healthcare, the importance of internship experience in candidate evaluation was also highlighted.

These findings provide a valuable reference for understanding the employment criteria for ESP graduates in different industries, indicating that the market has a strong preference for practical experience gained through internships.

6.2. Qualitative Analysis and Coding Approach

In this study, we employ a systematic coding process by python to organize and analyse the qualitative data obtained from interview texts. This method could facilitate the extraction and classification of key information into distinct categories and sub-categories of skills relevant to the study's objectives. The specific coding steps are as follows:

- a) Subcategory division: First, find key information related to the research topic, and determine the subtopic according to the meaning expressed by the interviewee. For example, "good oral English" is labelled as "oral ability", "good writing skills" is labelled as "writing ability", and "knowledge related to the construction field" could be marked as "industry knowledge" (detailed in table 3).
- b) Consolidation of similar items - Identify broad themes: This part of the consolidation work mainly defines major categories based on previous research hypotheses and research theories. For example, "speaking ability" and "writing ability" are identified as the broad categories of English skills, "negotiation skills" and "trade practical knowledge" are merged into business skills.
- c) Data coding and classification: Relevant instances in the text are tagged and categorized into appropriate subcategories, including a detailed review of context and content for precise classification.
- d) Continuous verification and adjustment of the code: Ongoing review and modification of the coding framework to ensure accurate representation of the content of the interview. This iterative process involves re-examining the text to fully capture all relevant information.

Table 3 Topics, sub-topics and some keywords

Skills Category	Sub-Categories	Brief Explanation	Keywords in Interview
English Skills	Oral Proficiency	Ability to express and understand spoken language, focusing on fluency, clarity, and appropriateness.	“Fluent communication”, “Clear articulation”
	Writing Skills	Ability to produce clear, accurate, and persuasive texts, focusing on grammar, spelling, and structure.	“Strong grammar”, “Effective writing” “good at writing”
Business Skills	Negotiation Skills	Ability to communicate effectively in business negotiations, find common ground, and achieve win-win outcomes.	“Negotiation strategy”, “Conflict resolution”
	Trade Practices	Knowledge of standard practices in trade, including regulations, customs, and effective strategies.	“Trade knowledge”, “Regulatory understanding”
	Industry Knowledge	Understanding of specific industries, including trends, challenges, and key players.	“Industry insight”, “Industry or knowledge”, “Market trends”
	Quality Internships	Experience in high-quality internships, providing practical skills and industry insights.	“Internship experience”, “Practical skills”
Critical & Innovative Thinking	Critical Thinking	Ability to analyze issues logically, identify patterns, and make reasoned decisions.	“Problem-solving”, “Logical analysis”
	Innovative Thinking	Capacity to think creatively and bring new, unique solutions to problems.	“Creative solutions”, “Innovative ideas”
Emotional Adaptability	Resilience	Ability to recover quickly from difficulties and adapt to change.	“Adaptability”, “Overcoming challenges”
	Emotional Intelligence	Understanding and managing one’s own emotions and empathizing with others.	“Self-awareness”, “Empathy”
	Confidence	Belief in one’s abilities and skills, and projecting assurance in various situations.	“Self-confidence”, “Assertiveness”
	Integrity	Adherence to moral and ethical principles, and consistency in actions and values.	“Ethical standards”, “Consistent values”
Self-Directed Learning	Self-Planning	Ability to set goals, plan steps, and manage time effectively.	“Goal setting”, “Career planning”
	Self-Monitoring	Regularly checking and assessing one’s own progress and performance.	“Self-assessment”, “Performance tracking”
	Self-Evaluation	Ability to assess one’s own strengths and weaknesses and seek improvement.	“Self-reflection”, “Continuous improvement”

Based on semi-structured interviews with HR managers or company representatives, themes and sub-topics extracted from the transcript of the interviews identify the key skills needed for ESP graduates. These insights provide a foundation for understanding industry

expectations. This qualitative analysis identified five main subject areas, ranked in order of importance by frequency, as shown in figure 2; each contributing to the employability of ESP graduates to varying degrees.

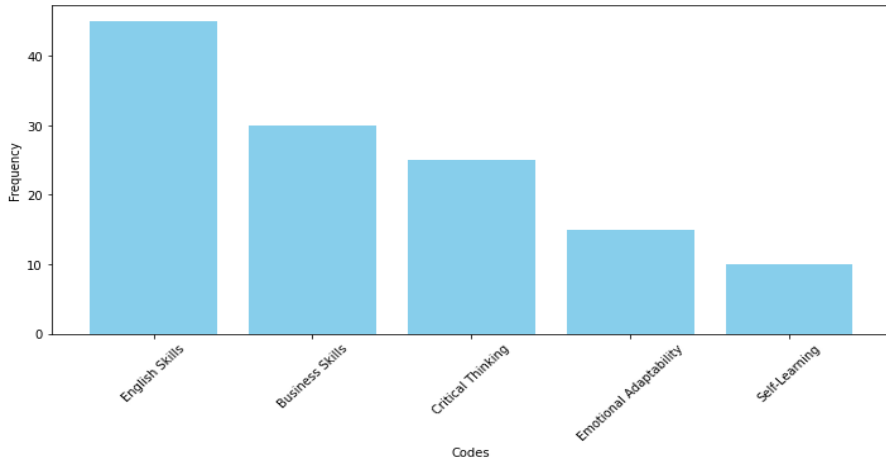


Fig. 2 Theme frequency in text data

Besides, the variation of importance could also be examined in the relationship graph as shown in figure 3. There are many nodes in the graph illustrating the various factors that contribute to “Employability”. The size of each node reflects different importance or weight, indicating a stronger relationship to employability compared to other factors. The closest nodes to “Employability” are mainly five larger nodes, including “Business Skills”, “English Skills”, “Critical & Innovative Thinking”, “Emotional Adaptability”, and “Self-Directed Learning”. Meanwhile, smaller nodes connected to those above modes are key attributes or components that contribute to the concept of each node. To be more specific, English Skills emerging as the most significant, emphasizes the importance of both oral and written communication competencies in a global professional context. Then, Business Skills as a category encompasses essential skills like negotiation, understanding of trade practices, industry-specific knowledge, and the value of quality internships. Critical & Innovative Thinking as a critical area mainly includes skills related to critical analysis, evaluation, and innovative problem-solving capabilities. Moreover, Emotional Adaptability focuses on emotional intelligence, resilience, confidence, and integrity, crucial for navigating interpersonal dynamics in working place. At last, Self-Directed Learning representing the ability to engage in autonomous learning activities, underscores the importance of continuous personal and professional development.

These represent key skills and attributes that are considered valuable for an ESP graduate’s employability, corresponds to the main topics and sub-topics directly related to topics and keywords listed in table 3. A deeper discussion about the employability framework derived from the above analysis can be presented as follows:

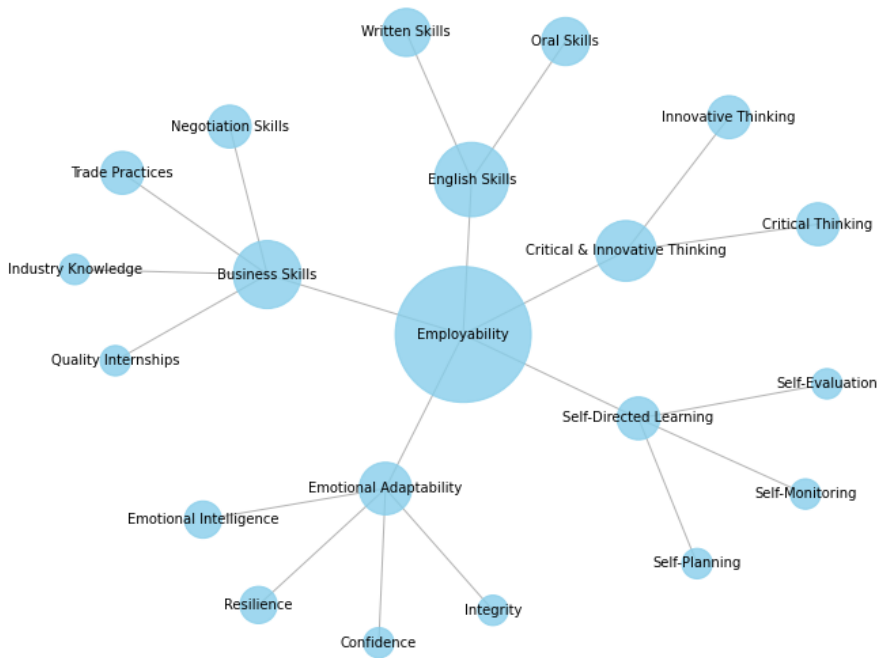


Fig. 3 Relationship graph of employability framework (based on adjusted weights)

English Skills (30% importance): As the most crucial factor, English proficiency is not only vital for effective communication but also for understanding and navigating diverse cultural contexts in global business environments. Previous study highlights the role of English as lingua franca for international business purposes in European case studies, and the results also show the importance of English for International Business (EIB) in multilingual environments, as well as participants' awareness of strategies to overcome language barriers (Rogerson-Revell 2007). Language ability remain the core competitive edge for ESP students in higher education in international business context. ESP educational programs should therefore continue to emphasize advanced English language training, including aspects of intercultural communication, to prepare graduates for international client interactions and effective teamwork in multicultural settings.

Business Skills (25% importance): These skills, encompassing negotiation, trade practices, and industry knowledge derived especially from internship experiences, as Usunier (2019) argues, are essential for handling international business transactions and challenges. Curriculum integration of practical business skills through case studies, simulation negotiations, and industry internships would provide ESP graduates with a blend of theoretical knowledge and real-world application. For an ESP graduate, accumulating quality internship experience before graduation can reduce a company's future training and communication costs, thereby generating more job opportunities, especially in a challenging job market.

Critical & Innovative Thinking (20% importance): In line with Karapetian's (2020) emphasis on dynamic work environments, fostering innovation and critical thinking is key.

ESP educational design in universities might encourage and exercise students to develop problem-solving skills and creative solutions through project work, research activities and innovative workshops.

Emotional Adaptability (15% importance): Skills such as resilience, emotional intelligence and integrity are increasingly valued when entering a highly competitive job market. ESP education might integrate emotional intelligence training and human development programs to help students develop these abilities.

Self-Directed Learning (10% importance): The ability to continuously self-learn and adapt to new market trends and technologies is essential in today's job market. ESP educational design might support this by encouraging and promoting self-directed learning resources, including research methods workshops, online courses, and creating a knowledge sharing culture.

By emphasizing these key areas - English proficiency, business skills developed especially through internships, innovative and critical thinking, emotional resilience, and self-directed learning - ESP education in colleges and universities can better prepare graduates for a complex global job market. This integrated approach ensures that ESP graduates are not only proficient in language and business skills, but also adaptable, innovative and emotionally intelligent, enabling them to excel in a challenging and dynamic job-hunting environment.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the rapidly evolving global job market, the employment of college graduates is a widely concerned issue. Based on quantitative audit experiments and semi-structured interviews, the study aims to examine the factors influencing ESP graduates in higher education to ensure that the educational curriculum could be better aligned with the actual needs of the market. The most important of these is English skills, which are the most critical component. In addition, business skills, including negotiation, trade practices and industry-specific knowledge gained primarily from internship experience, are also considered essential. This confirms the conclusions of previous audit experiment. Other important skills include critical and innovative thinking, emotional adaptability, and self-directed learning. To conclude, the findings of this study shows that though the consolidation of language ability is still the basis for the training of ESP talents, it should not be overlooked that the enrichment of internship experience and the all-round development of personal qualities and abilities make them more likely to get a job.

Our recommendations are as follows. First, universities could continue to focus on enhancement of target language proficiency of ESP students, emphasizing not only their fluency, but also mastery of domain-specific industry terminology and cross-cultural business communication. In addition, deepen business skills by enriching students with high-quality internships that foster a blend of critical and innovative thinking. Both on - and off-campus processes should be integrated with the development of individual emotional resilience and self-directed learning skills to prepare graduates for diverse and complex workplace interactions. Taken together, these strategies might be designed to provide ESP graduates with professional and diverse skills that are essential to thrive in today's dynamic environment.

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RHETORICAL STRUCTURE OF THE DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION SECTIONS IN MASTER'S THESES WRITTEN BY ENGLISH L1 AND L2 STUDENTS

Mirna Varga, Višnja Pavičić Takač

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Osijek, Croatia

ORCID iDs: Mirna Varga

Višnja Pavičić Takač

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2318-4490>

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8318-0235>

Abstract. *In writing a master's thesis students are expected to demonstrate both disciplinary knowledge and mastery of genre-specific writing conventions, which is particularly challenging for English L2 students writing in English. The present study deals with the analysis of the rhetorical structure of the Discussion and Conclusion sections in the corpus of master's theses (N=40) written by students majoring in applied linguistics at Croatian, UK- and US-based universities. Broadly based on the move-step models of the rhetorical structure of Discussions and Conclusions in research articles, the study explored the distribution of the rhetorical moves and steps across two sections in English L1 and L2 writing. The analysis showed overall higher frequencies of rhetorical moves in L1 thesis sections, indicating that English L1 writers structure the content of the Discussion and Conclusion sections in a rhetorically more elaborate manner than English L2 writers. The findings are discussed in light of their implications for informed genre-based academic writing instruction, particularly in non-Anglophone academic contexts.*

Key words: *English L1 students, English L2 students, master's thesis, rhetorical move structure*

1. INTRODUCTION

Master's thesis represents the most comprehensive academic assignment students must complete to pursue their master's degree and qualified participation in the disciplinary community of practice (Swales, 2004). Requirements placed on students to accomplish this task may be viewed at least from two converging perspectives. Students are expected to demonstrate substantial content knowledge and competencies in comprehending, researching, analyzing, and discussing a particular scientific topic (Thomson, 2013). At the same time, they need to demonstrate ability in structuring lengthy academic text by obeying genre-specific writing conventions and using the target disciplinary discourse (Biggs, Lai, Tang & Lavelle, 1999; Yakut, Yuvayapan & Bada, 2021). Exhibiting an advanced academic literacy level is a particularly daunting task for L2 majors writing theses in English (Biggs et al., 1999; Braine, 2002; Paltridge & Starfield, 2007). Previous research has reported on difficulties concerning English L2 students' overall language competence, e.g., grammatical accuracy or appropriate

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Corresponding author: Mirna Varga, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Osijek, Croatia

E-mail: mvarga@ffos.hr

vocabulary use (Bitchener & Basturkman, 2006), rhetorical functions of citations (Petrić, 2007), etc. However, one of the central issues in L2 student academic writing concerns a lack of awareness of content organization across different thesis sections (Paltridge, 2002; Bitchener & Basturkman, 2006). These issues notwithstanding, studies on the organizational structure of the thesis, particularly by L2 students, are fewer in number compared to extensive research on research articles (RA) (Paltridge, 2002). As Swales (1990) notes, along with the lengthy text size, limited research interest may be due to its less prominent status than the RA and the impact of research whose authors are mainly inexperienced novice writers. Nevertheless, in light of the increasing global trends of English-medium instruction, more pedagogically oriented research on L2 graduate writing seems more than justified. This is particularly relevant in academic settings with a noticeable lack of tradition of explicit genre-based academic writing instruction in the mainstream curriculum. To fill this gap, the present study aims to explore how students majoring in English applied linguistics at a Croatian university structure the Discussion and Conclusion (D/C) sections and to compare it to the way it is achieved by their UK- and US-based peers. Findings are discussed in light of possibilities for designing genre-based L2 writing instruction considering the specifics of the local and similar university settings.

2. GENRE ANALYSIS AND ACADEMIC WRITING

The study of the underlying organizational layout of content in academic genres has been closely tied to genre analysis, particularly Swales' (1990) model of the rhetorical move structure (Paltridge, 2013). The rhetorical structure is described as a set of segments or moves that refer to stretches of text performing a distinctive communicative purpose that may consist of further sub-segments or steps (Biber, Connor & Upton, 2007). The typical move-step analysis includes identifying and labeling rhetorical move types across a text, which, in turn, provides the overall organizational structure of the text (Biber et al., 2007). The move-step analysis has been the dominant analytical framework in cross-disciplinary linguistic research on academic genres (Kanoksilapatham, 2007a). The following section outlines the genre of the master's thesis within the framework of genre-based research.

2.1. The rhetorical structure of the master's thesis

A master's thesis can be defined as an original empirically-based research study written by a university graduate (Bui, 2019). Similarly to Ph.D. dissertations, it is written for assessment purposes and is evaluated by committee members (Thomson, 2013). Both genres entail following prescribed requirements regarding word limit, content organization across obligatory sections, appropriate language use, writing style, formatting, etc. (Thomson, 2013). These and similar features are commonly addressed in hands-on guides and handbooks that may facilitate novice writers' writing process. However, as Paltridge (2002) reports, the scope of generic-type manuals is limited in providing students with insights and knowledge resulting from a deeper level of rhetorical analysis. Since the textual structure represents "a central issue in text processing and production" (Johns 1995: 185), understanding how the content is typically structured remains a prerequisite for successful thesis writing, which makes

pedagogically-driven research on its underlying organizational structure all the more important.

Empirically-based accounts of the rhetorical structure of thesis sections have mainly followed the analytical move-step models of a congruent rhetorical structure of RAs (Samraj, 2008; Chen & Kuo, 2012, Ankomah & Afful, 2019). Chen & Kuo's (2012) analysis of the rhetorical structure of applied linguistic theses showed the traditional Introduction- Literature Review- Method- Results- Discussions- Conclusions pattern to be the most frequent type of thesis macrostructure. Though less elaborated, the structure of the sections showed similarities with those of RAs and PhD theses in terms of types and sequencing of moves. Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2016) compared the rhetorical structure of theses written by Vietnamese MA students majoring in TESOL and their international peers. Their findings showed overlaps in the overall thesis organization yet variations in the move-step structure of individual sections. For instance, in both corpora, there were no moves indicating a critical stance to previous research, which the authors assumed to be a characteristic of student writing overall. By contrast, deviations from the typical rhetorical structure, such as indicating research hypotheses in abstracts, were considered to be signs of students' insufficient genre knowledge. Samraj's (2008) examination of the rhetorical structure of thesis Introductions from a cross-disciplinary perspective revealed disciplinary variations in the content structure in that some disciplines broadly followed the traditional IMRD model while others showed greater structural variability. The semi-structured interviews with thesis supervisors revealed both disciplinary agreements on the preferred structure of Introductions and variations in supervisors' attitudes and expectations, even within the same discipline. These insights underscore the complexities in providing unitary accounts of the thesis structure but also promote the importance of analyzing its characteristic disciplinary patterns.

2.2. Discussion and Conclusion sections of the master's thesis

While there is a common understanding that thesis writing is a serious endeavor, writing the Discussion section seems to be particularly challenging (Bitchener & Basturkman, 2006). In Bitchener and Basturkman's (2006) study, student interviewees reported having a limited understanding of the overall function of the Discussion. For instance, they failed to recognize some of its core rhetorical functions, such as summarizing and interpreting results. While inadequate preparation and instruction might have impacted the results in the given academic context, students' difficulties in structuring the content in Discussions may not be surprising. By accounting for the nature of their results, writers need to provide new knowledge claims, which, in contrast to the descriptive functions of the Methods and to a certain degree Results sections demands deeper engagement with the subject matter and consequently more cognitive effort (Swales & Feak, 1994; Bitchener & Basturkman, 2006). The complexities in writing the Discussion are reflected in its multiple rhetorical functions. In applied linguistics, these broadly refer to providing background information, reporting, summarizing, and commenting on results. The latter involves multiple perspectives, such as accounting for, evaluating, and establishing relations between one's results and those obtained in similar research. Besides references to results, writers also summarize and evaluate the main aspects of the study, often followed by drawing deductions, such as providing implications and recommendations for further research (Chen & Kuo, 2012).

In some disciplines, the Discussion may be coalesced with the Conclusion, or the two may be written as stand-alone chapters, with the Conclusion being considerably shorter (Paltridge & Starfield, 2007). Previous studies have identified overlapping moves in the D/C sections, which include summarizing and evaluating the study and providing deductions from research. While the Discussion exhibits a cyclical move sequence, the Conclusion follows a linear sequencing of moves (Yang & Allison, 2003; Chen & Kuo, 2012). Despite similarities, the two sections perform different overarching rhetorical purposes. As Chen and Kuo (2012) note, the purpose of the Conclusion is to condense and underscore the main findings and evaluate the study, rather than provide any further commentaries on the results. As the Conclusion is the final “takeaway” section, how thesis writers summarize and structure its content merits research attention.

3. PRESENT STUDY

The present study aims to illuminate the patterns of similarities and differences in the rhetorical organization of the D/C sections in the master’s theses by English L2 students majoring in applied linguistics in Croatia and their L1 peers across UK- and USA-based universities. The specific research questions addressed are the following:

1. What is the distribution of the rhetorical moves and steps in the D/C sections in the English L1 vs. English L2 thesis sub-corpus?

2. Which moves and steps have an obligatory and optional status in each sub-corpus?

The comparison of the move-step structure of D/C sections in both sub-corpora allows us to examine how the two writer groups organized the content in the concluding thesis sections. We are particularly interested in exploring how L2 student writing conforms to the L1 preferred rhetorical organization of thesis content. By determining the obligatory vs. optional status of the moves and steps in each sub-corpus, the analysis will shed light on the prototypical features of the organizational structure of the given sections in the L1 and L2 thesis writing under study.

4. METHOD

4.1. Description of corpus data

The present corpus consists of two sub-corpora, each comprising 20 D/C sections. The total corpus size is nearly 100,000 words, with statistically significant differences found in the size of the two sub-corpora and the size of the Discussion sections (see Table 1). As the institutional guidelines of L1 theses were unavailable to us, the observed differences in word counts could not be accounted for. The corpus was extracted from the Croatian sub-part of the corpus of MA theses in (applied) linguistics written in English by English L2 and L1 students, previously compiled for a large-scale project on metadiscourse in academic writing (Varga et al., 2020). The original L2 sub-corpus was retrieved from the personal folders of students’ supervisors. As the overall research aim was to explore L2 students’ rhetorical choices before supervisors’ interventions, the L2 sub-corpus is based on unrevised theses drafts. By contrast, the L1 sub-corpus comprises texts extracted from submitted and defended MA theses. Open-access institutional repositories across British and American universities were used to compile the L1 sub-

corpus. All theses were submitted between 2009 and 2019, and all shared applied linguistics as the common subject domain. All L2 theses had the explicit section headings Discussion and Conclusion mainly written as single texts, without subsections. In most English theses, the D/C sections had conventional section headings. Almost half of the L2 Discussions (n=9) had sub-sections with content headings, while most Conclusions were written as complete texts. It is worth noting that the rhetorical structure of the L1 thesis was not assumed to be a normative standard against which the comparable analysis was conducted but was regarded as an instance of academic writing reflecting the specific L1 genre requirements, the mastery of which is broadly expected to be demonstrated in L2 thesis writing.

As our study is based on the comparison between L1 written English and the L2 learner variety (Ädel, 2006), it is important to address how the notion of English L1 and L2 writing is treated in the present analysis (for more details on the L1 vs. L2 terminological qualifications, see Varga et al., 2020). Our L1 sub-corpus comprises the theses submitted by students majoring in the Anglophone academic setting. Though the status of students' L1 background is unknown to us, we use the term "English L1 student (writer)" to denote writers whose language competence is institutionally acknowledged based on having their theses defended at a university in an English-speaking country. Along the same lines, "English L2 student (writer)" refers to master-level students majoring in EFL who submitted their theses at a Croatian University.

Table 1 Word count in the English L1 and L2 sub-corpora

	English L2 sub-corpus			English L1 sub-corpus			t	p
	number of words	mean per section	SD	number of words	mean per section	SD		
Discussion	19309	965.45	580.51	56740	2837	1298.23	-5.89	<.001
Conclusion	9166	458.3	169.46	13182	659.1	561.43	-1.53	.13
Total	28475	1423.75	601.17	69922	3496.1	1574.84	-5.49	<.001

4.2. Data analysis

To investigate the rhetorical structure of the target sections, we adopted Yang and Allison's (2003) move-step analytical framework drawing upon the rhetorical analysis of D/C sections of RAs in applied linguistics (see Figure 1). The framework was also utilized in previous analyses of the thesis' rhetorical structure (e.g., Chen & Kuo, 2012). The framework consists of 10 moves in total, seven in the Discussion and three in the Conclusion section. Three moves in the Discussion (M4, M6, and M7) and two moves in the Conclusion (M2, M3) are realized through several steps. Based on the shared communicative functions, the moves in the Discussion can be grouped into results-oriented (M1-M4) and study-oriented (M5-M7). The Conclusion moves are solely study-oriented and partly overlap with the congruent moves in the Discussion, with some slight differences in the communicative functions of steps. Following Pho (2013), our analysis is based on a top-down approach, meaning that the moves were identified based on the content of the textual segment.

<p>Moves and steps in Discussion</p> <p>Move 1—Providing background information</p> <p>Move 2—Reporting results</p> <p>Move 3—Summarizing results</p> <p>Move 4—Commenting on results</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">S4.1 Interpreting results</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">S4.2 Comparing results with the literature</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">S4.3 Accounting for results</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">S4.4 Evaluating results</p> <p>Move 5—Summarizing the study</p> <p>Move 6—Evaluating the study</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">S6.1 Indicating limitations</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">S6.2 Indicating significance/advantage</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">S6.3 Evaluating methodology</p> <p>Move 7—Deductions from the research</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">S7.1 Making suggestions</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">S7.2 Recommending further research</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">S7.3 Drawing pedagogic implications</p> <p>Moves and steps in Conclusion</p> <p>Move 1— Summarizing the study</p> <p>Move 2— Evaluating the Study</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">S2.1 Indicating significance/advantage</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">S2.2 Indicating limitations</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">S2.3 Evaluating methodology</p> <p>Move 3— Deductions from the research</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">S3.1 Recommending further research</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">S3.2 Drawing pedagogic implications</p>

Fig. 1 Move/step structure in Discussion and Conclusion thesis sections
(based on Yang and Allison, 2003)

The coding scheme was first piloted on a small corpus of D/C sections. After each author identified moves, we compared the analyses and revealed occasional mismatches in move coding, which resulted in establishing firmer coding criteria. As suggested in previous research (Pho, 2013), this involved deciding on some typical content questions to allow the distinction between similar steps comprising each move. For example, the questions ‘What do the results mean?’ and ‘Why were the results the way they were?’ were used to differentiate between S4.1 *Interpreting results* and S4.2 *Accounting for results*, respectively. In identifying move types, we also looked for lexical and metadiscourse signals that can indicate a distinct rhetorical function (Yang & Allison, 2003). For instance, the extraposed *it*-clause and hedge ‘seem’ in ‘*It thus seems that when participants are able to interact...*’ can be considered a sign of the writer’s cautious intention to provide a tentative interpretation of the results.

Despite the abovementioned strategies, our move categorization was occasionally fraught with obstacles due to fuzzy boundaries between similar move types, as well as the possibility for a text segment to perform more than one rhetorical function. As a

consequence, we were challenged by subjectivity in assigning a particular rhetorical function to a text segment, which has been recognized as one of the major methodological stumbling blocks inherent in the rhetorical move analysis (Pho, 2013; Kanoksilapatham, 2007b). To ensure maximum reliability of the analysis, we broadly followed in the methodological footsteps of previous research in which the same texts were analyzed by multiple raters and measured in terms of interrater agreement or reliability rates (Kanoksilapatham, 2007a; Chen & Kuo, 2012). Our approach was based on individual manual move coding of L1 and L2 sections and followed by a comparison of the results. In case of discrepancies in assigning a move type, we reached a consensus by opting for a stronger argumentation. All moves were coded using the move-step framework outlined above. Raw frequencies of each move type were calculated for both sections in each sub-corpus. Bonferroni corrected Mann-Whitney U test was used to test the differences in the frequencies of move types in the sub-corpora. To establish the obligatory vs. optional status of moves, we followed the methodological procedure proposed by Kanoksilapatham (2007b). The cut-off point of 60% of move occurrences in a sub-corpus was used to mark its status as obligatory. If the frequency of a move was less than 60%, it was considered optional. The statistical analysis included repeated measures ANOVA with within-subjects factor and Greenhouse-Geisser correction due to violated sphericity. Moves in Discussion and Conclusion were used as dependent variables. Due to multiple comparisons, Bonferroni corrections were applied to diminish the probability of making a Type I error.

5. RESULTS

The frequency analysis identified the presence of all moves and almost all steps in the corpus. Table 2 outlines the overall frequency of moves in the D/C sections across the sub-corpora, as well as the mean frequency of moves per section and Table 3 shows the distribution of moves and steps across two sub-corpora.

Results showed that, in total, L1 students used more moves than their L2 peers. The mean frequency of moves in L2 Discussion was 20.9 (SD = 10.79), ranging from 5 to 42 moves, while it was almost triple in L1 Discussions (M = 58.35, SD = 29.35) where it ranged from 18 to as many as 123 (see Table 2).

Table 2 Overall frequency of moves in Discussion and Conclusion sections across sub-corpora

	English L2 sub-corpus			English L1 sub-corpus		
	total frequency	mean per section (SD)	range	total frequency	mean per section (SD)	range
Discussion	418	20.9 (10.79)	5-42	1167	58.35 (29.35)	18-123
Conclusion	84	4.2 (1.61)	2-7	146	7.3 (8.06)	1-30
Total moves	502	25.1 (10.28)	11-44	1313	65.65	27-145

Table 3 Distribution of moves and steps across two sub-corpora

Moves	Steps	English L2 corpus				English L1 corpus				<i>p</i> _{bonf}
		appears in % of texts	<i>f</i>	% (n=418)	mean /section (SD) (n=20)	appears in % of texts	<i>f</i>	% (n=1167)	mean/ section (SD) (n=20)	
<i>Discussion</i>										
M1	Providing background information	90	54	12.92	2.7 (1.72)	100	233	19.97	11.65 (6.88)	<.001
M2	Reporting results	100	98	23.44	4.9 (3.09)	100	187	16.02	9.35 (6.23)	.003
M3	Summarizing results	50	27	6.46	1.35 (2.01)	90	110	9.43	5.5 (4.86)	.011
M4	S4.1 Commenting on results	75	49	11.72	2.45 (2.26)	85	75	6.43	3.75 (3.37)	1.00
	S4.2 Comparing results with the literature	65	46	11	2.3 (2.68)	90	78	6.68	3.9 (3.62)	1.00
	S4.3 Accounting for results	75	48	11.48	2.4 (2.72)	95	151	12.94	7.55 (6.08)	<.001
	S4.4 Evaluating results	70	31	7.42	1.55 (1.64)	70	59	5.06	2.95 (3.36)	1.00
M5	Summarizing the study	60	22	5.26	1.1 (1.21)	85	79	6.77	3.95 (3.44)	1.00
M6	S6.1 Evaluating the study	35	13	3.11	.65 (1.04)	55	41	3.51	2.05 (2.61)	1.00
	S6.2 Indicating limitations	10	2	0.48	.1 (.31)	40	12	1.03	.6 (.82)	1.00
	S6.3 Indicating significance/ advantage	20	5	1.2	.25 (.55)	65	46	3.94	2.3 (2.68)	1.00
	S6.3 Evaluating methodology									
M7	S7.1 Making suggestions	15	3	0.72	.15 (.37)	65	24	2.06	1.2 (1.11)	1.00
	S7.2 Deductions from the research	15	7	1.67	.35 (.87)	75	58	4.97	2.9 (-3.27)	1.00
	S7.3 Drawing pedagogic implications	40	13	3.11	.65 (.93)	25	14	1.2	.7 (1.84)	1.00

Conclusion										
M1	Summarizing the study	100	30	35.71	1.5 (.69)	100	52	35.62	2.6 (2.54)	.813
M2	Evaluating the study	25	6	0.12	.3 (.57)	55	21	14.39	1.05 (1.57)	1.00
	S2.1 Indicating significance/ advantage	50	10	11.9	5 (.51)	25	15	10.27	.75 (1.45)	1.00
	S2.2 Indicating limitations	0	0	0	0	30	9	6.16	.45 (.94)	-
	S2.3 Evaluating methodology	65	17	20.24	.85 (.75)	55	35	23.97	1.75 (2.61)	1.00
M3	Deductions from the research	80	21	25	1.05 (.69)	40	14	9.59	.7 (1.03)	1.00
	S3.1 Recommend ing further research									
	S3.2 Drawing pedagogic implications									

The results of the repeated measures ANOVA showed that there was a significant statistical difference in the distribution of moves in the Discussion section ($F(5.39, 204.78) = 25.96, p < .01; \omega^2 = .32$), as well as in Conclusion ($F(2.96, 112.48) = 11.509, p < .001; \omega^2 = .11$). The interaction between the two corpora and the distribution of moves in the Discussion and Conclusion, respectively, was significant.

Overall, the results point to the generally congruent distribution of moves in Discussion by two groups of writers (see Figure 2). In the Discussion, both L1 and L2 writers mostly commented on the results of their research. The high frequency of M4 *Commenting on results* in both sub-corpora is aligned with the overall rhetorical purpose of the section (Basturkmen, 2009). The most frequent move in L1 Discussions was M1 *Providing background information*, followed by M2 *Reporting results* and M3 *Summarizing results*. The analysis of the L2 sub-corpus showed a similar distribution of the first three moves, the only difference being the reversed order of the first and second most frequent move. The use of three remaining study-related moves (M5, M6, and M7) was similar in both sub-corpora in that their frequencies are considerably lower than the results-oriented moves (M1-M4).

We also calculated the occurrences of steps realizing distinct moves. The comparison of the results revealed higher frequencies of occurrences of all steps in the L1 sub-corpus. However, pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni adjustment showed that the differences were statistically significant in only four moves and steps in Discussion: M1 *Providing background information*, M2 *Reporting results*, M3 *Summarizing results* and the step *Accounting for results* in M4, as indicated in Figure 2.

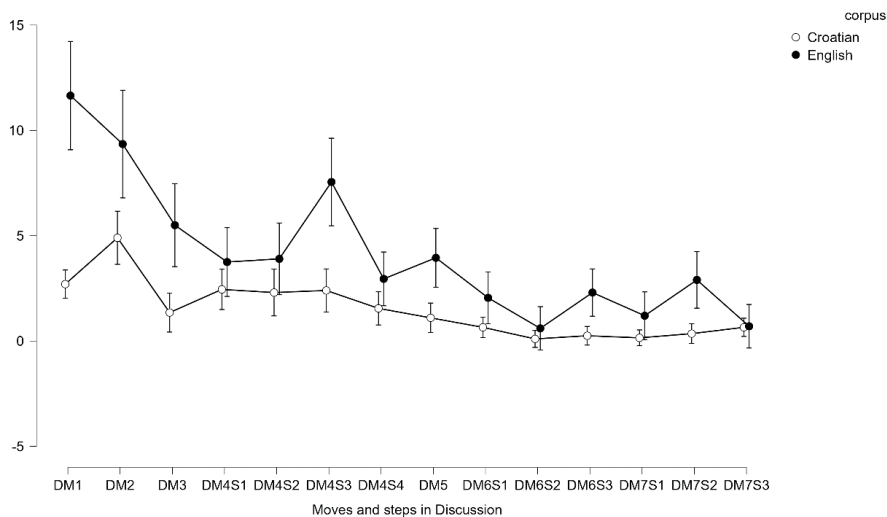


Fig. 2 Pairwise comparisons of mean frequency of moves and steps in Discussion across sub-corpora

The frequency analysis in the Conclusion sections shows the dominance of M1 *Summarizing the study* in both sub-corpora (see Figure 3). Yet, the frequency counts of the remaining moves indicate a different focus by the two writer groups. Unlike L2 writers, L1 writers were more interested in indicating the significance of their studies (S2.1) and evaluating methodology (S2.3). No occurrences of the latter in L2 Conclusions suggest that L2 English students did not find it important to evaluate the methodological aspects of their studies in this section at all. Instead, they paid considerably more attention to drawing pedagogic implications (S3.2) than L1 writers. However, pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni adjustment showed that the differences between moves and steps in Conclusion were not statistically significant (see Table 3).

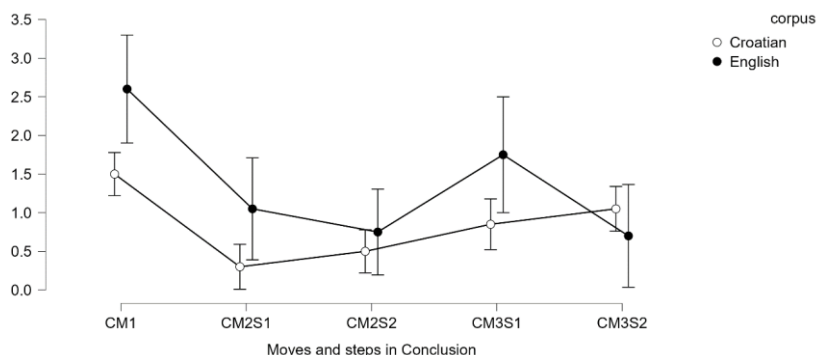


Fig. 3 Pairwise comparisons of frequency of moves and steps in Conclusion across sub-corpora

To determine the obligatory vs. optional status of moves and steps, we also calculated the frequency (%) of move occurrences in individual texts in both sub-corpora (see Table 3). The findings indicate a greater range of obligatory moves and steps in L1 Discussions. Based on the cut-off point outlined above, all seven moves, including at least one obligatory step in the multi-step moves, were obligatory in L1 Discussions, while four moves had the same status in L2 Discussions. Seven of ten steps were obligatory in L1 while four were in L2 Discussions. The optional steps were used at a higher frequency in L1 Discussions, except for *S7.2 Drawing pedagogic implication*, which occurred in 40% of L2 Discussions and 25% of L1 sections. In both sub-corpora, *M2 Reporting results* occurred in 100% of Discussions under study, underscoring its centrality. *M1 Providing background information* was also used in all L1 Discussions, showing a high frequency of occurrences in L2 sections (90%). The most striking difference was observed in the frequencies of *M3 Summarizing results*, which was used in 90% of L1 Discussions and 50% of L2 Discussions.

The frequency analysis in the Conclusion showed that *M1 Summarizing the study* was used in all L1 and L2 texts. Though *M2* was optional in both sub-corpora, variations in distributions revealed different writers' perspectives. Thus, while *S2.1. Indicating significance/advantage* was used at the rate of 55% in L1, it showed a frequency of 25% in L2 Conclusions. By contrast, *S2.2 Indicating limitations* was identified in 50% of L2 Conclusions, while it occurred in 25% of L1 Conclusions. *S2.3 Evaluating methodology* was reported in 30% of L1 Conclusions but it was not identified in any of L2 Conclusions, thus being the only step with no occurrences in the corpus as a whole. The frequencies of both steps realizing *M3 Deductions from the research* marked the obligatory status in L2 texts, yet it was optional in L1 Conclusions.

6. DISCUSSION

6.1. Rhetorical structure of the L1 and L2 Discussion sections

The comparison of the obtained results shows that L2 writers generally use more moves to structure their Discussion, as reflected in a statistically significant difference with a large effect size. Despite this overall distinction, L1 and L2 texts share certain rhetorical similarities. In other words, both L1 and L2 writers tend to focus primarily on reporting and discussing the obtained findings, while they are less concerned with evaluating their studies and making deductions based on them. This finding generally corroborates the results of Chen and Kuo's (2012) analysis of the overall rhetorical purposes of the Discussion in MA theses. It also corresponds to the underlying rhetorical structure of Discussions in RAs in applied linguistics (Yang & Allison, 2003). A closer look at the distribution of moves shows that all L1 and most L2 writers found it necessary to contextualize the discussion of the results against the background of information relevant to their research. This usually involved referring to the literature-based data concerning the underlying theoretical background, restating major research hypotheses, objectives, or other theoretical and methodological issues pertinent to the discussion. In both sub-corpora, *M1 Providing background information* was recycled throughout the section. However, it was often employed as the opening move, followed by *M2 Reporting results*. The sequence of two moves is illustrated as follows:

(1) *The aim of this experiment was to capture the presence of inter-linguistic links using a translation recognition task... In the critical incorrect ("no") trials, participants saw cognate and noncognate French words followed by... [M1 Providing background information] ... The results for these trials show that there was no difference in RT or accuracy interference... [M2 Reporting results] [ENG2]*

Though both writer groups frequently used M1, the statistically significant difference between the frequency counts shows (see Table 3) that L1 writers were more concerned with contextualizing the discussion of the results against the background data. This suggests that L1 writers were more likely to conform to the preferred rhetorical organization of the Discussion, which, among others, entails interweaving references to the background literature data and one's research with the discussion of the obtained findings (Bitchener & Starfield, 2007).

As previously indicated, M2 *Reporting results* was the only move that was used in all L1 and L2 Discussions, which is aligned with prior research on the main rhetorical functions of the thesis (Chen & Kuo, 2012), but not the RA (Yang & Allison, 2003). The saliency of this move is expected, given that providing meaning to findings and discussing their significance can hardly be achieved without reporting them (Swales & Feak, 2004; Bitchener, 2010). M2 was typically signaled by references to qualitative or statistical data, examples, tables, graphs, etc., as demonstrated below:

(2) *The error analysis of learners' word order errors shows that learners generally make errors in the placement of adverbials (46.19%). [HR8]*

As noted above, while reporting findings in the Discussion, a writer naturally comments on them. Hence, in the rhetorical moves' terms, the M2-M4 pair can be considered the most logical move pair. A sequence of M2 and two steps comprising M4 is illustrated in example (3). The writer starts with a synthesized report of the selected results, followed by the interpretation of the findings whose validity is supported by referring to the relevant theoretical model.

(3) *Without the ability to bootstrap knowledge, participants were scoring under 50% on the recognition tests. [M2 Reporting results] These results suggest that co-occurrence frequency, syntactic framework, and prior knowledge were all helping the participants learn the novel words, ... [S4.1 Interpreting results] The results corroborate the emergentist coalition model of word learning, which states that word learning... (Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2000). [S4.2 Comparing results with the literature] [ENG4]*

When the frequency counts of M2 occurrences are compared to those of M4 steps, the findings uncovered different rhetorical choices by two writer groups. In L1 Discussions, the frequencies of M2 and *S4.3 Accounting for results* are relatively close (see Table 3). Though at lower rates, most other M4 steps were recorded in more than 85% of texts, indicating that most L1 writers achieved the focal communicative function of the Discussion. By contrast, in L2 Discussions, the commentary-related M4 steps occurred in 65% to 75% of texts, compared to M2, which was reported in all texts. Additionally, the comparison of the move ratios showed that *S4.3 Accounting for results* occurred at the frequency of 11.5% as compared to 23% of M2, marking the highest frequency rate in the L2 sub-corpus. This finding suggests that in structuring the content of the Discussion

section, L2 writers were more concerned with reporting rather than explaining their findings. The comparison of frequency counts between the sub-corpora showed that the given step was used in 75% of L2 Discussions, whereas it was used in 90% of L1 discussions. As noted above, the difference in frequencies of *S4.3 Accounting for results* was statistically significant, which indicates that, compared to L2 writers, L1 writers were more successful in aligning their texts with the central rhetorical purpose of the Discussion. While it is hard to precisely account for the reasons underlying L2 students' choices in placing more emphasis on reporting rather than accounting for the results, it can be assumed that some students found it difficult to go beyond a mere description of the obtained findings. For this reason, they may have avoided taking risks to engage in a deeper discussion of their findings. Alternatively, as Bitchener and Basturkmen (2006) also report, students may have been uncertain of the main rhetorical purpose of the Discussion, which may have resulted in the restatement of the findings already presented in the Results. In doing so, however, some of them failed to completely comply with the rhetorical requirements of this section.

A further distinction in the rhetorical preferences of L1 and L2 writers concerns the use of M3 *Summarizing results*. It indicates the synthesis of results from which a follow-up discussion may ensue (Yang & Alison, 2012). At the lexical level, M3 is typically signaled by the use of discourse markers, such as *in general, in conclusion, to sum up*, etc., as shown in example (4):

(4) *In general terms, the results showed high percentage value, regarding classroom implementation, teacher practice...* [ENG9]

Close frequencies of M2 and M3 in L1 Discussions indicate that most L1 writers prefer to summarize previously reported results in writing this section. This contrasts with the findings reported in L2 Discussions, which point to the optional status of M3. When the frequencies of M3 are compared with the frequencies of somewhat congruent M5 *Summarizing the study*, it is noticeable that each group of writers showed similar tendencies in their usage. *Summarizing the study* represents a move that indicates a synthesized account of the key aspects of the conducted research (Yang & Alison, 2012). High frequencies of occurrences of M3 (90%) and M5 (85%) in L1 Discussions lead to the conclusion that most L1 writers found it equally important to sum up both the results and the study overall. For L1 writers, summarization therefore seems to be a subsequent step of a previous discussion. L2 writers, on the other hand, used the given moves substantially less frequently (M3=50%, M5=60%). The statistically significant difference between the frequency counts of M3 *Summarizing results* (see Table 3) indicates that, unlike in L1 Discussions, summarization is not one of the central rhetorical purposes in L2 sections. Swales and Feak (2004) suggested that *Summarizing* and *Reporting* key results are obligatory moves of both D/C sections. It may be the case that some L2 writers in our study were unaware of the former, which concurs with students' perceptions reported in Bitchener and Basturkmen's (2006) study. Additionally, they may have avoided dealing with summarization due to the inherent complexity of summary writing in general. Thus, they decided to summarize the study only in the Conclusions where this rhetorical function could hardly be avoided.

Differences in the frequencies of almost all steps comprising M6 and M7 in L1 and L2 Discussions indicate that, unlike L2 writers, L1 writers were more oriented toward evaluating different aspects of their studies as well as drawing deductions from them (e.g., recommending further research). In other words, compared to L2 writers, they more often expressed their authorial voice concerning the research conducted. For instance, in example (5), the writer takes a rather critical stance toward the research instrument by pointing to its shortcomings yet providing recommendations on how these might be remedied in future studies.

(5) *All in all, while some information could be discerned from the screen-captures, a questionnaire about the participants' interactions may have been more suited researching the way in which the participants engaged with the blogs and video blogs. [S6.3. Evaluating the methodology]. Alternatively, this research question could be addressed in more detail in future self-report studies, like those conducted by... [S7.2 Recommending further research] [ENG3]*

6.2. Rhetorical structure of the L1 and L2 Conclusion sections

Lower frequencies of the congruent moves in the L1 Conclusions indicate that though present in both sections, the rhetorical purposes of Evaluating the study and Drawing deductions from research are more prominent features of L1 Discussions than Conclusions. By comparison, frequency analysis of the congruent moves in L2 D/C sections shows the reverse rhetorical patterns. While the frequencies of steps comprising M6 and M7 point to their optionality in Discussions, relatively higher frequencies of most of their rhetorical counterparts in the Conclusion show that L2 writers preferred to evaluate their study in the final thesis section. This is particularly evident in the frequency counts of S3.1 *Recommending further research* and S3.2 *Drawing pedagogic implications* which are obligatory steps in the Conclusions but optional in Discussions. It is reasonable to suggest that the obtained distribution is related to the scope of L2 theses that more often dealt with classroom research than L1 theses. Also, a high frequency of the given step is likely due to the requirements of L2 thesis guidelines in which a reference to practical teaching implications was a required thesis component. As for the remaining move structure, differences were noted in the frequencies of S2.1 and S2.3 across the sub-corpora, indicating that compared to L2 writers, L1 writers were more concerned with emphasizing the advantages of their studies and evaluating various methodological issues. This finding supports the distribution of the congruent steps in the Discussion, underscoring the importance that L1 writers assign to these aspects of their theses. By way of illustration, the writer in the example below provided a positive evaluation of the obtained findings, which were confidently characterized as fundamentally encouraging, expressing thus a strong commitment to the importance of the conducted case study.

(6) *The fundamentally encouraging findings in this small-scale exploratory case study provide evidence that SL appears to be an effective language learning platform... [S2.1 Indicating significance/advantage] [ENG10]*

7. GENERAL DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

At the general level, the findings show that most English L1 and L2 student writers organized the content in the final thesis sections in line with the preferred rhetorical requirements. The frequency of the obligatory moves performing the core communicative functions suggests students' overall familiarity with the broad schematic structure of D/C sections. However, a deeper insight into the results revealed that English L1 students wrote rhetorically denser and more complex concluding sections. This is reflected not only in the higher frequencies of obligatory moves and the distribution of single moves and steps but also in the mean frequency of moves per section, which generally showed higher rates in L1 texts. Overall, both cohorts of writers were more concerned with reporting and commenting on their findings rather than with providing evaluations. However, this cannot be considered a major rhetorical weakness given their status as student writers and the purpose of the graduate-level writing under study (Basturkmen, 2009). Nevertheless, compared to L2 writers, L1 students demonstrated more willingness to express their critical voice and elaborate on multiple aspects of their research. This indicates their stronger commitment to discussing issues and generally deeper engagement with the thesis content.

Despite the lack of concrete data on L1 writers' previous experiences with academic writing, it is our general assumption that the present findings may reflect distinct culturally-driven teaching paradigms that focus more or less on the development of writing skills. Anglophone (tertiary) education seems to be more inclined toward skill-based teaching approaches than many non-Anglophone academic contexts, such as Croatian in which traditional frontal instruction still prevails. It is, therefore, likely that L1 students had been provided with more academic writing instruction, which had equipped them with a higher degree of rhetorical knowledge and writing skills required for thesis writing.

By contrast, in the Croatian academic setting under study, apart from essays, occasional seminar papers, and small-scale research report writing, genre-based writing instruction has not been a fully established component of the graduate English Studies programs. In other words, despite some emerging initiatives, stand-alone courses on academic writing are still in the infant stages. The lack of sufficient training and expertise in academic writing and the complexity of thesis writing may have left some L2 students ill-equipped with the necessary disciplinary rhetorical knowledge and skills to structure the content in a rhetorically more elaborate manner. For this reason, we argue that the provision of genre-based writing courses adapted to the nature of English L2 academic settings should be oriented primarily at raising students' awareness of the rhetorical and linguistic features of the target academic genres. This could be achieved through direct instruction on the rhetorical organization of the content and supplemented with appropriate writing practice. Indeed, L2 students reported didactic writing instruction as the most effective approach to developing rhetorical knowledge for L2 graduate writing (Biggs et al., 1999).

As previously mentioned, the institutional guidelines for thesis writing in English, along with the commercial handbooks and other resources on thesis writing, may be insufficiently instructive for meeting English L2 students' disciplinary writing needs, particularly concerning content organization (Bithchener, 2010). Therefore, tailor-made authentic teaching materials arising from disciplinary writing, such as the one analyzed here, may prove particularly useful for developing students' rhetorical awareness. Though successful writing does not involve only knowledge about the structural layout of the content (Paltridge, 2002), instruction in strategies to identify and explore the rhetorical patterns of

genres important for students' academic needs along with writing practice may facilitate stronger development of academic literacy (Tardy, 2023). Admittedly, genre-based writing instruction may require thesis supervisors to possess some knowledge of the rhetorical structure of academic genres. One of the solutions might be the provision of collaborative teaching between EAP instructors and subject-specific course instructors. Designing courses, workshops, or alternative teaching programs based on integrating disciplinary content and the target language skills might be particularly beneficial.

Although the results of the repeated measures ANOVA showed that there was a significant statistical difference in the distribution of moves in the Discussion and Conclusion, as well as the interaction between the subcorpora and the moves distribution in the two sections was significant, most pairwise comparisons failed to reach statistical significance. This may be a consequence of the corrections applied due to multiple comparisons. However, despite the limited scope and the relatively small corpus size, the study has provided us with some understanding of the rhetorical preferences of English L2 and L1 student writers in writing the final sections of their master's thesis. A congruent rhetorical analysis of the remaining thesis sections would provide a more comprehensive picture of the rhetorical practices of L1 and L2 student writers. The scope of the present study may be extended by the content analysis of the rhetorical moves, which might provide a more fine-grained insight into the specifics of move realization. For instance, a single move may only be formally present, indicating a particular communicative function yet lacking substance in the propositional content. To illustrate, if the claim in example (7) is not substantiated by further arguments, the communicative function of Drawing pedagogic implications may only be declared but not completely achieved.

(7) *In order to support the improvement of learners' pragmatic comprehension, the appropriate changes in the curriculum of English in Croatian high schools become a necessity.* [HR18]

Another important research strand may be the analysis of the typical word clusters used to signal moves, as it is commonly acknowledged that the rhetorical move structure is associated with formulaic language use (Lu, Yoon & Kisselev, 2021). English L2 student writing may be examined regarding the frequency, diversity, and complexity of lexical bundles used to achieve various rhetorical purposes and compared to English L1 writing or even expert writing. Such analysis may provide writing instructors with useful data to expand English L2 students' knowledge of conventional phraseology used in thesis writing.

8. CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to examine how Croatian students majoring in applied linguistics and English-speaking peers from Anglophone academic settings structure the content of the D/C sections of their master's theses. The comparative move-step analysis showed a higher frequency of rhetorical moves in L1 student writing. This is reflected in a more scrutinized discussion and evaluation of their research projects, resulting in higher-level academic writing. By contrast, though generally familiar with the schematic structure of D/C sections, L2 students demonstrated less engagement with the content, as reflected in a lower frequency of rhetorical moves, particularly those concerned with

more argumentative rhetorical purposes. We believe that the variations in the rhetorical choices between the two writer groups may be related to students' educational backgrounds, with L2 students being less exposed to genre-based pedagogy and consequently exhibiting less proficient academic writing skills.

The current research may encourage stronger implementation of genre-based writing instruction in Croatian and similar English L2 academic settings where it has not been sufficiently integrated into the leading educational paradigms. In light of the growing trends in the internationalization of higher education and the status of English as the world's dominant academic language, the demands for genre-based teaching in university study programs in English have become increasingly important.

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COMPARING THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS OF PANDEMIC AND PRE-PANDEMIC HIGHER EDUCATION LEARNERS IN AN AD-HOC GRAMMAR COURSE

Maria Eugenia Zevallos Valdivia, Enrique Gustavo Figueroa Navarro

Universidad San Ignacio de Loyola, Perú

ORCID iDs: Maria Eugenia Zevallos Valdivia  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8696-0034>
Enrique Gustavo Figueroa Navarro  N/A

Abstract. *This study intended to compare the academic achievements of two samples of pre-pandemic and pandemic groups within the context of an ad-hoc grammar programme, English Competency Course (ECC), administered at a university in Lima, Peru in 2018 and 2020. The thesis for this study sustained that the students who took part in ECC during the Covid-19 cohort of 2020 – delivered online – performed much better in terms of academic achievement than the ones who took the same course in 2018 in non-pandemic times. The data was treated through the non-parametric Mann-Whitney-Wilcoxon U test resulting in better performance for the pandemic group than for the pre-pandemic one. However, it was found that the former sample showed some degree of asymmetry, which questioned the conclusiveness of the test. This fact led to applying the bootstrap resampling method executing 10,000 Mood's median tests; the result was a 98.9% of significant p-values in favour of the pandemic sample. Consequently, it is claimed that on statistical grounds, the 2020 pandemic subjects proved to have attained a better academic achievement in English language learning than the 2018 pre-pandemic ones. In the light of the above results, some recommendations to obtain more valid results concerning the peripheral conditions in which university students learn the English language under online scenarios are provided.*

Key words: *Higher education, grammar, academic achievement, pandemic*

1. INTRODUCTION

How useful can it be for a university student to master a foreign language going beyond the realm of communication, i.e. being fluent and at the same time accurate in his/her production of both oral and written discourse? In higher education, grammar proficiency should undoubtedly be one of the drives to attain that goal (Zevallos, 2024). However, due to the sudden appearance of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020 and its presence for the next three years, much of what had been attained regarding linguistic competency in foreign language higher education, at least in the Peruvian context (Rojas, 2021), remained at a stand-by point (Hartshorn and McMurry, 2020).

During the pandemic period, attempts to reach students' pre-pandemic levels in terms of oral production did not prove to be so successful despite the unprecedented efforts

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Corresponding author: Maria Eugenia Zevallos Valdivia

E-mail: mezevall@hotmail.com

from the part of teachers, who relied primarily on the use of the emerging digital tools at their disposal to grapple with the situation. By 2021, it was constantly reported that with students being confined at home due to lockdowns, they were likely to assume passive and receptive roles during online classes, something that had not been observed in in-person environments (Sepulveda-Escobar and Morrison, 2020).

In the context where this study took place, deductive instruction (Thomas, 1970) leading to linguistic (Chomsky, 1968) and communicative competence (Hymes, 1971) was barely present during the online mode at pandemic times. Instead, inductive techniques were desperately applied along with the ongoing and trendy digital support. However, learners' pre-pandemic production levels were not reached, and as time went by, empirically speaking, students would become more receptive than productive.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Aligned to the thesis which gives light to this study, several reports have referred to both positive and negative aspects of online language learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. Some of them highlight better performance in terms of academic achievement compared to non-pandemic times whereas others emphasise the enhancement of issues such as soft and social skills in on-site learning.

Research on undergraduates' preferences regarding instructional material and assessment for both online and in-person modes (Kemp and Grieve, 2014) revealed a strong inclination towards the latter modality. Despite the convenience of completing tasks online under flexi-time conditions, participants valued activities such as discussions with peers and consolidation tasks done in the physical class due to the engagement generated and immediate feedback received. Concerning test performance, the study yielded no relevant differences between both types of assessment reaching similar levels of academic achievement in both types of learning.

A study by Quesada *et al* (2023) on learning perceptions showed preferences towards online over in-person learning despite having admitted that face-to-face classes proved to be more effective for them. Unfavourable aspects such as a significant increase in class workload, poor quality of internet connection, an increase in a sense of isolation and loneliness, etc. did not deprive participants from sharing a positive perception of virtual learning during pandemic times over in-person learning.

Opposed to students' inclinations towards the virtual mode, it might be claimed that at pandemic times, skill-oriented courses decayed in assuring effective learning rates. As a result, the trend towards face-to-face learning over online English courses has revived according to Contreras *et al* (2021). In their study, students and professors' perceptions of online versus face-to-face experiences at the Bachelor in the English Language - University of Chihuahua, Mexico conclusively showed preferences towards teaching-learning in the on-campus mode. Professors also reported lower rates in students' performance via online regarding the development of social skills than in a face-to-face semester.

Along with low academic achievement, cases of risk at facing online instruction have also been reported. Frolova *et al* (2021) argue that "... *the lack of readiness of students to maintain the necessary level of self-organization led to a decrease in students' requirements for themselves as an active participant in the educational process, while increasing requirements for digital competencies and personal qualities of the teacher.*"

The authors also highlight other features of the virtual mode class delivery worth being considered such as “... *the need for additional measures to maintain interest in learning: game context, network interaction in the student-student system, charismatic presentation of material*”, which will be worth deepening later in this study.

In a descriptive-correlated study, Gutierrez Alberico (2021) assessed the impact of usage versus use of the English language in a group of university students in The Philippines. The results revealed no correlation between variables but emphasised the role of the students’ proficiency of the target language and its adequate application or use in their oral and written production within higher education contexts.

A further investigation on the learning equivalence between online and campus-based instruction by Slover & Mandernach at Grand Canyon University (2018) considered age as a key factor in the students’ learning experience. Older or non-traditional students opted for online instruction and “traditional” or younger learners took courses on campus. The results revealed higher scores in an international high-stakes examination for those involved in online learning than the ones receiving classes on campus. However, some underlying factors associated with working schedules for the non-traditional students influenced their choice of online-based instruction and were worth considering when interpreting their actual preferences.

3. BACKGROUND

The quantitative data for the present study stems from a non-credit, grammar course called English Competency Course (ECC). This was a seven-week programme offered by the Bilingual Department of a private university in Lima, Peru, between March 2018 and June 2020, to university leavers who had not succeeded in passing their last general English course called English VI with the minimum mark of 14 over 20. The university gave them two options to overcome the situation: registering in the *ad-hoc* ECC or presenting the passing results of either the Preliminary English Test (PET), or First Certificate in English (FCE) - now known as English First.

Thought to be a remedial course, ECC was designed to make participants review the main grammatical structures they had learned during their first three years of general English studies at university. The course would cover typical structures belonging to A1 up to B2 levels according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages or CEFR (Council of Europe, 2020) in a period of seven weeks. The weekly contents of ECC corresponded to the main grammatical structures that the participants had studied in their English I to VI courses. What is more, the effectiveness of the ECC programme was demonstrated by Zevallos (2024) in a study that used pre- and post-test grades from the 2018 to 2019 sections as independent variables, and the non-parametric Wilcoxon signed-rank test. The findings were an effect size of nearly 70% which confirmed its effectiveness.

3.1. Data collection and analysis procedure

Two sample groups were selected for this study, one that belonged to the 2018 May-December sections, i.e. pre-pandemic subjects, and the other one from the 2020 May-December pandemic sections. For the former year, 60 subjects were taken, and for the latter one, 66. The variable of interest was the grade in the final exam of the course. Both groups received the same treatment in terms of content and teaching styles and methods. They were

exposed to the grammatical structures that belonged to A1-2 and B1-2 levels according to CEFR (Council of Europe, 2020) following the same scope and sequence map that had been devised by the ECC course designer. The main criterion for subject selection was the teachers in charge of the sections. For instance, for the 2018 cohort, two sections taught by the course designer and coordinator of the ECC programme and one by another teacher were chosen, totalling 60 students. For the 2020 cohort, again, two sections run by the course designer and the other by another teacher were selected, with a total of 66 subjects.

As additional reference, the number of ECC participants in 2018 totalled 436 and for 2020, the pandemic group, 260. It is worth mentioning that in 2020, the decay in the number of students compared to the two previous years was due not only to the Covid-19 context, but also to the fact that the Peruvian government had issued a law in which university leavers would be benefited by obtaining their bachelor degree automatically; in other words, they would not need to comply with requisites such as proof of foreign language proficiency, or other requirements to receive the degree. Consequently, as one of the purposes for the creation of the ECC programme started to fade, it was eventually withdrawn from the university's undergraduate curricula.

The first step to compare the grades obtained in the final exam of both groups was to execute the student's t-test for the independent samples. However, the restriction for its application was that even though both samples complied with the assumptions of homogeneity of variance and independence, for one of them normality was not verified. Therefore, the non-parametric Mann-Whitney-Wilcoxon U test was executed instead.

This test proved to be statistically significant favouring the pandemic group in terms of academic achievement. However, since some degree of asymmetry was identified (Fig. 2), certain doubts regarding the conclusiveness of the test arose. Therefore, it was decided to apply the bootstrap resampling method. It executed 10,000 Mood's median tests yielding a 98.9% of significant p-values, confirming that the students who belonged to the pandemic sample had performed much better academically speaking than the pre-pandemic ones.

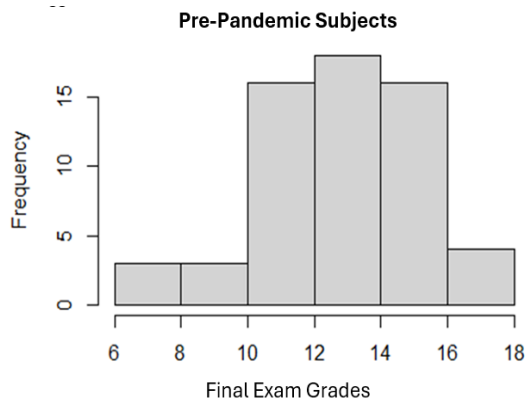


Fig. 1 Final exam grades for the pre-pandemic subjects

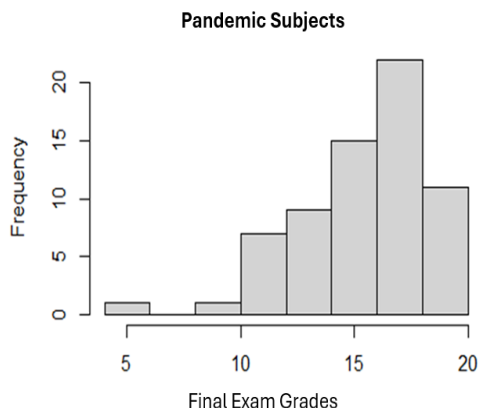


Fig. 2 Final exam grades for the pandemic subjects

4. THE FINDINGS

It was found that the mean for the final exam grades in the pre-pandemic group was 12.9 (SD = 2.4), whereas the mean in the pandemic group was 15.5 (SD = 2.8). A Welch two-samples t-test showed that the difference was statistically significant, $t(124) = -5.39$, $p < .0001$, $d = 0.90$.

Since the normality assumption for the t test was not validated for the pandemic sample, a Mann-Whitney U test was performed to compare the true location shift of the final exam grades between pre-pandemic and pandemic students of the ECC course. The results revealed a significant difference in the final exam grades between pre-pandemic and pandemic students of the ECC course; $W = 955.5$, $p = .000$.

However, as it can be seen in the above histograms, the pandemic sample shows some degree of asymmetry making the conclusiveness of the results questionable. The bootstrapped Mood's test performed on 10,000 resamples was significant 98% of the times ($n_1=60$, $n_2 = 66$, $p < .05$), indicating that the median of the final exam grades for the pandemic group was greater than the one for the pre-pandemic group.

5. DISCUSSION

According to the results found in this study, the students who took part in the English Competency Course during the Covid-19 year of 2020 – delivered online – performed much better in terms of academic achievement than the ones who took the same course in 2018 in non-pandemic times. Several authors coincide with these findings.

One of them is the Išaretović *et al* publication (2021), a study on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in a college in the Republic of Srpska – Bosnia and Herzegovina. Like in the present research, the Išaretović paper (2021) focused on measuring the academic performance of groups of learners attending classes in person, online and in a mixture of both modes. However, emphasis was put into the influence of the teaching methods applied, something that had not been included here despite having used a variety of digital tools and innovative pedagogies aligned with the trendy technological tools that

emerged at the time. Adoption and adaptation of these tools for the teaching of English, or in the case of ECC, for the review of grammatical structures, were present in both pieces of research work.

The Slover & Mandernach study (2018) on the influence of age over academic achievement, also supports the findings of the present study. Higher scores were obtained by the more experienced students, the ones who preferred taking the language course online compared to the younger students who took classes on campus. This was due to greater levels of maturity, schedule organisation, and some extrinsic motivational factors such as the application of the target language in real working environments, a plus that younger students could not have experienced.

Another aspect that favoured the pandemic cohort was not being physically monitored as can be seen under in-person exam conditions which contributes to low rates of anxiety. Aspects such as comfort and the sensation of not being constantly “observed” may condition the online examinee to be relaxed, or at least not so anxious as in physical settings. Steven Krashen’s language acquisition theory (1982) sustains that, emotions, be these positive or negative, are directly or indirectly correlated with language output.

In like manner, ECC participants were mostly involved in internship or formal employment in either mode of study, in-person or virtual, however, what might also account for higher results for the pandemic group is the maximisation of time. During the lockdown circumstances, they managed to comply with academic and working commitments in a more organised way than when attending face-to-face classes. Some other external variables in favour of virtual learning such as no commuting costs, home safety, comfort, and flexitime (Quesada *et al*, 2023) may have likewise played against the face-to-face results. His studies showed students’ preferences towards online over in-person learning despite having admitted that face-to-face classes proved to be more effective for them. Unfavourable aspects such as a significant increase in class workload, poor quality of internet connection, an increase in a sense of isolation and loneliness, etc. did not deprive participants from sharing a positive perception of virtual learning during pandemic times over in-person learning.

In spite of the evidence presented above in favour of online instruction in the learning of English as a foreign language at tertiary level, there might be certain factors associated with learners’ preferences towards studying face-to-face supported by several scholars which at this point, can be worthwhile presenting.

In the first place, an earlier study by Kemp and Grieve (2014) on undergraduates’ preferences regarding instructional material and assessment for both online and in-person modes revealed a strong inclination towards the latter modality. Despite the convenience of completing tasks online under flexi-time conditions, participants valued activities such as discussions with peers and consolidation tasks done in the physical class due to the engagement generated and immediate feedback received. Concerning test performance, the study yielded no relevant differences between both types of assessment reaching similar levels of academic achievement in both types of learning.

Later, in a descriptive-correlated study, Gutierrez Alberico (2021) assessed the impact of usage versus use of the English language in a group of university students in The Philippines. The results revealed no correlation between variables but emphasised the role of the students’ proficiency of the target language and its adequate application or use in their oral and written production within higher education contexts.

Along with low academic achievement, cases of risk at facing online instruction have been reported. Frolova *et al* (2021) argue that “... *the lack of readiness of students to maintain the*

necessary level of self-organization led to a decrease in students' requirements for themselves as an active participant in the educational process, while increasing requirements for digital competencies and personal qualities of the teacher." Additionally, the author mentions other features against online class delivery worth being considered such as "... *the need for additional measures to maintain interest in learning: game context, network interaction in the student-student system, charismatic presentation of material.*"

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The main conclusion based upon the findings of this study is having demonstrated statistically, the presence of a higher academic achievement in the students who took the English Competency Course (ECC) under pandemic conditions, i.e. via online learning, than the ones who studied in non-pandemic times, i.e. the ones who received face-to-face classes prior to the Covid-19 pandemic.

It is suggested though, to undertake further studies to validate the outcome obtained based on several assumptions. Firstly, it was not certain to know the extent to which the online examinees developed the test with the help of an external source, or if they did not look for help elsewhere. In this sense, it would be advisable to incorporate a tool such as specialised software that could deprive them from consulting web pages or opening applications to establish communication with peers while the exam is taking place, something that students on campus are not allowed to do.

In that respect, it can be arguable that as face-to-face learners are better monitored when it comes to taking tests, dishonest behaviours such as cheating or committing plagiarism can be better detected than on the virtual mode. In this way, the instrument used for online testing would therefore be very likely to yield a more reliable measurement of the students' learning.

In this sense, the ECC students exposed to face-to-face examination conditions could presumably have been at a disadvantage compared to the ones taking exams online. Therefore, to confirm the reliability and validity of students' exam results for future similar virtual courses, it is recommended that they can be called to take the exams on campus. Likewise, policies should be established so that these testing practices can be normalised, for example through the implementation of online exam proctoring software or other supervising online mechanisms.

Despite the outcomes of this study, the efficacy of in-person learning over virtual instruction can still be sustained. Even though external variables inherent to the pandemic context may have accounted for higher levels of achievement in favour of the virtual population, some uncontrollable variables may have also been present questioning the extent to which actual learning did take place for the pandemic subjects. Therefore, based upon the findings of this study, it is advisable to run experiments aiming at measuring the peripheral conditions in which university students can learn grammar under online scenarios, and most importantly, measure their impact on academic achievement levels.

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USING LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE TO DESIGN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES FOR STUDENTS' ACTIVE LEARNING


Hranush Ginosyan, Victoria Tuzlukova

Sultan Qaboos University

E-mail: hranushg@squ.edu.om and victoria@squ.edu.om

ORCID iDs: Hranush Ginosyan
Victoria Tuzlukova

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-6352-7163>

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0876-0728>

Abstract. *English for Academic Purposes is one of the most important areas of the structured foundation programs offered in Oman's institutions of tertiary education with the aim to assist students in their adjustment to the university life and to help them develop language skills and knowledge that are required for degree study. Much effort is involved in designing and running the English language foundation program courses; however, the problem of the students' underachievement is still one of the concerns. This study addresses the need for providing more support for the foundation program students' adjustment and adaptation to the academic life built on their active learning, interaction, and collaboration in extra-curricular activities. By focusing on the linguistic landscape of the academic spaces as a resource for designing engaging extra-curricular activities that promote active learning, this study attempts to encourage the linguistic landscape exploration practice through various academic enrichment programs which play a significant role in language learning curricula in the context of the foundation program offered by the Centre for Preparatory Studies at Sultan Qaboos University and beyond.*

Key words: *linguistic landscape, active learning, extra-curricular activities, Sultan Qaboos University, Oman*

1. INTRODUCTION

At the start of their first semester at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) in Oman, many students are placed into intensive English, mathematics and information technology courses through the foundation program offered by the Center for Preparatory Studies (CPS). When adjusting to the system of higher education, foundation program students encounter many and various challenges. These challenges can affect their academic performance, assessment, attendance, social and emotional well-being, confidence and self-esteem. With a view to address many of these areas for students to progress properly, the CPS initiated the student support structure of Extra-Curricular Activities (ECA) with an aim to support incoming students' adjustment, supplement their learning experiences,

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Corresponding author: Victoria Tuzlukova, Sultan Qaboos University, Oman

E-mail: victoria@squ.edu.om

provide them with real-life social connections and a relaxed environment to enhance their knowledge and practice their language skills. As perceived by both teachers and students enrolled in the foundation program courses offered by the CPS, the main key areas related to ECA programs, including their benefits in terms of students' progress enhancement, accommodation of their interests and needs, provision of a safe language-learning environment and support of their transition into the higher education system, involve the development of their skills in English for Academic purposes and academic performance (Ginosyan, et al., 2019). The events and activities organized by ECA also give students opportunities to develop students' communicative competence while addressing their needs and interests. Additionally, by providing extracurricular activities within the framework of the university's foundation program curriculum, ECA helps students succeed by addressing such aspects, as students' self-esteem and self-confidence, their motivation and positive attitudes toward learning, cross-cultural experiences, and transitional challenges (Ginosyan, et al., 2019). Ginosyan, Tuzlukova and Hendrix (2019) assert that there is increased engagement in motivation, and in confidence in students who were more involved in ECA. They argue that students participating in ECA increase their competence in active learning by being exposed to various activities outside the classroom with English being a tool and not the goal. The authors also explain that many extracurricular activities function as an extension of learning outcomes of the foundation program being of practical value to the program by including skills' practice and functioning as an immensely valuable resource for the foundation program. However, as noted in the study by Ginosyan, Tuzlukova and Hendrix (2019), although much is done for making the extracurricular activities conform to foundation program curriculum guidelines and learning outcomes, more involvement between extracurricular activities and foundation program learning outcomes can be beneficial. Gorter (2018) argues that "the linguistic landscape can be used for language learning, but even more as a powerful pedagogical tool to answer questions about language awareness, multilingual literacy, multimodality, identities" (p.8). Therefore, the authors suggest considering linguistic landscape as a potential content for designing and developing extra-curricular activities that can enhance foundation program students' active learning and their language skills and abilities.

The linguistic landscape is a widely researched trend in language learning which refers to the study of language on public signs in a given territory (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). The linguistic landscape is a combination of language and visuals, such as pictures or graphs, colors, and logos. It can exhibit itself in the form of road and traffic signs, billboards, shop windows, notice boards, posters, flags, banners, and other meaningful signs. The term 'linguistic landscape' was firstly coined by Landry & Bourhis (1997) in reference to the visibility and prominence of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region. The term as explained by Gorter (2018) gained its popularity in the 21st century due to a great focus on multilingualism and globalization where the language becomes a part of the surroundings shaping the global environment. Shohamy and Gorter (2008) view the linguistic landscape as a provider of a scene where the public space is symbolically built, establishing connections between the uses, concepts, language varieties, and contestations of multiple forms of 'languages' as they are displayed in public spaces. Kasanga (2012) highlights one important function of the linguistic landscape which is to convey what languages are locally relevant, or substantiate what languages are becoming locally relevant in a given community. Additionally, the analysis of the area's linguistic landscape can provide insight into the language situation of a particular area to unveil

multilingualism, dominance of languages, or language policies. The analysis of the number and types of languages on signs in a specific public space reflects people's cultural identity (monolingual, bilingual, multilingual) and practices as well as the order of dominance of those languages in a given territory.

The linguistic landscape is important in the context of language education for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is accessible to everyone as it is available in various forms: road signs, billboards, posters, banners, etc. Secondly, it influences the daily experiences of individuals and shapes how people interact as a society. In other words, it uncovers the identity of the individuals that make up the community, what languages they speak and/or prioritize. Lastly, the linguistic landscape can be an invaluable resource for language learning both inside and outside the classroom (Shohamy & Gorter, 2008; Gorter, 2018). Various activities and mini projects can be crafted for classroom practice to reinforce specific language skills. However, the benefits of engaging students in linguistic landscape exploration may outweigh those that come from the in-class practice as learning outside the classroom is mostly authentic and assessment-free. By focusing on the linguistic landscape as a resource for designing engaging extra-curricular activities that promote active learning, this study attempts to encourage the linguistic landscape exploration practice through various academic enrichment programs which play a significant role in language learning curricula.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Extra-curricular activities

Research indicates that student involvement in the extra-curricular activities produces its effect on their academic performance (Daniyal et al., 2012) while indicating that extra-curricular activities have become an important component of students' academic life. Consequently, many institutions of higher education worldwide keep investing significant resources on extracurricular activities (Seow & Pan, 2014). In addition to affecting academic progress of the students, participation in extracurricular activities has an impact students' adjustment to the context of tertiary education and their academic performance, which is associated with an improved grade point average, higher educational aspirations, increased college attendance, and reduced absenteeism (Broh, 2002, para. 8).

Many extracurricular activities have proven to be beneficial in building and strengthening academic achievement, even if the activities are not obviously related to academic subjects (Marsh & Kleitman, 2002, para. 9). To quote Marsh and Kleitman (2002), "a number of studies revealed that students participating in extracurricular activities did better academically than students who did not participate" (para. 7). The longitudinal study by Darling, Caldwell and Smith (2005), which particularly examined the relationship between extracurricular activities and academic performance in adolescents, found that "adolescents who participated in extracurricular activities reported higher grades, more positive attitudes toward school, and higher academic aspirations" (para. 1). The results of the study by Darling, Caldwell & Smith (2005) also revealed that students who participated in school-based extracurricular activities had higher grades. According to the researchers, they also had higher academic aspirations, and better academic attitudes than those who were not involved in extracurricular activities at all (para. 23-35).

Indeed, a substantial body of research demonstrates that extracurricular activities mitigate students' adjustment to academic life and promote academic performance in

students. However, the research also indicates that the impact of the extra-curricular activities on academic performance is inseparable from inside (institution-based, academic) and outside (social) influences. For example, in view of Quest and Schneider (2003), who believe that every school and community assign certain values to the various activities, putting more importance on some over others, the “value that is placed on each activity affects the relationship between that specific activity and academic performance (para. 4). Additionally, although numerous studies have found positive associations between extracurricular participation and academic achievement (Guest & Schneider, 2003), the specific effect that various activities produce is debated. For example, according to Broh (2002), “participation in some activities improves achievement, while participation in others diminishes achievement” (para. 1).

According to Guest and Schneider (2003), three factors influence this relationship. These factors are the “what,” the “where,” and the “when” (para. 7). The “what” suggests that “the type of participation or activity undertaken influences developmental outcomes” (Guest & Schneider, 2003, para. 8). The “where” suggests “that the school and community context in which extracurricular activity takes place matters” (Guest & Schneider, 2003, para. 9). Finally, the “when” suggests “that the developmental and historical context in which extracurricular participation takes place influences both how it is valued and its effects on subsequent development” (Guest & Schneider, 2003, para. 10). All three of these factors work together to influence the relationship between participation in extracurricular activities and academic performance, because each one places a different value both on activities and academics.

2.2. Active learning

Active learning as defined by Bonwell and Eison (1991) refers to “instructional activities involving students in doing things and thinking about what they are doing” (p. iii). Active learning involves interaction and collaboration among students (Thomas, 2009; Saunders, 2020), peer feedback (Chen & Lou, 2004), and an active learning experience environment (Montgomery, 2008) as well as hands-on participation, short writing assignments, and peer teaching, in order to encourage students and boost their motivation (Bernstein, 2018).

Active learning enables students to think critically and to engage, rather than simply to listen to a lecture (Rotzien, 2005). It is as much a part of the process as it is about the end project which enables students to help each other, see things from another’s point of view and solve their learning problems jointly with a certain level of team skills.

2.3. Linguistic landscape as an educational resource

One of the most recent trends in teaching of English to the speakers of other languages involves the expansion of its framework to embrace, for example, maturing competent language use (Sun, 2014). It also integrates such aspects, as specificity, taking prominence of the needs of the language learners and responding to their “immediate professional or academic demands” (Laborda & Litzler, 2015, p. 40). In addition, a few studies have specifically looked at the importance of learning a language and using it for ‘meaningful’ purposes (Krashen, 1981). So far, the evidence suggests that the most effective way is learning a language skill and using it in authentic situations (Savas, 2009; Krashen, 1981) while utilizing a variety of resources (Gorter et al., 2021). The concept of the linguistic landscape introduced by Landry and Bourhis (1997) to describe the language of signs is one of these (Shohamy, & Gorter, 2009). To illustrate, in general, the linguistic landscape of

Oman features diversity that embraces the multicultural and multilingual character of the community. Here, to quote Halliday (1978), “language actively symbolizes the social system, representing metaphorically in its patterns of variation the variation that characterizes human cultures” (p.3). Arabic as an official language enjoys a status that is not equaled by other languages represented in written and oral communication in the country. It is predominant in the “linguistic landscape” (Bourhis & Landry, 1997, p.25) of the country’s big and small cities and villages, and is displayed on governmental buildings, shop windows, commercial signs, posters, billboards, advertising, official notices, traffic signs, and, therefore, is omnipresent in the country in its “textual form” (Gorter, 2006, p.1) in various instances of written communication. However, more multilingualism with English as the second most used language in the country’s developing national economy and tourism industry, is evident, and Oman’s academia is not an exception. Nevertheless, there have been no studies yet on how both Arabic and English are distributed and reflected in the linguistic landscape of Oman’s academia, as well as about the possible role that the textual signs as examples of authentic input (Gorter et al., 2021) could have as a pedagogical tool and resource for language learners. In Gorter’s view (2006), language signs can be taken as “literal panorama” (p.82). They also have a profound potential for language learning. To quote Gorter et al. (2021), “the linguistic landscape offers a chance to link the classroom with real language use in society. What is learned inside the classroom can be reinforced in the context of natural language use. At the same time the linguistic landscape provides numerous opportunities for language acquisition and learning about languages that can be taken into the classroom” (n.p.).

To exemplify, a study conducted by Tociamaza-Hatch (2016) involved having students translate signs at a zoo. Researchers tested them on 50 target vocabulary words without having shared the word list with the students. The results showed that most of them picked up the words through the project itself. Another way of engaging students in the linguistic landscape exploration is through linguistic treasure hunts, interactive games where participants follow a series of clues to compete for a prize (Heinisch, 2019). The method of the linguistic treasure hunt aims at collecting and analyzing language variations in written form in a public space. A group of people follows a series of clues through a public space with an additional task to take, upload and tag pictures of signs and lettering in a public area. The group who solves the puzzles, uploads the highest number of pictures and tags them according to certain criteria wins a prize. As explained by Heinisch (2019), linguistic treasure hunts can be set up in diverse ways depending on the expected outcome which could range from the ability to navigate through a public space to understanding the relative status of linguistic communities. As for the advantages of this method, they involve gathering large amounts of data in a short period of time; providing the participants with the opportunities to “make an initial analysis of the data they have gathered during the linguistic treasure hunts in the form of annotations with a tagging system”, and enriching the data base for linguistic landscape research with the “vast collection of pictures from written signs in the public sphere” (Heinisch, p.3).

3. STUDY

The linguistic treasure hunt discussed in this paper was labeled “The CPS Linguistic Landscape Scavenger Hunt”. This activity was implemented within a section of an exit-level foundation program course students during Fall semester in 2023. The linguistic

treasure hunt primarily aimed at inspiring students' exploration and interpretation of signs in public spaces, offering students a context for active English language learning outside the classroom, stimulating English language learning in naturally occurring context of Oman's academia and developing observational and analytical skills by identifying and categorizing signs in the linguistic landscape.

3.1. Participants

Twenty-six foundation program students participated in this case study. The participants of this study, like other Omani university students, were high school graduates who started their university studies by taking a mandatory foundation program course before proceeding to their respective University colleges. The foundation program that they joined aims at maximizing the potential of young Omanis and enabling them to fully benefit from higher education (Oman Academic Standards, 2010) to better apply them in the future. The foundation program is administered through the CPS which offers students the English language, mathematics, information technology, and general study skills courses. Foundation program students tend to experience multiple challenges adjusting to the higher education system that can affect their progress in English medium academic environment, social and emotional well-being, confidence, and self-esteem (Ginosyan & Tuzlukova, 2016). Wangery & Mutweli (2012) claim that depending on their home environment and setting, some students find the physical and social settings of the university new, overwhelming and intimidating. The challenges most students face range from adjusting to the new sociocultural and physical environment of learning, such as the change to coeducation and the need to develop and apply a range of skills to deal with their studies. In order to mitigate students' academic transfer and improve their English proficiency, it is crucial to consider the potential of a variety of approaches that support students and make their language development more meaningful. The approach suggested to the study participants involved exploration of the linguistic landscape of the CPS premises.

3.2. Procedures

This case study focused on the linguistic landscape within and around the CPS building, specifically examining the signs in public spaces where the offices of the English teaching staff are located. The primary aim was to inspire students to explore and interpret these signs, providing insights into how language is used and displayed in this academic environment.

The participants were actively engaged in exploring the linguistic landscape of the CPS building through the CPS Linguistic Landscape Scavenger Hunt which consisted of three stages. In small groups of 3-4 students each, students walked around the CPS building surrounding area, the ground floor and the first floor and take photos of signs, advertisements, and other forms of written or printed communication they saw. After 30 minutes, students returned to the Conference room where the activity was administered. The groups arranged the signs into the following categories: informational, directional, promotional, and decorative. The next step was to further identify the signs as monolingual vs. multilingual signs. After the categorization of the signs, the students presented their findings to class by supporting their findings with relevant photos. The activity was concluded by a class discussion on different categories and types of signs found by the groups. The

participants identified commonalities and differences in their findings across various groups by addressing the following questions:

- How do the findings of each group compare, and what commonalities or differences can be identified among them?
- Do students typically pay attention to the signage around them when they are in a public place?
- Are students open to changing their attitude about paying attention to signage in public places?
- Which signs would they follow to find their teacher's office?
- Which types of signs typically catch their attention when they look around?
- Can they improve their English by exploring the signage around them?

4. DISCUSSION

The primary aim of this study was to inspire students' exploration and interpretation of signs in public spaces, specifically the linguistic landscape of the CPS building. Additionally, this paper suggested considering linguistic landscape as a potential content for designing and developing extra-curricular activities that can enhance foundation program students' active learning and their language skills and abilities. The analysis of the different categories and types of signs identified by the participants, along with some shared similarities and differences, yielded the following observations:

Language Usage: All groups observed that most of the signs were predominantly in English, which is expected in an English teaching environment. In other words, the signs reflected the academic and professional environment of the CPS. In addition, some groups noted the presence of bilingual signs, incorporating Arabic to accommodate non-English speaking staff, students, or visitors (see illustration 1).



Illustration 1 Linguistic landscape of outdoor academic spaces

This finding is in line with Shohamy & Gorter's (2008) claim that the linguistic landscape provides a scene where the public space is symbolically built, establishing connections between the uses, concepts, language varieties, and contestations of multiple forms of 'languages' as they are shown in public spaces.

Types of Signs: A significant number of signs were informational and directional, providing directions, office names, schedules, and other essential information for navigating the building. For example, in order to locate their teacher's office, students could follow directional signs, office directories, or nameplates on office doors, which typically include the teacher's name and office number. This finding agrees with Wangery & Mutweli (2012) who assert that some new students find the physical and social settings of the university new, overwhelming, and intimidating, so they need different channels of support that range from physical environment to academic achievement. By exploring the linguistic landscape of the premises of the Centre for Preparatory Studies, students will be able to adjust to the new physical environment of learning and seek support from their teachers.

Official Tone: Most of the signs had a formal tone, suitable for an educational institution, and were designed to convey clear and concise information. This finding goes back to Shohamy & Gorter (2008) who claim that the linguistic landscape offers a scene where the public space is symbolically built, establishing connections between the uses and concepts.

Design and Visual Elements: There was a noticeable consistency in the design of the signs, including fonts, colors, and symbols, which helped maintain a uniform look throughout the building. This reflected a standardized approach. However, the use of visual elements such as icons, logos, and images varied significantly, with some groups reporting more visually rich signs than others. Some of the signs were identified as purely textual, while others included visual aids to enhance understanding. It was generally noted that bold, colorful, or visually striking signs were the ones that caught attention. Additionally, signs at eye level or with clear and large text are also more likely to be noticed. This finding reasserts Shohamy & Gorter's (2008) claim that the linguistic landscape describes a scene where the public space is symbolically built, establishing connections between the uses and concepts. The CPS offers students a wide range of opportunities to engage in language learning outside the classroom by participating in extracurricular activities which normally take place in the rooms located on the ground floor (see illustration 2).



Illustration 2 Linguistic landscape of indoor academic spaces

This area is filled with bold, colorful, or visually striking signs to catch students' attention and get them involved in the extracurricular activities which can lead to increased engagement in motivation, and in confidence in students who were more involved in ECA (Ginosyan et al., 2019). Moreover, extracurricular activities organized by the CPS ECA give students opportunities to develop students' communicative competence while addressing their needs and interests (Ginosyan, et al., 2019).

Purpose and Function: The observed signs varied in purpose, ranging from directional signs to motivational posters, safety instructions, and administrative notices. This finding corroborates with Landry and Borhis (1997) who argue that languages on public signs serve different functions, including being a marker of the relative status of linguistic communities. This diversity highlighted the multifunctional role of signage within the building. On the one hand, all groups identified the primary purpose of signs as providing information and directions. On the other hand, differences were observed in secondary functions, like motivational and safety messages, which were more prevalent in some areas than others. A vivid example of this is the ground floor area discussed above where most extracurricular activities take place (see illustration 3).



Illustration 3 Linguistic landscape of the ground floor of the Centre for Preparatory Studies at Sultan Qaboos University

The bold, colorful, or visually striking signs aim at catching students' attention to engage themselves in the extracurricular activities they prefer.

This reaffirms the assertion made by Ginossyan, Tuzlukova and Hendrix (2019) that there is increased engagement in motivation, and in confidence in students who were more involved in the extracurricular activities

Materials and Durability: Both temporary and permanent signs were noted by all groups. However, the balance between temporary and permanent signs varied, with some groups encountering more temporary notices, indicating dynamic information needs. Differences were also observed in the materials used for the signs, from temporary paper notices to permanent metal, indicating varying degrees of permanence and importance.

Paying Attention to Signage: The participants unanimously agreed that they generally notice signage when they need specific information or directions. However, they tend to overlook the signs around them if the environment is familiar or if they are not in need of guidance. This finding is in line with Wangery & Mutwelli (2012) who believe that familiarization with new physical learning environment can mitigate transitional challenges faced by many new students.

Openness to Change: It was observed that, there is openness to changing attitudes about paying attention to signage, especially when its relevance and benefits are emphasized. Paying more attention can enhance navigational efficiency and awareness of surroundings.

Improving English through Signage: It was generally reported that exploration of the linguistic landscape can offer students a context for active English language learning outside the classroom. There was a shared belief that exploring signage can improve English skills. Reading and interpreting various signs help with vocabulary, context understanding, and functional language usage. It also exposes learners to practical and everyday English in different contexts. By analyzing and engaging with the signs in their environment, students can improve their English as well as develop a sharp sense of how language functions in public spaces, enhancing both linguistic and cultural literacy. This finding agrees with Gorter et al. (2021) that the linguistic landscape offers an opportunity to link the classroom with real language use in society. In other words, what is learned inside the classroom can be reinforced in the context of natural language use. Thus, by actively engaging themselves in exploring the linguistic landscape of the CPS building through the CPS Linguistic Landscape Scavenger Hunt, students can develop a keen sense of how language functions in public spaces, enhancing both linguistic and cultural literacy.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings revealed that by analyzing the various signs, students can gain a better understanding of the cultural and linguistic dynamics at play within the CPS. This approach produces dual results; it promotes students' awareness of linguistic diversity and encourages critical thinking and interpretive skills as they engage with their immediate surroundings. By identifying the commonalities and differences in the CPS linguistic landscape, the participants gained a deeper understanding of how signs serve different functions and audiences within the building. This analysis helped them appreciate the complexity of the linguistic landscape as well as encouraged them to think critically about the role of signage in shaping their environment. Additionally, reading and interpreting various signs boosts their vocabulary and functional language usage. Thus, linguistic landscape can serve as a potential content for designing and developing extra-curricular activities that can enhance foundation program students' active learning and their language skills and abilities. In a nutshell, by analyzing and engaging with the signs in their environment, students improve their English skills and gain insights into language functions in public spaces which can be sustained through extra-curricular activities which supplement the English language courses of the foundation program.

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DUALITY OF MEANING IN SPORTS SPECIFIC TERMINOLOGY: TOWARD BETTER COMPETENCE IN “PLAYING THE GAME”

Samad Mirza Suzani

Department of English, Marvdasht Branch, Islamic Azad University, Marvdasht, Iran

ORCID iD: Samad Mirza Suzani

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1124-8832>

Abstract. *Given the prevalence of sports culture and terminology in individuals' lifestyle as well as semantic and pragmatic aspects of sports jargon, the application of sports terms is becoming a major part of the culture and communication in many countries. Consequently, research in this area can reveal systems which have many instructive applications in different cultural, semantic and pragmatic settings. Accordingly, this study examines the issue of duality of meaning at the interface of semantics and pragmatics in sports specific terminology. The main objective is to explore whether terms used in sports context could be associated with and/or interpreted at distinctive dual (sport vs. non-sport) situations. Another objective is to seek out how a deeper understanding of linguistic and pragmatic experience of sports terminology can help make learners more effective communicators. Eventually, it is attempted to remedy the communicative situation by enhancing individuals' communicative competence and so make hints on how to “play the game” well in different contexts. For this purpose, 114 frequently-used sports expressions from seven different fields were selected through convenient sampling and were then sorted and analyzed. Following the content analysis, it was revealed that the terms used in sports context could be interpreted as not only being related to the sports events but also could be associated with non-sports situations such as business or social interactions. In the same vein, considering the duality of meaning, gaining a mastery of sports jargon is indispensable for learners to enhance their communicative competence in “playing the game”. Regarding the implications, since one of the major goals of linguistic research into meaning is to illuminate the knowledge involved in communication, studying the rules governing the composition of word meanings into sentences and discourses allows individuals to build systems which can interact with their users in deeper communicative situations. The result of this investigation can provide a more profound understanding of the elegance and complexity of sports jargon in the uniquely human system of linguistic communication.*

Key words: *Duality of meaning, jargon, sports events, sports specific expressions, terminology.*

1. INTRODUCTION

For a long time over the past years, there have been various types of sports programs reported from both television programs and other mass media. Such programs vary from the sports events that are most well-known throughout the world, such as the Olympic Games, the FIFA World Cup, Asian Football Cup, the UEFA Champions League and the

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Corresponding author: Samad Mirza Suzani, Marvdasht Branch, Islamic Azad University, Marvdasht, Iran

E-mail: smirzasuzani@yahoo.com

World Rally Championship, to more minor sports events like occasional or regional tournaments around various corners of the world.

Since sports and games have been a part of the way of life, there are many English idioms derived from these sources and sports culture and its terminology are prevalent in everyday English. Indeed, sports idioms are a part of a nation's cultural and linguistic assets where "members of common culture not only share the same information but also the methods of coding, storing and retrieving the information. Examination of the ethnocultural relevance of sports idioms in English speech occurs in areas such as news, business, social and political discourse as well as in areas where rituals, traditions, and customs are very closely connected with language and form part and parcel of the linguacultural "realia", thus the occurrence can be of note for both philologists and linguists. In this way, it is likely that the study of lexical semantics/pragmatics and the conceptual distinctions implicit in the vocabulary of this jargon can improve dictionaries which enable speakers of a language to extend their knowledge of its stock of words. Besides, it can improve materials which help those acquiring a second language through instruction (Clark, 1996).

In his essay, "The Idea of Duration", Bergson (2002) discusses multiplicity in light of the notion of unity. Whereas a unity refers to a given thing in as far as it is a whole, multiplicity refers to the "parts [of the unity] which can be considered separately" (p.49). Besides, Bergson distinguishes two kinds of multiplicity: one form of multiplicity refers to "parts which are quantitative, distinct, and countable", and the other form of multiplicity refers to "parts that are qualitative, which interpenetrate, and which each can give rise to qualitatively different perception of the whole" (pp. 72-74). In semantics and discourse, multiplicity of meaning refers to the idea that texts can have multiple interpretations, often varying significantly based on context, reader perspective, and cultural background. Still again, semantic dualism holds that what we say (the content of a sentence) is different from the referents of our speech (the actual entities).

Regarding the significance of terminology and professional jargon in ESP contexts, Lourido-Badía (2023) maintains that the teaching of English for Specific Purposes has become a trend inside university programs due to the clear necessity of acquiring, not only General English, but also field-specific input in the language in order to be able to increase the quality of students' performance in international job positions. Also, according to Oishi (2015, cited in Marušić, 2023), global professionals are looking to improve their English skills quickly since "they can't wait years to improve productivity and efficiency in English at work".

Given the sports activities, due to the present societies' mania for games as well as the extensive coverage of sports events by the mass media, many terms and idiomatic expressions have been incorporated into English. In the same way, considering the semantic and pragmatic characteristics of sports jargon and terminology, the application of sports terms is becoming a major part of the culture and communication in many countries so that research in these areas can reveal principles and systems which have many instructive applications in different cultural, semantic and pragmatic settings. For instance, advertisements in many societies are replete with sports terms and idioms associated with play and sports, so that they have mostly become associated with people's everyday life and business (Mirza Suzani, 2007).

Considering the aforementioned points, one of the main objectives of the current study is to explore whether terms used in sports context could be associated with and/or interpreted at distinctive dual (sport vs. non-sport) situations. Another objective is to seek out how a deeper understanding of linguistic and pragmatic experience of sports terminology can help make

learners more effective communicators. Eventually, it is attempted to remedy the communicative situation by enhancing individuals' communicative competence and so make hints on how to “play the game” well in different communicative and professional contexts.

1.1. Duality of meaning of sports terms at the interface of semantics and pragmatics

According to Chierchia and McConnell-Ginet (1990), meaning seems at once the most obvious feature of language and the most obscure aspect to study. It is obvious because it is what we use to communicate with each other and to convey ‘what we mean’ effectively. However, the steps in understanding something said to us in a language in which we are fluent are so rapid, so transparent, that we have little conscious feel for the principles and knowledge which underlie this communicative ability. In this vein, Grice (1989) differentiates two levels of context-dependent meaning *what is said* and *what is meant*, and Yule (2020) maintains that human language is organized at two levels or layers simultaneously; also, Jackendoff (1983) suggests questions of ‘semantics’ and ‘pragmatics’ are an important part of the study of linguistic structure which encompass several different investigations: how each language provides words and idioms for fundamental concepts and ideas (lexical semantics), how the parts of a sentence are integrated into the basis for understanding its meaning (compositional semantics), and how our assessment of what someone means on a particular occasion depends not only on what is actually said but also on aspects of the context of its saying and an assessment of the information and beliefs we share with the speaker.

Given that the communicators’ spell-boundness by the primary meaning is a serious downside (Mirza Suzani, 2005), it is often observed that sports terms and idioms mostly have semantic duality, i.e., having the same form and spelling they may carry two different levels of meaning and hence be interpreted at two different layers of meaning. In other words, sports idioms and expressions can act as a double-edged sword by application in sports contexts with strictly specific meaning as well as application in other-than-sports contexts with more general meaning. As an example, while the well-known term “hat-trick” in a sports-based context means “three points or goals scored by the same player in a particular match or game,” in non-sports context it has the more general meaning of “three successes achieved by one person consecutively” (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 2003). Likewise, the terms “dash” and “bar” can have different meanings depending on their appearance in sports contexts or non-sports situations (see Hartley and Viney, 1995).

1.1.1. Sports terms with strictly specific meaning

The use of some sports terms is strictly specific to particular contexts. For example, the “place” where a sport or game is played can differ from one sport to another. While a *court* is used for playing volleyball, basketball or tennis, a *course* is needed for golf and a *pitch* for football. Likewise, boxing is held in a *ring*, skating in a *rink*, shooting in a *range*, car-racing in a *circuit* and horse-racing in a *track* or *course*. The athletes who go swimming need *pools* and those who do athletics need *tracks* (see Thomas, 1995). In the same vein, a golf player holds a *club* in his hand, a squash/tennis/badminton player uses a *racket* playing those games and a *bat* should be held in hand when playing cricket/table-tennis/baseball game. On the other hand, for playing snooker/pool/billiards one needs to hold a *cue* in his/her hands, and finally for archery, hockey, canoeing, rowing and fishing *bows*, *sticks*, *paddles*, *oars*, and *rods/lines* are used respectively (see McCarthy and O'Del, 1994).

There are many other sports terms used in strictly specific contexts. For instance, regardless of a few exceptions, we use *play* with sports played with a ball (e.g., play tennis); *go* with sports ending in -ing (e.g., go fishing) and *do* with individual type of sports or martial arts (e.g., do yoga) (see Richards et al., 1997). The use of strictly specific terms is also evident in many other sports. For example, the expression "*Hail Mary*" in football, is used for a long shot, a desperate last-ditch attempt, as if relying on a prayer, the (Catholic) "*Hail Mary*" (*Ave Maria*), which means usually a long pass into the end zone to win the game. In the same vein, in the world of motor sports, the comprehension of motor sports such as rallies, Formula One racing, motocross or even cycling, high technical content is expected, because *shock absorbers* are always breaking, *axles* have to be changed, drivers may have problems with their *differentials* and mountain bikers might have trouble adjusting their *forks*. Sometimes, a specific sports term may carry different meanings in different sports contexts, for example the term *gambit* originates in wrestling from the Italian *gambetto*, which means tripping the opponent, however the term arrives in modern parlance through chess, and while in boxing it means strategem or tactic, in *chess* it means an opening system that involves a pawn sacrifice to gain the initiative right from the start. In Table 1, some further sports expressions together with their specific meanings in the relevant contexts are presented.

Table 1 Some sports expressions together with their specific meanings in the relevant contexts

Sports expression	Context	Meaning
four faults	show-jumping	the rider has lost four penalty points
a bull's eye!	archery/shooting	right in the middle of the target!
three-nil	football	the score is three goals to zero
on your marks, get set.	Athletics	get ready to start the race
forty-love	Tennis	the score is forty points to zero
it's a foul, ref!	Football	referee, sb has broken the rules!
fore!	golf	get out of the way of the ball!
seconds out!	Boxing	assistants out of the ring!
they're off!	horse-racing	the race has begun!
touch base	baseball	to connect with or briefly meet
Blindsided	football	caught unprepared
strike out	baseball	to fail
learn the ropes	Sailing	to understand how to do a job
take a rain check	baseball	to accept an offer for a later time
on target	Darts	on schedule to succeed
knock it out of the park	baseball	to do the job extraordinarily well
across the board	Cards	equal for everyone
call the shots	billiards	make the decisions
get off the hook	fishing	to escape
give it your best shot	hunting	try your hardest
get a second wind	sailing	have a burst of energy after tiring
go overboard	sailing	do or say more than you need to
hold all the aces	Cards	expected to win or succeed
race against time	Track	almost no time left to accomplish sth
skate on thin ice	skating	do sth risky
take the bull by the horns	bull fighting	accept the challenges and try one's hardest
take the wind out of one's sails	sailing	make sb feel deflated

As indicated in Table 1, sports idioms generally originate from a specific sport such as baseball or sailing and over time these phrases can come to mean something that are likely to be used in everyday life. In other words, while most sports idioms can still be used when discussing sports, they may even become more common in other areas of life in the world.

1.1.2. Sports terms in other-than-sports situations

It is not unlikely that sports terms and idioms be applied in contexts other than sports situations. For instance, as a sports term, the term “deal”, derived from card games, can be considered as a business transaction which is the basis of an economical society. Likewise, the sports expressions “That’s the ball game; that’s the way the game is played; that’s the game” can summarize any transaction in life. If one does not understand “the rules of the game”, it means more than the rules of a, let’s say, just card game or a sports event. It can mean that one doesn’t understand how life is played, how a culture works, how business is transacted, how schools work, how people meet and many other everyday events. Even the conduct of war is a “game” and a “level playing field” for ground troops necessitates mass bombing of the enemy. The most popular idioms are often those derived from those games most ingrained in the societies’ consciousness that have a wide audience or have been played for many years, such as wrestling in Iranian community or martial arts in the Far East. In addition, team sports, such as football and soccer have captured the corporate imagination to such a degree that people working on a project are called the “team” and a project “a ball”. Also, a quality control team is composed of “team players” who don’t want to “drop the ball”; their goal is to produce a superior product, to “score” in the marketing world by selling these products. In the same vein, to a competent listener, “to make an end run” immediately conveys going around an immediate superior to the boss; “to pinch hit” or “carry the ball” for someone means to substitute or work on a project for someone.

1.2. Movement from specific to non-specific (derived) meanings

One of the main aims in linguistic research has always been to determine how an analyzed segment of language functions, that is, what are the most prototypical words, what are the words not occurring at all, and what are the most frequently used collocations and expression. According to Sinclair (1996, cited in Marušić, 2023), a corpus is a collection of pieces of language that are selected and ordered according to explicit linguistic criteria in order to be used as a sample of the language. In the same vein, Sinclair makes a distinction between corpora comprising general language (GL) and those containing LSP, i.e., corpora which record a language in ordinary use from corpora which record more specialized kinds of language behavior (ibid.).

Considering this, the corpus of the present study includes sports terms and idioms related to different fields of sports used to check “the real state of affairs” when it comes to authentic language in use. *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* (2003) defines an idiom as, “a group of words whose meaning is different from the meanings of the individual words”. On the other hand, *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary* (2004) defines an idiom as, “a peculiar way of saying something which has become established after long use”. In other words, idioms are words or phrases which cannot be understood literally. Also, idioms are difficult for the non-native speaker to learn in isolation from their original source. With regard to the significance of idioms, it is mentioned that without using idioms, languages become harsh, because words are like the skeleton of the

language and idioms are like its soul. Therefore, as Ghaffari (2001) suggests, wrong translation of idioms may damage the soul of the language.

Table 2 Some common expressions with both sports-specific and general (derived) meanings

Idiomatic expression	Sports-based meaning	General (derived) meaning
the game	the sports event	competition, as in business
play the game	to participate in a contest	to know the rules
That's the ball game	The game is over	It is finished
ringside seat	a seat near to the game or fight	to be where the action is
glass jaw	a fighter/boxer who is especially vulnerable or susceptible to a knockout	a destructive criticism
home court advantage	to play a game on a team's home field or court	to have a particular advantage over the other side
Gambit	an opening system in chess that involves a pawn sacrifice to gain the initiative right from the start	a tactic or strategy
end around	an attempt to run around one's own end (of a line of players) and towards the goal	an attempt to avoid or bypass opposition
out of bounds	outside the boundaries of play	not correct, not according to the rules
play-off	teams playing against each other until one team wins	to compete to win sth
keep the ball rolling	to continue paying or rolling the ball	to keep sth going
no sweat	easy game requiring little sweat	no problem
hands down	a jockey, certain of victory, with dropping his hands, while relaxing his hold on the reins	with great ease; unconditionally
Swing	a stroke with one or both arms	to make sth happen
slam dunk	a forceful shot in which the player jumps to the basket and slams the ball in	a forceful, dramatic move against sb; a sure thing
all over but the shouting	finished and only the cheering is left	decided, concluded
take sides	to divide into opposing teams	to favor one viewpoint over another
play along (with)	to play the game with sb	to cooperate for a time
defensive play	to play defensively	to be defensive on a business project
Quarterback	the player on the field responsible for coordinating and directing play	a mastermind

Because sports and games have been a part of the way of life, there are many English idioms derived from these sources. There is no doubt that sports culture and its terminology are prevalent in everyday English. People everywhere love to talk about sports and it is rather hard not to get excited about big global events like the Olympic Games. In addition, sports can bring people together or they can divide people. Either way, they are often a good conversation starter for English learners. Grouping of idioms into categories according to a particular sport or game, on the other hand, can facilitate

the process of more successful comprehension. In this way, the language users can make use of their analytical ability to understand an idiom in the framework of the game from which it originated. For instance, the expression “Two strikes against him” is a statement from the sport of baseball that denotes that one strike is left before the batter is declared out. Some phrases, such as play hardball are much more common in the derived or more general sense. The sentence, “Let’s play hardball on this contract”, used in business or negotiations is more typical of this phrase than, “We play hardball when we play baseball”. If the idiom is infrequently or never used in its original or sport-based sense, it is more likely that it appears in more general sense. Another point to note is that the recognition, understanding and interpretation processes will be facilitated if the learners or communicators try to learn groups of idioms within the context of groups of sports and games with which they are associated. Table 2 presents further examples of some common idiomatic expressions with both sports-specific and general (derived) meanings.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Corpus

The corpus of the present study comprised relevant and frequently-used sports terms related to different fields of sports used to check “the real state of affairs” when it comes to authentic language in use. Thus, in the current qualitative study, 114 relevant and frequently-used sports terms related to different fields of sports were selected through convenient sampling and content analyzed in both general and sport-based contexts. The corpus of the study was collected from an assortment of relevant printed and online sources in different fields of sports, including professional books and jargon dictionaries as well as online websites and weblogs comprising sports terminology and jargon (see <http://www.sportsidioms.com/index.htm>). The fields of sports investigated comprised baseball, combat sports, target ball sports, tennis and court sports, archery, hunting, shooting and western as well as track and field.

2.2. Procedures

114 frequently-used sports terms and expressions related to different fields of sports were collected from an assortment of relevant printed and electronic sources in different fields of sports. The sources included professional books and jargon dictionaries as well as electronic sites and weblogs containing sports jargon. For content analysis, the sport or game was described within each category and a schematic drawing of the field on which it is played was included to enhance better comprehension of the expressions implemented. In this vein, sports and games were grouped into seven categories including baseball, combat sports, target ball sports, tennis and court sports, archery, hunting, shooting and western, which comprised idioms basic to sports activities and games. Then, for each sport or game, the pertinent idiom associated with each game or sport category was presented along with both specific (original) and general (derived) meaning applications.

3. RESULTS

After the data on different fields of sports were collected, a content analysis was conducted rigorously. A detailed description of the corpus gathered and used in the study is presented in Table 3.

Table 3 A detailed description of the corpus of the expressions used in the study

Field(s) of sport	N (sports-specific expressions)	N (general expressions)	Sum (sports-specific and general expressions)
Baseball	13	13	26
Combat sports	6	6	12
Target ball sports	5	5	10
Tennis and court sports	2	2	4
Archery	3	3	6
Hunting, shooting and western	11	11	22
Track and field	17	17	34
Total	57	57	114

3.1. Baseball

Baseball, like many other popular sports in numerous countries, has its own jargon and expressions, the mastery of which can be of great help to a successful interaction. Usually *major* teams have the best professional players and more *fans* or people who watch the games. A baseball team has nine people: *the pitcher, the catcher, first, second and third basemen, the shortstop, the left, middle and right fielders*. Baseball is played on four bases, first, second, third and home, on a diamond shaped field. The pitcher, the catcher, the basemen and the shortstop play in the *infield*. The fielders play in the *outfield* or the area around the infield. The pitcher throws (*pitches*) a ball to a *batter* on the opposing team, who tries to hit this ball with a *bat* and run around the bases.

There are many other idiomatic expressions used in baseball. For example, an *inning* is played when both teams have made three outs. A game is nine innings unless the score is *tied* at the end of nine innings. Then the game is played extra innings until one team has more *runs* at the end of the extra innings. Some other idioms used in this sport together with their dual meanings are presented in Table 4.

3.2. Combat sports: Boxing and wrestling

Boxing is a popular sport all over the world with the championship matches in the Olympic games watched by millions on television each year. The rules of boxing are as specific as its specialized jargon. In boxing two fighters use gloved hands to hit each other on areas of the upper body. Matches or *bouts* are won by a *knockout* where a contestant is knocked to the floor and counted out, and a *technical decision* is made, where a contestant loses by points; or he is hurt so badly he has to retire from the fight .

The history of some expression in boxing can be of interest to the readers. For instance, the expression *throw in the towel (or sponge)* means to stop the fight (or more generally, to give up and not to pursue an objective). The reason is that in the early days of boxing, opponents used bare fists to hit each other. When hit, a sponge was used to wipe away blood. When a fighter was no longer able to fight, his manager would throw the bloody sponge into the ring to stop the fight.

Table 4 Semantic duality in idioms used in baseball

Idiom	Sports-based meaning	General (derived) meaning
Pitch	to throw or toss	to give sth to sb
play ball	to play a ball game with sb	to do business with sb, to cooperate
knock one out of the ball park	to hit a ball out of the baseball park	to have a great idea, to do sth extremely well
grand slam	to hit a home run with bases loaded	sudden, sweeping victory
pitch sb a curve	to pitch a curve ball to the batter	to surprise sb unpleasantly
a lot on the ball	to throw a ball with a twist	capable and skilled
fast ball baseball	a ball thrown fast by the pitcher	not understand; to lose an opportunity
pinch hit for sb	to substitute for another batter	to substitute for another person
out in left field	out in the left field of the baseball	away from what is happening
he's up	he is next in the lineup to bat	he is next
major league	the best teams	the most important person or business
minor league	baseball player or team that is good, but not the best	a person, business or entity that is not the most important
drop the ball	to make an error	to blunder, to fail in some way

Wrestling, having particularly a long background in Iranian and Greco-Roman cultures and history, is also a very old sport in which two opponents struggle hand to hand to throw each other to the ground or to a *mat*. Depending on the type of wrestling (i.e., freestyle or Greco-Roman styles), different grips or *holds* are used. Some of the other terms used in combat sports are presented in Table 5, as follows:

Table 5 Semantic duality in idioms used in combat sports

Idiom	Sports-based meaning	General (derived) meaning
Heavyweight	a competitor in the strongest/heaviest division	to be the most important
Lightweight	not as strong as those in the heavyweight division	to be of lesser importance
a one-two punch	to deliver or receive two punches together	to be in a difficult situation
hit below the belt	to hit another boxer below the belt	to hurt sb unnecessarily
no holds barred	An extremely dangerous wrestling match	to do anything to achieve a result
down and out	to be hit such that one falls down and is counted "out"	to be in a bad situation and to need help

3.3. Target ball sports

One of the most well-known target ball sports is golf. It is a game in which each player uses clubs to hit a small ball into a series of holes on a golf course, which usually

has eighteen holes. Players compete individually or in teams, playing the golf course in groups of two, three or four persons. There are two basic forms of play: match play and stroke play. In match play the player who wins the most holes wins the game. In stroke play the player who has the fewest strokes wins the game. In Table 6 further idioms used in target ball sports are presented.

Table 6 Semantic duality in idioms used in target ball sports

Idiom	Sports-based meaning	General (derived) meaning
hole in one	to hit the ball into the hole with one stroke	to succeed the first time
par for the course	a standard for a hole on the golf course	to be below or above the standard set
Scratch	to be equal for all competitors	to be equal
tee it up	a place a golf ball on a tee to be hit	a place a golf ball on a tee to be hit
below or above par	to be below or above the standard set	to do worse or better

3.4. Tennis and court sports

The court sports include such competitive sports as tennis, handball, squash, badminton and paddle ball, as well as more casual adaptations of the court and ball concept for a game. The court sports have their own jargon. In Table 7 some common idioms used for tennis and other court sports will be illustrated.

Table 7 Semantic duality in idioms used in tennis and court sports

Idiom	Sports-based meaning	General (derived) meaning
to draw the line	line to mark the end of a court	to define a limit in anything
The ball's in your court	It's your turn to hit the ball	It's the other persons decision/turn to act

3.5. Archery

Archery is a sport in which competitors shoot arrows with a bow at a target (target archery) or shoot animals for game (hunting) or for fish (fishing). A target is something one shoots or aims at for scoring. Table 8 presents some common idioms used in archery and their meanings in different contexts.

Table 8 Semantic duality in idioms used in archery

Idiom	Sports-based meaning	General (derived) meaning
bull's eye	the center of a target	to win the point, to get the business deal
on target	to hit the target with a bow and arrow	on schedule, precisely right
wide of the mark	not on target or the bull's eye	to do less than expected

It can be interesting to know that the expression "bull's eye" has been derived from an old English sport in which bull-baiting dogs tried to pull a bull by his nose to the ground. Gamblers would place a bet "on the bull's eye" if he wished to make a bet. Crowns, an English coin, were used to bet so frequently "on the bull's eye that the coin itself came to

be called a bull's-eye. Later, the term was applied to the black center of a target. The idiom right on the money is also derived from the ancient interchangeable use of a coin, bull's-eye and the center of a target.

3.6. Hunting, shooting and western

For a long time, guns and pistols have been used for protection, to hunt for food and for recreation. Even in today's modern world we still see people riding herd on the free range with a gun in hand and "shooting from the hip" in battles. However, nowadays people may not have to *grab a bull by its horns*, except as recreation and pastime.

In the present world, almost every man and boy and some women could learn to shoot and to hunt for game and guns may not be a necessity for protection and for food anymore, but shooting and hunting continue to be popular sports.

Because the activity of hunting and shooting seems so necessary and is so popular today, there are many idioms derived from these activities. Today to *set one's sights on something* usually means to set a goal or objective rather than to sight an object with one's gun. Further expressions on hunting, shooting and western can be found in Table 9.

Table 9 Semantic duality in idioms used in hunting, shooting, and western

Idiom	Sports-based meaning	General (derived) meaning
shoot/shot down	to shoot a duck or bird down	to stop sth because it won't work
hound sb/sth	to run hounds or dogs after sb/sth	to urge continually
bark up the wrong tree	not barking at the animal that the hunter wants	to make a wrong choice
quick on the trigger	to shoot a gun quickly	to be fast
like a sitting duck	as a duck sits on water	to be unaware of sth to happen
set one's sights on sth	to line up the sight of a rifle or bow	to want or desire sth
call off the dogs	to order dogs away from the chase	to stop pursuing sth
straight from the shoulder	to hold a gun up at the shoulder and shoot it	to be frank
throw sb off the track	to try to divert or confuse pursuers	to confuse sb
riding for a fall	to be riding fast and/or dangerously	to risk an accident or failure
hold at bay	hunting dogs barking at game or prey until the hunter can arrive	to keep sth/sb stopped a while until sth else can be done

3.7. Track and field

Track and field sports include a variety of running, jumping and throwing contests, which take place on an oval track surrounding the field events area. There are many idioms in English concerned with both track and field and horse racing. Horse racing as a sports events and betting on horses has been one of the first forms of recreation in many countries and because horses have been used for transportation, recreation and racing, there are many idioms associated with their use.

There are two basic types of horse racing, flat racing and races where the horses jump over fences and other obstacles. Races vary according to distance, terrain or ground surface, type of horse, prize money and weighting system. Some idioms used in track and field along with their different senses are mentioned in Table 10.

Table 10 Semantic duality in idioms used in track and field

Idiom	Sports-based meaning	General (derived) meaning
a head start	to start with an advantage	to begin early
jump the gun	to begin before the official starts the race	to begin too soon
pass the baton	to give the baton to the next runner in a relay race	to continue the task
against the clock	to compete in sports in a timed event or against another competitor's time	to be in a hurry to meet a deadline or time for completion of sth
from scratch	from the starting line for a race	from the beginning
put sth/sb through paces	to move in a particular way, usually with speed, along a measured course	to show sth/sb how to do sth according to a predetermined standard
hit one's stride	the horse is running its fastest	to do one's best
dark horse	a horse no one thinks will win but does	a person no one thinks will win but does
winning hands down	to win a horse race with one's hands down	to do the best one can in a competitive situation
runner-up	to be second	to be second in any competition
off to a running start	moving at the start	a good start on sth
down to the wire	refers to the wire used to mark the end of a race	the last few minutes before sth must be accomplished
under the wire	Wire refers to the finish line	just barely in time; on time
neck and neck	The horses are running together	to be an even race
in the stretch/ down the stretch	in the final part of a race track between the last turn and the finish line	in the final stages of an event, such as a business or political campaign
riding for a fall	to be riding fast and/or dangerously	to risk an accident or failure
win by a nose	at the finish, to win by the length of a nose	to finish just a little better than the next person or business

As shown in Tables 4-10, idioms in general and sports idioms in particular are difficult for the non-native speaker to tackle in isolation from their original source, particularly if the non-native speaker does not have sufficient familiarity with such terms beforehand. A word of caution to note is that a satisfactory understanding of idioms, requires that a careful reader pay special attention to various layers of meaning in both sports-based contexts and non-sports-based situations. In addition, as indicated in the above examples, sports-based jargon is one of the hardest forms of language to deal with.

In the area of translation and interpretation, almost all translators concur that translation of sports-specific jargon is one of the most troublesome tasks to deal with. In translation from SL to TL a translator may encounter various sorts of vicissitudes. In times, the translator may not be able to find appropriate equivalent(s) in the TL and hence resort to the original term in SL. As an example, many terms used in Persian for different fields of sports and/or technical terminology are originally foreign terms for which no equivalent(s) has been proposed so far. An extremely familiar term is the term used for

calling the most popular sport in Iran – perhaps, after wrestling - That is, football in English (SL) and the borrowed term “*futbal*” in Persian (TL). It is interesting to mention that over the past years in Arabic (TL) for the same English (SL) word the equivalent “*al-korat-al qadam*” has been used as a result of loan-translation. The study, application and translation of sports terminology, on the other hand, are replete with limitations and restrictions, so that it may be unfortunate to confess that making use of sports-based examples can frequently alienate the target audience and slow translators down, resulting in delays and cost overruns.

4. DISCUSSION

There are regional and personal variations in the use of sports idioms and expressions. If interlocutors can not understand the games as well as their terms and idioms, it may hinder interaction at any stage of development. If, on the other hand, the audience attempt to listen and understand well, they will understand the sport and the way it is played, understand better the idiomatic expressions derived from it and henceforth, will be able produce a more successful comprehension out of the texts and then enhance communicative competence accordingly. Likewise, they may be well amazed at the number of persons and institutions, particularly businesses and businessmen, who use idiomatic terms, based on sports, to summarize a point.

Indeed, a close examination of most words reveals that they have many different senses and the rules which combine them into sentence meanings will frequently yield several possibilities for interpretation. Usually we resolve potential ambiguity unconsciously—unless someone carefully constructs a pun which turns on an ambiguity. Consider for example this pun, taken from Douglas Adams' “The hitchhiker's guide to the galaxy”. Ford and Arthur, are stowaways on a space ship.

Ford: You should prepare yourself for the jump into hyperspace; it's unpleasantly like being drunk.

Arthur: What's so unpleasant about being drunk?

Ford: Just ask a glass of water.

The passage turns on the ambiguity of the word 'drunk', which can be an adjective, meaning 'affected by alcohol', or the passive form of the verb 'drink'. Arthur takes Ford as intending the first sense of 'drunk'—with good reason: he's unlikely to mean that someone would drink him. But Ford reveals that the bizarre interpretation is what he intends. The art of the image is the metaphorical treatment of a person as a liquid; the joke turns on the sleight of hand which makes our semantic interpreter lean in one direction before pulling us back in an unexpected way with a disambiguation.

Indeed, as Jackendoff (1983) maintains questions of 'semantics' and 'pragmatics' have constantly been an important part of the study of every linguistic structure; in the same vein, sports terms can in times present a challenge in the process of communication as they frequently represent semantic duality, and hence can be interpreted as not only being related to the sports events but also as associated with non-sports situations such as business or social interactions. Consequently, distinguishing any term within its category can be a great help to enhance better understanding and more successful communication and the learning process will be facilitated if the students try to learn groups of idioms within the context of groups of games with which they are associated.

It should be noted that due to the key role of sports in everyday life and global interactions, an appropriate understanding of sports terms and expressions is presently indispensable. In addition, with the increasingly important role of sports in the development of global interactions and understanding among the world's nations, there have been many terms incorporated into English as idiomatic expressions as a result of the mass media's mania for sports events; therefore, grouping of idioms into categories according to particular common characteristics or particular sport or game identity can facilitate the process of understanding and interpretation of this jargon. It is also suggested that in the process of rendition of sports terms from SL to TL, a translator ought to use his or her analytical abilities to recognize the given idiom in the framework of the game from which it originates. Another noteworthy point is that in dealing with translation of sports terms a careful translator should pay special attention to the different meanings or connotations that are associated with each sports term or idiom, as it is a *must* for every translator to differentiate between denotative meanings of words and expressions and their connotative meanings. To a translator or interpreter, "I'll deliver the target" connotes the transfer of a translated file, while to a hunting goods supplier, it may mean something very different. Therefore, it is a requirement for every translator that after introduction to the game or sport category get familiar with both original or sports-based meanings and more general (derived) meanings and connotations in their own contexts.

5. CONCLUSION

Sports idioms are a part of a nation's cultural and linguistic assets where members of common culture not only share the same information but also the methods of coding, storing and retrieving the information. Examination of the ethnocultural relevance of sports idioms in English speech occurs in areas such as news, business, social and political discourse as well as in areas where rituals, traditions, and customs are very closely connected with language and form part and parcel of the linguacultural "realia".

From a linguistic perspective, the Communicative Method supports the idea that "when students are involved in real communication, their natural strategies for language acquisition will be used" (British Council, 2021) and that this issue will permit them to learn how to really use the language. In this vein, the examples provided in this study illustrate the issue of semantic duality in sports idioms at the interface of semantics pragmatics as well as the communicators' semantic and pragmatic abilities in action, and as Allen (1995) maintains, since one of the major goals of linguistic research into meaning is to illuminate the processes and knowledge involved in interaction and communication, studying the rules governing the composition of word meanings into sentence meanings and larger discourses allows us to build systems which can interact with their users in more naturalistic language. Investigating how our understanding of what is said on mass media is influenced by our individual linguistic and cultural assumptions and experience, which are much less visible than what is explicitly said, can help make us more conscious and effective communicators. The result of all of these (sometimes very abstract) investigations is a deeper understanding and appreciation of the complexity and expressive elegance of particular languages and the uniquely human system of linguistic communication.

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DIGITAL TOOLS AND ACADEMIC WRITING: A MODERATED MEDIATION MODEL OF WRITING SELF-EFFICACY

Madina Bekturova¹, Altnay Zhaitapova¹, Davronzhon Gaipov²,
Saule Tulepova², Gergana Dyankova³

¹Kazakh Ablai Khan University of International Relations and World Languages, Almaty, Kazakhstan

²SDU University, Kaskelen, Kazakhstan

³South-West University “Neofit Rilski”, Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria

ORCID iDs: Madina Bekturova <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6748-9355>
Altnay Zhaitapova <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-5065-5536>
Davronzhon Gaipov <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3012-8067>
Saule Tulepova <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0809-469X>
Gergana Dyankova <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9965-9590>

Abstract. *The increasing prevalence of digital writing tools in academic settings has sparked interest in understanding their impact on writing self-efficacy among students, particularly in non-Anglophone countries. This study presents the first-ever application of a moderated mediation model to investigate the influence of digital writing tools on academic writing self-efficacy, incorporating writing engagement as a mediator and technological proficiency as a moderator. In the present study, we tested the following hypotheses: (a) the positive impact of using digital writing tools on writing engagement and academic writing self-efficacy, (b) writing engagement positively influences academic writing self-efficacy as well as mediates the relationship between using digital tools and writing self-efficacy, and (c) technological proficiency moderates the mediated relationship between digital tool use and writing self-efficacy. Based on the data from a survey conducted among 332 postgraduate students of Kazakhstani universities, digital writing tools positively influence writing self-efficacy, with writing engagement playing a significant mediating role. Furthermore, technological proficiency was found to modestly moderate this mediated relationship, suggesting that higher proficiency enhances the positive effects of digital tools on writing self-efficacy. These results highlight the importance of integrating digital writing tools and improving technological skills to enhance academic writing outcomes in non-Anglophone contexts. This study contributes to the existing literature by offering novel insights and a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms through which digital writing tools affect academic writing self-efficacy and engagement, especially in diverse linguistic and cultural settings.*

Key words: *academic writing, digital tools, higher education, moderated mediation model, writing engagement, technological proficiency*

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Corresponding author: Davronzhon Gaipov, SDU University, Kaskelen, Kazakhstan

E-mail: davronzhon.gaipov@sdu.edu.kz

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid integration of digital tools into educational settings has significantly transformed the way academic writing is taught and learned, particularly in non-Anglophone countries. These tools, ranging from grammar checkers to collaborative platforms, have become indispensable in helping students enhance their writing skills and, consequently, their academic writing self-efficacy. Self-efficacy in academic writing, defined as students' belief in their ability to produce effective and high-quality written work (Bandura, 1994), is crucial for their success in higher education (Maguire, 2013). However, the pathways through which digital tools influence writing self-efficacy remain underexplored, particularly in the context of non-Anglophone countries.

While previous studies have examined the direct effects of digital tools on writing performance and engagement (e.g., Schcolnik, 2018; Ching, 2018; Curry & Riordan, 2021; Elnadeef, 2023), there is a need for a more comprehensive understanding of the underlying mechanisms that drive these effects. Specifically, the role of writing engagement as a mediator and technological proficiency as a moderator in this relationship has not been thoroughly investigated.

To address this gap, this study introduces a novel research model (Figure 1) that explores the moderated mediation effects between digital tools, writing engagement, technological proficiency, and academic writing self-efficacy. By examining these relationships within a moderated mediation framework, this study aims to provide a more detailed understanding of how digital tools can enhance writing self-efficacy through increased engagement, while also considering the varying levels of technological proficiency among students. We believe that this model allows for a more nuanced examination of the relationships between the constructs. Let us examine each relationship more closely:

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

2.1. Use of digital tools, academic writing self-efficacy and writing engagement

Research indicates that using digital writing tools significantly enhances academic writing self-efficacy. Studies show that these tools encourage collaboration, creativity, and personal expression among students, leading to improved engagement and performance (Croxton, 2014; Curry & Riordan, 2021; Power & St-Jacques, 2013; Tate & Warschauer, 2022). Additionally, digital writing software and AI tools provide structured support and direct feedback, enhancing students' understanding of grammar and overall writing coherence (Zulfa et al., 2023; Pitukwong & Saraiwang, 2024). Furthermore, various investigations highlight the effectiveness of digital tools in facilitating the writing process and improving academic writing skills (Schcolnik, 2018; Ching, 2018; Little et al., 2018).

Given these benefits, it is essential to understand how digital writing tools impact two crucial aspects of writing development: writing self-efficacy and writing engagement. Writing self-efficacy refers to a student's belief in their ability to perform writing tasks successfully (Bandura, 1994), which can be significantly boosted by the immediate feedback and guidance provided by digital tools. These tools (especially AI-powered) help students identify errors and make improvements in real-time, leading to increased confidence in their writing abilities (Marzuki et al., 2023).

On the other hand, writing engagement involves the level of interest, motivation, and involvement a student exhibits in the writing process. Digital writing tools promote engagement by making the writing process more interactive and enjoyable (Ramamuthie & Azlina, 2022; McKee, 2016).

By distinguishing these two aspects, it becomes clear that digital writing tools address both the cognitive and affective domains of writing. They not only improve students' technical writing skills and confidence (self-efficacy) but also enhance their motivation and involvement in writing activities (engagement). Therefore, based on this understanding, we can hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 1: The use of digital writing tools positively influences both academic writing self-efficacy and writing engagement.

2.2. Writing engagement and academic writing self-efficacy

The influence of writing engagement on academic writing self-efficacy suggests a direct relationship where increased engagement enhances students' confidence in their writing abilities. Research indicates that as students actively participate in writing tasks, they gain valuable experience and feedback, which significantly boosts their self-efficacy beliefs (Bracey, 2018). For instance, a study involving Norwegian undergraduate students demonstrated that higher engagement in complex writing tasks, such as integrating information from multiple sources, is linked to increased self-efficacy in academic writing (Bråten et al., 2023). Additionally, findings from first-year students in a nursing program revealed that positive beliefs about their writing capabilities were associated with greater engagement in academic writing, further supporting the notion that self-efficacy is enhanced through active participation in writing activities (Maguire et al., 2013). These insights lead to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Writing engagement directly influences academic writing self-efficacy.

2.3. The mediating effect of writing engagement

Previous studies have established that engagement in writing activities significantly contributes to improved language achievement, therefore, writing skills as well (Cai & Xing, 2023). When students are engaged, they are more likely to invest time and effort into their writing, utilize feedback effectively, and persist through challenges (Ives et al., 2018; Gaipov & Brownhill, 2021; Nguyen, 2021).

Digital writing tools can enhance writing engagement by providing interactive and user-friendly platforms that motivate students to write more frequently and with greater enthusiasm. For instance, Gopinathan et al. (2022) found that digital tools with collaborative features and real-time feedback mechanisms significantly increased student engagement in writing tasks.

Even though there are no specific studies examining writing engagement as a mediator between the use of digital tools and academic writing self-efficacy, existing research collectively supports the notion that writing engagement serves as a significant mediator in various educational contexts (Viorel&Mih, 2020; Hao&Lu, 2024), influencing both academic outcomes and the effectiveness of feedback mechanisms. In light of this, by examining writing engagement as a mediator, we are aiming to provide a deeper understanding of how

digital writing tools contribute to writing self-efficacy. Therefore, we developed the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Writing engagement mediates the relationship between the use of digital tools and academic writing self-efficacy.

2.4. The moderating effect of technological proficiency

Nowadays, students are often labeled as “digital natives” due to their inherent familiarity and comfort with technology. As digital natives, students possess digital competencies that enable them to effectively utilize technological tools (Kassymova et al., 2023), particularly for academic writing in English (Elnadeef, 2023). Research by Gayed et al. (2022) highlighted that students have the accessibility and availability to engage with technology tools throughout their writing process. Similarly, Hajimaghsoodi and Maftoon (2020) found that incorporating technology tools into writing tasks has significantly enhanced students' writing skills and integration with educational curricula. The study by Irfan, Sofendi, and Vianty (2020) highlights the significance of technological proficiency in academic writing, noting that it can aid in finding suitable references, checking plagiarism, and structuring ideas effectively.

Aside from our belief that the use of digital tools influences academic writing self-efficacy through writing engagement, we also surmise that technological proficiency may have a significant impact on this connection. Thus, the following hypothesis has been formed:

Hypothesis 4: Technological proficiency moderates the relationship between the use of digital tools and academic writing self-efficacy.

Thus, we designed the following research model based on the developed hypotheses:

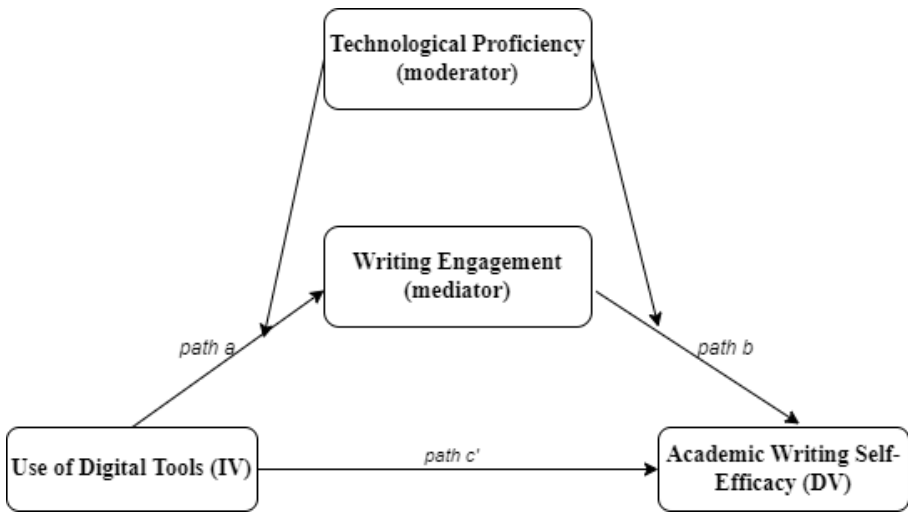


Fig. 1 Research model

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Sampling technique and data collection

We have used a non-probability sampling technique by distributing online Google Forms survey links to graduate students of three Kazakhstani universities, two of which were private. Graduate and postgraduate students were selected for this study due to the exclusive offering of the Academic Writing course at their levels, alongside their requirement to produce scholarly articles and theses.

Out of 387 collected answers, 332 were retrieved for further analysis after excluding responses with invalid and missing data. The survey consisted of five parts, four of which measured constructs, and one was dedicated to gathering demographic information. Ethical considerations for this study included obtaining informed consent from all participants (checking the relevant box in the survey) and ensuring confidentiality and anonymity.

3.2. Demographic information

In the study, the participant distribution included a range of age groups, with 25-30 years old comprising 28.3% of the respondents, 31-35 years old making up 33.7%, 36-40 years old representing 20.5%, and those aged 41 and above accounting for 17.5%. Among the total of 332 respondents, 56.7% are Master's students, while 43.3% are PhD students. Female respondents constituted 79.8% while male respondents made up 20.2%.

3.3. Measures

Measures for each variable were derived from previously validated instruments. Respondents rated 32 items on a five-point Likert scale: (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neither agree nor disagree, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree.

3.3.1. Use of Digital Tools (DT)

The instrument items measuring the use of digital tools were adapted from studies such as the one by Viberg et al. (2020). An example item is: "I am proficient in various digital tools for processing information". The total number of items was eight, and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .948.

3.3.2. Academic Writing Self-Efficacy (AWSE)

The survey items measuring this AWSE were adapted from the SAWSES (Situated Academic Writing Self-Efficacy Scale) instrument validated by Mitchell et al. (2021). Cronbach's alpha value for this construct was .893 for 9 items. An example item is: "When I reflect on what I am writing I can make my writing better".

3.3.3. Writing Engagement (WE)

The construct was assessed using six items adapted from Parsons et al. (2023). A representative item from the scale is: "When working on writing assignments, I think carefully about the words I use." In the current study, the scale demonstrated good reliability, with Cronbach's α coefficient of .966.

3.3.4. Technological Proficiency (TP)

We adapted the Technology Proficiency Survey for Educators (TPSE) developed by Christensen (2021) to tailor the survey items specifically to the context of writing. This process culminated in the consolidation and rephrasing of the items into a total of 9 targeted statements. An example item is: “I exemplify and advocate for safe, legal, and ethical practices when using digital tools in academic writing”. Cronbach’s alpha value for this construct was .968.

3.4. Data analysis

We utilized the PLS-SEM path modelling technique using SPSS AMOS 26 to assess measurement and structured models. This technique is multivariate and non-parametric, designed for assessing path models with latent variables (Hair et al., 2017). It functions similarly to traditional regression methods and is considered a powerful analytical tool for this reason. We selected PLS path modelling for several reasons. Firstly, it allows researchers to simultaneously evaluate the relationships between indicators and their latent constructs (the outer model) as well as the relationships between different constructs (the inner model). Additionally, Hair et al. (2017) have highlighted the effectiveness of PLS-SEM for complex analyses, particularly when a study involves both mediation and moderation analyses.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Evaluation of measurement model

The measurement model evaluation indicates strong internal consistency across all constructs, as can be seen in Table 1 below, with Cronbach's α values exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70. Convergent validity is confirmed, as all constructs surpass the 0.50 threshold (AVE). Additionally, all constructs show high composite reliability (CR), with values above 0.70:

Table 1 Descriptive statistics, Cronbach’s alpha values, correlations, scale reliabilities

Construct	Internal consistency	Mean	SD	Pearson correlation values				AVE	CR
				Use of DT	WE	TP	AWSE		
Use of DT	.948	3.93	1.02	1.00				0.827	0.966
WE	.966	3.83	.935	0.558	1.00			0.865	0.974
TP	.968	3.78	.819	0.624	0.563	1.00		0.901	0.981
AWSE	.893	3.92	.724	0.357	0.543	0.556	1.00	0.569	0.869

Discriminant validity is demonstrated in Table 2 below, with the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) values. Overall, the model is robust, meeting the criteria for internal consistency, convergent validity, discriminant validity, and composite reliability:

Table 2 HTMT values for discriminant validity

Construct	Use of DT	WE	TP	AWSE
Use of DT				
WE	0.661			
TP	0.723	0.637		
AWSE	0.521	0.774	0.777	

4.2. Evaluation of structural model

Logically, the next step is the evaluation of the structural model which is presented in Table 3 below. In this analysis, bootstrapping was employed by resampling the data with replacement multiple times to generate a distribution of path coefficients and their variability. Specifically, bootstrapping validates the impact of DT on WE, the direct effect of DT on AWSE, and the influence of WE on AWSE. Additionally, it supports the moderated mediation effect of TP on the relationship between DT and AWSE. Based on the calculations, the model explains 42.25% of the variance in WE. For AWSE, which is affected by both direct and indirect paths from DT and by WE, the R^2 value combines these effects, summing to a total effect of 1.005, which indicates that the model's influence on AWSE is significant:

Table 3 Bootstrapping

Paths		Coefficient values	T-statistics	p-values
Use of DT -> WE	path a	0.65	3.50	0.001
Use of DT -> AWSE	path c'	0.55	2.80	0.005
WE -> AWSE	path b	0.70	4.50	<0.001
TP x Use of DT -> AWSE		0.25	1.50	0.14

4.3. Mediation and moderation analyses

The mediation analysis demonstrates that the use of digital tools (DT) influences academic writing self-efficacy (AWSE) both directly and indirectly (complementary mediation). The direct effect of DT on AWSE is 0.55, with a p-value of 0.005, indicating a significant direct relationship. The indirect effect of DT on AWSE, mediated by writing engagement (WE), is calculated as 0.455 (0.65×0.70), which is significant given the p-values for the mediation paths (Use of DT -> WE: T-statistic = 3.50, $p = 0.001$; WE -> AWSE: T-statistic = 4.50, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that WE significantly mediates the relationship between DT and AWSE. The total effect of DT on AWSE, which combines both direct and indirect effects, is 1.005, confirming a significant overall impact. Furthermore, technological proficiency (TP) moderates this mediation, but the interaction term (TP x Use of DT -> AWSE) has a weaker effect with a coefficient of 0.25, a T-statistic of 1.50, and a p-value of 0.14. This indicates that TP has a limited influence on the strength of the relationship between DT and AWSE, suggesting that while TP does affect the impact of DT on AWSE, the extent of this influence is relatively modest.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide important insights into the complex interplay between digital tools, writing engagement, technological proficiency, and academic writing self-efficacy. Our empirical results confirm the direct positive influence of digital writing tools on writing self-efficacy, aligning with previous research by Ramamuthie and Azlina (2022), who systematically reviewed papers that empirically prove that digital tools significantly enhance students' confidence in their writing abilities. This consistency with earlier studies strengthens the argument that digital tools are an essential component in modern academic writing instruction, particularly in non-Anglophone contexts.

Moreover, the study highlights the significant mediating role of writing engagement. The positive association between digital tool use and writing self-efficacy is partly explained by increased engagement in writing tasks. When students are more engaged in the writing process, they are more likely to experience a sense of accomplishment, which in turn boosts their confidence in writing.

However, in our study, while technological proficiency does influence the relationship between digital tool use and writing self-efficacy, the extent of its impact is relatively limited. This suggests that in contexts where students are already familiar with basic digital tools, further proficiency may not substantially alter their writing outcomes. Instead, the focus should perhaps be more on how these tools are used to engage students rather than merely on their technical skills.

Overall, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on digital tools and academic writing by providing a nuanced understanding of how these tools influence writing self-efficacy. The moderated mediation model used in this research offers a valuable framework for future studies, especially in exploring how different contextual factors may influence the dynamics between technology, engagement, and academic outcomes. The alignment with several key studies strengthens the generalizability of our findings, while the discrepancies highlight areas for further research, particularly in exploring the role of technological proficiency across different cultural and educational contexts.

6. CONCLUSION

This study advances our understanding of the impact of digital writing tools on academic writing self-efficacy, particularly in non-Anglophone contexts such as Kazakhstan. By employing a moderated mediation model, we demonstrate that the use of digital tools positively influences writing self-efficacy, with writing engagement playing a critical mediating role. Although technological proficiency was found to moderately affect this relationship, its influence is less pronounced than that of engagement.

The implications of these findings are significant for educators and institutions seeking to enhance academic writing outcomes. Integrating digital writing tools into academic programs, coupled with strategies to boost student engagement, can lead to improved writing self-efficacy and, ultimately, better academic performance. Future research should continue to explore the diverse factors that contribute to writing self-efficacy, considering different educational and cultural contexts to build a more comprehensive understanding of how to support students in their academic writing endeavors.

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PROACTIVITY AS A PREDICTOR OF ESP STUDENTS' USE OF LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Mia Cirkveni, Mirna Hocenski-Dreiseidl, Sanda Katavić-Čaušić

Faculty of Economics and Business in Osijek, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Croatia

ORCID iDs: Mia Cirkveni

Mirna Hocenski-Dreiseidl

Sanda Katavić-Čaušić

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9333-7072>

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5524-6257>

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2962-5816>

Abstract. *Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic's pervasive influence, personality remained a key determinant of individuals' choices and academic accomplishments in higher education (Rodrigues, Rose, and Hewig 2024). Proactive students are more inclined to pursue foreign language proficiency, which is an educational advantage as by becoming equipped with intercultural communication skills, students become better prepared for the contemporary labor market. This research places emphasis on exploring higher education (HE) English for Specific Purposes (ESP) economics and business students' use of language learning strategies (LLSs) and their self-perceived proactivity, creativity and emotional regulation during the pandemic of COVID-19. Specifically, it assesses students' individual differences, investigates connections between LLSs and ESP students' proactivity, creativity, and emotional regulation, and reveals statistically significant predictors of ESP students' LLS use. The findings indicate that during the COVID-19 pandemic, medium strategy use was observed across all LLSs, and the metacognitive strategy was utilized the most frequently. Female ESP students employed the affective strategy more, whereas male ESP students utilized the cognitive strategy more. Proactivity was positively correlated with most LLSs and was revealed as the most significant predictor of ESP students' LLS utilization. The findings of this research contribute to LLS comprehension in the pandemic era, provide insights for ESP educators, and highlight the importance of foreign language learner autonomy.*

Key words: *language learning strategies, proactivity, English for specific purposes, COVID-19 pandemic*

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized world, the specialist knowledge for business positions needs to be underpinned by higher proficiency levels of English language knowledge in order to be competitive in the job market and prepared for specific discourse communities the students will be part of in their future careers. Without doubt, the mentioned influences the increased motivation for English acquisition requesting from different target audiences to

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Corresponding author: Mia Cirkveni, Faculty of Economics and Business in Osijek, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Croatia

E-mail: mia.cirkveni@efos.hr

acknowledge the ever-increasing demand for fluent English-speaking professionals and to embrace lifelong English learning. However, specific purposes pertaining to different target professions such as economics and business, make the foreign language acquisition (FLA) even more demanding as the targeted higher levels of fluency are a crucial prerequisite of a more efficient professional communication (Purwanto and Nurhamidah 2021). This was especially affirmed during the COVID-19 pandemic, when, globally, all aspects of peoples' lives became heavily dependent upon effective online communication (Reddy and Gupta 2020). While students of English for specific purposes (ESP) try to navigate the mentioned challenges, adequate language learning strategies (LLSs), or what Scarcella and Oxford (1995:63) refer to as "specific actions, behaviors, steps or techniques" assist them in fostering their efficiency and accelerating the target language acquisition. Generally speaking, the language acquisition processes imply the need to acknowledge learning as a dynamic and individual process which focuses on individual aspects of language learners and corresponding learning strategies learners use as to make learning "easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferable to new situations" (Oxford, 1990:8). Hence, FLA is heavily dependent upon individual differences, i.e., language learner characteristics such as cognitive aptitude, personality, creativity, motivation, anxiety, etc. (Bell 2012; Ehrman and Oxford 1995; Pawlak 2021; Dörnyei 2005), which are prominent exactly in foreign language learning and consequently affect the success of language acquisition (Dörnyei 2005; Karimi-Aghdam 2020). The challenging period of the COVID-19 pandemic unequivocally changed the way educators taught (Knežević and Tripković-Samardžić 2021), yet it has recently been questioned whether language learning online had affected the way in which students learned (Gajek 2023). This research was conducted on higher education (HE) ESP students during the COVID-19 pandemic, and is aimed at exploring the use of LLSs, investigating whether a connection exists between LLSs and students' self-perceived dispositions such as proactivity, creativity and emotional regulation, which were especially relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic, and revealing predictors of LLS use.

Two hypotheses were put forward for this research:

Hypothesis 1: A positive correlation exists between students' proactivity, creativity, emotional regulation, and language learning strategies.

Hypothesis 2: Students' proactivity predicts the use of language learning strategies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Language Learning Strategies

For almost fifty years, the effect of LLSs on language learning efficiency has interested foreign language researchers and practitioners (Chamot and Harris 2019; Rubin 1975), but has also attracted criticism by scholars due to ambiguity of its terminology and definition (Cohen 2014; Dörnyei 2005). Nonetheless, in the last decade, the field has been receiving increased recognition as it broadens the understanding of different ways in which individuals learn languages (Pawlak 2021; Lestari and Wahyudin 2020; Milla and Gutierrez-Mangado 2019). According to Petrogiannis and Gavriilidou (2015), substantial body of work into LLSs in FLA and educational psychology exists, which extent is closely related to the need to determine the traits and strategies of effective learners and promote learner-centered teaching. Obralić & Mulalić (2017) assert that the five-factor model of personality traits

(openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism) are significantly correlated with language learning strategies. Namely, language learning strategies and styles are the two main complementary aspects which influence the success of the language learning process (Wong and Nunan 2011; Oxford 1993). Language learning styles are general approaches to language learning and can be classified under the perceptual (visual, auditory etc.), the cognitive (global, analytic learner, etc.), personality (reflective, impulsive learner), and the compound learning style, i.e., the use of more than one style (Xu 2011). On the other hand, language learning strategies are specific approaches to improving understanding, enhancing learning, and aiding in remembering of information (O'Malley and Chamot 1990), i.e., behaviors that learners use to enhance their learning process and master their language learning (Dörnyei 2005; Oxford 1989), such as seeking communication with the speakers of the target language or thinking about one's progress while learning a language. Przybył and Pawlak (2023) view two perspectives of LLS application which affect the FLA. The micro-perspective of strategy use emphasizes specific strategies employed in LL process such as handling the language task and activity, and determining learners' strategic choices, whereas the macro-perspective accounts for the language being learnt, the language learning experience, cultural variables, and various individual differences (age, gender, aptitude, motivation). Overall, the more strategies students use, the more confident, motivated and successful students become (Ahmad, Mohammad, and Yaad 2022), especially since better language learners are the ones using a variety of learning strategies (Tandoc 2019). It can be assumed that less successful learners are in the position to improve their language performance if they start employing more LLSs. Arguably, language instruction ought to align with students' individual differences, preferred learning styles, and strategies to achieve the most effective learning outcomes.

The most prominent instrument developed for measuring the use of LLSs is the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) by Oxford (1990). Oxford's initial taxonomy (1990) asserted language learning strategies to be divided into direct (cognitive, compensation, memory-related) and indirect strategies (metacognitive, affective, social). However, her more recent self-strategic regulation model (S2R) has been gaining prominence as it addresses the need for a holistic view of language learners by categorizing strategies to address all aspects of the learner's experience. Namely, the S2R model focuses on four main categories of strategies: cognitive, motivational, social, and affective, where each strategy category is supported by its meta-dimensions, which empower learners to take charge of their learning process (Oxford 2017).

2.2. Individual Differences in Language Learning

The recognition of learner individuality is at heart of modern language teaching (Botes et al. 2023) where students' personalities become motivational determinants as they shape and affect students' own behaviors and success in FLA (Obralić and Mulalić 2017; Code, Zap, and Ralph 2021). Inarguably, language learning success is also affected by a conglomerate of learners' language aptitude, psychological, and affective factors (Biedroń 2023), and the research into how exactly it affects learning is quite abundant, which is supported by Fallan's claim (2006) about its essential role in the choice of learning styles, but also in selecting majors. When considering the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, research shows that students' proactive personality was positively associated with their on-line learning performance (Chai, Hu, and Niu 2023). The pandemic also increased students' creativity and

autonomy in FLA (Mufidah, Yansyah, and Jumadi 2022), and students' positive and negative emotions were related and coexisted in the online learning of foreign languages (Maican and Cocoradă 2021). Therefore, this paper will focus specifically on the interconnectedness of the mentioned three factors which have yet not been explored together in the context of LLS use, but are relevant and important in FLA and, thereby, in acquiring ESP, especially within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Proactivity is a relatively stable behavioral tendency in which individuals "scan for opportunities, show initiative, take action, and persevere until they reach closure by bringing about change", and, thereby, influence the environment (Bateman and Crant 1993:105). Proactivity is perceived as a significant employability asset (Tymon and Batistič 2016), one of the most significant traits of effective learners (Dai and Wang 2023; Fandos-Herrera et al. 2023), and constitutes a vital part of foreign language teaching and learning (Ngo 2022). Previous research on students indicates that proactivity contributes to academic performance (Cansino, Román, and Expósito 2018), while research on employees reveals that it contributes to career success (Seibert, Crant, and Kraimer 1999) and creativity (Kim, Hon, and Crant 2009). Research on ESP students shows that their overall academic participation in language courses was on a much higher level during the COVID-19 pandemic than before it (Knežević and Tripković-Samardžić 2021), which suggests that students were at that particular time more proactive. Interestingly, post-pandemic ESP students have an average proactive attitude toward English language acquisition with business students perceiving themselves to be more proactive than other ESP students (Ngo 2022). Naturally, FLA leads to foreign language comprehension, which contributes not only to becoming more eloquent communicators, but also to having higher future employment prospects (Sedlan-König, Hocenski-Dreiseidl, and Hocenski 2017). Since proactivity assumes a role in FLA, we aimed to explore its effect on the ESP students' LLS use during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Creativity has been linked to language learning as a characteristic of individuals who speak more than one language (Bialystok 2001). Researchers observe creativity as a personality trait that affects various aspects of individuals' personal, academic, and professional lives (Abdullaxayevna and Muhammadali 2022; Kharkhurin and Motalleebi 2008; Porter et al. 2022). According to DiLiello and Houghton (2008), the creative potential is one's creative self-efficacy, i.e., the creative capacity, skills, and abilities that individuals possess. It incorporates the belief in the ability to adequately do one's job, develop and test new ideas and ideas of others, find creative solution, and creatively solve problems. Foreign language educators establish the relevance of creativity in education by not only cultivating a climate of ingenuity within their classrooms, but also by actively engaging in activities geared towards nurturing their own creative thinking (Hocenski, Sedlan-König, and Turjak 2019). Interestingly, Hocenski, Sedlan-König, and Turjak (2018) ascertained these creative approaches in teaching to be more important to foreign language teachers than to educators of other subjects. The reason for that may be the fact that the implementation of creative methods in foreign language teaching plays a significant role in fostering heightened student motivation, thereby establishing a fundamental prerequisite for the proficient application of language abilities within a professional context (Rus 2020), which is the exact aim of ESP educators. For this exact reason, creativity ought to be considered as a prospective individual difference in FLA (Pipes 2023; Bialystok 2001), and will also be explored in this paper in relation to the use of LLSs of ESP students.

“Emotions are the driving force behind second language acquisition” (Dewaele 2011:36). The need for researching English as a foreign language (EFL) students' emotions was initially emphasized by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014), followed by Pawlak and Oxford (2018) plea for exploring various combinations of factors including students' emotions that affect the use of LLS. Consequent research shows that the social and affective variables are associated with LLSs (Cohen and Griffiths 2015; Heras and Lasagabaster 2015), while enjoyment, as a positive emotion, has a positive correlation with the use of the self-regulatory learning (SRL) strategy (Shen et al. 2023). As expected, emotionally stable learners, in contrast to neurotic ones, tend to be most frequent strategy users (Przybył and Pawlak 2023), and academic optimism, in addition to both positive and negative emotions, is correlated with SRL strategies (Xu and Wang 2024). The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic should not be overlooked as students' emotions at that time had an effect on their language learning success (Shao et al. 2023; Mihai et al. 2022). What is more, emotional regulation was essential for both educators and students (Zahrin et al. 2021; Zhao 2021). “Emotional regulation is the manipulation in self or other of emotion antecedents or certain physiological, subjective, or behavioral aspects of the emotional response” (Gross and Levenson 1993:970). The construct itself is an important component of the cognitive ability, the personality trait, and the mixed model of emotional intelligence (Hocenski 2021). Emotional intelligence encourages the language retention and the learning process (Sucaromana 2012), which is “emotion-laden because of challenges to and shifts in learner identity” (Cohen and Griffiths 2015:450). By prioritizing and facilitating emotional regulation strategies in the educational context, learners can become equipped with the ability to navigate and regulate their emotions effectively, which may enhance their FLA. Furthermore, the development of overall emotional intelligence in FLA also cultivates ESP students' entrepreneurial mindset (Cirkveni 2022), which, in today's dynamic and competitive professional world, is particularly significant. Namely, the entrepreneurial mindset, characterized by creativity, innovation, and proactive problem-solving (Kuratko, Fisher, and Audretsch 2020) could be nurtured through the development of emotional regulation strategies in FLA. Therefore, in this research, emotional regulation was used to investigate the connection to and the effect on students' LLS utilization during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This research aims to serve as a stepping stone for future systematic research by providing both theoretical insights and empirical understanding of the interconnections between LLSs and proactivity, creativity, and emotional regulation during the COVID-19 pandemic. The interplay of these factors seems important in differentiating students' use of LLS, especially in a time of crisis. Namely, by understanding whether these traits affect FLA not only sheds light on individual differences among students but also provides valuable insights for educators aiming to foster resilience and adaptability in their ESP learners. Together, these traits foster an environment where learners can maximize their potential by navigating the complexities of FLA, and thereby ESP, in unpredictable circumstances. Consequently, the first research problem in our study aimed to examine the relationships between students' self-perceived proactivity, creativity, and emotional regulation and their LLSs (H1: A positive correlation exists between students' proactivity, creativity, emotional regulation, and language learning strategies.). We then further hypothesized that proactivity has the potential to foster the use of LLSs. Therefore, the contribution of proactivity to the explanation of LLS use was explored as the second research problem (H2: Students' proactivity predicts the use of language learning strategies.).

2.3. Teaching and Acquiring ESP during the Pandemic of COVID-19

On May 5th, 2023, the World Health Organization had declared the end of the COVID-19 pandemic (Sarker et al. 2023), and it became apparent that in order to prepare for the unpredictability of the future, the society ought to develop adaptable and robust online, blended, and remote learning education systems (Ali 2020; Code, Zap, and Ralph 2021). Before the pandemic, globalization for ESP educators signified the realization of ESP as a way of overcoming traditional boundaries of a mere specialized vocabulary transfer to teaching about other cultures (Leon 2023), and technology was considered an efficient and available medium for teaching (Dashtestani and Stojković 2015). However, in contrast to pre-COVID teaching, where the educator's role was one of an information provider, during the pandemic, (ESP) educators became facilitators of the language learning process who also simultaneously had the additional task of managing and adjusting their own and developing their students' technological literacy (Purwanto and Nurhamidah 2021). During this period of changed living and learning conditions certain ESP students positively regarded the online learning implementation (Wardani 2020). Although blended learning was proven to improve students' motivation and language efficacy in ESP courses (Gerasimova, Pushmina, and Carter 2022), the virtual mode of teaching ESP had a more significant effect on students' technological literacy (Gaffas 2023). What is more, some ESP educators even encountered challenges in keeping students interested and engaged in online courses (Leon 2023). Since then, technology-enhanced learning has been additionally proven to positively affect foreign language proficiency, while also enhancing learners' critical thinking, communication skills, and their language awareness (Liu, Thurston, and Ye 2024).

3. METHODOLOGY

The research paradigm of this quantitative theoretical and empirical research was grounded in the epistemological assumption of positivism, as it aimed at investigating the interconnected relationships between LLSs and ESP students' self-perceived proactivity, creativity, and emotional regulation, and exploring whether these three factors contribute to the explanation of students' LLS use during the COVID-19 pandemic. The secondary data entails previous research which was used to write this papers' literature review, while the primary data was collected by a structured self-report questionnaire which was based on the following four affirmed, validated, and reliable measuring instruments.

The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) (Oxford 1990) was used to assess strategies students utilize when learning ESP. Although the latest S2R model focuses only on four main strategies (Oxford 2017), for this research, we decided to use the initial SILL taxonomy due to its' common use in FLA and ESP research (such as Pašalić 2013; Maulidia 2023). SILL consists of 50 items measuring six following strategies: memory-related (9 items), cognitive (14 items), compensation (6 items), metacognitive (9 items), affective (6 items), and social (6 items). Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients for the six subscales of the SILL were .76 for the memory-related, .84 for the cognitive, .58 for the compensation, .84 for the metacognitive, .55 for the affective, .77 for the social strategy, and .92 for the overall composite construct of SILL.

Proactivity Scale (Bateman and Crant 1993) was used as a self-report instrument to measure the perception of students' proactivity. The scale consists of 17 items, and the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for the overall proactivity was .86.

Creative Potential Scale (DiLiello and Houghton 2008) was used to measure the perception of one's creative potential, i.e., students' creativity. The scale consists of 6 items, and the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for overall creativity was .88.

Emotional Regulation and Control Scale (Takšić 2003) was employed in order to evaluate how individuals perceive their ability to manage and control their emotions. The assessment included gauging the effect of negative emotions and moods on thoughts, memory, behavior, and emotional regulation ability. The scale consists of 20 reverse-coded items separated into and measured by three dimensions, i.e., *the influence of emotions and moods on thoughts* (8 items), *the influence of emotions and moods on memory* (6 items) and *the control of emotional reactions* (6 items). Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients for the three dimensions were .89 for the influence of emotions and moods on thoughts, .85 for the influence of emotions and moods on memory, .75 for the control of emotional reactions, and .91 for the overall ERAC composite construct.

The questionnaire was translated to students' mother tongue, and was administered online, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, from March to April 2021, during one of students' ESP classes when all courses were still being delivered remotely. The participation in this research was voluntary and completely anonymous. The questionnaire given to participants included three sections in which they needed to indicate how much they agreed with statements regarding their thoughts, inclinations, and behaviors when acquiring ESP. The first section comprised the following demographic-related items: age, gender, study year, student status (i.e., full-time or part-time students), and the foreign language being learnt (English or German language). The second section contained three segments assessing various strategies while learning ESP, whereas the last section investigated certain aspects of respondents' opinions, emotional states, and tendencies towards creativity and proactivity. The questionnaire was assessed on a 5-point Likert scale where "1" indicated "never or almost never true of me" and "5" indicated "always or almost always true of me". The data was consequently analyzed in the Statistical Program for Social Science (SPSS) by using univariate (descriptive data analysis methods of frequencies, arithmetic means, and standard deviations), bivariate (correlation analysis), and multivariate methods (regression analyses).

In total, there were 302 complete responses (N=302). The analyzed demographic data revealed that 73.5% of students identified themselves as female (N=222), whereas 26.5% identified themselves as male (N=80). Slightly more than 15% of students were 23 years old or older (N=46), 17.5% of students were 19 or younger (N=53), whereas the majority of students were aged from 20 to 22 (N=203). All respondents were HE ESP students who study economics and business. Moreover, 93% were undergraduate students (N=281), and 7% were graduate students (N=21). Most of them were studying full time (88%, N=266), whereas only 12% were studying part time (N=36). When taking students' first language into account, 94.4% of students studied English as their first foreign language (N=285), in contrast to only 5.6% of students studying German as their first foreign language (N=17).

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics that was used to analyze ESP students' LLS use, as well as their self-perceived proactivity, creativity, and emotional regulation is provided in Table 1. The averages of 3.5 to 5.0 are considered to be high strategy use, averages of 2.5 to 3.4 are assigned medium strategy use, while averages from 1.0 to 2.4 are appointed low strategy use (Oxford and Burry-Stock 1995). Based on methods of frequencies and arithmetic means, our findings revealed that all six strategies were assigned medium strategy use with the metacognitive strategy ($M=3.39$) having the most frequent, while the affective strategy ($M=2.64$) the least frequent use. This suggests that during the COVID-19 pandemic, our sample of ESP students were intrinsically motivated to initiate, sustain, and assess the development of their language learning process. Namely, students had to manage their progress effectively in remote learning environments. Therefore, the higher use of metacognitive strategies aligns with the adaptive response expected from students facing challenging circumstances brought about by the pandemic.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of Measured Variables

	M	σ	α
SILL	3.08	.50	.92
Memory-Related Strategy	2.92	.62	.76
Cognitive Strategy	3.20	.65	.84
Compensation Strategy	3.18	.60	.58
Metacognitive Strategy	3.39	.69	.84
Affective Strategy	2.64	.61	.55
Social Strategy	2.91	.83	.77
PROACTIVITY	3.63	.50	.86
CREATIVITY	3.67	.72	.88
ERAC	2.93	.73	.91
ERAC Thoughts	2.95	.90	.89
ERAC Memory	2.85	.92	.85
ERAC Control	3.00	.81	.75

Note. N=302; SILL = Strategy Inventory for Language Learning; ERAC = Emotional Regulation and Control; M = Arithmetic Mean; σ = Standard Deviation; α = Cronbach's Alpha Internal Consistency Coefficients.

These findings are in line with previous research on higher education students' use of LLSs as they reveal the metacognitive (Lestari and Wahyudin 2020; Pagalilauan 2023), the cognitive (Alhaysony 2017), and the compensation strategy to be used the most, while the memory-related, the social, and the affective strategy the least (Pašalić 2013). It is also found that intermediate B1-B2 level students tend to use metacognitive strategies more often than beginning level students (O'Malley et al. 1985). Namely, once language learners become aware of LLSs, they choose ones that fit their learning style making them a "toolkit for active, conscious, and purposeful self-regulation of learning" (Oxford 2003:2). Depending on the purpose of learning, such as studying for General English or ESP, students use different LLS and adapt them accordingly (Griffiths 2019). Raising awareness of LLSs is paramount not only to FLA but also to the context of ESP as its use

broadens the understanding of language learning, promotes learner-centered teaching, and develops self-regulated learners (Oxford 2017). The lower use of the affective strategy, in our findings, may be attributed to stress due to changed learning environment, as well as limitations in social interactions.

Researchers tend to explore the effect of additional variables such as age, gender, educational level, or cultural background on LLS use (Ahsanah 2020; Karlak and Bagarić Medve 2016). By using the independent samples T-test as the statistical analysis method, our findings revealed several statistically significant differences. The first difference was in the reported use of the affective strategy according to students' gender. Female students ($N=222$; $M=2.7$, $\sigma=.56$; $p<.007$) reported higher use of the affective strategy than did male students ($N=80$; $M=2.47$, $\sigma=.71$; $p<.007$), which potentially reflects greater emotional awareness and proactive management of stress and anxiety among female students during this challenging period. Furthermore, contrary to popular belief (Ülger and Morsünbül 2016), our findings show that male students ($M=3.72$, $\sigma=.59$, $p<.05$) are the ones who perceive themselves to be slightly more creative than do female students ($M=3.65$, $\sigma=.76$; $p<.05$). The reason for this finding may range from the educational environment to cultural factors, but it may also be due to individuals' subjective perception. Namely, creativity is associated with independence and self-direction, which, stereotypically, are considered to be masculine characteristic, and "stereotypically masculine behavior enhances a man's perceived creativity, whereas identical behavior does not enhance a woman's perceived creativity" (Proudfoot, Kay, and Koval 2015:1), which suggests the existence of implicit gender bias in the perception of creativity. The final statistically significant difference is found between part-time and full-time students in their reported use of the compensation strategy. Part-time students ($N=36$; $M=3.34$, $\sigma=.89$, $p<.002$), who likely have different schedules and responsibilities compared to full-time students, reported higher use of the compensation strategy than did full-time students ($N=266$; $M=3.16$, $\sigma=.55$, $p<.002$). This suggests that part-time students have relied more on compensation strategies to help them adapt to the challenges of remote or disrupted learning caused by the pandemic. Additionally, relying on compensation strategies is more important for less proficient foreign language learners due to their lack of knowledge (Almusharraf and Bailey 2021). However, it is debatable whether that is the case with our sample as the level of students' English knowledge was not within the scope of this research. Nonetheless, in general, part-time students do spend considerably less time studying than do full-time students and self-reliance is a key aspect of managing both their personal and professional life at the same time. As a way of coping with acquiring ESP, it is to be expected that part-time students would guess and predict the meaning more, and use more gestures and similar phrases. When controlling for the effect of other independent demographic variables, no additional statistically significant differences in the use of LLSs were found.

4.2. Correlations

Proactive attitude is considered a beneficial characteristic of individuals who acquire FLs (Tandoc 2019), creativity as a lifelong skill encourages more efficient language learners (Adel 2017), while emotional regulation as a concept improves FLA (Derakhshan and Zare 2023). Research even shows that a positive connection exists between students' proactivity, creativity, and emotional intelligence (Zampetakis et al. 2009). However, to

our knowledge, research has not been conducted specifically on the connection between the mentioned three constructs and students' use of LLSs, which is why we aimed to explore this in the context of acquiring ESP during the altered circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, the initial research problem was to investigate the connection between LLSs and students' proactivity, creativity, and emotional regulation. The first hypothesis (H1: A positive correlation exists between students' proactivity, creativity, emotional regulation, and language learning strategies.) was analyzed by exploring the bivariate correlations of all constructs. Table 2 provides the intercorrelation matrix calculated by the Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) for all composite constructs and variables, and the elaboration of the connections between each construct and LLS follows.

Table 2 The Intercorrelation Matrix

	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1 Age	-.06	.55**	-.07	-.03	-.09	-.08	-.11	-.01	.05	.10	-.02	.08	.08	.06	.05
2 Gender	-	-.06	.03	.06	-.07	.02	.07	.16**	0	0	-.04	-.11	-.17**	0	-.07
3 Student Status		-	.07	.06	.03	.10	.01	.09	.08	.05	.05	.04	.03	0	.07
4 SILL			-	.72**	.86**	.58**	.81**	.59**	.79**	.32**	.25**	-.01	.03	-.07	-.01
5 Memory-Related				-	.52**	.36**	.46**	.41**	.44**	.24**	.22**	-.03	-.03	-.05	0
6 Cognitive					-	.44**	.64**	.29**	.59**	.28**	.25**	.03	.09	-.06	.01
7 Compensation						-	.31**	.35**	.36**	.06	.02	-.12*	-.06	-.14*	-.11
8 Metacognitive							-	.41**	.61**	.36**	.23**	.07	.09	0	.06
9 Affective								-	.51**	.14*	.02	-.16**	-.17**	-.10	-.11
10 Social									-	.26**	.21**	.01	.05	-.02	0
11 PROACTIVITY										-	.67**	.28**	.35**	.12*	.18**
12 CREATIVITY											-	.23**	.32**	.04	.16**
13 ERAC												-	.88**	.78**	.83**
14 ERAC Thoughts													-	.49**	.62**
15 ERAC Memory														-	.51**
16 ERAC Control															-

Note. N=302; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$; SILL = Strategy Inventory for Language Learning; ERAC = Emotional Regulation and Control.

The findings reveal statistically significant positive correlations between proactivity and the composite constructs of SILL ($r=.32$; $p<.01$), the memory-related, the cognitive, the metacognitive, the social strategy (r ranges from $.24$ to $.36$; $p<.01$), and the affective strategy ($r=.14$; $p<.05$). The strongest connection to proactivity is found between the indirect metacognitive strategy ($r=.36$; $p<.01$) and the direct cognitive strategy ($r=.28$; $p<.01$). This suggests that students who are more aware of their language learning capabilities and want to consciously improve their ESP, are generally more proactive. Furthermore, a significant positive connection exists between proactivity and emotional regulation ($r=.28$; $p<.01$), and all its dimensions (r for *the influence of emotions and moods on memory* is $.12$; $p<.05$; r for *the influence of emotions and moods on thoughts* is $.35$; $p<.01$; r for *the control of emotional reactions* is $.18$; $p<.01$), which suggests that the more proactive ESP students perceive themselves to be, the more they are in control of their emotional reaction. Some researchers even believe that ESP students ought to assume a more proactive role in the choice of materials and activities in class (Marjanovikj-Apostolovski 2017), while others assert that ESP students do search for additional opportunities to interact in the English language outside the university context

(an example of the metacognitive strategy) (Trinder 2013), which portrays students' proactiveness and suggests the profound effect that proactivity has on acquiring ESP, but also on FLA in general.

The composite construct of creativity has a statistically significant positive correlation to the memory-related, the cognitive, the social and the metacognitive strategy (r ranges from .21 to .25; $p < .01$), but also to the composite construct of SILL ($r = .25$; $p < .01$). This suggests that students who perceive themselves to be more creative also use LLSs more. Previous research shows a positive relationship between creativity and the use of LLSs, in particular the metacognitive strategy, and language proficiency (Rezaei and Almasian 2007). This is in line with the research of Pipes (2023:35), who states that "exploring creativity individually or in small groups remains the most promising way of understanding its impact and how it might be harnessed for the overall good of improving language learning results". Furthermore, aligned with existent research on business students that shows a positive connection of students' creativity, proactivity and emotional intelligence (Kumar and Shukla 2019), our findings also show positive and statistically significant associations between ESP students' creativity and proactivity ($r = .67$; $p < .01$). The reason for this may be the fact that proactive ESP students tend to take initiative, seek out new opportunities to learn, and engage in self-directed learning (Zimmerman and Moylan 2009), which naturally fosters creativity. Creativity belongs in the ESP classroom as it affects students' visual literacy and technological skills, and reinforces their ESP acquisition (Kulenović 2022; Adel 2017). There was also a statistically significant positive connection between creativity and emotional regulation ($r = .23$; $p < .01$) and its two dimensions *influence of emotions and moods on thoughts* ($r = .32$; $p < .01$), and *the control of emotional reactions* ($r = .16$; $p < .01$). These findings suggest that creative students have a better control of their emotional reactions, and since the pandemic required students' rapid adjustment to the altered circumstances, creative students could devise innovative coping mechanisms, which in turn enhanced their emotional regulation during the pandemic.

The composite construct of emotional regulation has a statistically significant negative connection to the affective strategy ($r = -.16$; $p < .01$) and the compensation strategy ($r = -.12$; $p < .05$). Although this connection is weak, this indicates that students who have confidence in their ability to effectively manage their emotions, will use the affective and the compensation strategy less. Although previous research shows that emotional regulation is linked to spontaneous strategy use (Eldesouky and English 2019), our finding show no positive statistically significant correlation between ERAC and any of the LLSs. Reasons for these findings may range from the altered reality in which students were living in, differences in the ESP learners' backgrounds, to the possibility of emotional regulation affecting the manner in which ESP students approach learning but not directly leading to an increased use of a specific LLS.

Finally, the findings reveal that the SILL composite construct is statistically significantly and positively connected to both proactivity and creativity, while two ERAC dimensions are negatively statistically significantly connected to two SILL subscales. This suggests that higher LLS use is associated with higher levels of proactivity and creativity. Additionally, students whose emotions affect their thoughts and memory may struggle to employ affective and compensation strategies effectively, as their emotions interfere with their ability to implement these strategies. Thus, the first hypothesis (H1) is partially confirmed.

4.3. Regression Analyses

Given numerous statistically significant correlations with the construct of proactivity, we assumed that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, proactivity had the potential to affect the use of LLSs, which is why the final research problem aimed to explore whether proactivity predicts the use of LLSs. Based on the final research problem, the second hypothesis (H2) states: Students' proactivity predicts the use of language learning strategies. In order to analyze the second hypothesis, regression analysis was used. Six models were created where each of the six LLSs was explored as the dependent variable. The predicting independent variables were demographic manifest variables of age, gender, and student status; latent variables of proactivity and creativity; and three dimensions of emotional regulation (i.e., *influence of emotions and moods on opinions*; *influence of emotions and moods on memory*; *control of emotional reactions*). Table 3 provides the main regression model with the highest percentage of the total variance explained (TVE), which was found in the use of the metacognitive strategy. Namely, the results reveal that all mentioned independent variables statistically significantly account for 17% of the metacognitive strategy use variance ($R^2=.17$; $F=7.37$; $p<0.01$). Considering their high Beta coefficients (β), proactivity ($\beta =.41$; $t = 5.56$; $p<0.01$) and age ($\beta =-.21$; $t = -3.18$; $p<0.01$) emerged as two statistically significant independent predictors of the metacognitive strategy use.

Other models also revealed proactivity as the most common independent predictor of the use of FLLSs. Namely, the second model was the cognitive strategy use model whose variance is accounted for 12% ($R^2=.12$; $F=4.92$; $p<0.01$), with proactivity ($\beta =.24$; $t = 3.09$; $p<0.01$) and age ($\beta =-.18$; $t = -2.62$; $p<0.01$) emerging as two statistically significant predictors. The third model explored the affective strategy use with 11% of the variance being explained ($R^2=.11$; $F=4.52$; $p<0.01$). Proactivity ($\beta =.29$; $t = 3.75$; $p<0.01$), student status ($\beta =.15$; $t = 2.26$; $p<0.05$), gender ($\beta =.13$; $t = 2.24$; $p<0.05$), and *the influence of emotions and moods on thoughts* ($\beta =-.19$; $t = -2.41$; $p<0.05$) are found to be the statistically significant independent predictors. The fourth regression model analyzed the memory-related strategy use, with 9.3% of the variance being accounted for ($R^2=.093$; $F=3.74$; $p<0.01$), and proactivity ($\beta =.21$; $t = 2.71$; $p<0.01$) being the sole statistically significant predictor. The fifth model explored the social strategy use, whose variance is accounted for 8.2% ($R^2=.082$; $F=3.26$; $p<0.01$), with proactivity ($\beta =.23$; $t = 3.00$; $p<0.01$) once more being the only statistically significant predictor. The final model analyzed the compensation strategy use with 7% of the variance being accounted for ($R^2=.07$; $F=2.77$; $p<0.01$). Student status ($\beta =.22$; $t = 3.27$; $p<0.01$) and age ($\beta =-.22$; $t = -3.12$; $p<0.01$) were the two statistically significant independent predictors.

Our findings are, to an extent, in alignment with the principles of the Proactive Language Learning Theory (PLLT) which puts the learners' active role at the forefront and posits that "proactive second language learning is strategic" (Papi and Hiver 2024:8). Although the PLLT founders emphasize the focus on strategic patterns of learning behavior rather than specific strategies used, we believe that the use of isolated strategies should be understood first, especially during changed circumstances such as the COVID-19 pandemic, to later be able to explore the language acquisition as a whole.

Table 3 Contribution of Predictors to the Explanation of Metacognitive Strategy Use

Predictors	β	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	Std. Estimate Error	F	Change Statistics				t	Sig.
							R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2		
Age	-.21**										-3.18	.00
Gender	.06										1.2	.23
Student Status	.11										1.67	.09
Proactivity	.41**	.41	.17	.15	.64	7.37**	.17	7.37**	8	293		
Creativity	-.05										5.56	.00
ERAC Thoughts	.00										-.67	.49
ERAC Memory	-.05										-.05	.96
ERAC Control	.03										-.78	.44
											.44	.66

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$; LLS = Language Learning Strategy; ERAC = Emotional Regulation and Control.

Overall, our research shows that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, self-perceived proactivity was found to be predictive of the use of each indirect (the metacognitive, the affective, the social) and two direct LLSs (the cognitive, the memory-related). This suggests that those ESP students who considered themselves proactive would use almost all LLSs more, whereas the highest effect would be on the use of the metacognitive strategy. Since proactivity does statistically significantly affect the use of the compensation strategy, it can be assumed that proactive ESP learners truly prefer to fully comprehend what they are learning rather than compensate for their lack of knowledge by making words up or guessing their meaning. Interestingly, in this research, higher age of ESP learners seems to be related to lower use of the cognitive and the metacognitive strategy. The reason for these findings may include the fact that older individuals have a lower cognitive flexibility (Egner and Siqi-Liu 2024). Namely, it seems that younger ESP learners are more adaptable and responsive to acquiring knowledge and languages and, thereby, tend to use the mentioned two strategies more. Furthermore, gender, student status, proactivity, and *the influence of emotions and moods on thoughts* statistically affect the utilization of the affective strategy. In particular, this suggests that female part-time students who believe that they are proactive but cannot regulate their emotions well, are more likely to use the affective strategy while learning ESP.

Consequently, the mentioned regression analysis findings show that during the COVID-19 pandemic the construct of proactivity, along with age, gender, student status, and the ERAC dimension *the influence of emotions and moods on thoughts*, were revealed as statistically significant independent predictors of the use of LLSs, which results in the second hypothesis (H2) being confirmed.

5. LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

There are many limitations to this research, but the initial one concerns the timeframe of when the research was conducted, which was during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since during the pandemic, learners had to adapt to new learning environments, and educators had to adjust to online teaching, these changed circumstances may have affected our findings as they concern a very specific learning situation. What is more, this research

was limited to ESP students of economics and business from one HE institution, and although the sample was large, it was rather heterogenous as the participants varied in terms of age, study year, study discipline, and employment status. The mentioned makes our findings not generalizable beyond the immediate context, which limits the prospective applicability of the results to other studies. However, in order to achieve generalizability, future research should include ESP students from different study disciplines and across more than one University in a country. Another limitation is the use of self-report instruments as they lead to “social desirability” biases in responses, over-subjectivity, inability to verbalize clearly, and low self-awareness among certain learners” (Oxford and Burry-Stock 1995:2). The final limitation deals with the modest percentage of strategy use variance explanation in regression analyses, which suggests that during the COVID-19 pandemic, alternative constructs that were not included in this research served as additional predictors of ESP students’ use of LLSs. Therefore, when considering the utilization of LLSs, additional constructs as individuals’ differences should be examined.

This research may contribute to the existing literature on FLA (in particular ESP) and LLSs by introducing the constructs of proactivity, creativity, emotional regulation as individual difference factors that are connected to and could contribute to a higher use of LLSs. Moreover, our findings carry significant pedagogical implications for ESP educators as they emphasize the importance of acquainting ESP students with LLSs, while also acknowledging the effect of students’ individual dispositions on the utilization of LLSs. It is our hope that our findings inform educators of the ESP students’ use of LLSs during the COVID-19 pandemic, and that ESP educators tailor their syllabi accordingly to not only advance their ESP students’ language skills, but also to cultivate their students’ proactivity, creativity, and emotional regulation, equipping students with skills that will benefit them throughout their studies and, hopefully, careers.

6. CONCLUSION

The findings from this research shed light on various aspects of LLSs and their relationship with ESP students’ self-perceived proactivity, creativity, and emotional regulation during the COVID-19 pandemic. The medium strategy use was observed across all LLSs and the metacognitive strategy was found to be used most frequently, while the affective strategy was ranked the lowest in terms of usage. Statistically significant gender differences were observed and female ESP students were found to employ the affective strategy more frequently compared to male students. On the other hand, male ESP students were found to utilize the cognitive strategy more and perceive themselves as more creative compared to female students. Additionally, part-time students seemed to rely more on the compensation strategy in their ESP learning compared to full-time students. Our findings further show that proactivity is positively correlated with almost all LLSs, while creativity is positively correlated with the social, the memory-related, the cognitive, and the metacognitive strategy. Conversely, emotional regulation showed a negative correlation with the affective and the compensation strategy. Ultimately, proactivity is identified as the most statistically significant individual predictor of the use of almost all LLSs by ESP students, while the *influence of emotions and moods on thoughts* emerged as a statistically significant predictor of the use of the affective strategy. Hence, it can be concluded that proactivity is a vital factor in how ESP students navigated their language

learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thereby, encouraging ESP learners to foster their proactivity, creativity, and emotional regulation, especially in special circumstances, may effectively increase the use of certain LLSs, which could result in enhancing ESP outcomes. Based on the mentioned findings, this research contributes to the understanding of LLS utilization, provides valuable insights for ESP educators and foreign language learners alike, and emphasizes the crucial role of promoting learner individuality in the FLA process.

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THE EFFECT OF ICEBREAKERS ON UNDERGRADUATE LIBYAN STUDENTS' MOTIVATION AND WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE IN ENGLISH

Nagamurali Eragamreddy

English Language Unit, Preparatory Studies Centre, University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Salalah, Sultanate of Oman

ORCID iD: Nagamurali Eragamreddy

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1026-183X>

Abstract. *The purpose of this study is to determine "how icebreakers affect Libyan undergraduate students' motivation and willingness to communicate in English". Pre and post-tests were administered to a single group as part of a pre-experimental study design. During the academic year 2023–2024, semester one, the study was conducted at the Faculty of Education, University of Sebha, Zuwila, Libya. Thirty students from the Department of English were chosen using a purposeful sampling technique. Interviews, observations, and questionnaires were used to gather data. According to the findings, icebreakers considerably raised students' desire and readiness to communicate in English. The study contributes to the field of teaching English by emphasizing how crucial icebreakers are to establishing a supportive learning atmosphere and encouraging communication skills. Prospective investigations have to concentrate on extended periods, cultural adaptations of conversation starters, and methods for reducing the Hawthorne Effect.*

Key words: *Ice-breakers, motivation, students' willingness to communicate, English language teaching.*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background and context of English Language Teaching (ELT)

Language has changed throughout human history, serving as an important indicator of development and advancement. It acts as the main channel for communication and serves as an outlet for cultural transmission across different communities. In Libya, English has become increasingly recognized as a global language, playing a crucial role in facilitating communication between nations for various purposes, including commerce, technology, and education (Gherwash, 2024). Proficiency in English empowers Libyan pupils to adapt to contemporary requirements and actively take part in a rapidly evolving world. It equips them with essential skills for securing employment while strengthening their horizons and creating sufficient opportunities for personal growth (Richards, 2001; Gherwash, 2024).

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Corresponding author: Nagamurali Eragamreddy, English Language Unit, Preparatory Studies Centre, University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Salalah, Sultanate of Oman

E-mail: Nagamurali.Eragamreddy@utas.edu.om

In Libya, the history of English instruction has changed significantly, especially throughout the 20th century. English language teaching (ELT) has seen several changes throughout the years, in contrast to disciplines like mathematics and physics, which have witnessed rather constant teaching methodologies (Gherwash, 2024; Thanasoulas, 2023). The difficulties involved in teaching and learning a new language are reflected in the development of various methods and strategies (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Teachers' use of icebreakers to promote communication and ease students into learning environments is influenced by the cultural background in Libya. For instance, Libyan students frequently use storytelling and humor as effective icebreakers to build relationships with teachers and fellow students.

As ELT has shifted from broad theories about language structure to more focused concepts highlighting exposure, contemporary approaches have replaced conventional methods that prioritized translation and rote memorization. These newer approaches support students' abilities to use English in everyday contexts (Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Wright, 2010). The instructional methods encountered in ELT can be divided into three periods: the traditional methods period, the current method period, and the post-method period. The first period included approaches such as the audio-lingual technique, direct method of instruction (natural method), total physical response approach (understanding approach), and community-based language instruction technique. Each of these evolved in response to earlier methods that failed to meet specific needs related to language instruction and acquisition (Celce-Murcia, 2014).

To address the demands of contemporary ELT and support Libyan students in applying their academic language beyond the classroom, modern approaches have emerged (Gherwash, 2024). When teaching English, two versions of the effective communication approach are utilized: content-driven language instruction, which uses subject matter to teach English, and task-oriented language instruction, which employs assignments to instruct English (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011).

The post-method period is characterized by the idea that certain techniques may be more effective than others. Building on this notion, Prabhu (1990) identifies three responses to the question of why there is no single best method: different approaches are necessary for various teaching and learning contexts; all methods possess some reliability; and there is no definitive right or wrong approach (Baresh, 2024). This flexibility is particularly relevant for Libyan students who benefit from culturally tailored strategies that incorporate local customs and communication styles into their English language learning experiences.

1.2. Importance of motivation and willingness to communicate in ELT

The importance of motivation and willingness to communicate in ELT cannot be overestimated, mostly when dealing with undergraduate students in Libya. Motivation is one of the main features of the educational process (Eragamreddy, 2015); it plays a role in both building up students' competencies and involving them in the learning process. Motivation is quite important, as it relates to how ready and willing students are to learn English. A significant role in how motivated students feel is played by factors such as the classroom environment, friendship with fellow students, and support from teachers (Masgoret & Gardner, 2003). Using icebreakers in this culture will increase motivation, as Libyans are very social people who show their hospitality through good treatment of guests. That will make the atmosphere more open and livelier for students to learn.

It has been discovered from research that highly motivated students are ready, alert, and aware during learning. On the other hand, unmotivated students get distracted and passive. It is, therefore, crucial for the instructor to use different approaches to improve students' motivation. Methods, such as rewarding them for effort and giving positive feedback can significantly enhance students' interaction in learning English. In EFL settings, students often have few chances to hear the target language beyond the class settings. This makes it even more important to find other ways to motivate them (Al Shlowiy, 2014). Teachers are important for motivating students; how they teach can help or demotivate students' desire to speak English (Urhahne, 2015).

The objective of this research is to investigate the potential of ice-breaking techniques in improving motivation and communication readiness among undergraduate students at the Faculty of Education of Sebha University in Zuwila. Observational data indicated that students in their first semester displayed a lack of enthusiasm for learning English, frequently appearing lethargic and disinterested during instructional sessions. In response to this challenge, ice-breaking activities were identified as an approach to revitalize classroom interactions and enhance student participation. According to Jurkiewicz (2020), icebreakers are supposed to lower anxiety levels and make the learning environment much more interactive. The concept of willingness to communicate (WTC), initially introduced by McCroskey and Richmond (1990) in the context of first language settings, was later adapted for the second language learning context by MacIntyre et al. (1998). WTC is recognized as a reliable predictor of success in language learning; thus, promoting students' WTC through effective pedagogical activities such as ice-breakers may lead to improved communication skills in English. By focusing on these elements, this research intends to bring to light the critical relationship that exists between motivation, WTC, and effective teaching practices within the Libyan educational environment.

1.3. Significance of icebreakers in promoting motivation and willingness to communicate

One way to understand ice breaking in the classroom is as a way to address students' emotional or physical coldness. Ice Breaker was employed to establish a learning environment that progressed from saturation to relaxed, from firm to motion (familiar), and from inactive to engaged (Loliyana, 2022). A successful ice-breaking strategy in the classroom, according to Diril (2015), keeps students happy during the learning process. When teaching English, ice-breaking can be done at the beginning of the lesson, during the material delivery, and at the end of the session. Ice breaking is, therefore, crucial to the smooth operation of both the method of instruction and learning as well as the learners' capacity to stay focused during the lesson. Motivation and icebreakers go hand in hand because icebreakers help teachers demonstrate their excitement for the subject matter, learning, and the students. Creating a connection with prior knowledge and connecting the material to what the student already knew were two ways to accomplish this. Theoretically, it can be said that icebreakers were a useful method for getting students interested in studying English. Under the heading " The impact of icebreakers on students' motivation and willingness to communicate in English at Faculty of Education, English Department semester one students of Sebha University, Zuwila," the investigator became keen on conducting a preliminary study.

1.4. The Research's Hypothesis

In line with the specific goals of the research that were identified, the following hypotheses have been stated and prepared accordingly:

Alternative Hypothesis

Undergraduate students in their very first semester at the Faculty of Education, specifically within the Department of English at Zuwila, which is part of Sebha University, will most likely demonstrate much higher levels of motivation and a greater willingness to engage in communication using the English language if icebreaker activities are carefully inserted into the overall classroom experience. The increase in motivation and willingness to communicate will probably emerge in a couple of observable ways: through more engagement, more active participation, and a distinctly more positive attitude toward the learning process concerning the English language.

Null Hypothesis

There is supposed to be no significant or remarkable difference in motivation levels and willingness to communicate in the English language amongst undergraduate students who are presently in their first semester in the Faculty of Education at Zuwila, Sebha University, Department of English, with or without icebreaker activities carried out in their class setting. It will also be proper to assume that the use of icebreaker activities will not bring about any quantifiable or noticeable changes in the overall participation of students and in their attitudes towards the process of learning the target language.

1.5. Research Questions

1. To conduct an in-depth study on the effects and influences of icebreaker activities on the motivational levels of students participating in English language learning. Therefore, the present research aim is to fully analyze and investigate the extent to which the introduction of icebreakers, as active and interactive games, influences the general level of motivation among students. Specifically, this will be done in terms of their willingness to actively take part, as well as their eagerness to interact with material about the English language.
2. To investigate the relationship between the use of icebreakers and students' willingness to communicate in the English language classroom. This objective specifically seeks to explore and examine the extent to which icebreaker activities can greatly improve and enhance students' preparedness and willingness to actively take part in conversations and discussions conducted in the English language. In this way, such activities will be of major importance in fostering improved communication skills for the students who will be involved. These hypotheses and objectives will guide the research process because they give a framework for examining the effects of icebreakers on student motivation and willingness to communicate in an EFL context.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1. Motivation and Willingness to Communicate - Theoretical Framework

The procedure to assess an individual's level of intensity, guidance, and determination in their pursuit of aims is known as motivation (Razak et al., 2018). The inclination of second language learners to initiate and continue actions has additionally been theorized (Ushioda, 2008). Motivation, which is a crucial component of the L2 WTC hierarchical pyramid model's fourth layer, is defined as an inner psychological condition that propels L2 learners to participate in learning activities and models learning behaviors into specific objectives. The propensity for action and persistence in learning has also been attributed to L2 learners (MacIntyre et al., 1998). The theory is that one important factor affecting a person's L2 WTC is their motivation. MacIntyre et al (1998) proposed that the choice to start a conversation is a motivated act driven by both temporary and permanent circumstances. In the fourth section of their pyramid structure for L2 WTC, they encapsulated motivation as an indicator of WTC, claiming that psychological and cultural components of the factor of inspiration for interaction are made up of social and between-group inspiration. A similar theory was put forth by Dörnyei (2005), who suggested that a person's WTC is the outcome of their L2 motivational autonomy framework and that L2 WTC is the product of the interaction between linguistic self-confidence as well as the ideal L2 self.

An increasing corpus of research in a variety of situations supports the main forecasting impact of motivation to learn a language in WTC. This is demonstrated by the experimental research conducted by Lee and Hsieh (2019), which found that among 261 Taiwanese undergraduate English students, motivation and confidence favorably supported second language WTC in a positive way in digital, traditional, and non-traditional classroom settings. Subsequent research by Lee and Draji (2019) with 176 Indonesian language students revealed similar patterns, showing a strong correlation between L2 WTC and a variety of affective variables like determination, inspiration, and self-assurance. Likewise, adopting the second language self-respect, Ebn-Abbasi et al (2022), discovered that among 308 English language students from Iran, prospective self-guides are strongly correlated with WTC. This point was amply demonstrated by a dual-method investigation by Suvongse as well as Chanyoo (2022), which found that among 341 Thai undergraduate students of English, instrumental motivation was an important indicator of L2 WTC.

Khajavy et al. (2018) and Alrabai (2022) verified that WTC and motivation are positively correlated in the EFL contexts of Saudi Arabia, China, and Iran. On the other hand, a few studies from Yashima (2002); Yashima et al., (2004) and Yu (2011) have found that motivation has an indirect impact on WTC. For instance, Yu (2011) found that among 234 Chinese university learners, inspiration subsequently surmised WTC in learning the English language using other optimistic agents of mediation. In general, prior empirical research agrees that motivation contributed to WTC in language learning.

2.2. Previous studies on the use of icebreakers in ELT classrooms

In language learning instances, icebreakers are essential because they act as motivators that improve the learning process as a whole. The purpose of these activities is to establish a welcoming and friendly environment that will help language learners feel a feeling of community. Several psychological and educational vantage points can be used to analyze how icebreakers affect language learners' motivation. First of all, by fostering

social interaction and lowering fear, icebreakers help to create a healthy learning atmosphere. When learning a language, beginners could be nervous about making errors or speaking a foreign language. Since icebreakers are frequently lighthearted and entertaining, they contribute to a laid-back environment where students feel more at ease with one another and the language learning process (Dörnyei, 2005). Since relaxed learners are more likely to participate proactively in the learning process, this anxiety reduction is crucial for increasing motivation.

Additionally, icebreakers increase motivation by encouraging a sense of unity and teamwork among students. Since learning a language is frequently a social activity, students are prone to be motivated to engage in educational activities when they feel linked to their peers (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003). A favorable group dynamic is created by icebreakers that promote cooperation and support among participants, which inspires them to work collaboratively to achieve shared language learning objectives. The affective filter, a term coined by Stephen Krashen to describe emotional elements that may help or impede language learning, is another topic covered by icebreakers (Krashen, 1985). Icebreakers assist decrease the emotional filter, making learners more sensitive to input and motivated to participate in language activities by introducing fun and engaging tasks into the language process of learning.

Although there isn't much scientific evidence on how icebreakers affect language learners' motivation, certain research and educational concepts point to possible advantages. Activities called icebreakers are meant to foster a friendly and relaxed learning atmosphere. By establishing a welcoming and encouraging environment in the educational setting, icebreakers can assist students feel more connected to one another. Higher motivation could be a result of this favorable atmosphere (Deci & Ryan, 1985). When used effectively, icebreakers can help language learners feel less anxious. Anxiety reduction is linked to higher motivation and involvement in the educational process (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). To encourage students to socialize and get to know one another, icebreakers frequently involve interacting socially. Learning a language and motivation have been related to social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978).

Icebreakers frequently call for casual conversation. Motivation for acquiring a language can be positively impacted by increased self-assurance and communication abilities (Bandura, 1977). Icebreakers can be created to draw on the passions and previous knowledge of students, increasing the relevance and curiosity of acquiring language material (Keller, 1987). Enhanced motivation can be attributed to heightened interest rates (Dörnyei, 2001). Certain icebreakers require learners to take responsibility for their education and proactively engage in the procedure of learning. This feeling of individuality may have a beneficial effect on motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Icebreakers can also be designed to accommodate students' varied learning preferences and styles, which will boost their motivation. Language learning can be made more individualized and pleasurable by engaging in activities that cater to different intelligences, such as linguistic, interpersonal, or kinesthetic (Gardner, 1983). Students are more likely to be motivated to actively take part in the language learning process when they discover tasks that align with their favorite methods of learning.

2.3. Effects of icebreakers on willingness to communicate in English

Icebreakers are essential for creating a happy and interactive atmosphere, particularly when learning a language, like English as a second language (ESL). Icebreakers have a variety of effects on people's willingness to communicate (WTC) in English, including linguistic,

social, and psychological ones. Icebreakers play a major role in helping language learners feel less nervous and more confident. Studies like those by Kang (2005) and MacIntyre and Charos (1996) show how anxiety plays a significant role in preventing people from communicating effectively through language. Icebreakers offer students a low-pressure, carefree environment that reduces nervousness and fosters positivity. This anxiety reduction is essential for increasing students' readiness to speak up in English. Icebreakers play a crucial role in promoting social interaction and creating an environment of encouragement among language learners. Studies conducted by Pica et al. (1987) highlight how crucial a supportive social setting is for language acquisition. Through the development of relationships and a sense of assistance among peers, icebreakers help students feel like they belong. Since people are more likely to employ language in a supportive community, social bond in turn has a positive impact on students' willingness to communicate.

By offering chances for real-world language practice, icebreakers also aid in the improvement of language abilities. According to Warschauer and Meskill (2000), language development depends on the application of genuine language in everyday communication contexts. Interactive and communicative exercises that necessitate English expression are frequently used as icebreakers. In addition to improving language proficiency, this real-world practice gives learners more self-assurance when speaking the language, which in turn increases their willingness to communicate. Furthermore, icebreakers have the power to dissolve cultural and social obstacles, especially in contexts where a variety of languages are being learned. Research by Gudykunst and Kim (2003) highlights the importance of intercultural communication skills for language acquisition. An atmosphere that is more welcoming and inclusive is produced by icebreakers that promote cultural exchange and comprehension. As a result, students are more inclined to communicate since they believe more at ease communicating themselves in a setting with a diversity of cultural backgrounds. Notwithstanding these advantages, it's critical to recognize that icebreakers' influence on a person's willingness to communicate may differ based on a variety of individual factors, including individuality, past language learning circumstances, and cultural background (MacIntyre et al., 1998). Although icebreakers usually improve WTC, each of these specific aspects may have an impact on how effective they are.

2.4. Factors influencing motivation and willingness to communicate

In the context of interpersonal communication, motivation and willingness to communicate (WTC) are essential elements, especially when learning a language. An individual's motivation and propensity for communication are influenced by a variety of factors, which can be divided into both internal and external factors. Motivation is greatly influenced by one's personal beliefs and attitudes regarding communication and language acquisition. The significance of attitudes is emphasized by Gardner's (1985) socio-educational model, which contends that motivation is increased by favorable attitudes toward the target language and its speakers. According to Gardner and Lambert (1972), internal factors influencing language learning include instrumental and integrative motivations. Whereas instrumental motivation is motivated by pragmatic objectives, integrative motivation is linked to the desire to become integrated into the intended language's culture. The willingness to communicate can be impacted by the existence of either or both.

Language acquisition can benefit from Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy, which is defined as one's confidence in one's capacity to complete a task. Motivation and WTC are positively correlated with high self-efficacy. Similarly, people who feel better about themselves might be more open to communicating (Yashima, 2002). The job of the

instructor and the general classroom atmosphere have a big impact on WTC and motivation. A classroom environment that is inclusive and positive can encourage students to communicate more readily, and a teacher who is encouraging and helpful can boost motivation (MacIntyre et al., 2003). Peer encouragement, cultural integration, and public perceptions of language acquisition are examples of social and cultural factors that affect motivation. Because they are exposed to and acknowledge linguistic diversity more, students in multicultural and multilingual environments, for example, may feel more motivated (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). The motivation for picking up a language is influenced by media exposure and technological developments. Involvement as well as motivation, can be increased by using interactive language learning applications, internet-based tools, and media materials in the target language (Stockwell, 2012).

2.5. The role of icebreakers in enhancing motivation and fostering a communicative classroom environment

In the classroom, icebreakers are essential because they act as instruments for removing barriers, fostering relationships, and fostering an environment that is open and communicative. These exercises are more than just fillers; they are calculated instruments that help raise student enthusiasm and create a more stimulating learning environment. Students feeling like they belong and have a sense of community is one of the main goals of icebreakers. Icebreakers help students establish a more personal connection with each other by encouraging conversation and creating a laid-back atmosphere. A supportive social environment is crucial for student success and retention, according to a Tinto (1993) study. By encouraging students to talk about their interests and personal experiences, icebreakers help create a welcoming environment in the classroom. Learners who feel connected to their fellow students and their educational setting are more likely to actively take part in class activities, making this sense of belonging a powerful motivator.

Icebreakers also work well to lower anxiety and foster a happy emotional atmosphere. Pupils may experience anxiety at the start of a new academic period, particularly if they are in unfamiliar environments or are surrounded by new peers. With the help of icebreakers, pupils can ease their fears and anxieties by getting to know each other and the teacher. The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) states that improving favorable feelings and lowering tensions both lead to higher motivation. Icebreakers help to create a positive emotional environment that encourages learners to take an active role in the process of learning by creating a laid-back and enjoyable environment. Icebreakers are important for encouraging communication skills besides motivation. A key component of learning is effective communication, and icebreakers give learners a chance to practice and improve these abilities. Effective communication and teamwork are encouraged through group discussions, idea-sharing, and problem-solving. According to a study by Johnson and Johnson (1994), cooperative learning improves academic achievement and communication skills. Icebreakers establish a foundation for ongoing cooperation and communication throughout the course by encouraging cooperative interactions at the start of the term.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research design

The design of this study was pre-experimental. One class served as the experimental class in the pre-experimental design. According to Boyas et al. (2011), the study was pre-

experimental and used "pre- and post-tests on group design." Two observations were made in this design, one before and one after the treatment. Pre-tests are observations taken before the treatment, and post-tests are observations taken after the treatment.

The following conveys the present design:

Table 1 Design of the Study

Group	Pre-text	Treatment	Post-test
Experimental	O1	X	O2

(Gay, 1987).

O1: The competence of the experimental group before giving treatment.

X: Treatment (with icebreakers)

O2: The study's group's competency resulting from treatment.

3.2. The Research's location and time

This study was carried out at the Faculty of Education, University of Sebha, Zuwila, Libya. It took place in the academic year 2023/2024, semester one, from October 1st to October 31st, 2023, for one month.

3.3. Participants and sampling procedure

Purposive sampling was used to obtain the sample. Semester one at the Faculty of Education, English Language Department, University of Sebha, Zuwila was selected by the researcher as a sample. There were 30 students enrolled in the program. The sample was selected by the researcher because it can be an enjoyable and successful means of inspiring them. For this reason, the researcher used icebreakers to positively impact students' motivation and propensity to speak English.

3.4. Data Collection Method

According to Sugiyono (2010), a study tool is a device employed to assess and gather details to facilitate processing. This research tool's purpose was to gather data regarding the study's implementation. This study involved a multidimensional strategy. First, information about students' motivation to learn was obtained through questionnaire replies. Furthermore, two observation sessions were carried out with the use of observation sheets to evaluate the effect of icebreakers on student motivation and communication on a qualitative level. Using this approach, icebreaker activity behavior patterns might be examined in real-time. Moreover, five students were interviewed to include a qualitative component. To gain a deeper knowledge of individual experiences and beliefs regarding the impact of icebreakers on English communication willingness, these interviews attempted to capture nuanced opinions. By combining quantitative and qualitative instruments, the study's findings are more thorough and legitimate, providing a full understanding of the subject.

3.5. Data analysis technique

SPSS 17.0 was used by the researcher to examine the information. The T-test was employed to compare the data from this study to determine whether there were any significant differences between the pre-and post-test scores. However, the researcher categorized the standard deviation and level score motivation of the pupils.

4. FINDINGS

The outcomes of the data analysis served as the foundation for this study's conclusions. Data was gathered through data analysis. The pretest and posttest served as the impact of icebreakers on students' motivation and willingness to communicate in English. Before providing treatment, the pre-test was used to assess the role of icebreakers on students' motivation and willingness to communicate in English, and the post-test was used to evaluate how much the icebreakers impacted students' motivation and willingness to communicate in English.

4.1. The Treatment

The following table shows the findings from being observed before as well as after the procedure.

Table 2 The outcome of the observation both before as well as after the treatment

Aspect	Prior Treatment	During and after treatment
Liveliness	<p>The teacher used the learning approach without the use of an icebreaker during the first session in the pre-test. The class situation was discovered by the researcher as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student participation in the classroom does not equate to increased learning. ▪ The learning materials that the researcher has provided are not generating much interest among the students. ▪ While some students were occupied conversing with their pals, the majority of pupils just sat silently in their chairs and pretended to grasp everything. ▪ A few pupils were operating their phones during the teacher's explanation of the subject. 	<p>Every time the researcher used an icebreaker in a class, it was evident to learners that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ They started to focus on the researcher. ▪ When allowed to play while learning, pupils have become more engaged, particularly in the researcher's team-based icebreaker game. ▪ In the learning environment, learners are interacting with one another more actively.
Understanding	<p>The teacher tested the students on the material that had been explained during the pre-test. The pupils' evidence demonstrated that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Despite the teacher's repeated explanations of the material, they failed to actively respond. ▪ Students exhibited passivity when asked to repeat the vocabulary that was talked about. 	<p>Following the distribution of an icebreaker, the students' motivation began to increase.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The interest of students communicating in English was higher. Students were able to respond to questions posed by the researcher. ▪ Students were excited to complete the assignments that the researcher gave them.

The summary of the observations made both before and after the treatment is provided in the above table. To determine whether the icebreaker method used when teaching English to students was useful to them, comparisons were made. It has been explained in this aspect of

the liveliness that before treatment, students' motivation and willingness to communicate in English was lower. However, following the use of an icebreaker in treatment, students engaged in active learning. When it came to understanding, the students' initial state was one in which they hardly responded to the researcher's questions; however, following the application of the treatment, to answer questions posed by the instructor, the students began to demonstrate an interest in paying attention to the class.

4.2. The Pre-test Questionnaire Results

The following table shows the questionnaires that students provided at the pre-test before receiving treatment from the researcher.

Table 3 The Pre-test Questionnaire Results

Respondent	Statement Number															Total	Category
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15		
R1	3	4	2	3	3	1	2	4	3	2	2	2	4	1	2	38	Average
R2	3	2	1	4	4	2	3	3	3	2	3	2	1	2	2	37	Average
R3	2	2	3	4	1	3	2	3	3	3	2	3	1	2	1	35	Average
R4	3	3	2	2	4	3	3	2	2	3	3	2	2	1	1	36	Average
R5	4	1	3	3	2	3	2	1	4	2	2	2	3	4	2	38	Average
R6	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	1	2	2	3	3	1	3	2	32	Poor
R7	4	3	3	2	3	2	2	3	4	3	3	3	2	3	3	42	Good
R8	3	3	2	4	2	2	4	3	3	1	3	4	2	2	2	40	Average
R9	3	3	2	1	1	3	3	2	2	2	1	3	3	2	3	34	Average
R10	4	3	3	2	3	3	2	1	1	3	3	2	4	2	2	38	Average
R11	3	1	2	3	2	2	1	3	2	4	2	3	3	2	4	37	Average
R12	2	2	1	3	2	2	4	2	4	2	2	3	2	3	2	36	Average
R13	2	2	3	2	4	2	3	3	2	1	4	2	2	2	2	36	Average
R14	4	3	2	1	3	2	2	3	3	2	1	4	2	3	2	37	Average
R15	4	3	3	2	2	2	3	2	1	4	3	1	1	4	4	39	Average
R16	4	2	3	3	1	3	2	3	4	2	3	3	2	2	1	38	Average
R17	3	2	1	4	4	2	3	3	3	2	3	2	1	2	2	37	Average
R18	2	2	3	4	1	3	2	3	3	3	2	3	1	2	1	35	Average
R19	3	3	2	2	4	3	3	2	2	3	3	2	2	1	1	36	Average
R20	4	1	3	3	2	3	2	1	4	2	2	2	3	4	2	38	Average
R21	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	1	2	2	3	3	1	3	2	32	Poor
R22	4	3	3	2	3	2	2	3	4	3	3	3	2	3	3	42	Good
R23	3	3	2	4	2	2	4	3	3	1	3	4	2	2	2	40	Average
R24	3	3	2	1	1	3	3	2	2	2	1	3	3	2	3	34	Average
R25	4	3	3	2	3	3	2	1	1	3	3	2	4	2	2	38	Average
R26	3	1	2	3	2	2	1	3	2	4	2	3	3	2	4	37	Average
R27	2	2	1	3	2	2	4	2	4	2	2	3	2	3	2	36	Average
R28	2	2	3	2	4	2	3	3	2	1	4	2	2	2	2	36	Average
R29	4	3	2	1	3	2	2	3	3	2	1	4	2	3	2	37	Average
R30	4	3	3	2	2	2	3	2	1	4	3	1	1	4	4	39	Average
Total																1110	-
Mean Score																37	Average

The pre-test questionnaire for the students' results is shown in the above table. Thirty students' samples were used in total. Out of 30 students, 2 received a score of 32, placing them in the poor category. 28 students were placed in the average category, with 4 receiving scores of 34, 4 receiving scores of 36, 6 receiving scores of 37, 6 receiving scores of 38, 2 receiving scores of 39, and 2 receiving scores of 40. In comparison, two pupils in the good group received an average of 42. The pre-test categories have an average mean score. 1110 is the overall score of the total students and 37 is the mean score value.

4.3. The Post-test Questionnaire Results

Following their treatment by the researcher, students received the questionnaires at the post-test. This survey will demonstrate the effects of icebreakers on students' willingness and motivation to speak in English as well as whether these factors have increased following the researcher's treatment.

Table 4 The Post-test Questionnaire Results

Respondent	Statement Number															Total	Category
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15		
R1	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	4	3	2	2	2	4	2	3	44	Good
R2	3	4	3	3	3	3	4	4	1	3	4	3	2	3	4	47	Good
R3	4	3	2	4	2	2	3	3	4	4	2	4	2	2	4	45	Good
R4	4	3	2	4	4	3	3	3	4	2	3	2	4	3	2	46	Good
R5	4	1	4	3	4	3	2	3	4	3	2	3	4	4	4	48	Good
R6	4	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	2	3	2	3	3	2	4	45	Good
R7	4	3	4	3	4	3	2	3	4	3	3	3	4	4	4	51	Excellent
R8	3	4	4	3	4	3	2	3	4	3	3	4	4	4	3	51	Excellent
R9	4	2	2	4	4	3	3	3	4	2	3	2	4	3	3	46	Good
R10	4	3	2	1	3	3	3	3	4	2	3	3	2	2	3	44	Good
R11	4	4	2	4	4	3	2	3	4	3	2	4	3	4	2	48	Good
R12	4	2	3	3	1	3	3	3	4	2	3	3	2	2	3	44	Good
R13	2	2	3	2	4	2	3	3	2	2	4	3	2	3	4	41	Average
R14	4	3	3	2	3	2	2	3	4	3	3	3	2	3	3	42	Good
R15	4	3	2	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	2	47	Good
R16	4	2	3	3	1	3	2	3	4	2	3	3	2	2	1	44	Good
R17	3	2	1	4	4	2	3	3	3	2	3	2	1	2	2	47	Good
R18	2	2	3	4	1	3	2	3	3	3	2	3	1	2	1	45	Good
R19	3	3	2	2	4	3	3	2	2	3	3	2	2	1	1	46	Good
R20	4	1	3	3	2	3	2	1	4	2	2	2	3	4	2	48	Good
R21	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	1	2	2	3	3	1	3	2	45	Good
R22	4	3	3	2	3	2	2	3	4	3	3	3	2	3	3	51	Excellent
R23	3	3	2	4	2	2	4	3	3	1	3	4	2	2	2	51	Excellent
R24	3	3	2	1	1	3	3	2	2	2	1	3	3	2	3	46	Good
R25	4	3	3	2	3	3	2	1	1	3	3	2	4	2	2	44	Good
R26	3	1	2	3	2	2	1	3	2	4	2	3	3	2	4	48	Good
R27	2	2	1	3	2	2	4	2	4	2	2	3	2	3	2	44	Good
R28	2	2	3	2	4	2	3	2	1	4	2	2	2	2	2	41	Average
R29	4	3	2	1	3	2	2	3	3	2	1	4	2	3	2	42	Good
R30	4	3	3	2	2	2	3	2	1	4	3	1	1	4	4	47	Good
Total																1378	-
Mean Score																45.9	Average

The post-test questionnaire results for the students are displayed in the above table. Thirty students' samples were used in total. Out of the 30 students, two students received an average score of 41, 24 were placed in the good category, where two students received an average of 42, six received an average of 44, 4 received an average of 45, four pupils received an average of 46, 4 received an average of 47, and 4 more received a score of 48. Four students were placed in the excellent classification, receiving an average of 51. The post-test category has a good mean score. 45.9 is the mean value. The total number of pupils with overall scores is 1378.

4.4. The Students' Pre-test and Post-test Classification

There were fifteen items on the questionnaire. There were four response result categories available for each item: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree.

Table 5 The frequency distribution and the percentage of students' scores before and after the test

No.	Motivation &WTC Category Range Score	Range	Pre-test		Post-test	
			F	P(%)	F	P(%)
1.	Low	15-23	0	0	0	0
2.	Poor	24-32	2	6.67	0	0
3.	Average	33-41	26	86.67	2	6.67
4.	Good	42-50	2	6.66	24	80
5.	Excellent	51-60	0	0	4	13.33
Total			30	100	30	100

According to the above table, out of the thirty pupils who took the pre-test, two fell into the poor category (6.67%), twenty-six into the average category (86.67%), and two into the good category (6.67%). In contrast, of the students who took the post-test, two fell into the average category (6.67%), twenty-four into the good category (80.00%), and four into the excellent category (13.33%). This indicates that the post-test score and its corresponding percentages are higher than those of the pre-test.

4.5. Mean and Standard Deviation Score

The following table displays the mean score and standard deviation score for the pre and post-tests.

Table 6 Total Mean Score and Standard Deviation of the Students in Pre-test and Post-test

Experimental Class	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
	37	2.34	45.9	2.77

The pre- as well as post-test standard deviations and mean values are displayed in the above table. It is visible how many scores increased during the pre and post-tests. When the questionnaire was used for the pre-test, its mean score was 37; when it was used for

the post-test, it increased to 45.9. Additionally, the standard deviation value was 2.34 during the pre-test and 2.77 during the post-test. Thus, the icebreaker technique affects students' motivation and willingness to communicate in English.

4.6. Test of Significance Evaluation

To determine whether or not where N = the total sum of pupils (30), K = the complete number of variables, and the degree of freedom (df) = $N-K$, was statistically different from the mean score for both of the factors (pre- and post-test) at the point of substantial variance (0.05). The outcome of the t-test and t-table computation is displayed in the following table.

Table 7 The T-test and T-table Calculation Results

Variable	T-test	T-table
X1-X2	2.77	2.000

The table above illustrates that the t-test score was greater compared to the t-table score. It suggests that there was a noteworthy distinction within the pupil's pre- as well as post-test results.

5. DISCUSSION

This research aimed to discover the effect of icebreaker activities on first-semester undergraduate students' motivation and willingness, to enroll in the Faculty of Education, Department of English at Zuwila, Sebha University, to communicate in the English language. The findings provided strong support for the alternative hypothesis and rejected the null hypothesis. This discussion merges the research hypotheses and aims with the findings while contrasting and connecting them to previous studies and theoretical frameworks within the field. Findings from the pre-test to post-test results clearly show that icebreaker activities have a significant impact on students' motivation and willingness to take part in English communication. Pre-test observations indicated a lack of enthusiasm, low interaction, and low participation among the pupils. Students showed a lack of activeness, relied on mechanical answers, and avoided active participation in the initial sessions. This vividly aligns with studies showing that mainstream teaching methodology often neglects the social and emotional dimensions of language acquisition (Dörnyei, 2001).

Conversely, the observations carried out after the test showed serious improvements. Students were seen to be more active, participated more actively in collaborative learning, and showed heightened interest in completing assignments and answering questions. The mean score increased from 37 in the pre-test to 45.9 in the post-test, and the standard deviation also increased, which means that there was even more variation in higher levels of performance (SD pre-test = 2.34; SD post-test = 2.77). This finding supports Research Question 1, which aimed to examine the effects of icebreakers on motivation levels.

5.1. Comparative Analysis: Icebreakers and Communication

This positive effect of icebreakers is supported by previous research, which shows that such activities reduce anxiety levels, hence creating a supportive learning environment

(Ghasiyah et al., 2024; Horwitz et al., 1986). As shown in the results of the post-test, 80% of students achieved the "good" category, while 13.33% reached the "excellent" level categories absent in the pretest. This finding highlights the role of icebreakers in improving class interactions and supports the theories on communicative competence, most particularly Hymes' (1972), model where it is foregrounded, that social involvement is significant to language use. Furthermore, the result of the t-test, being statistically significant ($t\text{-test} = 2.77$, $t\text{-table} = 2.000$), reflects a large difference in the outcomes of the pre-test and post-test measurements. This idea is in strong alignment with Dörnyei's (2021) concept known as the motivational self-system, which posits that by cultivating a clear and compelling vision of successful communication, particularly through involvement in engaging and interactive activities, students are more likely to enhance their effort levels and boost their self-confidence.

5.2. Null Hypothesis Revisited

The null hypothesis that icebreaker activities would not significantly affect the level of motivation of students, nor significantly influence their willingness to participate in communication, was convincingly and strongly rejected by the results. The data collected in the study proved not only a quantifiable improvement in motivation but also brought remarkable and positive changes in the students' attitudes as well. The data collected in this study builds upon previous studies that have noted the role organized icebreakers play in promoting interaction among students, particularly in culturally diverse classrooms (Tsui, 1996). However, other researchers have suggested that the benefits of icebreakers are short-lived and serve only to initiate interest, acting more as a 'catalyst' to motivate engagement, rather than a sustained or long-term intervention (MacIntyre et al., 1998). While the present study has found immediate treatment effects immediately after the intervention, future longitudinal research might help to indicate whether these observed improvements in interaction and engagement can continue beyond the duration of the intervention itself.

5.3. Research Question 1: Motivation through icebreakers

The first research hypothesis received strong and comprehensive support from an overwhelming amount of evidence. Observational data did reflect that in the pre-icebreaker period, students were remarkably lethargic and displayed limited levels of enthusiasm in their activities. Improvements that were recorded after treatment are neatly aligned with concepts presented by Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory and have unequivocally placed adequate social interaction as a crucial ingredient to the process of cognitive development. The icebreaker concept initiated a welcoming environment where students were enabled and motivated to participate in discussions and activities without the paralyzing fear of making errors.

5.4. Research Question 2: Willingness to Communicate

The second aim of this study was to explore and extensively examine the complicated association between the activities of icebreakers and students' general willingness to communicate by using the English language. The findings from this study provided evidence of a visibly remarkable and significant gap between the pre-test results, which averaged to fall under 86.67% and the post-test results, which present a distribution of

scores where 80% fell in the good category, while 13.33% achieved an excellent status. This result is very similar to certain research that considers the social aspect to be crucial in the development and improvement of communicative competence as presented in the work of Krashen (1985). Finally, one very remarkable result of the study was a visibly changing situation in the class, which took place during icebreaker activities. Students allowed themselves more open and uninhibited interactions, which helped them develop deeper social connections and relationships with each other. Moreover, it seemed that their overall confidence levels had noticeably improved. The present study findings support the view held by Ellis (2005) that interaction is both a primary cause and a major effect of the process of language acquisition.

While the results are in line with theories supporting interactive and communicative methodological teaching, critics call for a balance between structure and spontaneity. Icebreakers focus on student-centered learning, but some proponents of the structural approaches (Swain, 1985) now argue that grammar and accuracy may be neglected. This study, however, clearly showed that interactive icebreakers did not in any way compromise the understanding of the subject at hand. This assertion is supported by the evidence of improved participation rates and an increase in the number of correct responses taken during the post-tests. It further indicates that the context in which this study was carried out also highlights the critical importance of cultural factors that play a significant role in EFL learning environments. It was also found that icebreakers sensitively fostered a feeling of belonging amongst the students who participated, which resonated very strongly with Hofstede's (2001) framework about collectivist cultures. In these cultures, emphasis on group harmony and cohesion is believed to significantly enhance individual performance within the group setting. The finding very strongly supports the notion of implementing culturally responsive teaching strategies within language teaching and learning as it resonates with the needs and backgrounds of the learners. According to Kuswara (2004), the teaching-learning process must be successful and delightful as well as for the students to remain focused on what they are learning.

6. CONCLUSION

The researcher concluded that introducing icebreakers was a useful tool for raising students' motivation and willingness to communicate in English at semester one students by the discussion and the results. It was demonstrated by the student's motivation level results, which revealed that the t-test score was greater than the t-table value and that the pre and post-test results for the students varied considerably. Therefore, it could be said that treating students with icebreakers could help them become more motivated.

6.1. Contributions to the field of ELT and language teaching

Icebreakers are frequently used along with team-building exercises and are an important part of fostering a positive and stimulating learning environment in the context of English language teaching (ELT) and learning. These exercises are excellent resources for building community, lowering anxiety, and encouraging fluent language learners to communicate. The following, which draws from pedagogical practices and research, analyzes the contributions of icebreakers for ELT and language learning. In language classrooms, icebreakers play a critical role in fostering an inclusive and upbeat environment. These activities promote

conversation among students and between students and instructors in a laid-back environment. A welcoming classroom atmosphere is essential for language learning because it gives students a sense of community and encourages them to take an active role in their education (Brown, 2007). One of the most frequent challenges faced by language learners is language anxiety. Icebreakers, which encourage casual conversation and social interaction, are a useful tool for reducing anxiety. Students are more likely to get over their language anxiety and become more confident when using the target language when they can express themselves in a low-pressure environment. (Horwitz et al., 1986).

One of the main objectives of language instruction is effective communication. With the help of icebreakers, students can hone their language abilities in relevant situations. Students participate in real-world discussions in pairs or groups, which improves their speaking and listening skills. This communicative approach is in line with modern approaches to language teaching that emphasize using language in everyday situations (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Students in many language classes come from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Sharing cultural experiences and viewpoints as an icebreaker promotes awareness of and appreciation for diversity. This enhances the educational process and equips students with intercultural communication skills, which are essential in today's globalized world (Byram, 1997). Icebreakers frequently include cooperative activities that promote collaboration. These exercises teach students how to collaborate, exchange ideas, and find group solutions to problems. These cooperation abilities can be applied to language learning, where cooperation is necessary for group projects, talks, and peer evaluations, all of which support a comprehensive language-learning process (Willis & Willis, 2007). These contributions, which highlight the value of learner-centered, communicative, and culturally inclusive practices, are in line with the developing methodologies and pedagogical approaches in language education.

6.2. Limitations of the study

Within language education, research on the effects of icebreakers on students' motivation and willingness to communicate in English is very important. However, like any research, this research comes with certain limitations that need to be acknowledged. The following are some of the limitations of the present study. The time restriction placed on icebreakers poses a serious obstacle to the study of their effects on students' motivation and willingness to communicate in English. Typically, icebreakers are quick exercises intended to create a positive atmosphere for the class or workshop. This briefness might restrict the observed impact's depth. It won't have enough time to go from the first icebreaker to a consistent motivation or greater willingness to communicate in English. Furthermore, the brief duration might make it impossible to conduct a thorough investigation into the long-term impacts of icebreakers on language learning (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2005). The size of the participant pool is another limitation. With only thirty students, it might be difficult to extrapolate research findings to a larger population. Individual differences can lead to significant differences in language learning experiences, which a small sample size may not be able to fully capture. Furthermore, the transferability of research findings may be impacted by the dynamics of a smaller group being different from those of a larger class. An even more comprehensive and varied sample would yield a more robust understanding of how icebreakers affect motivation and willingness to communicate (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

The research is further complicated by the students' cultural backgrounds. Although cultural neutrality is frequently taken into consideration when designing icebreakers, differences in communication styles and cultural norms may have an impact on how effective these exercises are. Different cultural backgrounds may place a higher value on individual expression than others, and this could lead to differences in how students understand icebreakers. Cultural differences can affect students' engagement with the activities and, in turn, their motivation and willingness to communicate. In this particular context, research ought to take into account the possible impact of cultural factors on the results that are observed (Kim, 2008).

Even though the goal of icebreakers is to foster a lively and positive environment, there isn't much room for the instructor to directly affect the motivation of the class during these exercises. Rather than directly delivering motivational content from the instructor, the main goal of icebreakers is to encourage student interaction. As a result, there may be a limit to how much icebreakers can influence students' motivation. To investigate the motivational elements, more treatments or a more thorough analysis that goes beyond the icebreaker's immediate context would be necessary (Ushioda, 2001). Research may be limited by the appropriateness and accessibility of icebreakers. Not every cultural setting or degree of language ability will suit every icebreaker. Furthermore, icebreakers might lose their novelty over time, particularly if students have already engaged in comparable activities in other classes. This restriction highlights how crucial it is to keep coming up with new ideas and modifications for icebreakers to meet the specific requirements and tastes of students (Dingsøyr et al., 2012).

Motivation and willingness to communicate are difficult concepts to quantify. These complex psychological concepts are subject to influence from a range of internal and external sources. It takes advanced measurement tools to quantify the effect of icebreakers on motivation and willingness to communicate, and even with these tools, it might be difficult to capture the subtle changes resulting from a quick activity. Accurately measuring these constructions and meaningfully interpreting the results are intricate tasks that researchers must be aware of. The Hawthorne effect, in which pupils alter their behavior in reaction to being watched, may have an impact on the findings of studies conducted on icebreakers. When students are aware that they are being observed, they may change their motivation and willingness to communicate either consciously or unconsciously. It can be challenging to distinguish between behavioral changes that are genuinely brought about by the icebreakers and those that are a reaction to the research setting because of this awareness of being watched, which can add an artificiality to the research findings.

6.3. Suggestions for future research

As the body of knowledge regarding how icebreakers affect students' motivation and willingness to communicate in English grows, addressing contextual challenges can strengthen the validity and relevance of research findings. Considering the limitations of the current study, the following recommendations provide directions for future investigation. By performing longitudinal studies over a range of periods, future research can investigate the temporal aspects of the impact of icebreakers. It may be possible to determine whether icebreakers continue to be beneficial over time or if there are diminishing returns by looking into the long-term effects of these techniques on motivation and communication willingness (Hannan et al., 1983). This method can also assist in determining the best times to use

icebreakers in situations where language acquisition is taking place. Even though 30 participants might be a manageable sample size for some studies, more varied participant samples should be the goal of future research. Researchers can improve the external validity of their research by using comparative studies with larger and more diverse groups to help them generalize their findings across a range of demographics, such as age groups, cultural backgrounds, and language proficiency levels (Brysbart, 2019).

Future studies might concentrate on culturally modifying these exercises considering the impact of cultural background on the efficacy of icebreakers (Romani, 2013). It is possible to develop more culturally sensitive and broadly applicable strategies for increasing motivation and communication willingness by looking into how cultural differences affect students' responses to icebreakers and adapting activities accordingly. To overcome the shortage of appropriate icebreakers, more creative designs that can be applied in a variety of settings should be investigated in future studies. Creating icebreakers that are easily adjustable for various cultural contexts, language proficiency levels, and classroom dynamics could be one way to achieve this. Using icebreakers that are digitally and technologically enhanced could provide new opportunities for student engagement.

Given that teachers have less opportunity to inspire their students, further studies should examine how professional development initiatives for teachers affect how well icebreakers are used. The effectiveness of icebreakers in language classrooms can be enhanced by looking into ways to give teachers the knowledge and abilities to optimize their motivational power (Pranata et al., 2021; Purnama et al., 2019). Future research should include strategies to reduce the Hawthorne Effect, which occurs when participants change their behavior because they are aware that they are being watched (McCambridge et al., 2014). This could entail conducting studies with a naturalistic design, utilizing control groups, or utilizing more covert observation techniques to watch students in their real-world classrooms without realizing that they are being observed. Future research should use mixed methods approaches because measuring motivation and willingness to communicate can be challenging. The integration of quantitative assessments, like surveys and standardized tests, with qualitative techniques, like reflective journals and in-depth interviewing, can yield a more all-encompassing comprehension of the complex dynamics of motivation and willingness in language learning environments (Lee, 2023).

The researcher would like to recommend that icebreakers be used going forward in the English language program based on the study's findings regarding the influence of icebreakers on students' motivation and willingness to communicate in English. Furthermore, icebreakers are useful for all academic subjects, besides English classrooms. The teacher has a wide range of options for implementing icebreakers in the classroom by employing different activities. As a result, the pupils participate in more activities and have more motivation so that there will be more opportunities to be exposed to English language communication. In a learning environment, icebreakers also prevent a monotonous atmosphere.

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THE ROLE OF CULTURE AND ESP IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF SPECIALISTS

Anna Tenieshvili

Independent Researcher, Georgia

ORCID iD: Anna Tenieshvili

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2495-9975>

Abstract. *As it is known culture is divided into the following sub-fields: national culture, professional culture and organizational culture. National culture conditions collective mental programming or “software of the mind” (Hofstede, 2001), i.e. the way of thinking of people of one and the same nation and, consequently, professionals belonging to this nation. Organizational culture specifies norms of behavior of professionals of one certain field from organizational point of view. Professional culture conditions ways of behavior of specialists in professional situations. English for Specific Purposes in combination with professional culture are very important means for creating common model of professional of certain field, thus ensuring the basis for unification of professionals from all over the world, in this way making significant contribution to globalization. Professional culture in combination with English for Specific Purposes can become effective means for developing communicative skills in professionals.*

On the examples of absolutely different fields of human activity such as Medical and Maritime fields, we can see that due to professional culture medical specialists from all over the world have very much in common. Knowledge of Latin for Medicine, that can be considered to be the earliest example of Language for Specific Purposes, became important supplemental basis for this unification. In 1980s the English language was officially recognized as working language of maritime field. This fact as well as common professional culture significantly contributed to globalization of maritime field. Consequently, professional culture and English for Specific Purposes make significant contribution to development of model of professionals eligible for employment on the international level. Therefore, in the present article we offer consideration of syllabi for different ESP courses that would contain “culture” elements. Successful development of such syllabi that could be compiled on the global level would make significant contribution to globalization of different fields of human activity and could simplify the process of preparation of specialists in ESP both at higher educational institutions and international specialized companies on the international level. Practical implementation of this approach would be especially important for countries like Georgia that do not have significant experience in preparation of specialists who would be eligible for international employment.

Key words: *English for Specific Purposes, culture, cultural awareness, cultural competence, globalization*

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Corresponding author: Anna Tenieshvili, Independent Researcher

E-mail: anna_tenieshvili@yahoo.com

1. INTRODUCTION

The main aim of present article is to offer ways of development of common model of specialists of different professional fields who would be eligible to be employed and work on the international level.

Development of such professionals/specialists implies not only professional skills but also communicative/soft skills. Therefore, I think that one of the ways to achieve the above-mentioned goal is to supplement the curriculums of higher educational institutions with combination of correspondent ESP course and cultural elements. For this purpose, the proper ESP syllabus should be developed that would comprise cultural elements. The English language specialists who will work on development of such course should pay particular attention on thorough distinction between General English with national culture elements from English for Specific Purposes with professional culture elements as in most fields, professional culture and English for Specific Purposes would make significant contribution to development of model of professionals eligible for employment on the international level. Successful development of such model of the “cosmopolitan” specialists would make significant contribution to the process of globalization.

The present article covers such phenomena as language and culture, global model of international employee, interconnection existing between foreign language and its culture that becomes guiding factor for the language learner and ESP learners, some suggestions regarding design of ESP syllabus that would comprise elements of culture, intercultural awareness and intercultural competence.

2. METHODOLOGY USED

The present article and research offered in it are based on combination of qualitative research method and application of some review elements in it. The phenomenon of ESP is considered in combination with such phenomenon as culture is. The main scientific value of the article is suggestion of the idea of development of “cosmopolitan” models of specialists who would be eligible on the international labour market and possible ways for implementation of this goal. The review of the relevant opinions of different scholars of the field is offered in the paper for the purposes of confirmation of certain opinions and illustration of the essence of newly offered ideas.

3. LANGUAGE AND CULTURE, ESP AND CULTURE

3.1. Theoretical basis of the article

The present article represents piece of opinion regarding role of ESP and culture in professional development of specialists of different fields. It is an attempt to consider role of culture and ESP for professional development of specialists of different fields. I have mainly based my work on theoretical works of the following scholars: Ivona Baranovskaja, Pavel Skorupa, Moya Brennan, Margaret Van Naersseen, Maria Bunedia Cambonero, Anqi Dou, Rashid Ali Farrah Diebaa, T. N. Fedulenkova, V.Fielden Laura, Mercedes Rico, Alyc Frelick, Imomov, Monica Kavalir, Smaine Khalki, Ineta Luka, Thi Thuy Linh Nguyen, Kathem Mohammed Qattous, Tatjana Sinkus, Inese Ozola, Yulia P.Ten, Wiwczarowski, B.Troy.

Development and implementation of the approach offered in the present work would be especially important for countries like Georgia that do not have significant experience in preparation of specialists who would be eligible for international employment. The process of integration of elements of culture and ESP into curricula at higher education institutions in countries like Georgia is just in the process of preparation and development. Therefore, in the present article I am going to consider ESP course in combination with cultural elements as a basis for development of universal models of specialists for different professional fields. The development of the model of the specialist who would be eligible for employment on the international level requires specific approach during the process of education. Proper teaching of ESP course with integration of culture elements into it would contribute to finding the solution to this question. It would be reasonable to develop certain approach in the students to raise cultural awareness and be adapted to people of different nations and cultures more easily rather than being focused only on teaching culture to the students, that would be very difficult as students might work with representatives of numerous cultures and all cultures cannot be taught simultaneously within one course. Thus, the elements of intercultural awareness and intercultural competence should be rendered to ESP learners in order to develop communicative skills in ESP learners who will work on the international level.

Considering language on different levels and adding cultural elements to language studies is natural as language and culture are two inseparable phenomena. The idea of interconnection between language and culture is expressed by Maria Bunedia Cambonero in her article “Considering Cultural Content in Language for Specific Purposes: Business Spanish Curricula”: “It is widely accepted that language learning implies cultural comprehension alongside linguistic acquisition” [Cambonero, 2013:62].

As cited by Baranovskaay and Skorupa in the article “Some aspects of culture teaching in foreign language and ESP classes: cultural scripts and small talk”: “In 1972, Dell Hymes (discussed in Hyde 1998; Usó-Juan, Martínez-Flor2008), a sociolinguist and an anthropologist, was the first to assert that language and culture were inseparable. He viewed language as a medium to express culture of a particular cultural group. For Hymes it was vital to have the perception of “context” in order to use language appropriately and, thus, correctly” (Hyde 1998) represent different cultures” [Baranovskaay & Skorupa, 2011:120].

In order to prove the interconnection existing between language and culture I would also like to refer to opinions of several scholars. Thus, Qattous mentioned in his PhD thesis “The Cultural Dimension of English for Specific Purposes”: “...also culture is taught/learned unconsciously in a foreign language classroom whether you like it or not” [Qattous, 1995:95]. As cited by Ngyuen: “Valdes (1986, p.121) maintained that “it is virtually impossible to teach a language without concerning cultural content.” (Factors Affecting the Learning of English for Specific Purposes of the third-year English-major students at University of Phan Thiet p.31). ... also mentions “language is always the carrier of culture and it has unconscious cultural patterns that can be absorbed with the learning of the language” [Ngyuyen, 2022:95].

As Frelick and Van Naerssen mention in their paper “Professional Cultural Orientation in ESP”: “Since professional fields are as influenced by cultural assumptions as any other area of life, better understanding of these differences and the theories behind them may enable all of us to achieve more meaningful cooperative results in the attempt to bridge the barriers of language and tradition” [Frelick&Van Naerssen, 1982:13].

Language and culture are inseparable parts of individual of one particular nation and society. Qattous also mentioned: "It has been argued that language, thought and culture are interrelated. The definition of culture shows various definitions considering it as a system of social behaviour, or a way of life, emphasized by anthropologists, as knowledge and meanings that are historically transmitted through language, as values and concepts reflected in practices, as socialisation to the individual in the process of becoming a human being from infancy, and as a communication system through which different cultures can understand each others' way of thinking and behaving" "[Qattous, 1995:95]. Qattous was also citing Hodge and Kress who were mentioning that "Language is given to the individual by the society in which he or she lives. It is a key instrument in socialization, and the means whereby society forms and permeates the individual's consciousness" (Hodge & Kress, 1993:1). "[Qattous, 1995:63]. Frelick and Van Naerssen in their paper "Professional Cultural Orientation in ESP" mention: "Language is like a mirror. It can clearly reflect the cultural connotation of a language. The two depend on each other. To understand a language, we must first understand culture, and learning culture must master language" [Frelick & Van Naerssen 1982:452].

3.2. The phenomenon of "culture"

Since culture is one of the main subjects of this article, it would be expedient to consider the phenomenon of culture itself and its subbranches mentioning that culture is divided into the following sub-fields: national culture, professional culture and organizational culture. Initially, I would like to refer to opinions of various scholars who did some research on such phenomenon as culture is. According to Kavalir who mentions in his article "Culture in ESP Syllabus: Why and How": "The literature typically distinguishes between Culture with a "big C" and culture with a "little c". Traditional study of British and American/Canadian life and institutions has placed emphasis on "big C" or "achievement" culture – history, geography, institutions, literature, art and music – at the expense of "little c", "behaviour" or "behavioural" culture, which includes cultural behaviours, culturally-influenced beliefs and perceptions (cf. Curkovic Kalebic 1998, Stern 1992, Strevens 1977, Tomalin and Stempleski 1993). It is the latter, however, that seems to be of greater importance for ESP courses [Kavalir. 2013:115].

As mentioned by Qattous in his thesis "The Cultural Dimension of English for Specific Purposes: "Culture has been considered as 'socially acquired knowledge' (Round, 1988; Saville-Troike, 1989; Lyons, 1990; Alptekin, 1993; Treuba, 1991) that Widdowson (1990) calls 'schematic knowledge' which he identifies as modes of thought and social behaviour, that are considered customary in every society but not necessarily normal in another society" (p.60). The same author cites Barron who was saying that: "Culture is an information-processing system which has links with education, and ultimately, therefore, with ESP, because it involves the transfer of information in a factual system, the purpose of which is to produce fit members of society" (Barron, 1991:176) [Qattous, 2013:89]. As stated by Farrah who mentions in his article "Language and Culture in English for Business Purposes: Noticing Their Importance Through Television Advertisements": "Culture can be national, professional, organizational and personal" [Farrah, 2013:31]. In this way Farrah adds personal culture to the generally accepted three sub-fields of culture.

In order to be more precise with explanation of the essence of the sub-fields of such phenomenon as culture is, I would like to offer the following definitions of sub-classes of

culture: National culture is the norms, behaviors, beliefs, customs, and values shared by the population of a sovereign nation (e.g., a Chinese or Canadian national culture). It refers to specific characteristics such as language, religion, ethnic and racial identity, cultural history and traditions. (<https://www.igi-global.com/dictionary/national-culture-and-the-social-relations-of-anywhere-working/19905#:~:text=National%20culture%20is%20the%20norms,identity%2C%20cultural%20history%20and%20traditions.>) Professional culture is a set of knowledge skills that will make each specific type of worker a master of his or her job, working at world class standards [Imomov, 2020:159]. Organizational culture is the set of values, beliefs, attitudes, systems, and rules that outline and influence employee behavior within an organization [<https://www.achievers.com/blog/organizational-culture-definition/#:~:text=What%20is%20organizational%20culture%3F,the%20organization%20and%20its%20brand>]).

As per Hofstede cited by Qattous in his thesis “The Cultural Dimension of English for Specific Purposes”: "Culture' in general was defined as 'the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another. Consequently, 'organizational culture' can be defined as the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one organization from another" (Hofstede, 1991:180) [Qattous, 1995:65]. On basis of the above-given information, professional culture can be described as 'the collective programming of mind which distinguishes professionals of one field from the professionals of another field, and, national culture is 'the collective programming of mind which distinguishes the representatives of one nation from representatives of another nation.

In the article “Language Socialization in Professional Cultures: Language for Specific Purposes” Brennan and Van Naerssen mentioned: “Only in very recent years has some attention been consciously paid to the culture of the professional discipline, and in a few instances, to the home culture of the learner” [Brennan&Van Naerssen, 1993:18]. Later on they stated that “As the focus of LSP (Language for Specific Purposes) research is beginning to coincide much more strongly with a cultural focus, we would like to suggest that we can borrow several concepts from ethnographers and language socialization researchers” [Brennan&Van Naerssen, 1993:19].

Qattous also considered the phenomenon of organizational culture mentioning that: “Language programs can carry organizational culture which can be taught to employees to adapt to the new organization’s values and concepts that require appropriate behaviour or practice at work for the sake of achievement and harmony in a multinational multicultural work community [Qattous, 1995:95]. Qattous continues his contemplation of the essence of organizational culture: “The purpose of culture teaching is adapting the learners to a new cultural situation in the foreign language community with the aim of acculturating learners, facilitating communication with the native speakers for a better understanding of other cultures or for survival in the foreign community. Teaching organizational culture, whether business or vocational culture, aims at social survival in the job community. Moreover, it is to understand other cultures as points of view and not as inferior and superior, or wrong and right” [Qattous, 1995:96]. In his thesis “Cultural Dimension of English for Specific Purposes” Qattous also states that “organizational culture, the difference is very narrow in definition. Its definition has the major characteristics of the general definitions of 'social culture', such as being values, meanings, knowledge, behaviour, and historically transmitted and shared by all members of the organizational community. The difference may be in terms of job community instead of a non-job-related social community. Organizational culture is defined as "... the historically transmitted beliefs, behaviour, symbols and values of an organization" (Garratt, 1994:105) [Qattous, 1995:64].

Based on the above-given information I can say that the phenomenon of culture is divided into several sub-fields: national culture, professional culture and organizational culture. National culture conditions collective mental programming or “software of the mind” (Hofstede, 2001), i.e. the way of thinking of people of one and the same nation and, consequently, professionals belonging to this nation. Organizational culture specifies norms of behavior of professionals of one certain field from organizational point of view. Professional culture conditions ways of behavior of specialists in professional situations. English for Specific Purposes in combination with professional culture are very important means for creating common model of professional of certain field, thus ensuring the basis for unification of professionals from all over the world, in this way making significant contribution to globalization. Professional culture in combination with English for Specific Purposes can become effective means for developing communicative skills in professionals that would contribute to development of model of professionals who would be eligible for employment on the international level.

Since English for Specific Purposes has recently become means of widening the boundaries and connecting the professionals from different countries, such phenomenon as culture and breaking cultural boundaries became important subject of research and studies. As for ESP and development of the model of specialists/professionals who would be eligible for employment on the international level, such issues as knowledge of General English (GE), ESP (language + terminology), professional knowledge of the field and professional culture to which organizational culture can be added if people work in one organization can become the basis for the unification of specialists of one particular field throughout the world.

3.3. Global model of international employee

The importance of cultural components in ESP program is precisely described by Qattous in his thesis “The Cultural Dimension of English for Specific Purposes”: “The ESP program should present the trainees with activities that make them live the cultural experience in focus by being involved in a communicative situation that encourages them to feel and behave according to the regulations, rules of behaviour, principles of work and value system in the organization” [Qattous, 1995:317].

For achieving the goal of development of one common model of ESP professional, higher educational institutions should develop the strategy of reaching this goal. For this purpose, it is necessary to develop corresponding course integrating elements of culture in it. This course should comprise those elements of General English that are related to national culture, whereas the ESP course itself should be based on professional culture, the elements of organizational culture should be added as a supplementary material. In addition to the work on language materials and materials related to the phenomenon of culture, it would be necessary to take into consideration such phenomena as cultural/intercultural/cross-cultural awareness and cultural/intercultural competence. Although even several years ago cultural aspect was offered as subject of studies, nowadays it would be more expedient to focus on development of cultural and intercultural awareness and development of global model of international employee.

The above-mentioned approach could be supported by the opinion of Dou.: “The integration of cultural education into ESP education is supported and inspired by various theories, with the core being the theory of intercultural communication. This theory

dives into the close connection between language and culture asserting that language is not only a tool for exchanging information but also a key means of understanding and expressing culture” [Dou, 2024:171].

In ESP education, learning language extends beyond vocabulary and grammar to include an understanding and application of the meanings and uses of language elements within specific cultural contents.

3.4. Intercultural awareness, intercultural competence

In order to illustrate the importance of such phenomena as cultural/intercultural/cross-cultural awareness and cultural/intercultural competence, it would be expedient to mention definitions of the above-mentioned phenomena given in www.wikipedia.org: Cultural sensitivity, also referred to as cross-cultural sensitivity or cultural awareness, is the knowledge, awareness, and acceptance of other cultures and others' cultural identities. It is related to cultural competence (the skills needed for effective communication with people of other cultures, which includes cross-cultural competence), and is sometimes regarded as the precursor to the achievement of cultural competence, but is a more commonly used term. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_sensitivity As for such phenomenon as cultural competence, according to www.wikipedia.org:

Cultural competence, also known as intercultural competence, is a range of cognitive, affective, behavioural, and linguistic skills that lead to effective and appropriate communication with people of other cultures. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_competence#:~:text=Cultural%20competence%2C%20also%20known%20as,with%20people%20of%20other%20cultures

When it comes to the importance of role of culture in ESP courses we should highlight that it is development of intercultural awareness and intercultural competence that should be paid particular attention on. Since such skill as intercultural awareness is the very skill that would enable future specialists to cooperate effectively on the international labour market in multicultural professional environment.

The purpose of cultural/intercultural/cross-cultural awareness is explained by Khalki in the article “The Relationship of Language and Culture in ESP”: “To use cultural awareness as a fostering factor for developing communicative competence in the target language (The Relationship of Language and Culture in ESP” [Khalki, 2017:275]. As Luka cites in her article ““Facilitating the Development of Tourism Students’ Intercultural Language Competence in an ESP Course”: “The study regarding English language competence and intercultural competence are similar to those of the study conducted in Lithuania (Pukelis &Pileicikiene 2009) which show that students have developed an ability to work with people from other cultural environments, they possess knowledge of intercultural differences, professional knowledge of other countries and have highly developed foreign language competence. These abilities coincide with the generic competences of the Tuning project – knowledge of a second language, appreciation of diversity and multiculturalism, ability to work in an international context, understanding of cultures and customs of other countries” [Luka, 2012: 145]. As cited by Sinkus and Ozola in their article ““Integrating Intercultural Dimension in ESP Course for Undergraduate IT Students”: “According to Leung [2, p.519], intercultural competence is the “ability to function effectively across cultures, to think and act appropriately, and to

communicate and work with people from different cultural backgrounds either at home or abroad” [Sinkus&Ozola, 2023:810].

Speaking about cultural/intercultural/cross-cultural awareness and cultural/intercultural competence one cannot help mentioning system of symbols that exists in any language. As stated by Ten in the article “Symbol as Universal Non-verbal Means of Intercultural Communication in the Time of Globalization”: “Intercultural communication is “the act of understanding and being understood by, an audience of another culture” [Ten, 2014:41]. The author also mentions that here are three main elements of intercultural communication: 1) a person who communicates; 2) the symbols by which it is communicated; 3) a person who interprets the symbols [Ten, 2014:40].

Even such linguistic means as phraseological units can be considered as bearers of culture. As stated by Fedulenkova in her article “Cross-Cultural awareness of Phraseology in ESP Learning”: “Phraseological units present the mirror of the native speakers’ culture. They accumulate much cultural and sociolinguistic information to turn into inexhaustible sources of domain-specific knowledge and a reliable path to intercultural understanding. By means of their components they enable the ESP learner to enter the cultural space of the native speaker, which helps him/ her to perceive the cultural code and the tints of the phraseological meaning [Fedulenkova, 2016:230].

Therefore, cultural/intercultural/cross-cultural awareness and cultural/intercultural competence become very important for developing adequate skills in the learners and preparing them for work in multicultural environment. Intercultural Awareness can be developed on basis of professional culture in professional settings and ESP could become additional basis for it. Initially cultural awareness is developed during learning of General English the learners of General English always get close to English culture. Therefore, those who speak good English are always closer to English national culture and have more in common with native speakers of English and other learners of English than those who do not. As Khalki stated in his article “The Relationship of Language and Culture in ESP: Such relationship between language and culture raises attention to learning culture through language teaching [Khalki, 2017:277]. According to Khalki “If language is considered as social practice, then culture should become the core of language teaching to the point that cultural awareness should be seen as enabling language proficiency [Khalki, 2017:278]. He also mentions that CA is necessary “To understand the forms of organizations, concepts, customary beliefs and patterns of behaviour of members of the target culture community” [Khalki, 2017:279]. Later on, he continues stating that cultural/intercultural/cross-cultural awareness and cultural/intercultural competence are also necessary in order:

- To acquire enough knowledge and understanding of the target culture with the purpose of developing a tolerant attitude towards its community.
- To develop an awareness of the differences and similarities existing between cultures and their implications.
- To be able to behave linguistically and non-linguistically in such a way that one’s intended meanings are understood by members of the target language and culture community.
- To use cultural awareness as a fostering factor for developing communicative competence in the target language” [Khalki, 2017:275].

During last few decades the English language has become “lingua franca” in different fields of human activity throughout the world contributing to the development of cosmopolitan model of humans. Similarly, the development of intercultural awareness and

intercultural competence would get us closer to development of sample/pattern of intercultural awareness model that would contribute to facilitation of intercultural communication including certain professional fields of human activity that require ESP courses to be included in their curriculum. Any learner of foreign language gets closer to the culture this language belongs to, since any language is part of culture. Development of cultural/intercultural/cross-cultural awareness and cultural/intercultural competence would contribute to development of universal model of professional that would erase the existing differences and peculiarities distinguishing them.

As per Sinkus and Ozola “Nowadays, the English language is viewed as an international language and a means of intercultural professional communication in the globalized world. Developing students’ intercultural communicative competence is considered to be one of the responsibilities of ESP teachers, so integrating intercultural dimension in the professional English course is of paramount importance” [Sinkus&Ozla, 2023:815].

Since language represents significant part of any culture, even if culture is not included in curriculum of language studies, it is incorporated in the hidden curriculum since it is well-known fact that language and culture are interrelated/interconnected and are two inseparable phenomena. The phenomenon of culture, its subfields and the derived notions of cultural/intercultural/cross-cultural awareness and cultural/intercultural competence are considered in the present article as one of the main aims of the present article is to prove the necessity of incorporation of culture into ESP course and recommending methods of implementation of this aim that would facilitate communication between specialists of the field. This aim represents part of the general aim of the present article that is, as stated earlier, to offer ways of development of common model of specialists of different professional fields who would be eligible to be employed and work on the international level.

Since ESP is aimed at facilitating communication and cooperation between professionals from different countries, it would be expedient to determine possible options how to achieve cultural/intercultural/cross-cultural awareness and cultural/intercultural competence:

- 1) by approaching representative of other nation, their concrete individuals and cultures;
- 2) by developing common model of professional in working environment/professional settings. ESP and professional knowledge could become good basis for achieving these goals

The other issue that becomes more and more important is the internationalization of studies process by internationalization of curricula of higher educational institutions. Therefore, Wiwczaroski in his article “Integrating Language Learning and Culture into an ESP International Marketing Course Syllabus” mentions:” internationalization of the curricula is a must for Hungarian higher education in the future to provide its students with all the necessary skills and competencies that the globalized world demands [Wiwczaroski, 2014: 69]. As Baranovskaya and Skorupa mentioned in their article “Some Aspects of Culture Teaching in Foreign Language and ESP classes: Cultural Scripts and Small Talk”: “The development of people’s cultural awareness leads them to better critical thinking about, sensitivity to, and tolerance for both their own culture and the culture of the others” [Baranovskaya&Skorupa, 2011:129]. In his work “Factors Affecting the Learning of English for Specific Purposes of the third-year English-major students at University of Phan Thiet” Nguyen stated that “ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner’s reasons for learning”. in ESP courses, the learners mainly use professional skills. They learn English for their job-related future. In the same view, Hutchinson and Waters (1989) added that what differentiates ESP from GE is the realization of learners’ needs since ESP students know exactly why they need English” [Nguyen, 2022:28].

3.5. Interconnection between foreign language and its culture

The basis for successful acquisition of any ESP course is good knowledge of General English. One should also take into consideration the fact that any General English course comprises elements of national culture of the nation this language belongs to and, consequently, the learner of English who has good command of GE has already been immersed into English culture as the English language as any other language represents significant part of national culture. Thus, General English is bearer of English and American cultures. Any person who knows English well gets closer to its culture, therefore, the people who speak English can find something in common easier than those who don't. The cultural element is contained in any language as both language and culture represent certain nation. The above-mentioned statement can be supported by Qattous who cited Widdowson in his PhD thesis states: "... it is not the business of language teaching to bridge the cultural gap, that a concern for culture can indeed be a distinction from more pressing pedagogic matters, and that the acquiring of cultural knowledge, in so far as this is relevant to language learning as such, is a corollary and not a condition of the language learning process" (Widdowson, 1988:13) [Qattous, 1995:69].

Alongside the interconnection existing between GE and national culture, it would be expedient to mention the fact that GE is part of any ESP branch, consequently, national culture is contained in ESP course, even if it is hidden, but in addition to that there is phenomenon of professional culture that any ESP branch comprises.

The following table (Table 1) could be developed on basis of above-given information.

Language	Culture	Skills
General English	National culture	Language skills, communication skills
English for Specific Purposes	Professional culture	Language skills, communication skills, enhanced knowledge of the specialty in English
Professionalism – English language proficiency in professional setting - Organizational Culture		

As it can be seen from the above-given table, ESP is closely interconnected with professional culture. The importance of GE for mastering of ESP and development of intercultural skills should not be underestimated. GE is bearer of national culture, ESP includes GE and consequently includes national culture, ESP is bearer of professional culture. If ESP represents cultural education dimension, good knowledge of ESP and professional culture would contribute to improvement of organizational culture in specific working environment.

3.6. Some recommendations on design of ESP syllabus comprising "culture" elements

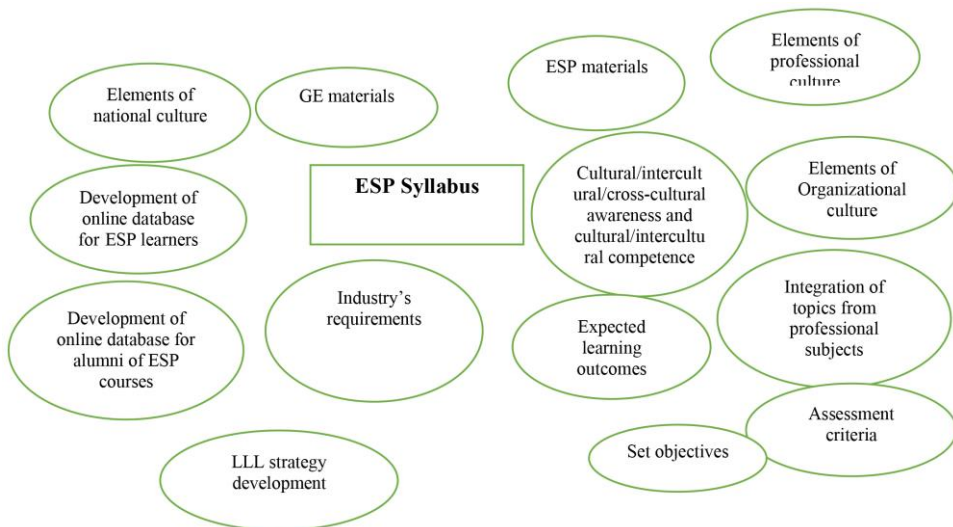
In my opinion the ESP course that would contain cultural issues should contain the following components:

- 1) Topics of GE that contain national cultural elements;
- 2) Establishing interrelation between ESP, professional culture and professional field, e.g. (ME, field of Medicine);

- 3) Ways of application of two above-given items to develop cultural/intercultural/cross-cultural awareness and cultural/intercultural competence;
- 4) Considering national culture, professional culture, organizational culture on practical examples: case studies, role-plays; www.youtube.com videos, etc.
- 5) Development of Lifelong Learning (LLL) strategies to profound professional knowledge of ESP learners;
- 6) Perspectives of development of web-based platforms such as www.moodle.com, www.moodlecloud.com as for ESP courses as well for professionals of certain fields world-wide aimed at unification of specialists of certain field.

In order to illustrate all these components, I decided to make the following concept map of ESP syllabus:

Concept Map of ESP Syllabus



Development of the curriculum for preparation of the relevant specialists, in its turn, would contribute to the process of globalization. Integration of topics of GE with elements of national culture will help ESP learners to get closer to these both phenomena that represent basis for successful acquisition of ESP course and elements of professional culture. As it has already been mentioned, it is very important to take into consideration the fact that such phenomenon as culture is very closely interconnected with General English. Therefore, it is very important for ESP learners to have good basis of General English since it is the best way to get closer to national culture.

Proper rendition of ESP course comprising texts on professional topics that would build up professional knowledge making focus on terminology of the field will contribute to development of professional culture in ESP learners will become good basis for

formation of proper modern “cosmopolitan” specialists. The important basis for unification of the specialists of one certain field from all over the world might be knowledge of specifics of this field. Even the knowledge of terminology can become means of development of common professional culture, and medical field is a good example of that. On the examples of absolutely different fields of human activity such as Medical and Maritime fields are, we can see that due to professional culture medical specialists from all over the world have very much in common. In addition to their professional knowledge of certain field of Medicine, they have knowledge of Latin for Medicine, that can be considered to be the earliest example of Language for Specific Purposes, and that is important supplemental basis for the unification of medical specialists throughout the world.

Although officially cultural element has not been included into Maritime English course, it is still incorporated in hidden curriculum at maritime educational and training institutions. Maritime field can be used as an example of practical application of cultural/intercultural/cross-cultural awareness and cultural/intercultural competence. In 1980s the English language was officially recognized as working language of maritime field. This fact as well as common professional culture and development of cultural/intercultural/cross-cultural awareness and cultural/intercultural competence among seafarers on the international level significantly contributed to globalization of maritime field. The specialists of this type are prepared in such issues as cultural/intercultural/cross-cultural awareness and cultural/intercultural competence as these phenomena will be rendered to them through GE and ESP courses, usually in form of hidden curriculum that ensures rendition of elements of national and professional cultures. Acquisition of language skills and cultural awareness can be offered in such a manner in ESP course so they are absorbed by the learner during educational process and would become valuable asset when the alumni/future specialists start work in a certain field. The adequate explanation of cultural/intercultural/cross-cultural awareness and cultural/intercultural competence can be found in the following explanation given in one of the documents of American Medical Association titled “Delivering Culturally Effective Care to Adolescents”: “The Knowledge and Interpersonal skills that allows providers to understand, appreciate, and work with individuals from cultures other than their own. It involves an awareness and acceptance of cultural differences: self-awareness; knowledge of the patients’ culture; and adaptation of skills” [Delivering Culturally Effective Care to Adolescents, p. 37].

The three sub-fields of culture: national culture, professional culture, organizational culture and even personal culture as per Farrah [Farrah, 2013:31] should be discussed with ESP learners on the theoretical level, and practical examples could be taken from such platforms as www.youtube.com, etc. The acquired knowledge and experience can be practiced in role-plays during educational process. The support to the above-mentioned idea of development of web-based platforms can be found in Dou’s article “Intercultural communication in ESP education” when he mentions: “Some ESP courses use virtual platforms and online collaboration tools to simulate international work environments, further strengthening students’ cross-cultural communication skills. These platforms provide students with opportunities to communicate with people worldwide, helping them practice handling cultural differences and communication barriers in a safe environment. Direct interaction with instructors and peers from different cultural backgrounds is also essential way to cultivate students’ intercultural competence. Through group discussions, collaborative projects and cultural exchange activities, students can learn and experience from diverse cultural perspectives, building confidence in effective communication in diverse environments. These intercultural teaching methods not only broaden students’ cultural perspectives but also lay the foundation for their success in a globalized environment” [Dou, 2024:173].

Development of ESP courses on the proper level meeting the requirements of the system of education and of the industry is very important. Such ESP courses can be used in higher educational institutions and in different organizations and companies. Successful development of such model course on basis of which corresponding syllabi could be compiled on the global level would make significant contribution to globalization of different fields of human activity and could simplify the process of preparation of specialists in ESP both at higher educational institutions and international specialized companies (for example, oil company, etc.). on the international level. If such syllabi are implemented at all higher educational institutions it would contribute to development of globalized model of professionals who would be eligible for employment on the international level.

The importance and combination of language and culture might differ in different ESP fields. ESP courses differ from each other depending on the field they are supposed to cover; therefore, cultural elements should be approached in each of them in absolutely different ways. It is clear that ESP course for tourism will be different from the ESP course for such a field as Medicine, or for some Business fields, therefore different approaches should be applied when compiling syllabi for different ESP courses, and, consequently, cultural components should be integrated in different ways into each of such ESP courses. Thus, ESP course for tourism should be mainly based on elements of national culture, whereas ESP course for Medicine should be based on professional topics and knowledge of Latin since most of Medical terms are derived from the roots of words of Latin and Greek origin. Although it is clear that ESP courses differ from each other, such components as professional knowledge, professional topics, specific terminology of certain field would be the core components in all of them. ESP courses can cover very different fields of human activity that would require different approaches during compilation of the syllabi. The field of Medicine and Maritime field have already been discussed in the present article. Thus, the basis for compiling ESP syllabi for the field of Medicine would be such items as Latin medical terminology, English medical terminology, professional knowledge, professional culture. Maritime field implies specific terminology related to such fields as Navigation, Mechanical Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Logistics, professional knowledge of these fields and maritime field in general, cultural/intercultural/cross-cultural awareness and cultural/intercultural competence, globalization of maritime field, national culture, professional culture, organizational culture, world religions. Engineering would mainly comprise terminology, professional knowledge, professional culture. Financial field would cover specific terminology, professional knowledge and professional culture, politeness, rules of conducting business negotiations. Cultural aspect has influence on behavior in terms of politeness, therefore Cambonero stated: "Different cultural understandings of politeness may influence the manner in which language is used, and cultural differences in business or academic communication may lead to varying interpretations of professional terminology {Cambonero, 2013:172}. Cambonero also states: "Cultural content associated with national values is not only relevant for direct interaction, oral or written communication: it is also valuable knowledge for decision-making in different business areas [Cambonero, 2013:7].

The basic principles to be considered in case of field of hospitality would be terminology, national culture, organizational culture, cultural/intercultural/cross-cultural awareness and cultural/intercultural competence, politeness, globalization. In relation to hospitality field we can bring the following words of Fielden and Rico: "As stated in the theoretical framework, the combination of language and culture is central to the process of learning

languages in hospitality studies given the acute need these professionals will have to actively apply their language skills in real-time” {Fielden&Rico, 2017:349}.

Cultural component has crucial importance not only in different fields of human activity but even in case of scientific work. Thus, Qattous mentioned: “Even though scientists around the world can study the same phenomena of nature, the way they approach problems may differ for they are based on ways of thinking that are shaped to a large extent by their cultures through educational systems, philosophies and political systems [Qattous, 2015:1] Science education influences dramatically the development of the cultural perspectives on science [Qattous, 1995:10].

It is very important to interconnect ESP and professional culture; the latter is developed in the specialists of certain field during educational process and becomes more profound in working environment. Common professional culture and good command of ESP and terminology of the field can become good basis for successful cooperation and unification of specialists of certain fields from all over the world. The phenomenon of national culture is usually covered by GE. Knowledge of GE unifies specialists as well as knowledge of certain specialty unifies specialists of a certain field coming from different countries. As it was mentioned earlier, national culture with knowledge of GE represent basis for integration of professional culture with knowledge of ESP in ESP course.

Some training programs could also become basis for unification and internationalization of specialists of certain field. Learning foreign language especially General English already implies immersion into the culture of this language as any language represents huge part of any culture. Any language is not only expression of culture, it is significant part of any culture through which nation and its specifics could be understood. Learning language implies learning its culture. Cultural differences should be taken into consideration when doing some business or just collaborating with professionals from another country. Raising levels of cultural/intercultural/cross-cultural awareness and cultural/intercultural competence is the best way to overcome these obstacles. I think that such platforms as www.moodle.com, www.moodlecloud.com etc. can be used as means of knowledge management that would help developing universal skills and qualities in specialists/ professionals throughout the world. Such network can be organized on level of alumni, on the level of experienced professionals currently employed for different projects, academics of the field, etc. Frelick and Van Naerssen mention in their article “Professional cultural orientation in ESP” mentions: Since professional fields are as influenced by cultural assumptions as any other area of life, better understanding of these differences and the theories behind them may enable all of us to achieve more meaningful cooperative results in the attempt to bridge the barriers of language and tradition” [Frelick&Van Naerssen, 1982:13].

4. CONCLUSION

In the present article I tried to consider language and culture “under one umbrella” focusing on the importance of both of these phenomena for development of modern “cosmopolitan” models of specialists for different fields who could be eligible to be employed and consequently work on the international level. Successful implementation of this goal on the global level would make significant contribution to the process of globalization.

For this purpose, I considered interconnection existing between language and culture as both of them represent the essence of certain nation. Therefore, learners of foreign language

get closer to the culture of the nation this language belongs to. General English has huge importance in this matter as GE is bearer of national culture, whereas ESP course would contribute to development of professional culture. Sometimes, it is implemented in hidden form as is the case in Maritime field.

In the present article I have considered the phenomenon of culture and its sub-fields: national culture, professional culture and organizational culture referring to the opinions of well-known scholars.

I tried to offer the principle of compilation of ESP syllabus that would comprise cultural elements and illustrated it by correspondent Concept map. Such issue as development of ESP syllabi for different fields has also been considered in the present article.

Such phenomena as cultural/intercultural/cross-cultural awareness and cultural/intercultural competence were given particular attention as these phenomena would play significant role in development of “cosmopolitan” professionals.

The present article represents an attempt to make contribution to achievement of main goal stated in it, that is development of model of specialists for different fields who would be eligible for employment on the international labour market and would be able to successfully work on the international level in the future.

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THE INVESTIGATION OF GRAMMAR LEARNING STRATEGIES AMONG IRAQI EFL LEARNERS

Maryam Abdualhassan, Ala Hussein, Rana Abdul-Settar

Department of English, College of Education for Human Sciences, University of Basrah, Iraq

ORCID iDs: Maryam Abdualhassan
Ala Hussein
Rana Abdul-Settar

<https://orcid.org/0009-0003-7481-3426>

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3008-1126>

<https://orcid.org/0009-0002-4089-9340>

Abstract. *The study of grammar learning strategies received significant attention in EFL learning in recent years since their invention by Pawlak. The main objective of this study is to assess the degree to which a group of Iraqi English learners employs grammar learning strategies. The data was gathered using a quantitative research approach through a survey method. A total of 200 Iraqi EFL learners effectively participated in the grammar learning strategy inventory scale, which was created by Pawlak (2018). According to the results, Iraqi learners who are learning English as a foreign language use these strategies to a moderate degree. Students commonly employed strategies such as self-motivation, memorization, repetition, self-encouraging, and seeking correction for grammar errors. Furthermore, the majority of learners primarily employed cognitive strategies, while metacognitive strategies were utilized to a lesser extent. In addition, the study revealed that Iraqi EFL learners employ corrective feedback strategies more frequently than other subtypes of cognitive strategies.*

Key words: *Grammar Learning Strategies, Metacognitive, Cognitive, Affective, and Social Strategies.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Grammar is an essential component of all languages since it provides the foundation for effective and accurate communication via speaking, writing, and listening. Understanding grammar is vital for developing reading and writing skills. It is difficult to grasp the intricate structure of language learning without a basic understanding of grammar (Azar 2007). One of the most significant problems that EFL students have when studying a foreign language is the variation in grammatical structures from their original language. Students struggle to generate phrases due to their lack of grammar and the differences between the grammar of their native language and the foreign language (Schultz 2001). Furthermore, students commonly make grammatical errors, which is attributed to the use of traditional methods that do not assist students in acquiring the

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Corresponding author: Maryam Abdualhassan, Department of English, College of Education for Human Sciences, University of Basrah, Iraq

E-mail: pgs.maryam.abdualhassan24@uobasrah.edu.iq

necessary rules (Mahdi 2018). Due to the challenges that EFL learners face in learning the grammar of foreign languages, many efforts have been made to produce suitable strategies that can enhance learners' learning of the grammar of the English language. As a result, a specific collection of procedures aimed at improving the learning of grammar in the English language (Pawlak 2018).

Therefore, the present study tends to address the following research questions: (1) To what extent do Iraqi EFL learners utilize grammar learning strategies?, (2) Are there variations in the utilization of different categories of grammar learning strategies among Iraqi EFL learners?, (3) Are there variations in the utilization of different subcategories of cognitive strategies among Iraqi EFL learners? Consequently, the research is grounded in these hypotheses: (1) The usage of grammar learning strategies among Iraqi EFL learners is moderate. (2) Iraqi EFL learners exhibit variations in the usage of different categories of grammar learning strategies. (3) Iraqi EFL learners demonstrate variations in the usage of different subcategories of cognitive strategies. This highlights the importance of the present research in offering valuable insights into the most efficient strategies for learning grammar. Furthermore, the findings can have a major impact on educational policies and curriculum development.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The term "grammar learning strategies" was first utilized by Oxford and her colleagues who described them as the intentional actions and conscious cognitive processes that language learners employ to facilitate the learning and usage of the language, to enhance effectiveness, efficiency, and enjoyment (Pawlak 2009). In a recent development, grammar learning strategies are defined as intentional and flexible cognitive processes and actions that learners consciously employ in specific situations to enhance their self-regulated, independent acquisition of second/foreign language grammar, intending to achieve effective task performance and long-term proficiency (Oxford 2017). This definition provides a comprehensive overview of the key attributes of strategies for learning grammar (Pawlak 2018).

Furthermore, distinctive characteristics of grammar learning strategies are described as follows: (1) they are activities to be taken by learners, (2) they require somewhat conscious consideration in their applications, (3) optional means selected by learners, (4) they entail purposeful and goal-driven endeavors, and (5) they aim to establish, sustain and control the language learning process (Griffiths 2009).

Grammar learning strategies are divided into four primary categories along with four respective subcategories of cognitive strategies: the first type is metacognitive strategies which refer to aid the learners in efficiently controlling, managing, and evaluating students' grammar acquisition. Those strategies that entail developing grammatical proficiency by engaging in reading and listening activities, as well as completing a variety of grammar assignments. Students who possess a comprehensive understanding of their learning processes and employ metacognitive strategies are more likely to achieve academic success (Stephen and Singh 2011). The second type includes cognitive strategies, which are further divided into four subtypes: (A) Grammar learning strategies that help students acquire and understand grammar in communication activities, (B) Grammar learning strategies that improve the acquisition of explicit grammar knowledge by identifying rules using instances or inference, (C) Grammar

learning strategies that strengthen implicit grammatical knowledge by making it easier to understand grammatical structures, such as forming sentences using newly learned rules, and (D) Grammar learning strategies that are used to correct grammar errors by actively listening to teacher feedback and self-correction during grammar practice. The third type is effective strategies, which seek to regulate emotions and incentives while learning grammatical skills in the target language. This includes strategies such as being calm in the face of difficulty and encouraging oneself to tackle difficult grammatical ideas. The final type is social strategies, which are collaborative or participatory strategies used with the teacher, proficient second language speakers, or classmates to increase grammar acquisition. This type includes activities like supporting people who are struggling with grammar and participating in grammar practice sessions with peers (Pawlak 2018).

In related studies, a study to assess the consistency and accuracy of the grammar learning strategy inventory in a sample of 106 students was conducted. The grammar learning strategy inventory was used to gather data. The results showed that the grammar learning strategy inventory was a valid and accurate method for the use of strategies for learning and mastering English grammar. The study results also indicate that the strategies most commonly used were metacognitive, followed by cognitive strategies. Affective strategies were ranked in third place, with social strategies being the least used (Pawlak 2018). In Indonesia, a study was carried out on a sample of 100 college students. The study seeks to identify learners who have achieved various levels of success and their use of strategies for learning grammar. The data was collected using a scale that measures grammar learning strategies. The findings showed that students at all levels demonstrated a wide range of strategies. Achieved learners employed metacognitive strategies, while learners with lower and average achievements relied more on social strategies (Cahyani, Muhammed, and Cahya 2022). Furthermore, another study is established to investigate the grammar learning strategies used by Malaysian undergraduate students who are learning English as a second language (ESL). A quantitative survey research approach was used to collect data. Google Forms delivered questionnaires to Malaysian ESL undergraduate grammar students in a random manner. 80 students participated in the study by completing the questionnaire and actively engaging with it. The data was examined using both descriptive and inferential methodologies among the student population. The study found that social strategies were the most frequently used, while high-proficient students utilized all strategies more often than low-proficient students (Mohamad et al. 2023). To fill the existing gaps, the present study aims to examine the extent to which Iraqi (EFL) learners utilize grammar learning strategies, as well as to determine if some types of grammar strategies are preferred by learners over others. The present study also aims to examine the variations in the utilization of different subcategories of cognitive strategies.

3. METHODOLOGY

The current study utilizes a quantitative method that aligns with its research questions and aims. Therefore, the modified version of the grammar learning strategy inventory scale is utilized to align with the Iraqi educational context.

The present investigation employs the Grammar Learning Strategy Inventory Scale, which is derived from Pawlak's work (2018). The initial version includes 70 items, but

the researcher selects only 40 items specifically designed for the educational setting in Iraq. Consequently, a new version contains two sections: The initial section pertains to the student's background information, while the subsequent section comprises 40 items that are organized into four categories. Part one comprises five statements regarding metacognitive strategies. Section two consists of 24 statements that cover cognitive strategies categorized as B1, B2, B3, and B4. The statements consist of 3 items related to communication tasks, 13 statements concerning explicit knowledge, 5 statements targeting implicit knowledge, and 3 statements focusing on corrective feedback. Part three consists of 6 statements that illustrate effective strategies, whereas part four includes 5 statements that analyze social strategies. In addition, the response format is structured to encompass five categories: "never," "rarely," "sometimes," "often," and "always," which have been derived from Oxford (1990).

The scale's validity and reliability were both established. The scale is verified by presenting it to a panel of experts from diverse universities. The specialists have verified the reliability of the scale for performing these strategies among Iraqi learners. Furthermore, Cronbach's alpha is employed to assess the internal consistency of the scale by conducting a study with thirty students, to determine its reliability. Table (1) presents the findings for the overall Cronbach's alpha for the 40 items of the grammar learning strategy inventory scale which is 0.83. An average between 80 to 90 is very good for internal consistency (DeVellis 2017). Consequently, this indicates this instrument has a high degree of internal consistency.

Table 1 Grammar Learning Strategy Inventory Scale's Internal Reliability

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.833	40

Participants in this study are a group of third-stage students from the Department of English, College of Education for Human Sciences, the University of Basrah. 200 students are chosen at random to be part of the sample. Third-stage students were selected due to their three years of substantial exposure to grammar instruction in an educational setting.

The scale was administered to the participants over one week. Throughout the weekdays, the researcher disseminated around 200 copies of the grammar learning strategy inventory to Iraqi students, out of a total of 300 copies. The students were classified into four groups, labeled A, B, C, and D. The study's objective was explained to the students, emphasizing the importance of their participation and ensuring that their responses would be kept confidential and used for research purposes. Participants were prompted to seek clarification regarding any unfamiliar elements of the scale. Each participant took approximately 20 to 30 minutes to accomplish the grammar learning strategy inventory scale. After completion of data collection, the collected data was inputted into SPSS version 2026 for statistical analysis and Excel version 2013 for the design of graphs. Moreover, the mean is employed to determine the most and least employed strategies while the standard deviation is used to understand the variability of scores.

4. RESULTS

The grammar learning strategies can be classified into four categories: metacognitive, cognitive, affective, and social strategies. The goal of the scale is to assess the extent to which learning strategies are employed, as well as to identify variations in usage between different grammar learning strategies and subcategories of cognitive strategies. Therefore, Oxford et al. (1995) classification of the standard mean is used to accomplish these aims, as shown in Table (2).

Table 2 Grammar Learning Strategies' Standard Means

Level	Mean
5.0-3.5	High
3.4-2.5	Medium
2.4-1.0	Low

Table 3 Mean, Standard Deviation, and Level of Metacognitive

Type	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
Metacognitive strategy	Item 1	3.18	1.23	Medium
	Item 2	2.99	1.26	Medium
	Item 3	3.18	1.86	Medium
	Item 4	3.44	1.11	Medium
	Item 5	3.52	1.22	High

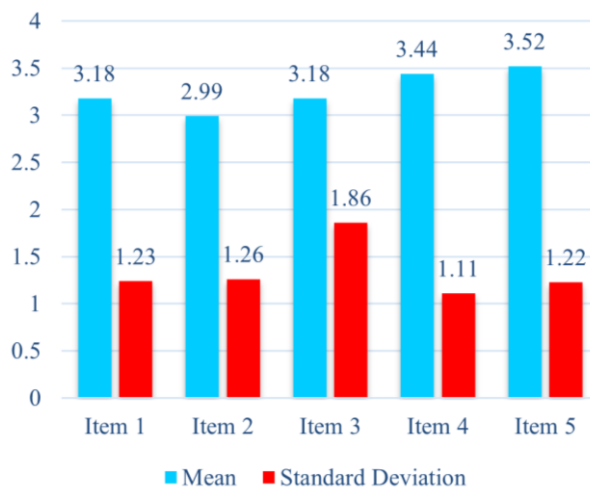


Fig.1 Mean and Standard Deviation of Metacognitive Strategies

The findings from Table (3) and Figure (1) demonstrate items associated with the metacognitive strategies. Among the items, learners demonstrated high usage in focusing on grammar structures during speaking and writing (mean = 3.52). However, other aspects of metacognitive strategies, such as paying attention to grammar structures during

reading and listening (mean = 2.99), were less frequently used. This suggests that while students make some efforts to plan and evaluate their grammar learning, these strategies are not as consistently employed, reflecting a preference for traditional approaches over critical self-monitoring and management.

Through cognitive strategy, participants have different scores divided into four subcategories B1, B2, B3, and B4 to show how students use the strategies of communication tasks, explicit knowledge, implicit knowledge, and corrective feedback strategies through their learning grammar.

Table (B1) 4 The mean, Standard Deviation, and Level of Communication Task Strategies

Type	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
Communication Task Strategies	Item 6	3.32	1.08	Medium
	Item 7	3.36	1.13	Medium
	Item 8	3.40	1.27	Medium

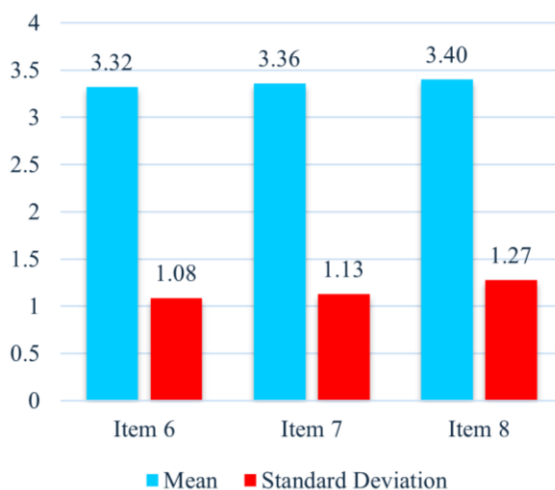


Fig. 2 Mean and Standard Deviation of Communication Task Strategies

As Table B1 (4) and Figure (2) above show, all the communication task strategies indicate medium-level usage. The results highlight a moderate use of strategies such as identifying structures that bring up difficulties in terms of meaning or communication, noticing structures that appear repeatedly throughout, and utilizing search engines such as Google to investigate the usage of particular grammatical structures in meaningful situations. This might be attributed to the way English is learned in Iraq. Iraqi students may face limited opportunities to participate in real-life communication outside the classroom. The limited exposure can result in moderate use of these strategies that concentrate on learning grammar within a meaningful context.

Table (B2) 5 Mean, Standard Deviation, and Level of Explicit Knowledge

Type	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
Explicit knowledge	Item 9	3.83	1.15	High
	Item 10	3.36	1.10	Medium
	Item 11	3.39	1.24	Medium
	Item 12	3.39	1.21	Medium
	Item 13	3.00	1.29	Medium
	Item 14	3.37	1.16	Medium
	Item 15	3.87	1.09	High
	Item 16	3.14	1.16	Medium
	Item 17	3.40	1.19	Medium
	Item 18	3.62	1.13	High
	Item 19	3.17	1.16	Medium
	Item 20	3.16	1.20	Medium
Item 21	3.50	1.19	High	

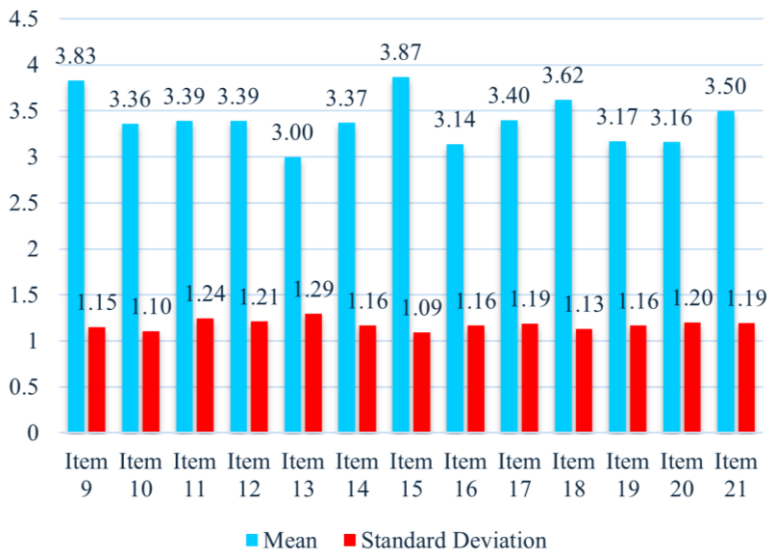


Fig. 3 Mean and Standard Deviation of Implicit Knowledge Strategies

The mean scores for items related to explicit knowledge are depicted in Table B2 (5) and Figure (3). These scores indicate that the majority of learners in Iraq employ these strategies at a moderate level. However, among these strategies, items 9, 15, 18, and 21 have achieved the highest scores. The high level of these items shows students' preference for repetition, memorization, and reliance on limited sources, rather than exploring innovative ways for grammar learning. Other strategies, namely 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20 have been found to be moderately used by Iraqi EFL learners as they ranged from (3.00) to (3.40). It means that students lack motivation and awareness of the importance of these strategies in developing their learning of language.

Table (B3) 6 Mean, Standard Deviation, and Level of Implicit Knowledge

Type	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
Implicit Knowledge	Item 22	3.55	1.22	High
	Item 23	3.51	1.18	High
	Item 24	3.35	1.23	Medium
	Item 25	3.24	1.15	Medium
	Item 26	3.54	1.22	High

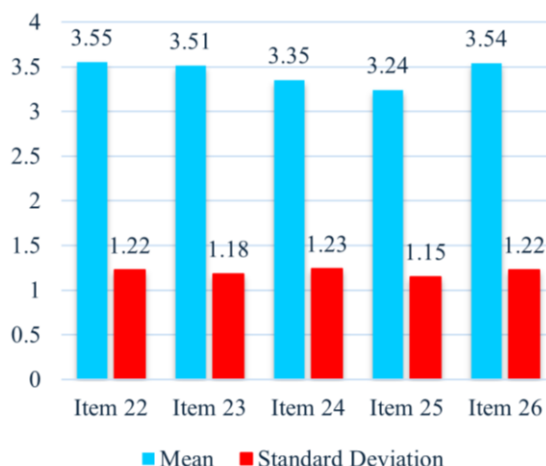


Fig. 4 Mean and Standard Deviation of Implicit Knowledge Strategies

The means of these items are cognitive strategies under the name of implicit knowledge. The findings in Table B3 (6) and Figure (4) demonstrate items 22, 23, and 26 have high utilization of strategies such as frequent repetition of rules, participation in varied tasks (e.g., paraphrasing and translation), and repeated exposure to grammatical structures through reading and listening, with means (3.55), (3.51), and (3.55) respectively. In contrast, items 24 and 25 show a moderate level of utilization, with means of (3.35) and (3.24), indicating little engagement in strategies such as using new patterns to construct new sentences.

Table (B4) 7 Mean, Standard Deviation, and Level of Corrective Feedback

Type	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
Corrective Feedback	Item 27	3.66	1.22	High
	Item 28	3.95	1.05	High
	Item 29	4.04	1.14	High

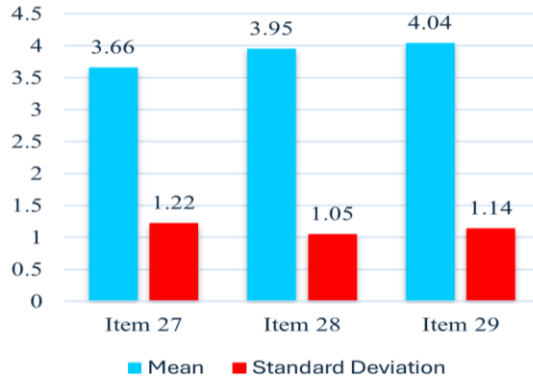


Fig. 5 Mean and Standard Deviation of Corrective Feedback Strategies

As shown in Table B4 (7) and Figure (5) above, students highly correlated with the strategies of corrective feedback which means students always or often used these strategies to learn grammar. In this group of strategies, the highest scoring of item 29 (mean = 4.04) showed that learners actively sought feedback to fix grammatical errors. Items no. 28 and 27 have scored means of (3.95), (3.66) which represents a high level of usage regarding students who pay close attention to feedback and correction from the teacher to understand grammatical mistakes, emphasizing their reliance on teacher-centered instruction.

Table 8 Mean, Standard Deviation, and Level of Subtypes of Cognitive Strategies

Subtypes of cognitive strategy	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
Communication task strategies	3.36	.74	Medium
Explicit Knowledge Strategies	3.36	.55	Medium
Implicit Knowledge Strategies	3.44	.66	Medium
Corrective Feedback Strategies	3.88	.82	High

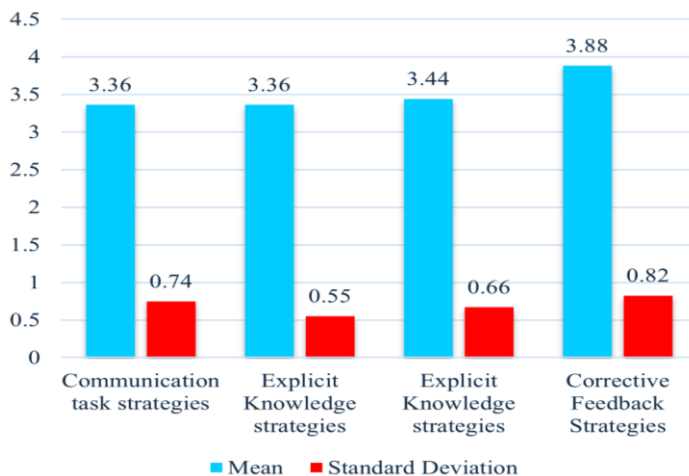


Fig. 6 Mean and Standard Deviation of Subtypes of Cognitive Strategies

Table (8) and Figure (6) illustrate the prevalence of cognitive strategies related to corrective feedback (3.88), followed by implicit knowledge (3.44), explicit knowledge, and communication task strategies, which have the same lowest mean (3.36). Students in Iraq rely heavily on corrective strategies due to the prevalent teacher-centered approach in most classes. In this setting, instructors are seen as the primary source of information, and students value being corrected by them.

Table 9 Mean, Standard Deviation, and Level of Affective Strategy

Type	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
Affective strategy	Item 30	3.51	1.22	High
	Item 31	3.58	1.10	High
	Item 32	3.17	1.13	Medium
	Item 33	3.54	1.13	High
	Item 34	3.50	1.20	High
	Item 35	3.15	1.10	Medium

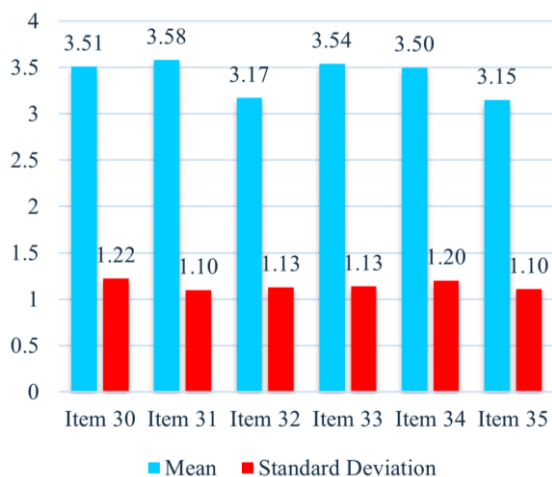


Fig. 7 Mean and Standard Deviation of Affective Strategies

Table (9) and Figure (7) present results related to affective strategies as a type of grammar learning strategy. High-scoring items include maintaining motivation in grammar practice despite difficulties (mean = 3.58) and rewarding themselves for achieving goals (mean = 3.54). However, strategies like maintaining a diary to document grammar learning experiences (mean = 3.15) were less frequently used, indicating that while learners actively manage their attitudes and motivation, they do not consistently engage in reflective practices.

Table 10 Mean, Standard Deviation, and Level of Social Strategies

Type	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
Social strategy	Item 36	3.28	1.17	Medium
	Item 37	3.32	1.18	Medium
	Item 38	3.62	1.19	High
	Item 39	3.20	1.25	Medium
	Item 40	3.57	1.11	High

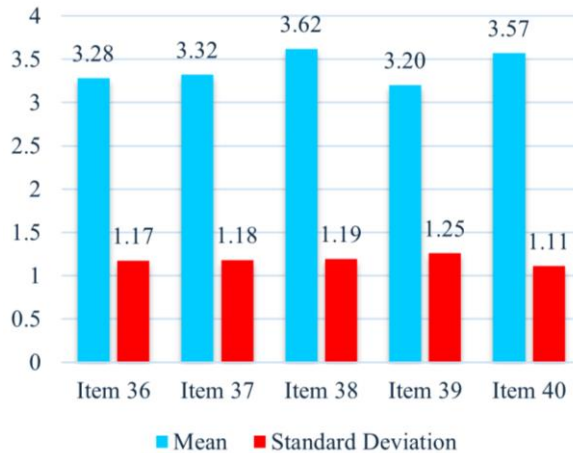


Fig. 8 Mean and Standard Deviation of Social Strategies

Throughout social strategies, learners frequently engaged in helping peers with grammar concepts (mean = 3.57) and occasionally sought correction of grammatical mistakes (mean = 3.62). However, reliance on group work or discussions with classmates was less evident, as reflected in the lower mean scores for collaborative activities. This highlights the learners' tendency to depend on individual effort rather than leveraging peer interaction as a resource for grammar learning.

Table 11. Mean and Standard Deviation of Overall Grammar Learning Strategies, and Categories of Grammar Learning Strategies.

Categories	Mean	Standard Deviation
Grammar Learning Strategies	3.41	.44
Metacognitive Strategies	3.26	.68
Cognitive Strategies	3.44	.49
Effective Strategies	3.40	.61
Social Strategies	3.39	.67

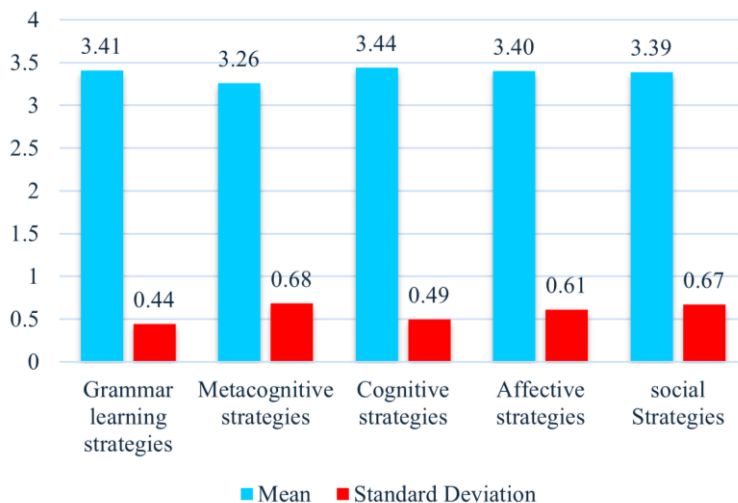


Fig. 9 Mean and Standard Deviation of Overall Grammar Learning Strategies, and Categories of Grammar Learning Strategies

The study reveals that grammar learning strategies were used at a moderate level overall, with a mean score of (3.41). Cognitive strategies were the most frequently employed, followed by affective, social, and metacognitive strategies. The findings emphasize the dominance of teacher-centered practices in shaping learners' preferences, particularly their reliance on corrective feedback and structured learning activities. However, the moderate use of metacognitive and social strategies points to a need for more emphasis on self-regulation and collaborative learning in the classroom.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that Iraqi EFL learners utilize grammar learning strategies at a moderate level, with a mean of (3.41). While cognitive strategies are the most frequently employed (mean = 3.44), metacognitive strategies are the least utilized (mean = 3.26). These results shed light on the learning preferences of Iraqi students and have implications for understanding the role of cultural, educational, and contextual factors in shaping grammar learning behavior.

One of the most notable findings is the Iraqi EFL learners heavy reliance on cognitive strategies, particularly corrective feedback strategies, which had the highest mean score (3.88) among all subcategories. This reliance reflects the teacher-centered nature of the Iraqi educational system, where instructors are viewed as authoritative figures and key sources of knowledge. While this approach ensures that students value accuracy in grammar, it may hinder the development of independent learning skills. Future pedagogical interventions should aim to balance corrective feedback with opportunities for autonomous error analysis and peer correction. This shift could promote deeper grammatical awareness and learner independence.

Iraqi EFL learners' moderate use of communication task strategies (mean = 3.36) highlights the limited opportunities for real-life grammar application outside the classroom. This result aligns with the broader challenges faced by EFL learners in contexts where English is not widely spoken. Providing authentic, communicative tasks in classroom settings, such as role-playing, collaborative projects, or real-world simulations, could address this gap and enhance students' ability to employ grammatical structures in meaningful contexts.

An interesting result of the present study is that affective strategies ranked second in students' preference among the four main categories of grammar learning strategies, with a mean score of (3.40). This finding highlights that Iraqi students face emotional and psychological challenges when learning complex grammatical concepts. Consequently, strategies related to self-encouragement and anxiety reduction were commonly employed by these learners, reflecting their need for a supportive classroom environment that fosters positive attitudes toward grammar learning. Teachers play a crucial role in this regard by engaging their students in activities aiming at lowering stress, celebrating their hard work and achievements, and ultimately cultivating a growth mindset.

While social strategies were reported to be moderately used by Iraqi EFL learners (mean = 3.39), these strategies showed a higher frequency in areas such as extending help to peers and seeking clarification from teachers. However, the findings suggest a lesser reliance on collaborative learning methods like group discussions. This preference for individual efforts over group work could be rooted in cultural attitudes toward learning and peer interaction. To enhance the utilization of social strategies, educators might integrate structured peer-learning activities, such as grammar-focused study groups or pair work, into the curriculum.

The low usage of metacognitive strategies (mean = 3.26) is particularly concerning, as these strategies are critical for self-regulation, planning, and monitoring one's learning process. The findings suggest that Iraqi learners prioritize traditional approaches, such as memorization and repetition, overactive reflection, and self-assessment. This pattern highlights the need for targeted instruction in metacognitive strategies, such as goal setting, progress tracking, and evaluating one's understanding of grammatical rules. Having workshops or training sessions focusing on these skills could empower learners to take greater control of their grammar learning journey.

When compared with other contexts, such as Saudi Arabia (Alzahrani 2024)(Alnufaie & Alzahrani 2024) and Japan (Nakachi 2021), the findings reveal both similarities and differences. Like Saudi learners, Iraqi students demonstrate a strong preference for corrective feedback, emphasizing the influence of teacher-centered approaches in both contexts. However, unlike Japanese learners, who mostly prefer cognitive strategies but use affective strategies the least, Iraqi learners demonstrate a more balanced approach to emotional regulation. These differences underscore the importance of considering cultural factors when examining grammar learning strategies across different EFL contexts.

In light of these findings, this study offers several pedagogical recommendations. First, educators should aim to employ diverse instructional strategies to foster a balance between teacher-centered and learner-centered approaches. Second, curriculum designers should incorporate activities that promote metacognitive awareness, such as reflective journals or self-assessment tasks. Finally, the integration of communicative and collaborative tasks could address the limited opportunities for real-life grammar use, thereby enhancing students' ability to apply grammatical rules in practical settings.

By addressing these areas, Iraqi EFL learners can develop a more comprehensive and effective approach to grammar learning, ultimately improving their proficiency and confidence in using the language. Future research should explore the impact of implementing these pedagogical interventions and examine variations in strategy use across different learner groups, such as high and low achievers, to gain deeper insights into effective grammar instruction.

6. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the utilization of grammar learning strategies among Iraqi EFL learners, revealing a moderate overall use of cognitive strategies as the most frequently employed category. The findings highlight the learners' strong preference for teacher-centered corrective feedback and their reliance on traditional learning methods such as repetition and memorization. Conversely, the low utilization of metacognitive strategies points to a need for fostering greater self-regulation and reflective practices in grammar learning.

Affective strategies emerged as significant in helping learners manage the emotional challenges of grammar learning. As for social strategies, though moderately used, emphasized the importance of teacher support and peer collaboration. The findings underscore the role of cultural and educational contexts in shaping strategy preferences, with the teacher's authority being a dominant influence in the Iraqi educational system.

Based on these insights, the study provides practical recommendations for educators and curriculum designers. Encouraging a more balanced approach that integrates metacognitive, communicative, and collaborative learning strategies can enhance students' independence and proficiency. Incorporating authentic, real-world grammar tasks and fostering positive, low-anxiety learning environments can further support learners' engagement and confidence.

This study contributes to the understanding of grammar learning strategies in the Iraqi EFL context and provides a foundation for future research. Further investigations could examine the effectiveness of specific pedagogical interventions in promoting underutilized strategies, as well as explore individual differences among learners in grammar strategy use. By addressing these areas, educators can better equip students with the tools needed for effective grammar learning and broader language acquisition.

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DIGITAL NEUROPEDAGOGY: HARNESSING COGNITIVE SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR EDUCATIONAL EFFICIENCY

Mikhail Matveev

Department of Foreign Languages of the Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology, Russia

ORCID iD: Mikhail Matveev

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3629-1332>

Abstract. *This paper discusses the approaches of digital neuropedagogy aimed at optimizing educational processes through the use of technology based on cognitive sciences. The focus is on the theoretical foundations and practical applications of neuropedagogy in modern educational settings. The goal of the study is to explore the possibilities of personalized learning using digital technologies. Key findings demonstrate enhanced efficiency in cognitive processes such as attention, memory, and thinking. Methods include an analysis of educational technologies applied in the context of neuropedagogy.*

Key words: *neuropedagogy, cognitive science, digital education, educational technologies, learning*

1. INTRODUCTION

The field of education is currently undergoing a period of significant transformation. The demands of the 21st century require learners to not only acquire knowledge but also to develop sophisticated cognitive abilities, adapt to rapid technological developments, and navigate an increasingly interconnected and complex world (Dede, 2010). The skills and skill groups that employers anticipate will become increasingly important in the period leading up to 2025 include critical thinking and analysis, problem-solving, and skills in self-management such as active learning, resilience, stress tolerance and flexibility.

Traditional pedagogical approaches, which often rely on rote memorisation, passive learning, and a one-size-fits-all approach, are struggling to meet the evolving demands of the modern educational landscape. John Bruer, a prominent figure in the field of educational neuroscience, has cautioned against simplistic attempts to directly translate brain research into classroom practice, stating that "A bridge too far: trying to directly apply brain research to classroom practice is unlikely to be successful" (p. 4). Nevertheless, the advent of digital neuropedagogy offers a more sophisticated and promising avenue. This interdisciplinary field acknowledges the intricate interplay between brain function, cognitive

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Corresponding author: Mikhail Matveev, Department of Foreign Languages of the Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology, Russia

E-mail: mike-matveev@mail.ru

processes, and the potential of digital technologies. This article presents the case for integrating digital neuropedagogy into the Russian academic landscape. It makes the case that this relatively new field has significant potential to revolutionize educational practices and meet the challenges faced by learners in the modern age.

Digital neuropedagogy is an emerging interdisciplinary field that draws upon insights from neuroscience, pedagogy, and digital technology with the aim of enhancing educational practices. By leveraging our understanding of the brain and cognitive processes, digital neuropedagogy seeks to create more effective and personalised learning experiences. This article introduces digital neuropedagogy to the Russian academic community, highlighting its potential to revolutionise education and improve learning outcomes.

Digital neuropedagogy represents the synergistic fusion of digital pedagogy and neuropedagogy, leveraging the capabilities of digital technologies to align with the principles of brain-based learning. It is a paradigm shift, a fundamental rethinking of teaching and learning based on insights from neuroscience, cognitive science, and the learning sciences. It goes beyond merely integrating technology into existing pedagogical practices. By understanding how the brain learns, coupled with the innovative tools and strategies offered by digital technology, digital neuropedagogy aims to create transformative learning experiences that are more engaging, effective, and personalised. This review article delves into the vast potential of digital neuropedagogy, focusing on how it can enhance educational efficiency by harnessing the principles of cognitive science and digital technology.

The evolution of neuropedagogy has been shaped by various schools of thought, both Western and Soviet. Soviet researchers like Lev Vygotsky and Alexander Luria have significantly contributed to our understanding of cognitive processes, emphasizing the sociocultural and neuropsychological aspects of learning. Their perspectives offer a rich contrast to Western approaches that often focus more on individual cognitive functions and neural mechanisms.

The rich intellectual heritage of Russian pedagogy, with its emphasis on theoretical thinking, conceptual understanding, and social consciousness, provides an optimal context for developing digital neuropedagogy. By integrating these traditions with cutting-edge technologies, a distinctive Russian approach to digital neuropedagogy can be created that reflects the country's cultural values and educational objectives.

Furthermore, digital neuropedagogy provides solutions to the specific challenges currently encountered by the Russian educational system. To illustrate, it can facilitate the personalisation of learning in large classrooms, a common feature of Russian schools. Furthermore, it can address the increasing necessity to engage students who are progressively immersed in the digital realm. By employing technology in a manner that is consistent with the principles of brain-based learning, it is possible to construct more engaging and effective learning environments. Furthermore, digital neuropedagogy has the potential to cultivate creativity and innovation in education, which are indispensable for Russia's future prosperity in a globalised knowledge economy.

This paper will present a rationale for why digital neuropedagogy is crucial for the future of education in Russia. The current educational system, while robust in its fundamental structure, encounters obstacles in addressing the heterogeneous requirements of 21st-century learners. Digital neuropedagogy provides an effective method for personalising learning, enhancing student engagement and facilitating the growth of essential cognitive abilities. By

adopting this approach, it is possible to construct a more dynamic, responsive and effective educational system, which will better equip students to succeed in an ever-changing world.

This article will examine how digital tools can be designed and implemented to optimise cognitive processes such as attention, memory, problem-solving, and critical thinking, with the ultimate goal of facilitating deeper learning and improved educational outcomes. Furthermore, it will explore the challenges and ethical considerations associated with this emerging field, recognising the need for careful consideration of cognitive load, equity and access, data privacy, and teacher training.

2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Digital neuropedagogy is not merely the incorporation of technology into the classroom; rather, it is the alignment of technology with the natural wiring of the human brain for learning. This approach draws upon a rich tapestry of theoretical frameworks from neuroscience, cognitive science, and the learning sciences. This paper will examine the key principles that underpin this emerging field, providing a foundation for understanding how digital tools can be leveraged to enhance learning.

Neuropedagogy, also known as brain-based learning, is an educational approach that seeks to harmonise educational practices with the brain's inherent learning mechanisms. It acknowledges that the brain is a dynamic and complex organ, continually adapting and rewiring itself in response to experiences. As Tracey Tokuhama-Espinosa (2014) correctly asserts, the brain is not a static organ; it is a living, breathing, ever-changing entity that is constantly being shaped by our experiences.

The following principles of neuropedagogy are particularly pertinent to digital learning:

- **Experience-Dependent Plasticity:** The structure and function of the brain are not static but undergo constant change in response to experiences. The growth of new neural connections can be promoted by learning experiences that are challenging, engaging, and relevant (Draganski et al., 2004). One might consider this process analogous to the strengthening of a muscle through exercise. The more a muscle is used, the stronger it becomes. Digital tools can facilitate the provision of personalised learning experiences that are responsive to individual needs and preferences, thereby optimising the potential for brain plasticity. At the same time, Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is consistent with the principle of experience-dependent plasticity, underscoring the significance of providing learners with challenges that are moderately beyond their current abilities. However, Vygotsky places significant emphasis on the role of social interaction and guidance from more knowledgeable others in scaffolding learning within the ZPD. This concept complements the individual focus of Western neuropedagogy. This social dimension is of great importance for a comprehensive understanding of experience-dependent plasticity, as it highlights the interactive nature of cognitive development. Another prominent Soviet scientist, Alexander Luria, made significant contributions to the field of neuropsychology. His research on the functioning of the brain and higher cortical functions is particularly noteworthy and offers valuable insights. Luria (1966) conducted research into the manner in which distinct brain regions interact to

facilitate cognitive processes, thereby providing insights that are parallel to and enhance those gained from Western studies on neuroplasticity.

- For instance, language learning applications such as Duolingo adapt to the individual progress of the learner, providing increasingly challenging exercises that encourage the expansion of the neural pathways responsible for language processing. This approach ensures that learners are consistently challenged, thereby promoting the growth of new connections in the brain.
- **Emotional Significance:** Emotions are of significant importance in the processes of learning and memory (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007). It can be posited that experiences evoking strong emotions are more likely to be remembered. Digital tools can be employed to create emotionally resonant learning experiences through the use of multimedia elements, storytelling, and gamification.
 - For instance, virtual reality experiences can facilitate students' engagement with historical events, enabling them to "walk in the shoes" of historical figures and experience the emotional weight of those events, which may lead to deeper understanding and retention. Consider a student exploring the Anne Frank House in VR, experiencing the confinement and fear that Anne experienced, which could make the history lesson far more impactful.
- **Multisensory Integration:** The concept of multisensory integration is defined as the process by which the brain integrates information from multiple sensory modalities. The brain is capable of processing information from multiple senses simultaneously. It has been demonstrated that learning experiences that engage multiple senses can enhance comprehension and retention (Shams & Seitz, 2008). Digital tools can be employed to create immersive and interactive learning environments that stimulate multiple sensory modalities, thereby facilitating more comprehensive and enduring learning.
 - One such example is the potential offered by augmented reality applications. These have the capacity to superimpose digital data on top of the real world, thus affording learners the opportunity to engage with three-dimensional models, hear audio explanations, and manipulate virtual objects with their hands. This approach allows for the engagement of multiple senses simultaneously. A student studying the anatomy of the human heart could utilise an AR app to perform a virtual dissection of the heart, hearing the sounds of the valves and observing the blood flow through the chambers.

Cognitive science also provides a framework for understanding the mental processes involved in learning, including attention, memory, problem-solving, and critical thinking (Anderson, 2014). Digital neuropedagogy employs cognitive science principles to inform the design of digital tools that optimise the aforementioned processes. One might consider it to be akin to providing the brain with the requisite tools and strategies to facilitate more efficient functioning. Nevertheless, this concept was initially proposed by P. Galperin (1969). His stage theory of mental action formation provides a comprehensive model of the processes through which learners acquire new knowledge and skills. He put forth the proposition that the process of learning progresses through a series of stages, commencing with external, material actions and subsequently internalising these actions into mental representations. This model can inform the design of digital learning tools that provide learners with opportunities to engage with both concrete and abstract representations of concepts.

The following areas are of particular importance:

- **Attention:** In a world inundated with diversions, the ability to capture and sustain attention is more crucial than ever. Digital tools can be designed to capture learners' attention by incorporating novelty, relevance, and interactivity. For instance, incorporating game elements, such as points, badges, and leaderboards, can tap into the brain's reward system and motivate learners to remain engaged (Sailer et al., 2017).
 - Another key strategy for capturing attention is personalisation. When learners perceive that the content is relevant to their interests and needs, they are more likely to pay attention. Digital tools can provide personalised learning pathways, adaptive feedback, and customised content to enhance relevance and engagement. A student interested in marine biology might be more engaged in a lesson on ocean currents if it includes interactive simulations of marine life and real-world examples of how currents impact marine ecosystems.
- **Working Memory:** The capacity of the working memory, the mental workspace where information is held and manipulated, is limited. Digital tools can assist learners in managing their working memory load by presenting information in manageable chunks, providing visual aids, and offering opportunities for practice and retrieval (Sweller, Ayres, & Kalyuga, 2011). George Miller (1956) famously described the capacity of working memory as "the magical number seven, plus or minus two," highlighting its inherent limitation. In the field of Soviet science, Alexander Luria's (1973) pioneering work in neuropsychology offered significant insights into the functional organisation of the brain and its role in cognitive processes, including working memory. His research on patients with brain lesions revealed the intricate interconnection between diverse brain regions in supporting working memory functions, including attention, rehearsal, and retrieval. This provides a more nuanced understanding of the neural underpinnings of working memory, which complements the Western focus on this topic. Another valuable insight was provided by P. Galperin's stage theory of mental action formation (1966), which further elaborates on cognitive development by emphasising the internalisation of external actions into mental processes. This theory is consistent with Western models but offers a more detailed account of the gradual transformation of physical actions into cognitive functions.
 - To illustrate, let us consider the juggling act as a metaphor for working memory. One can only keep so many balls in the air at once. Digital tools can help by breaking down information into smaller chunks, providing visual cues to help organise information, and offering opportunities to practice and retrieve information, thereby strengthening those neural connections. For example, a history lesson on the American Revolution could be divided into smaller modules, each focusing on a specific battle or event. This would facilitate the use of interactive timelines and maps to help students visualise the sequence of events.
- **Long-Term Memory:** The ultimate objective of learning is to transfer information from the working memory to the long-term memory, where it can be stored and retrieved for future use. Digital tools can facilitate this transfer by incorporating spaced repetition, elaborative rehearsal, and retrieval practice (Dunlosky et al., 2013).

- The concept of long-term memory is not a singular entity; rather, it encompasses a multitude of distinct types. These include episodic memory, which encompasses recollections of past events; semantic memory, which encompasses knowledge of facts and concepts; and procedural memory, which encompasses memories of acquired skills and the ability to perform actions. It is possible to design digital tools to support the formation of each type of memory. For instance, interactive simulations can assist learners in developing procedural memory by enabling them to practise skills in a secure and controlled environment. A student learning to code could utilise a simulation to practise writing and testing code, thereby developing their procedural memory through hands-on experience.

Psycholinguistics is the scientific study of the psychological processes involved in language acquisition, comprehension, and production. Digital neuropedagogy employs psycholinguistic principles to develop digital tools that facilitate language learning (Harley, 2014). It is A. Leontiev's Activity Theory (1975) that offers a robust framework for understanding the socio-cultural context of language learning and cognitive development, which can inform psycholinguistic research in digital neuropedagogy. It provides a robust framework for the comprehension of the socio-cultural context of language learning and cognitive development. Leontiev posited that cognitive processes are deeply embedded in social interactions and cultural practices, a perspective that complements Western approaches to psycholinguistics, which might emphasise more cognitive or individualistic aspects. Furthermore, the utilisation of digital tools has the potential to significantly enhance language development.

The following areas of focus have been identified:

- **Vocabulary Acquisition:** The acquisition of a robust vocabulary is of paramount importance for the comprehension of written texts, the facilitation of effective communication, and the attainment of academic success. The utilisation of digital tools can enhance the process of vocabulary acquisition, making it more engaging and effective. These tools provide spaced repetition, personalised feedback, and contextualised examples (Nation, 2013).
 - Context plays a pivotal role in the acquisition of new vocabulary. Learning words in context is far more effective than memorising isolated definitions. Digital tools can provide rich and meaningful contexts for vocabulary acquisition through interactive stories, videos, and simulations. For instance, a vocabulary application could present new words within the context of a narrative, thereby enabling learners to infer the meaning from the surrounding text and observe how the word is employed in a natural setting. For instance, A. Leontiev's (1978) Activity Theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the ways in which learning is embedded within social and cultural contexts. He posited that human activity, mediated by tools and signs, shapes our cognitive processes and understanding of the world. This perspective emphasises the necessity of designing digital learning environments that engage learners in meaningful activities that are connected to their real-world experiences.
- **Reading Comprehension:** The ability to comprehend written material is a fundamental skill that underpins the acquisition of knowledge. It is of paramount importance to comprehend the content of any reading material in order to facilitate

the acquisition of knowledge. Digital tools can facilitate reading comprehension by offering interactive glossaries, text-to-speech features, and personalised feedback (Rayner, 2009).

- The utilisation of digital tools has the potential to enhance reading comprehension. This can be achieved through the implementation of pre-reading activities, which facilitate the activation of prior knowledge. Furthermore, the integration of visual aids and annotations can serve to scaffold complex texts, thereby enhancing comprehension. Additionally, the promotion of active reading strategies, such as summarising and questioning, can also contribute to an enhanced comprehension process. For example, an online reading platform could permit students to highlight key terms, take notes, and respond to comprehension questions as they read, thereby encouraging active engagement with the text.
- **Language Production:** The process of language production is a crucial aspect of language learning and acquisition. In order to achieve true mastery of a language, learners must be afforded the opportunity to utilise it in authentic communicative contexts. Digital environments can provide such opportunities through the use of interactive simulations, virtual language exchange programs, and collaborative writing platforms (O'Dowd, 2018).
 - The importance of authentic communication is underscored by the potential of digital tools to create immersive environments where learners can practice speaking and writing in real-world scenarios. These scenarios may include ordering food in a restaurant, giving a presentation, or collaborating on a project with international peers. Such experiences afford learners the chance to apply their linguistic abilities in contexts that are both meaningful and conducive to the development of fluency and confidence.

3. APPLICATION AND EXAMPLES: DIGITAL NEUROPEDAGOGY IN PRACTICE

This section examines the application of the principles of digital neuropedagogy in real-world educational settings, with a view to enhancing learning outcomes. The examination will focus on specific examples of digital tools and approaches that leverage cognitive science and psycholinguistic insights to create more engaging, effective, and personalised learning experiences.

One of the most promising applications of digital neuropedagogy is the field of personalized learning. In a manner analogous to the tailoring of a suit to an individual's unique measurements, the objective of personalized learning is to adapt the educational experience to align with each learner's strengths, needs, and preferences. The utilisation of data analytics and adaptive algorithms by digital tools has the potential to make this vision a reality, moving away from the traditional "one-size-fits-all" approach to education. One of the most prominent proponents of this approach was the Soviet psychologist L. Vygotsky. In 1978, L. Vygotsky forcefully advanced the case for individualized instruction, acknowledging that learners possess disparate starting points, learning styles, and rates of progress. Vygotsky regarded the teacher's role as that of a facilitator, guiding learners within their zone of proximal development (ZPD) and providing support as they gradually assume greater responsibility for their own learning.

This approach is consistent with the objectives of personalised learning, which employs digital technologies to adapt instruction to individual requirements and preferences. The integration of Vygotsky's principles into the framework of personalised learning allows for a more comprehensive and holistic understanding of student development.

Adaptive Learning Platforms are defined as digital tools that facilitate the delivery of personalized learning experiences. To illustrate, D. Elkonin's (1971) theory of child development emphasises the necessity of taking learners' developmental stages into account when designing educational experiences. He put forth the argument that distinct age groups engage in particular leading activities that drive their cognitive and social development. By leveraging this understanding, digital neuropedagogy can facilitate the creation of age-appropriate learning environments that align with learners' developmental needs and interests. These platforms function as digital tutors, offering tailored instruction and support. Algorithms are employed to assess learners' strengths and weaknesses, provide personalised feedback, and adjust the pace and difficulty of instruction accordingly (Azevedo & Hadwin, 2005).

- For instance, Khan Academy provides learners with the opportunity to pursue personalized learning pathways in a range of subjects, including mathematics, science, and others. This allows them to advance at their own pace and receive targeted support when needed. It is akin to having a personal tutor available at all times, guiding learners through their individual learning journeys.
- The field of **Intelligent Tutoring Systems (ITS)** is concerned with the development of computer-based systems designed to provide learners with guidance and feedback in a manner that is both adaptive and personalized. These systems represent a further advancement in the field of personalised learning, utilising artificial intelligence (AI) to provide tailored guidance and feedback. Such systems simulate the experience of one-to-one tutoring, adapting to each learner's unique learning patterns (Woolf, 2010).
 - As an example, Carnegie Learning's MATHia software provides students with step-by-step guidance, assistance in the form of hints, and constructive feedback as they engage with mathematical problems. It is akin to having a patient and knowledgeable tutor at one's side, providing scaffolding for learning and just-in-time support. Empirical evidence indicates that intelligent tutoring systems can result in notable learning gains, particularly among students who encounter difficulties with traditional instructional methods (VanLehn, 2011).
- **Personalized Learning Analytics:** These tools collect and analyse learner data, providing valuable insights into individual learning patterns, strengths, and areas for improvement (Siemens & Baker, 2012). This information can be used to personalise instruction, provide targeted interventions, and support learners' self-regulated learning.
 - For example, Learning Analytics dashboards can provide learners with visual representations of their progress, helping them to understand their own learning patterns and set goals. For instance, a dashboard might illustrate a student's time investment in distinct tasks, their performance on quizzes, and their strengths and weaknesses. However, it is of paramount importance to address ethical considerations pertaining to data collection and privacy, ensuring that learner data is employed responsibly and transparently. Students must be

informed about the data being collected, how it will be utilised, and have the right to opt out.

The process of learning should be an engaging and enjoyable experience, rather than a tedious and burdensome one. Digital tools can leverage the brain's natural reward system and its affinity for novelty, multisensory experiences, and interactive challenges to enhance learner engagement and motivation. By capitalising on the brain's innate drive for exploration and challenge, digital tools can enhance the intrinsic rewards associated with learning.

- **Gamification:** The incorporation of game elements, such as points, badges, and leaderboards, can transform the mundane learning tasks into exciting quests, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of gamification. The incorporation of game elements, such as points, badges, and leaderboards, can transform the mundane learning tasks into exciting quests. Gamification engages the brain's reward system, motivating learners to persevere, achieve goals, and experience a sense of accomplishment (Kapp, 2012). Empirical evidence indicates that the implementation of gamification strategies can enhance student motivation, engagement, and academic performance (Sailer et al., 2017).
 - For instance, Duolingo, a widely used language learning application, employs gamification techniques to make language learning both enjoyable and addictive. Learners accrue points for correct responses, engage in competitive interactions with their peers, and advance to subsequent levels as they progress. The experience is akin to that of playing a game, yet simultaneously acquiring a new language. The success of Duolingo can be attributed, in part, to its effective use of gamification principles.
- **Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR)** are two distinct forms of immersive technology. These immersive technologies facilitate experiences that transport learners to novel environments, enabling them to investigate historical sites, explore the human body, or even journey to distant planets. The integration of VR and AR can facilitate the enhancement of multisensory experiences, thereby promoting a more profound understanding (Merchant et al., 2014). The creation of a sense of presence and immersion through the use of these technologies can enhance the engagement and memorability of learning experiences.
 - One example of such an application is Google Expeditions. This allows students to undertake virtual fieldwork at locations that might otherwise be inaccessible in the real world. One can envisage a scenario in which students are able to explore the Amazon rainforest, walk through ancient Rome, or embark on a journey through the solar system from the comfort of their classroom. Such immersive experiences have the potential to stimulate curiosity, enhance comprehension, and facilitate the formation of enduring memories.
- **Interactive Simulations** permit learners to experiment, explore, and learn by doing. For instance, V. Zinchenko's (1995) work on developing activity highlights the importance of active engagement and exploration in the learning process. Zinchenko emphasised that the most effective learning occurs when students are actively involved in the process, a principle that is reflected in the use of gamification and interactive simulations in Western digital neuropedagogy. These tools facilitate engagement by making learning activities more interactive and enjoyable, thus enhancing cognitive

and emotional involvement. Digital neuropedagogy can utilise this understanding to create immersive and interactive learning environments that encourage learners to explore, experiment and discover. Interactive learning allows the manipulation of variables, the observation of outcomes, and the testing of hypotheses in a safe and controlled environment, thereby promoting active learning and problem-solving (Aldrich, 2009). By providing a hands-on, interactive learning experience, simulations can assist learners in developing a deeper understanding of complex concepts.

It is important to note that simulations can be an extremely effective learning tool, but it is essential to select simulations that are well-designed and aligned with the learning objectives. It is possible that some simulations may oversimplify complex concepts or fail to provide adequate feedback. Consequently, it is of the utmost importance to exercise great care when selecting and implementing such simulations. For instance, a simulation of a chemical reaction should accurately represent the underlying scientific principles and provide clear feedback to learners about the consequences of their actions.

Language is the fundamental basis of learning, communication, and human connection. Digital tools can be effective resources in language learning, offering opportunities for extensive linguistic input, guided comprehension, and authentic communication practice. By capitalising on the potential of technology, it is possible to create more engaging and effective language learning experiences that facilitate connections between learners and the global community.

- **Digital Vocabulary Tools:** The acquisition of a robust vocabulary is of paramount importance for the comprehension of written texts, the facilitation of effective communication, and the attainment of academic success. The utilisation of digital tools can enhance the process of vocabulary acquisition, making it more engaging and effective. This is achieved through the provision of spaced repetition, personalised feedback, and contextualised examples (Nation, 2013).
 - As an illustration, the platform Quizlet permits users to create their own flashcards; play interactive games, and monitor their progress. It may be regarded as a personalised vocabulary coach, providing customised practice and support. Research has demonstrated that spaced repetition, a fundamental component of numerous digital vocabulary tools, can markedly enhance vocabulary retention (Cepeda et al., 2006).
- **Interactive Reading Platforms** provide support for struggling readers and enhance comprehension for all learners. They can track learners' eye movements and provide real-time support, such as text-to-speech, word prediction, and picture dictionaries (Rayner, 2009). By providing scaffolding and personalised support, these platforms can help learners develop the skills and confidence they need to become successful readers.
 - For instance, Read&Write Gold provides a comprehensive range of features that facilitate more accessible and engaging reading experiences. The software can read text aloud, highlight key words, and provide definitions on demand, thereby assisting learners in navigating complex texts with greater ease and confidence. Such assistance can be of particular benefit to students with learning disabilities, such as dyslexia, who may find traditional reading methods challenging.
- **Virtual Language Exchange Programs** facilitate the breakdown of geographical barriers, enabling learners to engage in communication with native speakers from

a multitude of global locations. Such programmes afford learners the opportunity to engage in authentic communication and cultural immersion, thereby rendering language learning more meaningful and motivating (O'Dowd, 2018). By engaging in authentic interactions with native speakers in real-world contexts, learners can develop proficiency, self-assurance, and a more profound understanding of diverse cultures.

The role of technology in fostering intercultural understanding is becoming increasingly evident. Virtual language exchange programmes are playing a pivotal role in this regard, facilitating cross-cultural understanding and communication. One can envisage a scenario in which an individual is able to engage in a digital conversation with a peer in a different country, thereby acquiring knowledge about their cultural heritage and practising their language skills. Such experiences can facilitate the broadening of horizons, the fostering of empathy, and the preparation of learners for a globalised world.

4. CHALLENGES AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

While digital neuropedagogy offers considerable potential for transforming education, it is essential to acknowledge and address the challenges and ethical considerations that accompany its implementation. As with any endeavour, digital neuropedagogy requires a skilled captain to navigate the treacherous waters of education. Careful planning and thoughtful decision-making are essential to ensure the success of this endeavour. This section will examine some of the key issues that educators, researchers, and policymakers must address as this field continues to evolve.

One of the most significant challenges in digital learning environments is the potential for cognitive overload. The profusion of information, stimuli, and multitasking opportunities that characterise digital spaces has the potential to overwhelm learners' working memory, thereby impeding comprehension and retention (Sweller, Ayres, & Kalyuga, 2011). It is akin to attempting to drink from a firehose: the sheer volume of information that is available in digital environments can make it challenging to process it effectively.

It is imperative that instructional designers are cognizant of the principles of cognitive load theory when developing digital learning experiences, ensuring that:

- **The inclusion of extraneous information is avoided.** It is advisable to concentrate on the most essential content and to avoid any superfluous distractions or visual clutter. One might consider the process of decluttering a room as analogous to the creation of a clean and organised space, which allows the mind to focus more effectively. For instance, a learning platform with a straightforward, uncluttered interface and transparent navigation will be less likely to overwhelm learners than a platform with distracting banners, pop-up advertisements, and an intricate layout.
- **Information is presented in a manner that allows for its comprehension in manageable units.** This process is analogous to consuming a meal in discrete portions, which is more easily assimilated and retained. Instead of presenting a comprehensive lecture on the Revolution, it would be more beneficial to divide the information into smaller, more manageable units, each focusing on a specific event or aspect. This would allow learners to check their understanding along the way.

- **Learners are afforded the opportunity to engage in practice and retrieval activities.** It is important to provide learners with opportunities to engage actively with the material, apply their knowledge, and receive feedback. It is important to note that learning is not a spectator sport; it requires active participation. The utilisation of interactive quizzes, simulations, and collaborative projects affords learners the opportunity to apply the knowledge they are acquiring and to receive feedback on their progress.

The digital divide, or the gap between those who have access to technology and those who do not, represents a significant challenge to the equitable implementation of digital neuropedagogy (Warschauer, 2003). A number of factors, including socioeconomic status, geographic location, and disability, can impede access. This is analogous to a library containing a vast array of books, yet only allowing certain individuals to enter. In order to fully realise the potential of digital neuropedagogy, it is essential to ensure that all learners have the opportunity to benefit from it.

In order to ensure that all learners can benefit from digital neuropedagogy, it is essential to do the following:

- **Provide equitable access to technology and internet connectivity.** It is imperative that schools and communities invest in providing all learners with the necessary devices, software, and reliable internet access. Access to technology should be regarded as a fundamental human right, rather than a privilege. This may entail the provision of laptops or tablets to students who lack such devices at home, the establishment of robust Wi-Fi networks in educational institutions, and the implementation of internet access programs for low-income families.
- **Develop digital literacy skills.** It is imperative that learners are equipped with the requisite skills to navigate digital environments effectively, to critically evaluate online information, and to utilise digital tools for learning and communication. It is becoming increasingly clear that digital literacy is an essential skill for success in the 21st century. It is recommended that digital literacy instruction be incorporated into the curriculum, with the objective of equipping students with the skills to search for information online, evaluate the credibility of sources, communicate effectively in digital environments, and use digital tools for creative expression and problem-solving.
- **Design inclusive digital learning experiences.** It is highly important that digital learning materials and platforms be accessible to learners with diverse needs, including those with disabilities. This necessitates the adherence to the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which is designed to create learning experiences that are accessible to all learners, irrespective of their abilities or disabilities. For instance, digital textbooks could provide text-to-speech functionality, adjustable font sizes, and alternative navigation options to accommodate learners with visual or auditory impairments.

The collection of vast amounts of learner data in digital learning environments has been identified as a cause for concern with regard to privacy and security (Holmes, Bialik, & Fadel, 2019). Such data may encompass personal information, academic performance, learning preferences, and even biometric data. As we embrace the potential of digital neuropedagogy, it is also imperative that we remain vigilant in protecting the privacy and security of learner data.

In order to guarantee the ethical and responsible use of learner data, it is of the utmost importance to do the following:

- **Establish clear guidelines for data collection, storage, and use.** It is imperative that educational institutions and providers of educational technology be transparent about the data they collect, how they use it, and with whom they share it. It is imperative that parents, students, and educators be provided with transparent and comprehensible privacy policies that delineate the manner in which data is collected, utilized, and safeguarded.
- **Obtain informed consent from learners (or their parents).** It is imperative that learners are informed about the intended use of their data and that they are afforded the opportunity to opt out of data collection. The consent process should be meaningful and ongoing, allowing learners to withdraw their consent at any time.
- **Implement robust security measures.** It is imperative that learner data is protected from unauthorised access, use, or disclosure. This necessitates the utilisation of robust passwords, encryption, and other security protocols to safeguard data. It is recommended that schools and educational technology providers undertake regular audits of their security systems and remain informed of the most effective practices for data protection.

The successful implementation of digital neuropedagogy necessitates that educators possess the requisite knowledge, skills, and support to integrate digital tools effectively into their teaching practices. Teachers represent the core of the educational system and must be equipped with the requisite tools and knowledge to navigate the digital landscape effectively.

In order to empower teachers to embrace digital neuropedagogy, it is essential to do the following:

- **Provide professional development opportunities.** It is imperative that teachers receive training on how to select, use, and evaluate digital tools that align with neuropedagogical principles. Professional development should be ongoing, relevant, and hands-on, providing teachers with opportunities to experiment with new tools, share best practices, and receive support from experienced colleagues.
- **Establish a culture of innovation and collaboration.** It is recommended that schools create a supportive environment where teachers can experiment with new technologies, share best practices, and learn from each other. This may entail the establishment of online communities of practice, the allocation of time for peer-to-peer mentoring, and the commemoration of innovative applications of technology in the classroom.
- **Provide ongoing technical and pedagogical support.** In order to implement digital neuropedagogy effectively in their classrooms, teachers require access to technical assistance, instructional coaching, and resources. This may entail the provision of dedicated technology support staff, the delivery of coaching from instructional technology specialists, and the establishment of a library of high-quality digital learning resources.

5. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The field of digital neuropedagogy is characterised by a dynamic and rapidly evolving nature, driven by the convergence of advancements in neuroscience, cognitive science, and educational technology. As we continue to elucidate the mysteries of the brain and

develop increasingly sophisticated technologies, the potential for transforming education is immense. This section presents a number of promising future directions for research and practice, demonstrating how this field can continue to shape the future of learning.

The advent of new technologies offers educators the opportunity to enhance learning and align educational practices with the principles of brain-based learning. These technologies have the potential to personalise learning experiences, provide real-time feedback, and create immersive and engaging learning environments that were previously unimaginable.

Among the most promising areas of application are:

- **Artificial Intelligence (AI).** The advent of AI is rapidly transforming numerous aspects of our lives, including the field of education. V. Davidov's (1996) concept of developmental teaching demonstrates the potential of AI to foster higher-order thinking skills. He posited that the objective of education should be to cultivate learners' theoretical thinking and conceptual understanding, rather than merely to transmit knowledge. The utilisation of AI-powered tools affords learners the opportunity to engage in complex problem-solving, critical analysis and creative exploration, thereby facilitating the advancement of their conceptual understanding. The utilisation of AI-powered tutors, personalised learning assistants, and adaptive assessment tools has the potential to provide individual learners with tailored support, feedback, and guidance, thereby optimising learning pathways and promoting mastery (Woolf, 2010). It is possible to imagine a virtual tutor that is able to analyse a student's learning patterns, identify areas of difficulty and provide personalised instruction and practice activities, adapting to their individual needs in real time. As Rose Luckin (2018) proposes, AI has the potential to facilitate the creation of learning experiences that are genuinely personalised, adaptive, and engaging, catering to the distinctive needs and preferences of each individual learner.
- **Brain-Computer Interfaces (BCIs).** BCIs permit direct communication between the brain and external devices, thereby offering the potential to track learners' brain activity in real-time and to personalise instruction based on their cognitive states (Blankertz et al., 2010). Although still in the early stages of development, BCIs have the potential to provide insights into learning processes and to tailor interventions to individual needs. For instance, a BCI could identify instances where a student is experiencing difficulty comprehending a concept and automatically adjust the pace or complexity of the instruction accordingly. Nevertheless, the ethical implications of utilising BCIs in education must be meticulously considered, with a view to ensuring that learners' privacy and autonomy are safeguarded. This resonates with the concerns expressed by neuroethicists such as Judy Illes (2017), who emphasises the necessity for "responsible innovation" in neurotechnology, ensuring that its applications in education prioritise student well-being and ethical considerations.
- **Personalised Learning Analytics.** The advent of sophisticated data analytics and machine learning has facilitated the creation of advanced learning analytics platforms. These platforms are capable of monitoring learners' progress, discerning patterns in their learning behaviours, and offering personalised recommendations and feedback (Siemens & Baker, 2012). Such platforms facilitate the development of self-awareness and self-regulation in learners, thereby empowering them to assume responsibility for their learning. One can envisage a dashboard that provides students with real-time feedback on their progress, highlighting their strengths, identifying areas for improvement, and suggesting personalised learning resources. In his 2013 work,

George Siemens posits that learning analytics can serve as a valuable tool for empowering learners to understand and manage their own learning processes. This, in turn, can foster metacognition and self-directed learning.

- **Affective Computing** is the study of how computers can be programmed to understand and respond to human emotions. Affective computing is the use of technology to recognise, interpret, and respond to human emotions. In the field of education, affective computing could be employed to identify students' emotional states, such as boredom, frustration, or engagement, and subsequently modify the learning experience in accordance with these findings. For instance, in the event that a student exhibits indications of frustration, the system could provide supplementary assistance or modify the difficulty level of the task. This is consistent with the growing recognition of the importance of emotions in learning, as Rosalind Picard (2000) asserts, "Affective computing is about equipping computers with the capacity to recognise, comprehend, and even convey emotions, which could facilitate the development of more empathetic and efficacious learning technologies."
- **Wearable sensors** are devices that can be worn on the body and that can collect data about the wearer's physiological state. Wearable sensors, such as smartwatches and fitness trackers, are capable of collecting physiological data, including heart rate, skin conductance, and brainwave activity. Such data could be employed to monitor students' engagement, stress levels, and cognitive load, thereby providing valuable insights into their learning experiences. Nevertheless, the utilisation of wearable sensors in educational settings has the potential to give rise to ethical concerns pertaining to privacy and data security, which must be meticulously addressed. As with any technology that collects personal data, transparency, informed consent, and data security are of paramount importance in order to ensure ethical and responsible use.
- **The Metaverse** is a concept that has emerged in recent years. It is a virtual world where users can interact with each other and with digital objects in a seemingly real environment. The metaverse is a virtual world where users can interact with each other and with digital objects in a manner that appears to be real. In the field of education, the metaverse has the potential to facilitate immersive learning experiences. This could involve students exploring historical sites, conducting virtual science experiments, or collaborating on projects in a shared virtual space. Nevertheless, the development of educational applications for the metaverse is still in its nascent stages, and it remains to be seen how this technology will shape the future of learning. Some educators posit that the metaverse may serve as a "transformative learning space" (Wu & Lee, 2022), offering opportunities for embodied learning, social interaction, and creative expression.

Despite the growing body of research on digital neuropedagogy, numerous questions remain unanswered. Further research is required in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the potential of this field and to ensure that it is implemented in an effective and ethical manner.

The following areas represent key areas for future research:

- **Investigating the long-term impact of digital neuropedagogy on learning outcomes, cognitive skills, and motivation.** Longitudinal studies are required to assess the long-term effects of digital neuropedagogical approaches on learners' academic achievement, critical thinking abilities, creativity, and lifelong learning

dispositions. It is therefore necessary to ascertain whether these approaches facilitate a more profound comprehension, a greater retention of knowledge, and an enhanced motivation for learning. It is imperative that we move beyond the limitations of short-term studies and examine the long-term impact of these approaches on learners' cognitive development, academic success, and lifelong learning habits.

- **The role of emotion and social interaction in digital learning environments** is a key area for further investigation. It is recommended that research investigate the potential of digital tools to foster positive emotions, social connections, and collaboration among learners. These factors have been demonstrated to enhance learning and motivation. How can digital learning environments be created that are not only cognitively stimulating but also emotionally engaging and socially supportive? As Mary Helen Immordino-Yang (2016) says, emotions are an integral component of learning, and it is imperative to design digital learning environments that acknowledge and capitalise on the potential of emotions to enhance engagement, motivation, and the construction of meaning.
- **Developing ethical guidelines for the use of neurotechnologies in education.** As neurotechnologies become more sophisticated and integrated into educational settings, it is of the utmost importance to develop ethical guidelines that ensure these technologies are used responsibly, equitably, and with respect for learners' privacy and autonomy. How can we ensure that neurotechnologies are used to the benefit of all learners, regardless of their background or abilities? How can the privacy and autonomy of learners be protected when brain-based data is used to personalise instruction? What are the potential societal implications of integrating neurotechnologies into education? The Neuroethics Society (2023) has advocated for a "proactive and participatory approach" to the development of neuroethical guidelines, which would involve educators, researchers, policymakers, and the public in a dialogue about the responsible use of neurotechnologies in education.

The future of digital neuropedagogy is reliant upon the fostering of greater integration and collaboration across disciplines. By convening experts from neuroscience, cognitive science, education, and technology, we can fully realise the potential of this field, thereby creating a more effective, engaging, and equitable learning experience for all. In order to fully realise the potential of digital neuropedagogy, it is essential to adopt an interdisciplinary approach that draws upon insights from a range of fields and research traditions. This encompasses the incorporation of perspectives from the Soviet school of pedagogy and neuroscience, which proffers invaluable insights into the social, cultural, and historical dimensions of learning.

In order to achieve this interdisciplinary approach, it is necessary to do the following:

- **Establish collaborative relationships between neuroscientists, cognitive scientists, educators, and technologists.** In order to fully realise the potential of digital neuropedagogy, it is essential to adopt a genuinely interdisciplinary approach, drawing upon insights from a range of fields and research traditions. This entails incorporating perspectives from the Soviet school of pedagogy and neuroscience, which proffers invaluable insights into the social, cultural, and historical dimensions of learning. The integration of these perspectives enables educators and researchers to gain a more comprehensive understanding of learning processes and to develop more effective educational interventions. The formation of interdisciplinary research teams allows for the integration of diverse perspectives and expertise, thereby

facilitating the development and evaluation of innovative digital learning tools and approaches. By working together, these experts can ensure that digital tools are based on sound scientific principles, aligned with educational goals, and designed to meet the needs of diverse learners. As interdisciplinary scholar Howard Gardner (2017) posits, the challenges of the 21st century necessitate the dismantling of disciplinary silos and the embrace of a more holistic and collaborative approach to knowledge creation and problem-solving.

- **Share of best practices and research findings across disciplines.** Conferences, publications, and online platforms can facilitate the dissemination of knowledge and the development of a shared understanding of digital neuropedagogy. By disseminating their insights and experiences, researchers and practitioners can facilitate the advancement of this field and ensure that its benefits reach all learners. Open access journals, online communities of practice, and international conferences can play a pivotal role in fostering this cross-disciplinary dialogue.
- **Engage stakeholders in the development and implementation of digital neuropedagogical approaches.** It is imperative that educators, learners, parents, policymakers, and technology developers are all involved in the shaping of the future of this field. This is to ensure that it meets the needs of all stakeholders. By engaging a diverse range of stakeholders, we can develop a more inclusive and equitable approach to digital neuropedagogy that benefits all members of the learning community. This participatory approach can help to ensure that digital neuropedagogy is implemented in an ethical, sustainable, and responsive manner to the needs of diverse learners.

To translate the vision of digital neuropedagogy into reality within the Russian educational landscape, we propose the following concrete actions:

1. **Establish a National Research Center for Digital Neuropedagogy:** This center would serve as a hub for research, development, and dissemination of best practices in the field, fostering collaboration among scientists, educators, and technology developers.
2. **Develop Pilot Programs in Schools and Universities:** Implement pilot programs to test and evaluate the effectiveness of digital neuropedagogical approaches in real-world educational settings.
3. **Create Funding Opportunities:** Provide dedicated funding for research, development, and implementation of digital neuropedagogy initiatives.
4. **Design Professional Development Programs:** Equip educators with the knowledge, skills, and resources to effectively integrate digital neuropedagogy into their teaching practices.
5. **Foster Collaboration:** Encourage partnerships between educational institutions, research centers, technology companies, and government agencies to advance the field of digital neuropedagogy in Russia.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Digital neuropedagogy provides a compelling illustration of the transformative potential of interdisciplinary research. By integrating insights from neuroscience, cognitive science, psycholinguistics, and educational technology, this nascent field offers a compelling vision for the future of education. The future of learning is one where the acquisition of

facts is not the sole objective; rather, it is a dynamic and engaging process that aligns with the brain's natural learning mechanisms. This approach empowers learners to reach their full potential and prepares them for the complexities of the 21st century.

The evidence presented in this review indicates that digital neuropedagogy has the potential to enhance educational efficiency. When digital tools are designed and implemented with a deep understanding of cognitive processes, they can transform the learning experience. Such tools can personalise instruction, catering to individual needs and preferences; enhance engagement, making learning more captivating and enjoyable; improve language acquisition, opening doors to new cultures and connections; and foster the development of essential 21st-century skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and collaboration.

Nevertheless, the path towards the full realisation of the potential of digital neuropedagogy is not without its obstacles. It is imperative that these challenges are navigated thoughtfully and ethically, with the objective of ensuring that this powerful approach to learning benefits all. It is important to be aware of the potential for cognitive overload when designing digital learning environments, ensuring that they are both stimulating and not overwhelming. It is imperative that we address the issues of equity and access, and strive to bridge the digital divide. This will ensure that all learners have the opportunity to benefit from these innovative approaches. Furthermore, it is of paramount importance to ensure the responsible and ethical use of learner data, safeguarding privacy and promoting transparency.

Furthermore, ongoing research is vital to enhance our comprehension of the influence of digital tools on learning and to inform the advancement of innovative and efficacious digital learning environments. It is imperative to investigate the long-term effects of digital neuropedagogy on learning outcomes, cognitive skills, and motivation. It is imperative to investigate the design of digital learning environments that not only facilitate cognitive growth but also promote emotional well-being and social connection. Furthermore, it is imperative to develop ethical guidelines for the use of emerging neurotechnologies, ensuring that they are used responsibly and for the benefit of all learners.

As we progress further into this new era of learning, it will be imperative to foster collaboration across disciplines in order to facilitate the advancement of knowledge in this field. In order to shape the future of digital neuropedagogy, it is essential that a multidisciplinary team comprising neuroscientists, cognitive scientists, educators, technologists, policymakers and learners work together. It is imperative that this collaboration occurs in order to guarantee that digital neuropedagogy meets the needs of all learners and contributes to a more equitable and effective educational landscape. The future of learning is promising, and digital neuropedagogy represents a compelling direction that can guide us towards a more engaging, personalised, and brain-compatible approach to education. It is of the utmost importance that we recognise the transformative potential of digital neuropedagogy and collaborate to create a future where all Russian learners have access to engaging, effective and personalised educational experiences that empower them to thrive in the 21st century. An interdisciplinary approach allows learners to become active participants in their own learning, rather than passive consumers of information. It enables them to become architects of their own knowledge, creators of their own futures and engaged citizens of a rapidly changing world.

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SYSTEM OF ENGLISH EXERCISES FOR IMPROVING MEMORY IN INTERPRETER EDUCATION

Vasiliy M. Glushak¹, Yelena Yu. Orekhova², Natalia A. Sergienko²

¹MGIMO University, Department of German Language, Russia

²Surgut Surgut State University, Department of Foreign Languages, Russia

ORCID iDs: Vasiliy M. Glushak

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0193-8071>

Yelena Yu. Orekhova

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4954-9518>

Natalia A. Sergienko

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6884-5315>

Abstract. *This article describes the role of short-term memory in the interpreter's activity and the development of its capacity in interpreting students. Considering the fact that students are rarely or not at all offered short-term memory training exercises during a translation course, the authors of the article propose a system of memory training exercises that can be integrated into two of the three stages of an interpreting course: series of numbers and their combination with a noun, echo repetition, 'snowball' type exercises; exercises with mnemonics; and typified grammatical and semantic structures. Based on the developed typology of exercises, we propose a lesson-by-lesson scheme for combining different types of exercises and thematic organisation of classes in an interpreting course. The effectiveness of classes with sequential implementation of such exercises, as opposed to courses without their application, was experimentally determined. It was found that the systematic and consistent performance of memory exercises during a semester increases the capacity of operative memory units and the degree of accuracy of the reproduced invariant indicated by a noticeable decrease in omissions, additions, substitutions, or mistakes. Based on the results, it is concluded that it is advisable to practice memory training not only directly in translation classes but also in foreign language classes in the first and second years so that students master the necessary competencies before they begin their translation studies.*

Key words: *interpreting, interpreting training, short-term memory, pedagogical experiment, typology of exercises*

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the important mechanisms of translation activity is memory. In translation activity, memory is the retention of information about verbal cues after their action has already ceased (Serova, 2001, p. 119). All types of memory are important in translation activity, but their role varies depending on the type of translation (Daro, 1997, p. 622-628; Zhong, 2001, p. 37). According to experimental data, Y. Kozelecky designates short-term memory as the main system where the processes of current information processing occurs (Kozelecky, 1979, p. 44), so it is often called operational memory (Atkinson, 1980, p. 54) or working memory

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Corresponding author: Vasiliy M. Glushak, Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO University), Russia

E-mail: glushakvm@mail.ru

(Dong et al., 2015). It is into short-term memory that information from sensory memory and information sampled from long-term memory go. Calling short-term memory active, working memory, or working memory, it should be noted that it plays an active role in processing information, as opposed to traditional views of it that attribute to it a passive role as an intermediate link on the way to long-term memory. In addition, the information contained in working memory is directly accessible to a person, and its retrieval is carried out quite quickly and accurately. It is considered a necessary component of any activity, ensuring its success with other mental processes (Alekseeva, 2019, p. 18).

Short-term memory plays an important role in the translation process, thanks to which the translator can memorise many linguistic units within a predetermined period of time. After translation, the incoming information may disappear from the short-term memory. Short-term memory helps a person perceive data at a certain moment, retain them in memory, and transform them (Alekseeva, 2019, p. 17). J. Miller established that the duration of short-term memory is 15–20 seconds. Its volume includes five to nine units (Miller, 1956). This memory functions without a preliminary setting for memorising information but rather with the setting for further reproduction of the material after some time.

Turning to the publications that focus on ways to improve memory performance, it should be noted that their authors point to the need to integrate different skills in the interpreter training process (Emelyanova, 2024, p. 191). According to M. Lee, short-term memory – which is involved in the coordination and regulation of ongoing information processing – may be one of the factors that determines the competence of interpreters. According to the results of an experiment that involved measuring the working memory capacity of interpreters with more than 10 years of experience and novices with fewer than 3 years of experience, V. Lee concludes that the efficiency of using short-term memory resources for interpreting increases with experience and training (Lee, 2011, p. 106-107). According to I.S. Alekseeva, the amount of text that an interpreter can remember is a controlling indicator of his/her memory mobilisation (Alekseeva, 2001, p. 54). The importance of short-term memory training is also noted in other works (Heuven et al., 2016, p. 80; Jiang et al., 2018, p. 1470; Selezneva, 2023, p. 150; Zefirov, 2015, p. 15).

To improve the quality of interpreting with poorly developed short-term memory, it is recommended to use translation shorthand (Heuven et al., 2016, p. 10) as well as various mnemotechniques (Soanes et al., 2006, p. 477) and other effective memorisation techniques (Stanojević Gocić et al., 2023, p. 608). Interpreting teachers are increasingly insisting that exercises to develop short-term memory capacity be included in the teaching of interpreting (Alekseeva, 2001; Hambrick et al., 2002; McNamara et al., 2001; Prins et al., 2011). In addition, experimental studies confirm that the translator's memory capacity can be increased by periodically performing special exercises (Jiang et al., 2018, p. 1470).

Thus, the methodological literature on teaching interpreting recognises the need to consider the factor of short-term memory in the process of teaching interpreting students, without the development of which their future professional activity may be complicated.

2. THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY AND RESEARCH METHODS

An analysis of interpreting curricula at some leading universities in Germany (Universität Bonn, Universität Heidelberg), Russia (Moscow State University, Moscow State Linguistic University), and the United States (State University of New York at Binghamton, The

Graduate School of Translation and Interpretation) in translation studies has shown that students are not offered short-term memory training techniques during the translation course, despite the fact that there are books with memory exercises. Teachers avoid introducing such exercises into their classes because they believe that it may consume class time to the detriment of training direct translation skills and mastering translation transformations. In addition, the exercises presented in these publications are designed for a wide range of users and do not consider the thematic specifics on which interpreting courses are based. To eliminate this shortcoming, we developed a set of exercises that can be integrated into interpretation classes. In our work, we were guided by the thematic lesson plan on which the course on interpreting in the political science program at MGIMO University (Moscow, Russia) is based. We assume that any interpreting class consists of three stages – in the first two of which it is advisable to integrate memory training exercises. The first stage, which lasts up to 20 minutes, involves ‘warming up’ the speech apparatus, developing speech technique, training short-term memory through exercises on repetition of rows of numerals and combinations of numerals with nouns, and reciting mnemonic verses. In the second stage, which lasts up to 20 minutes, individual translation skills are practiced. This stage includes exercises to develop working memory capacity – echo repeats, snowball exercises, and exercises with typified grammatical and semantic structures. The third stage of the lesson covers the remaining 40 minutes and includes translation exercises, i.e., translating unfamiliar texts from one language into another. As a homework assignment, each time the students must echo-repeat the given text, save it in an audio file, and submit it to the teacher for checking.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Typology of exercises for the development of short-term memory of interpreting students

The literature presents various memory exercises in the process of teaching translation: completion of the teacher’s statements, shadowing, answering questions on the listened text, consecutive repetition of numbers and words, cursive phrases to practice diction, associations, repetition of sentences by ‘snowball’ type, rhyming, mnemonic-images, memorization of the text and restoration of the text content by ‘snowball’ chain, and memorization and reproduction of text fragments (surnames, names of objects, numbers) (Fomina et al., 2023). Next, we will present our typology of exercises for training the short-term memory of transfer students. The wording of the tasks will indicate which language or translation is in question, with L1 denoting the language of instruction or mother tongue and L2 denoting English as a foreign language.

1.1. Exercises on rows of numbers and their combination with nouns

The purpose of performing exercises on rows of numbers and their combination with nouns, along with training the memory to memorise both precision and non-precision vocabulary, is to develop the ability to switch quickly from one language to another and from one type of information to another. In each subsequent lesson, exercises with an increasing number of components of the series are suggested:

Exercise 1. Repeat after the speaker in L2 a series of four digits without changing their order.

4 12 1 35
2 15 9 65
<...>

Exercise 2. Translate the numerals consecutively into L2 by adding 1. For example, if the speaker says 24 in L1, you should translate 25 into L2.

12 67 92 44 10 59 37 28 ...

Exercise 3. Repeat in L1 a consecutive row of three representatives of different nationalities and their quantitative designations. The row is constructed according to the principle 'one representative of European nationality – several representatives of European nationality – several representatives of nationalities of other continents.'

One German – two Slovaks – nine Americans.
One Croatian – four Hungarians – seven Brazilians.
<...>

Exercise 4. Repeat in L2, following the speaker, the information in L1 about the distance between different cities, adding after each city the country in which it is located.

Vienna – Bratislava 67 km.
Berlin – Brno 539 km.
<...>

Exercise 5. Translate the numerals consecutively into L2, subtracting 1. For example, if the speaker says 124 in L1, you should translate 123 into L2.

124 673 920 441 102 594 378 <...>

The next type of exercise is a combination of numerals and nouns. In addition to memory training, such exercises are aimed at students' mastering the name of precision vocabulary in a foreign language, i.e., proper names:

Exercise 6. Follow the speaker in L2 and repeat a series of place names without changing their order.

Saxony, the Alps, the Baltic Sea, the Caucasus, the Danube, and the Sahara.
Catalonia, Carpathians, Black Sea, English Channel, Kalahari, Ural Mountains.
...

Exercise 7. Follow the speaker in L2 and repeat a series of weather forecasts for different cities without changing the order of the forecasts.

Cologne +12 degrees Celsius, Paris +9 degrees Celsius, Prague +12 degrees Celsius.
Rome – Rain, Copenhagen – Hail, Munich – Snow.
<...>

Exercise 8. Repeat the results of a sporting event after the speaker in L2.

Champions League 2011/2012: Bayern Munich – Manchester City 2:0.
Bundesliga: Werder Bremen – Borussia Dortmund 3:1.
<...>

Exercise 9. Repeat the summary of the election results in L2 after the speaker, without changing the order of the data. Each student translates two results.

Bundestag elections 1949: Christian Democrats 31 percent, Social Democrats 29.2 percent.

U.S. presidential election 2004: George Bush – 50.7 percent, John Kerry – 48.3 percent.

<...>

Exercise 10. Repeat after the speaker the information about the years when different countries joined some international organisations without changing the order of the data. When repeating, give the full name of the international organisations.

Spain NATO 1982, Germany UNESCO 1951, Algeria OPEC 1969.

Georgia WTO 2000, Chile APEC 1994, Canada G7 1976.

<...>

Exercise 11. Repeat the ingredients of the dishes in L2 after the speaker without changing the order of the ingredients.

Green potato salad: 1 kg boiled potatoes, 300 g frozen bean pods, 150 g arugula, 1 ripe avocado.

<...>

Exercise 12. Repeat after the speaker in L2 the number series of fish without changing their order.

North Sea crab 59 € per kilo, salmon fillet 31 € per kilo, trout 15 € per kilo, sea bream 22 € per kilo.

<...>

Exercise 13. Follow the speaker in L2 and repeat the number series of birds without changing the order of the birds.

35 Storks, 12 Cranes, 47 Falcons.

246 eagles, 356 quails, 469 gulls.

<...>

Exercise 14. Repeat economic statistics in L2 after the speaker without changing their order.

Lignite production in million tonnes in 2009: Germany 170; China 120; Russia 68.

Crude oil production in million tonnes in 2011: Saudi Arabia 525; Russia 511; USA 352.

<...>

1.2. The Shadowing technique

Another type of exercise to develop the short-term memory capacity of interpreting students is so-called shadowing, which involves thoroughly practicing an audio text and then reading it simultaneously with the speaker or slightly behind the speaker or with a slight lag behind him/her while mimicking as much as possible the articulation, intonation, pace, and rhythm of the speaker's speech (Golenko, 2022, p. 40; Sumarsih, 2017, p. 184). In addition, students acquire the initial skills of simultaneous interpreting (simultaneous listening and speaking), developing clean articulation of sounds at a fast pace of speech:

Exercise 15. Shadowing. Step back 2–3 words and repeat the sentences in half-voice after the speaker. Be ready to repeat in full voice on the teacher’s command.

More than 90 percent of Europe’s inhabitants speak Indo-European languages. Slavic, Germanic, and Romance languages are the most common. Greek, Albanian, Baltic and Celtic languages, and Romani are also Indo-European languages. <...>

Exercise 16. Shadowing. Say in L2, observing the pronunciation norm when rendering proper names.

Napoleon Bonaparte, Tolstoi Lew Nikoilaevich, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, Charles Philip Arthur George, Salvador Domingo Felipe Jacinto Dalí i Domènech <...>

Exercise 17. Shadowing. Translate into L2, observing the German pronunciation norm for proper names.

Giorgio Cavalli in Milan and Polina Sidorova in Ekaterinburg.

Katarína Garajová in Košice and Sabiene Altmayer in Hamburg.

<...>

Exercise 18. Shadowing. Repeat the sentences half-voiced after the speaker, 1–2 words apart. There are gaps in the texts; they are indicated by silence (in the exercise, they are in bold). During the repetition, fill them in according to the meaning. Be ready to continue the repetition in full voice on the teacher’s command.

Next week, I am flying to the Czech Republic. My good friend Karel lives in the capital of the Czech Republic **Prague**. He is a Czech. I am taking 1,200 **Czech crowns** with me to the Czech Republic, and I want to visit Prague and Karlovy Vary.

I will spend my holiday in the capital of Germany – **Berlin**. In Berlin, I know Jens and Anne. Jens and Anne are **Germans**. I withdrew 200 **euros** from an ATM at Berlin’s airport. The euro has been in use in Germany since 2002, but my grandfather believes that the national currency of Germany is still **the German mark**.

Exercise 19. Shadowing. Repeat the sentences in a half-voice after the speaker after 2–3 words. Be ready, on the teacher’s command, to continue repeating in full voice.

The prefix ‘Latin’ in ‘Latin America’ indicates the origin of the Romance languages, namely Latin. The term ‘Latin America’ now encompasses all American countries whose official languages are Spanish or Portuguese. Some countries also use English and French in addition to their native languages. <...>

Exercise 20. Shadowing. Repeat the sentences in a half-voice after the speaker after 3–4 words. Be ready, on the teacher’s command, to continue repeating in full voice.

Hockey players of the Slovak national youth team beat the Canadian national youth team with players under 20 years of age 3:1. This is already the second victory for the Slovak team. In the first round, they defeated the team from Switzerland with a score of 3:0. The Slovak national team will also play against Latvia and Sweden. The World Championship will last until January 5. <...>

Exercise 21. Shadowing. Stand back for 4–5 words and repeat the sentences after the speaker in a half-voice. Be ready, on the teacher's command, to continue the echo-repeat in full voice.

Germany was one of the six founding members of the current EU in 1957. As of 2024, it comprises 27 states, and the official currency in many EU countries is the euro. <...>

Exercise 22. Shadowing with elements of simultaneous translation. Translate the names of countries and telephone codes into German. Add the capitals of the respective countries when translating, e.g.: Slovakia 421–Slovakia 421, Bratislava.

Lithuania 370, Australia 61, Luxembourg 352, USA 1, Sweden 46, Czech Republic 420, Austria 43, Turkey 90, Ukraine 380, Serbia 381, China 86, Azerbaijan 994, Romania 40, Finland 358, Japan 81, Syria 963, Poland 48, Algeria 213, France 33, Portugal 351, Argentina 54, Uzbekistan 998, Armenia 374, Norway 47, Russia 7, Belgium 32, Brazil 55.

1.3. 'Snowball' exercises

Training of short-term memory is also ensured by several repetitions of the same semantic segments in context. This is facilitated by snowball-type exercises, the essence of which is as follows: As the number of words that students need to must reproduce increases, the syntactic structure of the utterance becomes more complex. The more often the embedded element is repeated, the more successfully it is fixed in memory. Through the development of the skill of stepwise lengthening of structure and the skill of syntactic linear unfolding, whole phrases are learned effectively, and interlingual correspondences are learned quite firmly. In addition, snowball exercises are an excellent example for memorising both large amounts of information and the order of units in a text (Zahorák, 2021, p. 95-96):

Exercise 23. Repeat after the speaker the sentence you have been given (new elements at the next presentation of the utterance in the exercise are marked in bold).

1. Europe is divided into Eastern Europe, Central Europe, and Western Europe.

2. **From a geopolitical point of view**, Europe is divided into Eastern Europe, Central Europe, and Western Europe.

3. From a geopolitical point of view, Europe is divided into Eastern Europe, **which includes the former Soviet republics**, Central Europe, and Western Europe.

<...>

10. From a geopolitical point of view, Europe is divided into Eastern Europe, which includes the former Soviet republics **Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan**; Central Europe, **which includes the former socialist bloc countries Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, and the former Yugoslav republics Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina and North Macedonia**; and Western Europe, **which includes all former capitalist countries: Great Britain, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Switzerland, Austria, and the Scandinavian countries.**

1.4. The mnemonic linking system

The next type of exercise for developing the short-term memory of transfer students is the mnemonic linking system. It comprises the construction of texts that create a story based on sequences of actions, vivid images, and associative chains (Sacks-Zimmerman et al., 2018). Texts within the mnemonic linking system are sometimes created in verse

form (Osianova et al., 2020, p. 48). With memory training to memorise the completeness of information, the mnemonic linking system helps students memorise the order of the components of an utterance. The following exercises within the mnemonic linking system were used in our interpreting course:

Exercise 24. Listen to the text and complete the following tasks: 1) List all the nationalities in the order and gender in which they occur. 2) How is each nationality characterised? 3) Try to reproduce the whole text.

Stereotypes

A proud Swede,
 Two hard-working Latvians,
 Three quiet Finns,
 Four sporty Norwegians who always win something,
 Five fast and boisterous Poles who love to shop,
 Six serious, well-mannered Brits who only understand English,
 Seven full-bodied Germans who eat their sausages,
 Eight cheerful Frenchmen who forget all their problems,
 Nine beautiful, slim Czech women who don't rush to work,
 Because ten strong Slovaks are coming to meet them.

Exercise 25. Listen to the text and do the tasks:

- 1) Name all the names that include the element *shuck*.
- 2) Name all the names that include the element *sipp*.
- 3) Retell the text.

Once upon a time, there was a man who had three sons.
 One was called Shak,
 another was called Shakshavverak.
 and the third was called Shakshavverakshakomini.
 There was also a woman who had three daughters.
 One was called Sipp, one was called Sipsivelipp,
 and the third was called Sipsivelippsippsippomini.
 And Shak took Sipp,
 and Shakshavverak took Sipsivelipp,
 and Sakshavverak took Sakshakomini as his wife Sipsivelipsippomini.
 Children were born to the couple, and they gave them double names:
 Shak-Sipp,
 Shakshavverak-Sipsivelippe, and
 Schackschawwerrackschackomini-Sippsiwvelippsippomini.

Exercise 26. Listen to the text and perform the tasks:

- 1) Name all the composites that include the component 'Rhubarb'.
- 2) Listen to the text again and retell it.

In a small village, there once lived a girl with the name Barbara. And Barbara was known everywhere for her wonderful rhubarb cake. Therefore she was also called Rhubarb Barbara. Rhubarb Barbara noticed quickly that she could make money with her cakes and opened a bar: The Rhubarb Barbara Bar. The Rhubarb Barbara Bar went well

and quickly had regular customers. And the three most well-known of them, three Barbarians, came so often to the Rhubarb Barbara Bar to eat Rhubarb Barbara Bar's delicious rhubarb cake that they were called the Rhubarb Barbara Bar Barbarians for short. The Rhubarb Barbara Bar Barbarians had beautiful beards. And when the Rhubarb Barbara Bar Barbarians wanted to maintain their Rhubarb Barbara Bar Barbarians Rhubarb Barbara Bar Barbarians Beards, they went to the barber. The only barber that could handle such a Rhubarb Barbara Bar Barbarians' Beard was called Rhubarb Barbara Bar Barbarians Beard Barber. The Rhubarb Barbara Bar Barbarians Beard Barber also liked to go to the Rhubarb Barbara Bar. And in addition to eating Rhubarb Barbara Bar's delicious rhubarb cake, he liked to drink a beer, which he ceremoniously called Rhubarb Barbara Bar Barbarians Beard Barber Beer. The Rhubarb Barbara Bar Barbarians Beard Barber Beer could only be purchased at a very specific bar. And the person selling the Rhubarb Barbara Bar Barbarians Beard Barber Beer at the counter of the Rhubarb Barbara Bar Barbarians Beard Barber Beer Bar was named Baerbel. And so the Rhubarb Barbara Bar Barbarians, together with the Rhubarb Barbara Bar Barbarians Beard Barber Beer and Rhubarb Barbara Bar Barbarians Beard Barber Beer Bar Baerbel, went to the Rhubarb Barbara Bar to eat Rhubarb Barbara Bar's delicious rhubarb cake and to clink a glass of Rhubarb Barbara Bar Barbarians Beard Barber Beer (World Translation Center, 2022).

1.5. Exercises with typified grammatical and semantic structures

The last type of exercises used in our interpreting course to train students' short-term memory capacity are utterances with typified grammatical and semantic structures. They represent an element of preparation for simultaneous interpreting:

Exercise 27. Translate the following statements synchronously. Pronounce your translation in a half-voice. Be ready to continue translating in full voice at the teacher's command.

Catholics make up 56 percent of all CDU party members.

Bavarians make up 14 percent of the total German population.

<...>

Exercise 28. Translate the following statements. Pronounce your translation in a low voice. Observe the German pronunciation norm for proper names. Be ready to continue translating in full voice at the teacher's command.

Germany's largest companies

Aldi, from the retail sector, headquartered in Mülheim near Essen, is ranked 13th in Germany with 200,000 employees.

Airbus from the copper production sector, headquartered in Hamburg, is ranked 47th in Germany with 4,831 employees.

<...>

The above-presented typology and thematic organisation of exercises for the development of short-term memory in transfer students can be summarised in the following table (Table 1):

Table 1 Distribution of types of exercises for the development of short-term memory by themes of lessons

Lesson No.	Lesson topic	Exercise numbers
1	Introductory lesson	Ex. 1, Ex. 15
2	European countries	Ex. 1, Ex. 2, Ex. 23
3	Countries of the world	Ex. 3, Ex. 16
4	Cities	Ex. 4, Ex. 17
5	Hydronyms	Ex. 4, Ex. 5, Ex. 23
6	Geography	Ex. 6, Ex. 22
7	Weather and natural disasters	Ex. 7, Ex. 18
8	Sports	Ex. 8, Ex. 19, Ex. 23
9	Plants	Ex. 11, Ex. 20
10	Animals and fish	Ex. 12, Ex. 23
11	Birds	Ex. 13, Ex. 24
12	Politics	Ex. 9, Ex. 27, Ex. 23
13	International organizations	Ex. 10, Ex. 21, Ex. 25
14	Economics	Ex. 14, Ex. 28
15	International cooperation	Ex. 10, Ex. 26

2. Experimental study of the effectiveness of exercises on the short-term memory of future translators

It is obvious that interpreting students develop their short-term memory capacity even without special exercises. This is because students learn new words on a regular basis, perform oral translation of texts from their native language into a foreign language and vice versa, listen to audio texts, try to memorise as much information as possible, and perform other types of exercises related to learning a foreign language and translation. This assumption has been tested earlier in practice during the experiment (Alekseeva, 1991: 19), where at the initial stage of mastering the oral translation, the first-year students were noted to have operational memory units of small capacity (8.0 syllables). In addition, the subjects at the beginning of the course are distinguished by the lowest accuracy of the reproduced invariant according to the highest number of omissions or omissions (25.3 syllables), additions (2.1 syllables), and substitutions or errors (5.6 syllables). Conversely, after the first semester of the interpreting course, the subjects were characterised by an increase in the capacity of operative memory units (9.3 syllables). The greatest degree of accuracy of the reproduced invariant was achieved through a marked decrease in omissions (18.3 syllables), additions (1.8 syllables), and substitutions or errors (3.9 syllables).

An experiment was conducted to determine the effectiveness of using the developed set of exercises for developing working memory in students attending a translation course. The participants of the experiment were two groups of Kant University students, nine students each, who studied a course of political translation from German into Russian during four semesters. The first group studied interpreting according to the traditional programme, which lacked special exercises for the development of short-term memory. In the second group, the classes were conducted with the consistent use of short-term memory exercises.

Before starting the translation course, the students were tested to determine their short-term memory capacity, the number of omissions and omissions of information elements in the

audio text, additions of missing information elements, and substitutions of heard information elements and other errors. The students were asked to listen to 10 sentences in a foreign language with a number of syllables from 15 to 25 and repeat them as accurately as possible. The words in the text were selected so that they did not exceed three syllables. A similar test was conducted with each student from both groups at the end of the first semester of translation studies. The results of the tests were compared with a similar experiment conducted by T. D. Alekseeva and presented in the form of a table (Table 2):

Table 2 Experimental results on the development of working memory in transfer students from different academic courses

	Alexeeva's experiment		A course without memory exercises		A course with memory exercises	
	Beginning of study	End of study	Beginning of study	End of study	Beginning of study	End of study
Memory capacity (syllables)	8,0	9,3	7,7	9,0	7,9	10,2
Omissions (syllables)	25,3	18,3	26,9	19,8	27,2	17,9
Addenda (syllables)	2,1	1,8	3,0	2,2	3,0	2,0
Substitutions and errors (syllables)	5,6	3,9	5,9	4,3	5,7	3,4

4. CONCLUSION

The importance of short-term memory development in the professional work of a interpreter is a recognised fact. The greater the interpreter's capacity, the more effective his the work is. In this regard, it is necessary to train short-term memory as early as possible during interpreting courses at university. The analysis of curricula in various countries has shown that in interpreting classes, memory exercises are either not provided at all or are performed inconsistently and unsystematically. To prove the effectiveness of short-term memory exercises, we developed a corpus of exercises that followed certain rules:

1. Increasing the number of components of the series in each subsequent lesson;
2. Increasing the rate of pronunciation of word chains and utterances from slow to faster;
3. Transitioning from memorising word chains to memorising word combinations, sentences, and texts;
4. Moving from memorising sentences with simple syntactic structure to sentences with complex structure;
5. Transitioning from memorising elements from one thematic area to memorising elements combined from different areas;
6. Moving from memorization tasks to memorization, reproduction, and translation tasks.

An experimental study was conducted to measure memory capacity at the beginning of the interpreting course and at the end of the first semester in two groups of MGIMO students: those studying under a traditional programme without exercises and those

studying under a special programme with sequential performance of such exercises. The analysis of the obtained results provides foundation to assert that, unlike traditional training programmes, the inclusion of special exercises for the development of short-term memory in the interpreting course and their consecutive performance throughout the course contributes to an increase in memory capacity and to a decrease in the number of omissions and omissions of information elements of the audio text, additions of missing information elements, substitutions of heard information elements, and other errors.

Thus, it can be said that tasks for training working memory are necessary at the initial stage of teaching interpreting. The key is to be systematic in this area: At least 20 minutes should be allocated for each lesson because memory development requires time, effort, and constant work. Large memory capacity that helps interpreters ensure the accuracy and quality of translation in various situations. It is advisable to practice memory training not only directly in translation classes but also in foreign language classes in the first and second years of study so that students have the necessary competencies before they begin their translation training.

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LEARNERS' PERSPECTIVES ON NATIVE LANGUAGE USAGE IN ENGLISH-FOR-LAW CLASSES AT A VIETNAMESE TERTIARY INSTITUTION

Huong Thanh Nhac¹, Nguyet-Huong Dang Nguyen²

¹Hanoi Law University, Vietnam

²University of Languages and International Studies, Vietnam National University, Hanoi, Vietnam

ORCID iDs: Thanh-Huong Nhac

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0185-529X>

Nguyet-Huong Dang Nguyen

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4119-3470>

Abstract. *Recent years have seen a growing tendency to take full advantage of native language, also known as mother tongue (L1) into language teaching and learning, particularly in English-for-Specific-Purposes (ESP) contexts, due to its undeniable benefits affirmed in the existing literature. This study focuses on examining learners' perceptions of the use of first language (L1) in English-for-law classes at a tertiary institution. To achieve its objectives, the study employed a mixed-method approach involving survey questionnaires with 158 students, along with semi structured interviews with nine randomly selected ones. The quantitative results were treated with the support of the SPSS v26.0 while qualitative data obtained from the interview were analyzed for further explanation. The findings revealed learners' positive views on the role of L1 and its use as a way of teaching and learning as well as a scaffolding technique in acquiring legal English. Interestingly, statistically divergence in learners' views was denoted with reference to duration of legal English studying, their level English proficiency and their majors. Such results were expected to contribute to the existing literature of L1 utilization in ESP learning contexts.*

Key words: *English-for-law, learners' perspectives, native language*

1. INTRODUCTION

The integration of native language in English as a second/ foreign language (EFL/EFL) as well as English for specific purposes (ESP) has raised controversy among researchers and educators for the past few decades. Many scholars argued that communicative teaching approach has shifted focus from structure-based learning to meaning-driven education, leaving the use of L1 discouraged while others highlight how traditional priorities, i.e., precision and accuracy are still emphasized. Undeniably, within ESP contexts, specialized language forms the core of the courses, enabling learners to acquire domain-specific skills and knowledge. However, technical jargon often poses challenges for learners, the thoughtful use of L1 to build conceptual understanding is highly necessitated.

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Corresponding author: Nguyet-Huong Dang Nguyen, University of Languages and International Studies, Vietnam National University, Hanoi

E-mail: huongndn29@gmail.com

In the case of English for law, a type of ESP in legal fields, the debate around L1 inclusion mirrors broader discussions in language teaching. Proponents of monolingual approaches advocate minimizing L1 use to immerse learners in realistic legal practice scenarios and prioritize knowledge creation through meaningful engagement. They argue that excessive reliance on L1 dilutes the immersive experience of communicating legal English concepts in second language or foreign language (L2/FL). On the other hand, advocates of bilingual approaches highlight L1's utility in facilitating comprehension, particularly when teaching complex legal frameworks and terms (Le, 2011). Brown (2000) asserts that translation into L1 can aid learners, especially those with limited proficiency in English, to grasp specialized concepts and language skills effectively. This is particularly relevant when learners struggle to express themselves or comprehend intricate legal issues. Additionally, several researchers emphasize the necessity of occasional L1 use to address challenging topics, provide detailed instructions, or explain critical contrasts (Pilipović, 2018). In other words, comprehension-based teaching rather than purely communicative strategies can help learners build robust, accurate linguistic and conceptual foundations.

In the existing literature, numerous studies have investigated L1 employment in ESP education, in which scholars such as Brooks-Lewis (2009), Butzkamm (2003), and Tuyen & Van (2019) underline the role of L1 in improving comprehension, leading to the efficient outcomes. Nevertheless, in English for legal purposes, learners' views have been insufficiently addressed whereas learners' needs, interests and preferences are deemed as a keystone in designing and conducting effective ESP courses (Gak, 2016). Therefore, this study focuses on delving into learners' perspectives on their own and their teachers' usage of L1 in English-for-law lessons at a tertiary institution in Vietnam.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Native language use in ESP settings

L1 use has been recognized as a natural, conscious, and immediate means of communication among learners in both EFL/ ESL contexts (Hughes et al., 2006). Various studies have explored this issue, showing that learners, regardless of their proficiency levels, favor L1 usage for better acquisition of English language and knowledge (AlAmir, 2017; AlMoayidi, 2018; Carrió-Pastor & Vallés, 2015; Debrelí & Oyman, 2015; Poljaković, 2016). Within the ESP context, particularly for adult learners with varying language proficiency levels, there is a strong inclination to utilize L1 transfer (Brown, 2000), making its use by teachers almost inevitable. L1 usage in ESP classes has drawn considerable attention from scholars and educators worldwide (Xhemaili, 2013; Poljakovic, 2016; Darginviciene & Navickiene, 2015; AlTarawneh & AlMithqal, 2019; Milic et al., 2019; Chirobocea, 2018; Jan, Li & Lin, 2014), whose research revealed its benefits in various aspects.

In terms of interlanguage enhancement, adult learners have the tendency to transfer from L2 to L1 due to their knowledge possessed heavily dependent on L1. Language is a means of expression, thus expressing in L1 is truly safer than in L2 due to their mastery in L1. As stated, adult learners, by virtue of their insufficient knowledge and skills of L2/FL, are frequently incompetent in expressing themselves. Accordingly, they are more likely to experience anxiety, even shame and hesitance to learn for fear of making mistakes. In such situations, language transfer is deemed as a valuable alternative despite its report to produce

both positive and negative effects (Brown, 2000). Irrespective of erroneous utterance, interfering factors are almost certainly not viewed as failures, yet as efforts to try and comprehend a new language rule (Brown, 2000). In the similar vein, Kavaliauskienė (2009) acknowledges that the transfer between L1 and L2, whether perfect or not, is substantial in the process of building and developing the interlanguage. Furthermore, existing literature has shown that translation technique from L2 into L1 is a valuable way of compare and contrast the two language systems, which in turns, benefits language learners (Glušac & Gak, 2023). In other words, scholars agree that L1 enables learners to compare and contrast two language systems, fostering a deeper understanding of specialized language and leading to long-term retention (Darginavičienė & Navickienė, 2015). Darginavičienė and Navickienė (2015) also affirm constructive points of L1 usage in reducing learners' mistakes, thus resulting in better comprehension and more effective learning outcomes. Undeniably, L1 can be utilized for providing direct translation equivalents to learners regarding issues covered, concepts defined or questions for students to clarify vague matters. Additionally, Xhemaili's research (2013) states that when seeking the participants' viewpoint, L1 is reported to support them in understanding complicated grammar points or specialized notions, ensuring efficient class time. Likewise, previous studies illustrate that learners instructed in L1 show more effective performance than those receiving only L2 instruction (Latsanyphone & Bouangeune, 2009; Stanojević Gocić, 2016). It is attributed by the evidence that translation as a teaching technique in ESP classes leads to learners' overall comprehension of both content and language (Jerković & Komaromi, in press; Rushwan, 2017). Several researchers even classify translation as the "fifth skill" essential for teaching and learning outcomes in ESP (Janulevičienė & Kavaliauskienė, 2002).

What's more, Nesi (2014) proclaims learners' favor for bilingual dictionaries instead monolingual ones as they are likely to take full advantage of direct transfer or contrastive analysis between two language systems, generating innumerable beneficial impact on language proficiency enhancement. Previous researchers, i.e., Glušac and Milić (2021) and Knežević et al. (2021) pinpoint that the majority of ESP learners express their preference on leveraging bilingual dictionaries instead of monolingual ones to identify direct restatement of unknown terms or concepts, irrespective of their linguistic proficiency level. In particular, as regards teaching specialized terms in ESP, learners are reported to benefit a lot from L1 inclusion, as it is one of the most effective techniques for explaining meanings and forms to learners (Abduh et al., 2022; Rosmaladewi et al., 2020). Research indicates that language-switching to L1 enhances students' ability to comprehend vocabulary meanings and facilitates their overall language acquisition process (Le & Le, 2019; Schmitt, 2000). Prior studies affirm the value of L1 in clarifying difficult terms or abstract concepts, saving time and increasing efficiency in understanding (Afzal, 2013; Mahmutoğlu & Kıcır, 2013; Tajgozari, 2017; Timor, 2012). Similarly, Chirobocea (2018) suggests that L1 or translation can serve as an efficient tool for explaining complex specialized terminology, providing learners with straightforward ways to decipher meanings (Doff, 1988; Nation, 2001). Consequently, students often find it easier to enhance their English proficiency, particularly with specialized vocabulary, phrases, and expressions (Schmitt, 2000).

Although the efficiency of L1 usage is widely acknowledged, the appropriate extent of its integration depends on various factors, including course content, time constraints, learning objectives, students' preferences, and their language proficiency levels (Gajšt, 2019). Additionally, existing knowledge attributes a crucial role in determining the extent

of L1 inclusion (Darginavičienė & Navickienė, 2015). Kavaliauskienė (2009) notes that students' L1 linguistic competence, learning styles, and abilities further influence this balance. Almoayidi (2018) emphasizes that the learning environment, learner types, and their objectives are critical in deciding the suitability of L1 usage, while Kovačić and Kirinić (2011) stress that judicious use of L1 benefits L2 acquisition. Both monolingual and bilingual approaches may be applied to introduce new knowledge and language to learners. While many instructors advocate for maximizing students' exposure to L2, they still acknowledge the necessity of L1 when teaching ESP. Combining multiple approaches is often more effective than relying on a single method (Day & Krzanowski, 2011). Research by Latsanyphone and Bouangeune (2009) indicates that students taught using both L1 and L2 outperform those instructed exclusively in L2. Similarly, Gajšt (2019) underscores that using both languages help students relate ESP course knowledge to their specific fields, particularly for those with lower proficiency levels.

Conversely, several studies highlight the potential drawbacks of L1 use in ESP courses. Over-reliance on L1 can hinder interaction in English (Kavaliauskienė, 2009) and discourage students from using monolingual resources like English dictionaries (Glušac & Milić, 2020). Almoayidi (2018) warns that extensive L1 usage can reduce essential L2 exposure, impeding students' progress. Mirza et al. (2012) argue that translation-based teaching methods may negatively impact L2 acquisition by limiting comprehensible input, suggesting that minimizing L1 use is often advisable.

Until now, the debate on the optimal L1 use in ESP instruction remains unresolved. While some instructors overlook its benefits, others overuse it. Striking the right balance requires careful consideration of learners' needs and course objectives to achieve effective outcomes. Despite substantial literature on L1 usage in various ESP contexts, there is little research specifically addressing its use in English-for-law teaching and learning contexts. This gap motivated the researchers to undertake this study to delve into students' perceptions of their own and their teachers' use of L1 in English-for-legal-purposes lessons at a Vietnamese tertiary institution.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1. Participants

76 students (including 55,3% sophomores and 44,7 juniors) majoring in legal English (known as legal English majors) and 82 students (45,1% sophomores and 54,9% juniors) specializing in International trade and business law (herein after referred to as law majors) at a tertiary institution agreed to partake in the survey questionnaire. Yet only nine participants were randomly selected to involve in follow-up semi-structured interview, ensuring that the sample included both legal English and law majors while their self-assessed English proficiency was not taken into consideration.

In terms of English language proficiency, 69,2% students have had more than 12 years studying English, while the rest have been learning English from 9 to 12 years, equipping them with foundational English skills necessary to undertake specialized English-for-law courses. They self-evaluated their English as either proficient (13%), relatively good (26%), average (51%) and poor (10%). Furthermore, both legal English majors and law majors are required to study three basic legal English courses and two advanced legal English courses.

While law majors commence English-for-law classes since the first semester, legal English majors partake ESP subjects when they enter the second year.

With reference to their legal background knowledge, legal English majors and law majors share different features. Legal English majors were only required to study such general foundational subject as Theory of State and Law before entering specialized English courses. Conversely, law majors were instructed to core subjects namely Theory of State and Law, Constitutional law, Civil law, Criminal law and Administrative law in their curriculum before studying legal English.

3.2. Instruments and Data collection procedures

The study employed two sets of self-made research instruments including a survey questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The questionnaire was divided into two parts: Part one collected demographic information, while Part two examined students' overall perceptions on L1 use, as well as on their own use and their teachers' use of L1 in English-for-law, i.e. legal English classes. After a reliability test (confidence level $\alpha = 0.83-0.91$; Cronbach, 1951), the final version consisted of statements rated on a five-point Likert scale: (1) totally disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, and (5) totally agree. The data collected were analyzed using IBM SPSS v.26 to authenticate the interval scales as follows: 1.0–1.80: totally disagree; 1.81–2.60: disagree; 2.61–3.40: neutral; 3.41–4.20: agree; 4.21–5.00: totally agree. To further validate the findings, frequency tests were conducted to identify whether there were significant statistical divergences among students of different level of their English proficiency and their majors.

The semi-structured interview questions for randomly selected students were conducted to get in-depth information relating to the L1 use in English-for-legal -purposes classes. The recorded interviews were transcribed and cross-checked with notes to gain deeper insight of learners' perspectives on the L1 employment and reasons behind. Data concerning the similar issues were interpreted with the combination of both qualitative and quantitative source of information.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Learners' views on their own L1 usage in English-for-law classes

As regards the questions seeking learners' general perspectives on L1 usage, the data revealed that 42% of the participants "always" or "usually" employed L1 while 32% of them sometimes used it, the rest (26%) chose to use it "rarely" in legal English lessons. It is not surprisingly as at this University, only-English policy is not applied in English classes. Understandably, the majority of the participants (62%) considered such usual L1 use as rational when necessary whereas a relatively low number of them admitted over-using L1 on specific circumstances where it should be avoided. The sequencing survey results indicated that most of the learners acknowledged the necessity of their own use of L1 to take notes of as well as to translate what teachers said during class ($M=3.67$; $SD=.857$; $M=3.45$; $SD=.932$). A statistically significant difference in mean scores was observed between sophomores and juniors ($M=4.01$, and $M=2.95$, respectively) when investigating whether students of different generations share similar use of L1, indicating that the lower generation students made use of L1 for note-taking in class much more

than their later generation colleagues. On the other hand, no statistically significant divergence was reported with reference to students' L1 use to translate what teacher said between second-year and third-year, which means that both generations of students tried to improve comprehension by translating into L1 what the teacher said. Similar results were experienced between the two groups as regards using L1 to communicate with peers in class and to express themselves competently, when it receives high rate of agreement among the surveyed students ($M=4.01$; $SD=.765$; $M=4.12$; $SD=.905$). Variety of reasons are shown in the semi-structured interview.

"I often use L1 to take notes or translate a text, even what the teacher said for the purpose of improving my comprehension and retention of knowledge. Usually, I find note-takings in Vietnamese quicker and efficient than in English" – S#4

The aforementioned opinion is that of several participants. However, one student did not report using L1 as he believed he was proficient enough in English.

"L1 use is my priority when communicating with my friends as it is much quicker and devoid of miscomprehension. However, it also depends on each situation where English is used, or combination of both English and Vietnamese is acceptable" is the sharing viewpoint of S#1.

"Vietnamese is not forbidden in English classes, so I usually use Vietnamese to communicate with my class-mates. Sometimes when I think that I cannot express myself adequately in English, I resort to Vietnamese as an alternative with my teacher's permission." – S#9

Especially, in respect of acquiring new legal English terms, a strong approval was observed regarding the statement that L1 utilization was beneficial ($M=4.23$; $SD=.567$). This statistic was supported by in-depth responses.

"I find it easier to acquire and retain new legal English terms if I know Vietnamese equivalents" – S#2

As expected, a majority of participants disagreed with the statement that they never used Vietnamese translations in English for law classes ($M=2.27$; $SD=.819$). This indicates a strong preference among learners to know Vietnamese equivalents or translations of legal language. When encountering unfamiliar legal language in English, students prioritized asking their teachers for clarification in the mother tongue ($M=4.14$; $SD=.597$). Online translation tools, such as Google Translate, were the second most favored resource for negotiating the meaning of unknown legal concepts ($M=3.84$; $SD=1.029$). Regarding dictionary use, students preferred bilingual dictionaries over monolingual ones to understand the meanings of unfamiliar notions ($M=3.82$; $SD=.871$ versus $M=3.55$; $SD=1.132$). However, researching and reading Vietnamese documents to identify the meanings of legal knowledge was less favored strategy, as reflected by their low mean values ($M=2.47$, $SD=1.050$; M).

Table 1 Anova results for the learners' views on differences of L1 use among legal English majors and law majors

	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.*
Law majors	.03072	.0531	.000
Legal English majors	-.0146	.0601	.970

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

As illustrated in table 1, a statistically significant difference is seen between legal English majors and law majors' L1 use, which is shown by Sig. level. The finding means that legal English majors show a stricter view in favor of L1 use in English-for-law classes than law majors. Insufficient background knowledge of law of legal English majors can constitute one of the reasons of legal English majors' insistence on more L1 use in the classroom, which is indicated in subsequent semi-structured interviews.

"I think in order to learn legal English efficiently, one needs to hold adequate language and law content knowledge. Yet, in my case, as a legal English major, my legal background knowledge is insufficient, thus understanding and acquiring legal English is challenging. L1 inclusion thereby is of the utmost importance." – S#7.

4.2. Learners' views on their teachers' use of L1 in English-for-law classes

Relating to teachers' uses of L1 in legal English classes, the participants reported their teachers' L1 use in class for different purposes, including giving instructions, providing further explanation, translation equivalents or even class-management. In each situation, learners expressed their various level of favor of L1 use in English-for-law lessons. Notably, a strong agreement was observed regarding the statement of teachers' usage of L1 in explaining new legal terms, as reflected by a high mean value ($M=4.32$; $SD=.1018$). Such statistic does not mean that learners expected to be provided new legal English terminology in English only yet in both English and Vietnamese ($M=4.11$; $SD=.893$). The data further demonstrated neutral attitudes towards the sole use of either English or Vietnamese in explaining new legal English terms ($M=3.01$, $SD=.767$; $M=3.13$, $SD=.692$, respectively). However, a significant number of learners agreed that using L1 to instruct legal English terms helped them easily connect the language with the content ($M=4.33$; $SD=.624$), thereby aiding retention. Conversely, students found it harder to retain legal terminology when definitions were provided exclusively in English ($M=3.02$; $SD=.1012$). Interestingly, learners disagreed with the notion that Vietnamese translations hindered their ability to acquire legal concepts in English ($M=2.25$; $SD=.1115$). Instead, they believed that such translations contributed to better acquisition of the terminology ($M=4.06$; $SD=.863$). Regarding the amount of L1 used by teachers, opinions were divided. While a majority of students disapproved of excessive Vietnamese explanations all the time ($M=2.37$; $SD=.989$), they held neutral views on the need for Vietnamese equivalents or translation being provided only for difficult legal notions ($M=3.06$; $SD=.1017$). This highlights the mixed expectations among learners regarding how teachers should approach new legal concepts.

In addition to preference of teachers' L1 use for explaining new terms, the participants also expected their teachers to use L1 to compare and contrast two legal cultures, legal systems ($M=3.98$, $SD=.873$), which proved their important roles in acquiring language. As noted, languages and cultures are not separated, instead, they have a reciprocal relationship. Especially in legal fields, legal systems are distinctive, legal language is different, accordingly. Providing reasons for the choice, followed-up interview revealed,

"When we study legal English, or English for legal purposes, there are numerous concepts that cannot be found in Vietnamese. Such concepts are related to English or American legal cultures. Thus, we want our teachers to provide legal background, of course in Vietnamese, to contrast the legal systems. By this way, we can understand the deeper meaning of language"- S#5.

Sharing similar viewpoints, S#3 affirmed that,

“I would like my teacher to provide contrast analysis of legal systems, legal language in Vietnamese, helping me follow lessons easier”.

Many students disagreed that L1 usage reduces their interest in acquiring legal English, shown by low mean score ($M=2.53$, $SD=.762$). In contrast, the flexible employment between L1 and English is advisory, especially in the context of legal English classes where specialized English language is considered challenging. To some extent, using L1 in legal English classes as a teaching medium is one way to motivate learners to acquire legal English ($M=3.42$; $SD=.748$).

“Sometimes, I feel demotivated in legal English classes due to the complexity of language, which makes me find it extremely difficult to understand. In such a case, teacher’s L1 use solves the problem, leading to my comprehension and acquisition in a much easier way.”

“I would like my teachers to apply bilingual approach in instructing legal English for me to grasp knowledge easily” – S#6

In terms of teaching grammar, most of the students disagreed with the statement that the teachers usually use L1 to explain grammar ($M=2.12$, $SD=.883$). Providing reasons for this, S#5 manifested,

“Understandably, grammar rules in English-for-law classes which are nearly the same rules in general English classes, are not too challenging. My teachers often use English to revise that knowledge and only use Vietnamese for the points which are new and complicated.”

Table 2 Learners’ attitudes towards L1 usage

Paired Differences								
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence interval of the difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1:	-.872	1.517	.123	-1.113	-.629	-7.025	123	.000

Table 2 depicts the value of Sig.(2-tailed) = 0.000, less than 0.05, denoting that the presumption that duration of legal English studying has no effect on the L1 is wrong. Obviously, a notable discrepancy between the viewpoints of learners experiencing legal English for shorter period of time and those studying it for longer is illustrated through statistics -1.103 và -0.619. In other words, learners when commencing legal English have a tendency to use and expect to be instructed in L1 much more than peers learning legal English for a longer duration. Follow-up responses reveal,

“When beginning learning legal English, I felt overwhelmed because of its distinctive features. Its meaning and its usage are quite different from “plain English”, English that I use every day. Usually, I do not know whether I understand the concept correctly or not. Therefore, I always expect my teachers to provide Vietnamese translation/ equivalents.” – S#8

“At first, I find it extremely challenging and try to translate all the materials in Vietnamese for better comprehension. Gradually, I become familiar to legal English, understand them quickly and of course, it is not necessary to find Vietnamese equivalents for all. Yet, difficult concepts need L1 explanation after all” – S#5

Table 3 The correlation of L1 usage, learners' language proficiency and legal background knowledge

Coefficients							
	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	Collinearity statistics	
	B	Std. Error				Tolerance	VIF
L1 usage	2.216	.242		8.847	.000		
English proficiency	.251	.055	.352	4.389	.000	.911	1.067
Legal background knowledge	.273	.063	.369	3.813	.000	.617	1.518

Table 3 indicates the correlation effects among three variables: learners' views on L1 usage, their English proficiency and legal background knowledge. Clearly, the Sig. values are less than 0.05, three valid variables included in the linear regression model, are correlated from one side. The coefficients ViF reached below 2, meaning that there is no multicollinearity. Additionally, the higher statistic of Beta standardized coefficients than 0.0 specifies one-sided impact of the independent variable on the dependent variables. Of the two, the correlation between learners' views on L1 usage and legal background knowledge is stronger shown by higher beta value (B=.369) than that between learners' views on L1 usage and English proficiency, with B=.352. Consequently, it can be seen that legal background knowledge has had greater effect on learners' views on L1 usage. Specifically, legal English majors expressed a stronger preference for L1 usage compared to law majors. This preference could be attributed to legal English majors' limited background knowledge of law, leading to higher expectations for Vietnamese translations for better and deeper understanding. Its complexity is undeniable, legal English, therefore, requires not only learners' language competence but background knowledge of law, as well.

On the other hand, when comparing learners' perceptions based on their self-assessed general English proficiency, the post-hoc analysis revealed that students with "average" and "poor" self-assessed level of English proficient, felt that their English proficiency was insufficient to effectively legal English without L1 use. Conversely, higher-level students, especially those who self-evaluated their English as "proficient" or "relatively good" rated the English approach as more beneficial for acquiring legal English, though they did not abandon the use of L1.

5. DISCUSSION

Overall, there is a broadly positive perception among learners that L1 should be encouraged in English-for-law classes. Survey questionnaire statistics and ANOVA test correlations confirm that students regard L1 use as rational and beneficial in English-for-law classes. These findings align with previous studies conducted in diverse settings (Glusac et al., 2023; Hall & Cook, 2013b; La, 2022; Mahmutoğlu & Kıcı, 2013; Timor, 2012), which highlight that learners' L1 is a critical factor in promoting ESP learning and acquisition.

For their own use, learners employ L1 for note-takings and translation of what the teachers said as well as for communication in classes. The statistics relating to different cohorts indicate that the lower-year students take the advantages of L1 for taking notes

more than upper-year ones. This finding is compatible with Glusac et al., (2023) but contrasts with the statistics in terms of L1 use in translating and interacting in class. The results of interviews also confirm that both sophomores and juniors, regardless of their majors, address translation as a recommended practice activity to enhance their knowledge comprehension in class and at home as well. Such suggestions have been clamored for its essential teaching and learning technique in previous studies (e.g., Jerković & Komaromi, in press; Rushwan, 2017; Stanojević Gocić, 2016).

Concerning the learners' self-reported general English proficiency level, the findings confirm that this variable is at every likelihood to greatly influence L1 use. Specifically, learners, either of "poor", "average", "relatively good" or even "proficient" level of English acknowledge L1 use in legal English classes. This finding is similar to Stanojević Gocić, (2016), Jerković and Komaromi (in press), and Rushwan (2017) who highlight the pedagogical potential of L1 equivalents among students of different proficiency levels. The aforementioned data is also in line with Mahmoud's study (2006), which claims that the use of L1 is popular among advanced learners. On the other hand, in this research, L1 proves to be at a more frequent use among students with "poor" language knowledge than advanced learners. Hughes et al., (2006) explain that a strong dependence on L1 among the lower learners' English proficiency means more tendency to resort to L1 usage in attempting to comprehend what they are instructed and express themselves adequately. Similarly, statistically significant difference is observed between legal English majors and law majors when the prior show their preference for L1 inclusion more than the latter partly due to their distinct legal background knowledge.

As regards learners' views on their teachers' L1 usage, both qualitative and quantitative data illustrate that teachers leverage L1 for various purposes, most commonly as a scaffolding technique, i.e., either as providing instructions, or offering, explaining translation equivalents of new specific legal English matters, as affirmed as essential by Milić et al. (2018). Also, students of less experience divulge that their teachers use L1 as a scaffolding device aiming at improving comprehension more than their more experienced peers. On top of that, the majority of students favor using their mother tongue when dealing with new legal terms or domains. Evidence from learners' response suggests that allowing them to struggle with translating terms on their own is likely to enhance their long-term memory retention. In particular, ambiguous or complex terms are seen as better understood by learners with the aid of their mother tongue (Hall & Cook, 2013b; La, 2022). This is especially significant in legal terminology, which often includes features tied to complicated specific legal and cultural contexts. Differences in legal regulations, practices, and terminology across countries create challenges for language learners. Using only-English to explain these cultural and systemic differences can be unclear, particularly for learners with limited English proficiency or without prior background knowledge. Larson-Freeman (2000) supports this perspective, noting that the meaning of a word extends beyond dictionary definitions and varies according to cultural and contextual communication. Thus, the importance of L1 is emphasized when dealing with culturally specific legal terms, ensuring learners gain a clearer understanding of these differences. Another significant finding concerns teachers' contrast analysis of legal systems, legal cultures and the provision of supplementary information. This supports Takac's (2008) assertion that comparison between English and L1 language, cultures is a highly effective strategy for analyzing, comparing, and clarifying meanings to avoid misunderstandings. These techniques not only help learners grasp the meanings of legal

concepts but also enable them to use them effectively in communication, reading, listening, and writing (Le & Le, 2019).

In the current study, L1 employment is preferred for its clarity and efficiency. Learners find L1 usage essential for connecting their legal background knowledge to legal English knowledge. A key finding is that learners prefer teaching methods that combine both English and Vietnamese over methods relying solely on one language. In other words, the L1 inclusion is highly recommended as frequent as the students denote that over-use of L1 in translating legal concepts may sometimes cause confusion due to non-equivalent meanings between the two languages. Teachers are therefore advised to integrate both English and Vietnamese judiciously, for instance, by presenting key language knowledge in English and asking students to translate them into Vietnamese. In both approaches, clarifying the basic meaning and language use in contexts is prioritized.

6. CONCLUSION

This study highlights learners' perceptions of L1 usage in English-for-law classes. The findings align with prior studies, suggesting that learners consider L1 usage as reasonable when necessary and support teachers' L1 use as a scaffolding technique, mostly to provide equivalents or clarifications for new legal English concept. Basically, the results of this current study proclaim that from learners' view, both learners and lecturers leverage L1 for pedagogical, linguistic and even affective benefits to promote legal English learning. A balanced use of English and Vietnamese is recommended to help learners bridge their legal background knowledge with legal English language.

The empirical findings of this study contribute to the limited literature on the L1 use in legal English teaching and learning, a special type of ESP. However, the study is not without limitations. First, the small scale of participants from a single tertiary institution restricts the generalizability of the findings to broader populations. Second, the lack of research instruments to measure the practical effects of native language usage on learners' acquisition and enhancement of legal English is a limitation. Future research should aim to address these gaps.

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CONTEMPORARY MATTER: UPDATING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF ENGLISH FOR MEDICAL PURPOSES

Andrea Stötzer^{1,2}, Éva Farkas¹

¹Doctoral School of Education, University of Szeged, Hungary

²Albert Szent-Györgyi Medical School, University of Szeged, Hungary

ORCID iDs: Andrea Stötzer
Éva Farkas

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1064-2416>

<https://orcid.org/0009-0002-9474-1514>

Abstract. *There is a growing interest in learning and teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) at tertiary level in countries where English is not the primary language. Due to globalization, there has been a shift from learning and teaching English for General Purposes (EGP) to ESP in universities worldwide, and English for Medical Purposes (EMP), a notable subset of ESP, is no exception. This narrative review aims to contribute to understanding the evolving landscape of EMP development and teaching by highlighting aspects of EMP that warrant revisitation. Through a focused approach, the concept of EMP is investigated first and we argue that it is essential to clarify the applied terms, proposing 'English for Health Sciences Purposes' (EHSP) for multiple healthcare disciplines and reserving 'English for Medical Purposes' (EMP) specifically for medical students and physicians. In addressing the second research question, this paper emphasizes the importance of learning EMP by highlighting its distinct target audience and emphasizing that EMP is purpose-driven, content-based, and tailored to medical contexts, offering learners a competitive edge. The review also underscores the need for new types of needs analyses. In answering the third research question, it has been found that EMP teachers often lack formal medical training but are required to teach specialized content. Despite recent EU initiatives offering professional development for Languages for Specific Purposes teachers, EMP instructors must continually self-educate. Their role requires adaptability, flexibility, and modern teaching skills, as they act more as facilitators and collaborators than traditional language instructors. Hopefully, the findings of upcoming empirical studies will help develop student-centered approaches to EMP and may lead to a supportive environment for the effective teaching of this specialized field.*

Key words: *English for Medical Purposes, English for Specific Purposes, learning and teaching English for Medical Purposes, EMP teachers*

1. INTRODUCTION

In non-Anglophone countries, where English is not the first or official language, universities are increasingly shifting from teaching and learning English for General Purposes (EGP) (i.e., English as a Foreign Language) to teaching and learning English

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Corresponding author: Andrea Stötzer, Doctoral School of Education, University of Szeged, Hungary

E-mail: stotzer.andrea.maria@med.u-szeged.hu

for Specific Purposes¹ (ESP) (Dou et al. 2023; Hyland and Wong 2019). The emergence of ESP is undoubtedly due to the fact that English has become a global phenomenon, dominating communication in numerous fields (Dyvik 2023; Galloway and Rose 2015). This trend is particularly visible in fields such as business, engineering, law, and medicine, where specific professional language use is essential (Rahman 2015). Moreover, English has unquestionably become the international language of science and technology (Di Bitetti and Ferreras 2017; Larsen-Pusey and Pusey 1987; Pavel 2014; Rose 2018). It is widely accepted that the ability to communicate in English has become an integral part of being and becoming a scientist (Mičić 2013). Especially in medicine, as Heming and Nandagopal (2012, 485) argue, ‘English is the *de facto* language of international medicine’; and a good command of English is required to obtain essential medical and scientific information (Džuganová 2019).

This brings us to the focus point of this literature review: teaching and learning English for Medical Purposes (EMP)². In light of the growing interest in EMP, it has become timely to conduct a focused narrative literature review to revisit the definition and concept of EMP, identify the main stakeholders (medical students and EMP teachers), and highlight new areas where further research is needed. The relevance of this literature review lies in addressing aspects of EMP that have received little discussion so far. Its limitation is that due to the interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary nature of the field – situated at the interface between applied linguistics, psychology of language learning, higher education, and adult language learning – the search and mapping of the literature were challenging, inevitably leaving the review far from being comprehensive.

EMP is primarily investigated within the realms of linguistics and applied linguistics, but this narrative literature review focuses on some of the pedagogical aspects of teaching and learning EMP that have received less attention in research. Thus, it aims to address the following research questions:

RQ1 How is EMP conceptually defined? (Chapter 3)

RQ2 What factors underline the importance of learning EMP? (Chapter 4)

RQ3 Who are the teachers of EMP? (Chapter 5)

This literature review follows a thematic structure to answer the above research questions. It starts with the description of our strategy for reviewing the literature. It is followed by an attempt to clarify what EMP is, providing an overview of the various terms used in defining this segment of specific language use, accompanied by our own elucidation and definition of EMP. We then justify why EMP should be taught at medical schools, and how this approach is supported by relevant scholarly sources. A section in this chapter is devoted to intriguing questions related to EMP teachers. Since the relevance and need for teaching EMP at medical schools are often justified by needs analyses, the subsequent section discusses needs analyses in the field of EMP and the lessons learned from them. In the conclusion, we outline the areas where further research is needed to gain a deeper understanding of this specialized field.

¹ English for Specific Purposes has been defined as ‘the branch of English language studies that concerns the language, discourse, and culture of English-language professional communities and specialized groups, as well as the learning and teaching of this object from a didactic perspective’ (Sarré and Whyte 2016, 150).

² For a historical trends and the evolution of EMP through publications see Shomoossi et al. (2019).

2. METHODS AND DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter outlines the methodology used to search and select relevant literature for this focused narrative review of the literature on EMP. The aim was to review studies related to our research questions concerning EMP. First, we identified key databases, set criteria for inclusion and exclusion, and selected keywords to guide the search process.

We used academic databases, academic networking sites, and academic publishers' searchable sites (see Table 1) to ensure adequate coverage of the subject matter.

Table 1 Databases used for reviewing the literature on English for Medical Purposes

Academic Databases	Academic Networking	Academic Publishers
Clarivate/Web of Science Dissertations and Theses Global EBSCO ERIC Google Scholar JSTOR ProQuest Central ScienceDirect Scopus Taylor & Francis Online Wiley Online Library	Academia ResearchGate	Cambridge University Press De Gruyter John Benjamins Oxford Handbooks Online Oxford Research Encyclopedias

The search process involved several steps. Initial searches were conducted in the databases using search terms such as “English for Medical Purposes”; “English for Doctors”; “Medical English”; “needs analysis” AND (“English for Medical Purposes” OR “English for Doctors” OR “Medical English”), and, in addition “English for Specific Purposes [ESP] teachers” OR “Languages for Specific Purposes [LSP] teachers”. Titles and abstracts were screened to assess their relevance to our research questions. Irrelevant studies were excluded at this stage. The selected articles were reviewed in full to determine their suitability based on the inclusion criteria (see Table 2), which were set to identify reliable sources, peer-reviewed articles, books, and theses that provided empirical data, theoretical insights, or comprehensive reviews related to the research questions.

Table 2 Inclusion and exclusion criteria applied for reviewing the literature on English for Medical Purposes

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
1) Address any of the identified key areas related to the research questions 2) Deal with ESP or LSP as long as the source in question contain relevant particular information on EMP and the teachers of EMP 3) Accessible through the selected databases or the library of affiliated University	1) Purely linguistic in nature 2) Not peer-reviewed 3) Do not provide information relevant to answering the research questions 4) Published before 2000 unless considered seminal and frequently cited in recent literature

Due to the complexity of the subject matter, we proceeded and processed the literature primarily by backward snowballing, a technique involving the identification of additional studies by reviewing the references of the already selected articles. This method is

particularly effective for discovering seminal works that might not be captured through initial database searches alone, especially in the field of teaching and learning EMP.

To ensure the use of up-to-date literature, we focused on articles published after 2000. This timeframe was chosen to capture contemporary trends and developments in the field, especially considering the significant changes over the past two decades. However, the timeline for our literature review begins with 1986 because this year saw the publication of Maher's (1986) frequently cited definition of EMP (see Chapter 3).

3. WHAT IS 'ENGLISH FOR MEDICAL PURPOSES'?

Findings from this literature review confirm that, depending on which aspect is emphasized, various terms are used to describe the 'international language of medicine'. In addition to EMP, less frequently used terms include 'Medical English' (Baethge 2008) and 'Medical English as lingua franca' (MELF) (Tweedie and Johnson 2022), where the main emphasis is on English as the common language among healthcare professionals from different linguistic backgrounds. The most frequently used term, however, is EMP. A well-known and frequently cited definition of EMP was provided by Maher (1986):

the term 'English for Medical Purposes' (EMP) refers to the teaching of English for doctors, nurses, and other personnel in the medical professions... In general terms, EMP (a) is designed to meet the specific English language needs of the medical learner (e.g., nurse, GP, dentist, etc.); (b) focuses on themes and topics specific to the medical field; (c) focuses on a restricted range of skills which may be required by the medical learner (e.g., for writing a medical paper, preparing a talk for a medical meeting, etc.)

However, we found that the use of the term EMP (and its shortened version: English for Medicine) is not consistent throughout the literature. Some surveys include only physicians or medical students as learners of EMP, while other surveys involve nurses, nursing students, and sometimes other health professionals (HPs) as well (see needs analyses in Chapter 4.2). This inconsistency arises from the broad, general interpretation of the word 'medicine' in English, referring to any branch of medical science. In Figure 1, an asterisk indicates the problematic term, sometimes involving exclusively physicians or to-be physicians, and sometimes other representatives or students of other health professions.

When applying the occupation-based classification, the name of the subspecialty which is teaching the specific English language to medical students and physicians is clearer: 'English for Doctors'. The duplicity of the terms as exhibited in Figure 1 results from two ways of classifying ESP in the field of Health Sciences (HS), depending on whether the classification is based on discipline or occupation. In the middle of Figure 1, 'English for Academic Purposes' (EAP) and 'English for Research Publication Purposes' (ERPP) (the latter introduced by Flowerdew and Habibie 2021) are inserted to create intersections with each subspecialty since these are essential for all HPs pursuing academic work.

We argue that it is necessary to clarify the terms we use since the subspecialties seen in Figure 1 have started to distinguish themselves from other subspecialties (e.g., teaching English for Dentistry is largely different from teaching English for Physiotherapy). For clarity, we suggest using the term 'English for Health Sciences Purposes' (EHSP) or 'English for Healthcare Professionals' when multiple disciplines of HS are involved, and reserving EMP for when the learners are medical students or physicians. In this paper, 'EMP' will refer specifically to 'English for (Medical) Doctors'.

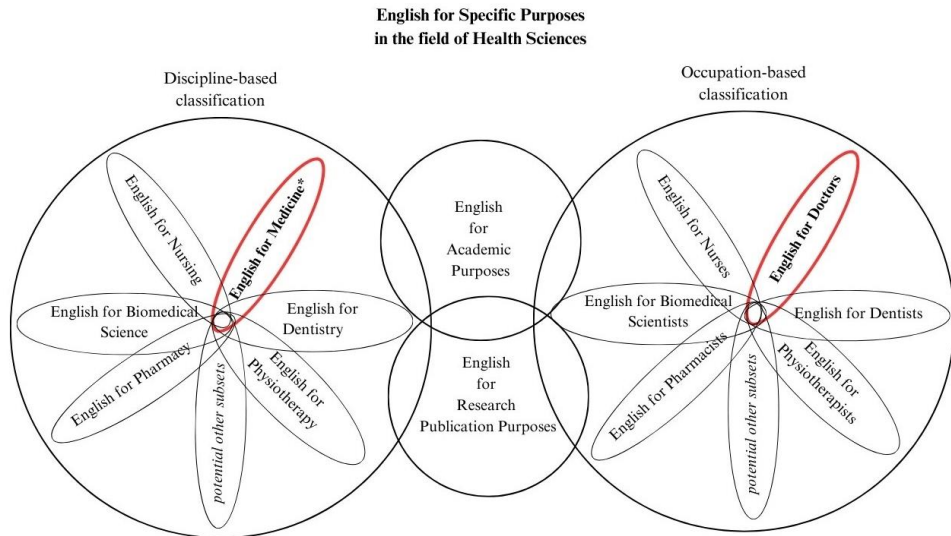


Fig. 1 Classification of English for Specific Purposes in the fields of Health Sciences based on discipline and occupation

From our research conducted among medical students and LSP teachers (work in progress)³, and from our teaching experience, we know that even if certain elements of the terminology of EHSP are the same (e.g., taking patient history, talking to patients, general anatomy and physiology terms), there are notable differences in the language use of these disciplines across various dimensions: (1) technical⁴ vocabulary: although dentists, pharmacists, physiotherapists, nurses, and other allied HPs share some of the terminology (jargon), their essential vocabulary sets are largely different; (2) needs and expectations: the learners' goals in developing their English language skills for their prospective careers may vary considerably (e.g., to read literature, publish, give presentations, or work abroad); (3) level of English proficiency of learners (although it has to be noted that EMP learners are rarely beginners).

EMP must also be distinguished from Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and English-Medium Instruction (EMI). Our findings indicate that these terms define particular methods of delivering specific knowledge of English and the settings in which they are taught. The targeted learners, content material, and the focus of imparting knowledge differ. Table A1 in the Appendix⁵ clarifies these terms and their relation to EMP.

In this literature review, our definition of EMP (from a pedagogical viewpoint) is as follows:

³ In spring 2024, we conducted a questionnaire-based study among medical students in which we aimed to explore their motivation in learning EMP. We adopted Dörnyei's questionnaire (in Taguchi, Magid, and Papi 2009), which was based on Dörnyei's motivation theory (Dörnyei 2005, 2009) and adapted it to the EMP learning environment. Data analysis is in progress.

⁴ By 'technical' we mean 'a word or phrase used in a specialized field to refer to objects or concepts that are particular to that field and for which there are no adequate terms in ordinary language. See also: jargon.' <https://dictionary.apa.org/technical-term>

⁵ Appendix

EMP (or ‘English for Medical Doctors’) is considered a branch of English for Specific Purposes. EMP, the specific language of medicine, is typically taught by native or non-native English language teachers to non-native medical students in medical schools (mainly in non-Anglophone countries) as an integral or complementary part of their medical education. Additionally, EMP is taught to content/subject teachers (medical educators) who teach medical (content) subjects to ‘international’ medical students in programs where English is the medium of instruction. EMP is also taught to practicing medical doctors and/or researchers who need to improve their academic English to publish and present in English⁶.

4. WHAT FACTORS UNDERLINE THE IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING AND TEACHING ENGLISH FOR MEDICAL PURPOSES?

4.1. Why English for Medical Purposes and not English for General Purposes?

To capture the specific nature of EMP and argue for its relevance and necessity, it is important to examine to what extent the teaching and content of EMP differ from teaching English for General Purposes (EGP) either as English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or English as a Second Language (ESL)⁷. Based on our findings in the literature, teaching EMP is distinctively different in several ways, many of which relate to the learners of EMP as listed below. In today’s increasingly student-centered education, it is natural that the answer lies in the learners’ interest:

(1) Target audience and context. EMP is taught at medical schools, at the tertiary level. The learners (medical students, practicing physicians, or researchers) will undoubtedly need English for their studies and throughout their career. They are expected to read and write articles in English, present at conferences, and communicate with patients and professionals alike (Sarré and Whyte 2016). In our view, similar to studying Latin, EMP courses should be made available (if not compulsory) for non-native medical students at medical schools in non-Anglophone countries, as this would effectively aid their studies, professional development and career advancement.

(2) Learner profile. EMP learners are considered adults, as they are over 18 years of age. It is known that adult language learners generally ‘take a more proactive role and use a variety of resources to promote their language learning’ (Papi and Hiver 2020, 228).

(3) Purpose-driven learning. EMP is learnt for a specific purpose. It means it serves as a tool in the hands of its users (Dudley-Evans and St John 1998, 4–5). Maher’s (1986) definition also emphasizes the ‘instrument-like’ (instrumental) nature of EMP. When a language is learnt for a specific occupational or professional purpose, it inevitably changes the motivation to learn that language (Pavel 2020). Therefore, exploring medical students’ motivation to learn EMP would be a significant step forward in EMP research and practice.

(4) Competitive advantage. Nowadays, English must be separated from other languages in the sense that it has become a basic educational skill (Dörnyei and Ushioda 2011, 72). According to Graddol (2006, 15), this also means that no competitive advantage can be gained

⁶ Since medicine is a discipline that goes hand in hand with the pressure and need for publishing in English (‘Publish or Perish’ phenomenon), practicing physicians and researchers working in this field often express their need for courses or further training in English for Research Publication Purposes (ERPP).

⁷ ESL is taught in countries where English is the dominant or official language, while EFL learners are in non-English-speaking countries.

by the mastery of English. This may be true for general English, but not for ESP, especially in the field of science and academic publishing. Meta-research conducted by Amano et al. (2023) has found that non-native English speakers spend more time, money, and effort than native English speakers to have their papers published. It means that medical students who invest energy and time in learning EMP gain a competitive advantage: they will have a higher chance of succeeding. Their knowledge of EMP will help them during their university years and after.

(5) Content-based teaching. Teaching EMP is usually content-based, relying on authentic materials from the medical context (e.g., authentic doctor–patient dialogues, patient information leaflets, and discharge summaries). However, there are approaches to make it more context-based (Wiertlewska 2019), and we agree that EMP can and should be taught as a subject complementing medical content subjects. In this approach, the EMP teacher acts as a facilitator, mentor, or language assistant collaborating closely with content teachers (medical educators) to assist or support the teaching process of medical content subjects (transdisciplinary didactic approach). Such collaboration requires cooperation among content teachers, EMP teachers, and students. Antić (2016) suggests a similar setup, highlighting that in ESP, language teaching and content knowledge are integrated, which is a motivating combination for students. Flowerdew and Peacock (2001) also call for cooperation between subject specialists (content teachers) and English teachers. According to Barron (1992, as cited in Flowerdew and Peacock 2001), collaboration can be achieved in at least two ways. In the first method, content teachers provide insights into their teaching material, and the EMP teacher builds the EMP material around the discipline-related course content. In the second scenario, the content teacher participates as a consultant in some language classes recommending topics and/or projects, commenting on discipline-related subject matter, and helping run discussions.

4.2. What do needs analyses teach us?

Researchers in the field generally agree that teaching any language for specific purposes should be based on needs analyses (Bui 2022; Bui and Huong 2023; Sarré and Whyte 2016). According to Rahman (2015), Mubaraq (2017), and Wette (2018), specialized language courses differ from general language courses in that they assess the needs of language users and specifically address these needs. Table A.2 in the Appendix⁸ summarizes the main findings of some of the numerous needs analyses conducted in several countries around the world.

Needs analyses have been crucial in the development of teaching EMP and researching into EMP. Their findings refer to the given country or university context, which vary in the evolution of the necessity of teaching EMP. Thus, these findings are not necessarily universally applicable; however, there are some lessons to learn, and there are some new avenues of research to open:

(1) Role in early stages. Needs analyses among students or practicing professionals play an important role at an early stage when these can effectively help in the creation of course and curriculum design. In Europe (in the European Higher Education Area; EHEA), the days of traditional needs analyses in terms of EMP are over. Needs should be assessed from other perspectives and other questions need to be raised: What methods do students prefer to learn EMP? What language learning strategies do they use when learning EMP? What motivates them in their learning process?

⁸ Appendix

(2) Awareness and motivation. Medical students seem to be aware of the importance of learning EMP; although their motivation may differ. This has also been confirmed by our findings in a pilot study we conducted at our University⁹. Nevertheless, the basic need in terms of EMP has been clearly established: EMP must be learnt. If EMP must be learnt, it must be taught. Therefore, one may argue that EMP should be introduced into the medical curriculum similar to how Latin is already included in the curriculum in many medical schools.

(3) Professional needs. Needs analyses should be conducted among trained medical professionals as well to determine what EMP knowledge and skills they need in their career. Their use of EMP and EAP (in specific situations and genres) indicates clearly the EMP knowledge base and English language skills that EMP students will need later during their career. These surveys should be performed on an ongoing basis, as needs continuously change in the rapidly evolving medical field. Thus, the EMP curriculum/course material can be kept up-to-date, and the necessary skills can be developed, tailored to the real, actual needs.

(4) Teachers' needs. Needs analyses should also be conducted among EMP teachers. They repeatedly voice their need for professional and vocational training (Bajzát 2020). The question is whether there are sufficient opportunities for them to learn and exchange ideas. Fortunately, recent initiatives within the EHEA have surveyed and addressed the needs of LSP teachers in higher education (Chateaufreynaud and John 2022) (see Chapter 5).

5. WHO ARE THE TEACHERS OF ENGLISH FOR MEDICAL PURPOSES?

Medical practitioners, educators, and researchers need English throughout their careers. If we accept the fact that English has become a basic skill for medical professionals, the same way as learning English is increasingly becoming a self-evident, 'natural' part of education (Al-Hoorie 2017, 7), it is reasonable to argue that EMP should be taught at medical schools. This is consistent with our findings in literature: the need for specialized language education is probably greater than ever before (Breeze 2020). In many countries, this is indeed the case, which brings us to a very important question in connection with the EMP teacher: who should teach EMP?

Due to the scarcity of literature specifically related to EMP teachers, our search was extended to include search terms like "ESP teachers" and "LSP teachers". We found that EMP teachers, like most ESP/LSP teachers (Sarré and Whyte 2016), are native or non-native, qualified English language teachers, who possess the necessary language and pedagogical knowledge, but often lack formal education or training in the discipline or field of specialty the 'technical language' of which they teach (Bajzát 2020¹⁰; Pavel 2014; Sarré and Whyte 2016). It is understandable, particularly in the field of medicine, as a language teacher interested in teaching EMP is unlikely to pursue a degree in Medicine. Conversely, trained medical practitioners are highly unlikely to engage in teaching EMP.

⁹ We conducted a pilot study in November 2022 involving medical students at a Hungarian university. A questionnaire, which was based on Dörnyei's motivation theory (Dörnyei 2005, 2009) was answered by 161 medical students. This pilot study has been followed by a nation-wide survey involving medical students of all four medical schools in Hungary (data analysis is in progress).

¹⁰ In a survey, conducted by Bajzát (2020), it has been found that the responding ESP teachers (from Romania, the Netherlands, Japan and Germany) felt that obtaining a PhD degree was more important for them than obtaining a discipline-related degree to do their job.

On extending our search, we found two recent EU projects that are important milestones in LSP teachers' research. These projects contribute to filling the gaps and overcoming the shortcomings previously experienced in the field of effective training and professional development for LSP teachers:

- (1) TRAILS project¹¹ is an Erasmus+ R&D initiative which focuses on enhancing the teaching of Languages for Specific Purposes. The project involved universities and research institutions from Spain, France, Slovenia, Poland, Italy, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Croatia. They conducted a complex needs analysis among LSP teachers to identify the required competences of LSP teachers and develop a training program for them. Based on their findings, they organized a pilot winter school for LSP teachers (Chateaufreynaud and John 2022).
- (2) CATAPULT (Computer Assisted Training And Platforms to Upskill LSP Teachers) project¹² is another Erasmus+ initiative aimed at providing professional development and training tools for LSP teachers in adult and higher education. It provides LSP teachers with the necessary skills to teach in the digital era (Sarré, Skarli, and Turula 2021). The project has developed a common competence framework that outlines the key competences required for LSP teaching.

Consistent with our personal experiences in teaching EMP, the literature review confirmed that the work of EMP (and generally, ESP/LSP) teachers is highly complex (Basturkmen 2012; Ding and Bruce 2017). Beyond traditional language teaching roles, they often develop materials, design courses, and curricula (Cao et al. 2022; Csongor, Németh, and Hild 2019; Kaščáková 2016; Saidi and Afshari 2021); moreover, in order to accomplish these goals, they frequently conduct research and needs analyses (Belcher 2006). EMP teachers frequently address issues such as intercultural competencies (Lu and Corbett 2012), soft/transversal skills, political correctness, and the characteristics of written scientific English (hedging, structuring, etc.) within the context of their EMP classes. Douglas (2017) notes that ESP instructors help the learners connect with their chosen domain and integrate into the specific professional, academic, and vocational culture (discourse community). This integration requires continuous self-education on the specific content of their chosen specialty (Božić Lenard and Lenard 2018). There is an extensive amount of background knowledge that EMP teachers need to acquire about the specialty (medicine), the language of which they teach. This is largely accomplished by self-teaching because there are very few training opportunities for EMP teachers (Cao et al. 2022; Chateaufreynaud and John 2022). Participation in further training and ESP-related conferences are frequently mentioned by ESP teachers as the most important ways of professional development (Bajzát 2020). Douglas (2017) encourages ESP teachers to look at other ESP domains and contexts for inspiration and insight. The TRAILS project highlighted the lack of career development prospects for LSP teachers at European universities.

The role of ESP teachers is both challenging and frustrating. They often do not know the content better than their students (Brunello and Brunello 2018; Meristo and López Arias 2020). Inevitably, this unique position impacts their role as teachers: they are no longer the 'overall source of knowledge', but rather should be viewed as language assistants, collaborators, facilitators, mentors, and consultants. Given this complexity, it is reasonable to assume that EMP teachers have a high level of flexibility, adaptability, resilience, and proficiency in 21st century skills. This is undeniably another area that merits further investigation.

¹¹ <https://trails.hypotheses.org/>

¹² <https://catapult-project.eu/overview/>

6. CONCLUSION

The limitation of this literature review lies in the multidimensional nature of the topic; however, with a focused approach, some of the important aspects of EMP have been pointed out. This focused narrative review began by addressing the first research question (RQ1: How is EMP conceptually defined?) and examining the concept of EMP. Consequently, the use of the term ‘EMP’ has been recommended when medical students, practitioners, or researchers are meant to be the learners of EMP. When an umbrella term is needed to include other health professionals such as nurses, dentists, etc., using the term ‘English for Health Sciences Purposes’ would be more demonstrative and accurate.

In answering the second research question (RQ2: What factors underline the importance of learning and teaching English for Medical Purposes?), the critical role and necessity of EMP in medical education has been emphasized by highlighting the competitive advantage which can be gained by mastering EMP during university years. Moreover, mastering EMP has far-reaching implications: if non-native trainees and trained doctors (and, in general, HPs) can communicate fluently in English, a globally shared language, it will positively influence health sciences and, consequently, patient care worldwide. It has also been pointed out that needs analyses should take new turns and should be carried out among EMP teachers. The review’s findings confirm that LSP teachers, in general, lack training and further training opportunities, their work is highly complex, they have to self-teach themselves on the discipline (the subject-matter/content) the language of which they teach, and there are no career development prospects. Although there is a growing body of research on teachers’ identities, there is very little research on EMP teachers’ identities, career development, motivation, training opportunities, and working conditions. Research into the working methods of EMP teachers would also be beneficial to see what their responses are to the recent changes (e.g., remote teaching, appearance of AI).

As it has been highlighted, instead of the traditional needs analyses (i.e., surveying the needs of the students), new questions need to be raised. Nowadays, learners of EMP should be asked about their learning strategies when learning EMP, and surveying their motivation would be another important line of inquiry in the field of EMP research.

On reviewing the important aspects of EMP in the literature, future research directions have been recommended. Hopefully, the findings of upcoming empirical studies will help develop student-centered approaches to EMP and may lead to a supportive environment for the effective teaching of EMP.

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APPENDIX

Table A.1 Various settings of teaching English for Medical Purposes.

		Methods of delivering knowledge	
EMP taught as:	ESP English for Specific Purposes	EMI English-Medium Instruction	CLIL Content and Language Integrated Learning
Definition	“The branch of English language studies that concerns the language, discourse, and culture of English-language professional communities and specialized groups, as well as the learning and teaching of this object from a didactic perspective” (Sarré and Whyte 2016, 146)	“The use of the English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries or jurisdictions where the first language of the majority of the population is not English” (Macaro et al. 2018, 37)	“CLIL is an approach in which a foreign language is used as a tool in the learning of a non-language subject in which both language and the subject have a joint role” (Coyle, 2002)
Level	Higher education	Higher education	Primary and secondary education
Typically taught by	Mainly non-native, trained/qualified English language teachers who specialize (by self-teaching) in the field of medicine/health sciences, usually without any formal training in HS	Non-native (or native) university lecturers (medical professionals) with English knowledge between B2–C2 (usually without pedagogical training)	Non-native (or native) teachers who received training in the given subject (e.g., biology, physics) AND in English (usually trained in CLIL)
Learners	1) Non-native (undergraduate) medical students (rarely beginners) 2) Non-native postgraduate medical professionals (rarely beginners) 3) Non-native EMI content teachers teaching in international training programs (Morell 2020)	Non-native (occasionally native) university students at medical schools where the medium of instruction is English (international medical programs) (not beginners)*	Non-native primary and secondary school students in countries where English is not the first language
Purpose	Learning medical (technical and non-technical) vocabulary, written and verbal interprofessional (e.g., between a medical doctor and a nurse) and intraprofessional communication (e.g., doctor–doctor communication, referrals) and doctor–patient communication + English for Academic Purposes (EAP)	Content enjoys priority. Some incidental language learning may take place.	Content and English language are equally taught and assessed.
Typical settings in terms of EMP	EMP (elective or compulsory) courses are offered to medical students at medical schools	EMP is used/needed by non-native university lecturers (typically holding a degree in Medicine) to deliver knowledge on their particular subject to non-native/native students attending English-medium medical education	<i>An intersection where teaching EMP is similar to CLIL: language (EMP) teachers of preparatory courses of (international medical programs) at medical schools are often required to explain content when teaching</i>

programs of medical schools (international medical programs)	<i>medical terminology and vice versa, content teachers (medical educators) find it sometimes necessary to correct certain language-related mistakes or explain language-related problems</i>
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*Our personal experience aligns with literature findings (Bo et al. 2022; Chan et al. 2022): non-native students within the EMI setting may also require EMP training. These ‘international’ students admitted to medical schools where the medium of instruction and communication is English, often have intermediate to proficient general English knowledge. However, they likely received their former education (e.g., biology, chemistry, physics) in their mother tongue. Thus, when they enter English-medium medical education, they are expected to understand a highly complex content in ‘medical English’ the terms of which they are only vaguely familiar with. Naturally, this affects the efficiency of their learning process.

Table A.2 Needs analyses conducted among learners/users of English for Medical Purposes and their main findings

Author (year of publ.)	Country	Respondents	Most important findings
Tasçi (2007)	Turkey	Medical students	Students were not satisfied with the English knowledge of their language teachers or the available teaching materials.
		Lecturers	Lecturers rated the importance of EMP higher than students.
Hwang (2011)	Taiwan	Medical students	Students suggested: first-year students should take reading classes, second-year students listening classes, and third-year students conversation classes.
Epifani (2016)	Italy	Respondents from all fields of HS	75% of the respondents stated that they needed English in their work
Karimnia and Khodashenas (2018)	Iran	Medical students	1) Students use their English reading skills most frequently. 2) They self-reported the highest level of proficiency in reading.
Lodhi et al. (2018)	Pakistan	Medical doctors working in academia	Large gap between the competencies that the doctors acquired and the language skills they want to achieve.
		Medical students	Strong demand for EMP is detected among the students.
Safiyeh (2021)	Palestine	Medical students	1) Students are most satisfied with their reading skills and least satisfied with writing skills. 2) 58% said that EMP courses are not intensive enough to enable them to speak confidently in communication situations.
		EMP teachers	Four basic skills are equally needed, but the greatest need: developing writing skills.

IT SPECIALTY STUDENTS' PRAGMA-PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN KAZAKHSTANI ESP CLASSES

Kumis T. Zhaiykbay¹, Davronzhon Gaipov¹, Tulebike A. Kulgildinova², Saadat M. Ushurova³

¹SDU University, Kaskelen, Kazakhstan

²Kazakh Ablai Khan University of International Relations and World Languages, Almaty, Kazakhstan

³Satbayev University, Almaty, Kazakhstan

ORCID iDs: Kumis T. Zhaiykbay <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1517-5896>
Davronzhon Gaipov <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3012-8067>
Tulebike A. Kulgildinova <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6837-8569>
Saadat M. Ushurova <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8392-6989>

Abstract. *The article focuses on the study of IT specialty students' pragma-professional communicative competence (PPCC) in Kazakhstan. The study aimed to identify students' perception of ESP teachers' performance and challenges in forming IT specialty students' pragma-professional communicative competence. The study was conducted using a mixed-methods approach, with both quantitative and qualitative data collected from 508 IT students and 36 teachers from four universities in Kazakhstan. A survey and focus group interviews were used to collect data on the students' perceptions and teacher's views of teaching ESP. After the students' interview responses, the most commonly shared students' perception of ESP teacher's assessment policy. Most of the students emphasize the need to improve the teaching methods and add sphere (IT) related topics into ESP classes since they found that teaching materials are not up to date and sphere (IT) related. The result of the analysis of responses on teachers' view on teaching goals of ESP, it was revealed that teachers are aware of the importance of using major (IT) specific terms, topics, and activities in ESP classes to develop PPCC. However, they emphasize only general English goals as ESP teaching goals since there are some difficulties in incorporating ESP goals. They claim that class size, students' major (specialty) and level differences have a huge impact on incorporating the ESP goals. Therefore, they have to teach general English rather than ESP to their students. The significance of this paper is it provides insight into how Kazakhstani EFL teachers view the teaching goals of ESP and students' perceptions of ESP in the formation of PPCC. The study leads to several educational recommendations. First, the university program should strengthen the focus on teachers' awareness of teaching goals of ESP and obedience of the ESP syllabus. Second, ESP classes should be divided into levels and spheres of different groups. Third, professional development programs should be arranged for all ESP teachers to enhance their ESP knowledge and support them with teaching materials.*

Key words: *IT students, English for specific purposes, perception, challenges, pragmatic competence*

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Corresponding author: Davronzhon Gaipov, SDU University, Kaskelen, Kazakhstan

E-mail: davronzhon.gaipov@sdu.edu.kz

1. INTRODUCTION

The methodology of foreign language education (MFLE) is highly developing as well as the demand of English for IT specialists. The key to the successful professional activity of any specialist is the active use of a foreign language both at the cultural and everyday level, at the same time in the field of professional communication. Hence, the significance of professional communicative competence is widely recognized in FLE. The content of foreign language education for non-linguistic specialties should have the main component in their curriculum - teaching fluent professional communication. Additionally, the process of the formation of professional communicative competence implies not only professional foreign language knowledge, but also the development and appropriation of social norms of behavior, and the ability to implement them in one's future professional activity (Kunanbayeva, 2013). According to Kunanbayeva's (2016) work "Professional Training of university graduates", she mentioned the essentialness of professional training of students and developed the "competent" model of a specialist. This model consists of four competencies: professionally oriented competence, professionally based, and professionally defined competence, intercultural and international professional communicative competence. Kunanbayeva in her monograph "Competence Modeling of Professional Foreign Language Education" offers a professional concept or vocational concept as a unit of the subject content of foreign language education. The author notes that in the present conditions "the essence and content of the concept of "vocational education" is changing and becoming more complicated. In modern conditions, vocational education is designed to form a new specialist for a qualitatively new level of the country's innovative and professional potential, capable of giving a new impetus to technology transfer in the country's strategic development. She highlights the professional concept, which involves the implementation of psychological and pedagogical principles when a student in a learning environment can see and be actively included in the context of his future professional activity. The subject and procedural aspects create the context of future professional activity, resulting in the "actualization of professional and value aspects of the content of education", through "the formation of professional self-awareness of students in the course of designing and implementing educational professionally oriented situations that encourage student activity in the social and subject context of the future professional activity". The State Program for the Development of Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011-2020 notes that English must be studied not only as a foreign language but also used as a language for teaching at all levels of education. This task requires special attention since English is not used in everyday communication, in comparison with the Kazakh and Russian languages. The purpose of higher education is focused on the formation of different competencies. The competency-based approach has a broader concept and direction compared to the traditional knowledge approach, since it involves a whole experience for independently solving complex life and professional problems. To develop such competencies teaching English for general purposes has not been viewed as effective anymore. A significant way of implementing professional education and developing professional competencies can be done in ESP classes, as the purpose of ESP is mainly based on student's future professional needs and motivation (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

According to Räisänen and Fortanet Gómez (2008), the main feature of ESP is to cater for the needs of the learners of specific disciplines. ESP students are already assumed to possess some general knowledge of English and learning language in ESP

class focuses on making students communicate within a specific professional domain. However, some teachers perceive the teaching goals of ESP as overly narrow emphasizing only linguistic skills while neglecting broader language skills applicable to students' professional field and communicative competencies. It may lead to the difficulty of developing students' professional competence. In this paper, the focus is on Kazakhstani students' perceptions of ESP teacher's performance and challenges in the formation of IT students' pragma-professional communicative competence.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Since Bologna Declaration and State Program of RK for 2011-2020 initiate the increased internalization of university education. In some contexts, the institutions might decide that, since English would be used as a specialised means of communication in EMI courses, there would no longer be a need for ESP courses, which by definition focus on the language (Dearden, 2018). Pavesi & Ghia (2020) note that some universities consider ESP as a basic pre-requisite rather than a complex and subject-specific competence to be developed. The authors revealed that some Italian universities downgrade the teaching ESP by claiming that students need basic knowledge of English rather than subject specific. Accordingly, teachers' role in English language teaching also shapes their planning and curricular decisions, in effect determining what should be taught and what path instruction should follow. The role of ESP teacher is not only provider of a content and language but also need analyst. Since the ESP teacher is not the primary knower of subject knowledge, the teacher should analyse the needs of his students to present the relevant material to students. This means teachers do not follow any predetermined syllabuses, since students' needs vary from speciality to speciality and year of the study. Charles (2014) revealed that teachers who are involved in needs analysis of students tend to foster more conductive learning environment which leads to enhanced student satisfaction and proficiency development in ESP context. Nurmetov et al. (2023) identified the need for analysis of Kazakhstani IT alumni and found that they were mainly satisfied with the ESP content and different kinds of projects worked on during the studies. However, the respondents recommended to add some diversified IT terminology and some assignments that were given during ESP classes were not valuable at work (such as presentations and vocabulary not related to IT), which should be the reminder for ESP teachers to review the assignments given. Suzani et al. (2011) has identified the reasons of not meeting student's demands in ESP classes as a) students are not ready for ESP classes; b) lack of teacher's qualification; c) ESP teaching methods are still passive; d) ESP classes too large. Kassymova et al. (2021) revealed three main factors influencing IT students' English language proficiency in ESP classes such as overcrowded classes, mixed-ability students, and ineffective learning environment. There are several challenges that ESP teachers' encounter while teaching lack of knowledge of discipline, lack of proper needs analysis, lack of ESP training, large classes, and learner's varied English competences (Iswati & Triastuti, 2021). Furthermore, those factors may also cause some challenges in the development of communicative and professional competences since teachers' main goal of teaching might shift to a different direction. It might also become a stumbling block in advancement and growth of ESP teaching. Lourido-Badía(2023) analyzed how ESP materials used in the Sports Science and Psychology program students to provide instructional strategies, activities which foster development of B2 level

of communicative skills required for future career. She identified that ESP materials have wide range of activities to foster communicative skills however it could not reach proper adaptation to B2 level which is not appropriate to the specific language acquisition and all four skills were rarely included in the materials.

The demand for IT education in Kazakhstan is increasing and tertiary education should prepare such specialists who are proficient in English and competent in professional domains. Kuhail et al., (2023) claims that IT professionals' foreign language training should last 4-5 years to acquire the required communicative competencies (linguistic competence, pragmatic competence) since the entire field of technology and programming language are bound to English. Zhaiykbay (2023) studied the importance of the development of IT specialists' pragma-professional communicative competence by emphasizing that communicative competence might not be enough for IT students to deal with pragma-professional problems. Kaldarova (2023) also supports the fact of developing subject-related competencies of IT students to be able to meet the demands of the global market. She mainly focused on developing IT students' subject-communicative language competencies and assessed the degree of formation. Zhaiykbay et al. (2023) examines the impact of pragma-professional communicative competence (PPCC) on job performance of IT specialists and identifies crucialness of PPCC in project completion and effective collaboration. There is limited literature on IT speciality students' pragma-professional communicative competence (PPCC) in the Kazakhstani context. However, several studies have investigated the communication skills of IT professionals in Kazakhstan, providing insights into challenges and opportunities for developing communicative competence among IT students. In a study by Kairzhanova and Bolshakov (2021), which aimed to explore the role of the English language in the IT sphere in Kazakhstan, it was found that the lack of communication activities and skills are one of the main barriers to effective collaboration and teamwork in the IT industry. This highlights the importance of developing PPCC among IT specialty students. This study investigates the students' perception of ESP teachers' performance and challenges in the formation of IT specialty students' pragma-professional communicative competence.

1. What are the IT students' perceptions of ESP teachers' performance in the Kazakhstani context?
2. How do teachers view the teaching goals of English for Specific Purposes?
3. What are the challenges these students report in incorporating the formation of pragma-professional communicative competence in foreign language education?

To answer those questions, we did an exploratory study with the help of a survey and interview, and both qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out with the 1st and 2nd year IT specialty students (508) and teachers (36) of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in universities of Kazakhstan. The participants of the research were students and teachers of four Kazakhstani universities. Among (508) students 12 students and 8 teachers were selected for focus group interview; selection was voluntary. All the research procedures were conducted in English. All the ethical issues were followed, and the consent letter was sent to the department chairs; teachers and students were also e-mailed the consent letter.

3.1. Data collection

Participants of the main study were the 508 IT specialty students majoring in (Computer Science, Software Engineering, Mathematical Computer Modelling, and Information Systems). In the pilot study, 53 IT specialty students took part. The students were asked to fill out the survey online and based on their answers the updates were done. The survey with close-ended (Likert Scale) and open-ended questions was taken online, and it was divided into two sections: a) sections on students' perception of ESP teachers' performance; and challenges in incorporating the formation of pragma-professional communicative competence; b) sections on teachers' view of teaching objectives of ESP. All the ethical issues were followed, and the consent letter was sent to the department chairs; teachers and students were also e-mailed the consent letter. They were aware of the aim of the research, and they could cancel their participation at any time. The consent letter contained the link to the survey and students got access easily. After the collected data, the Likert scale questions were statistically analyzed by SPSS. Twelve students and eight teachers from different universities were interviewed. A semi-structured interview was developed, and a focus group interview was conducted. The qualitative data was thematically analyzed by codes.

Table 1 Percentages of student respondents from four universities

University code	Percentage
University 1	30,9%
University 2	17,5%
University 3	23,4%
University 4	28,2%

Based on results, the majority of participants (30,9%) were from University 1 and University 2 (28,1%), more than third participants (23,4%) were from University 3, and the rest (17,5%) were from University 4.

Table 2 Majors taken by respondents

Major subjects	Percentage
Computer Science	46,9%
Software Engineering	27,5%
Information Systems	14,6%
Mathematical Computer Modelling	11%

As seen in Table 2, the majors taken by respondents are mainly Computer Science (46,9%), less than a third are favor of Software Engineering (27,5%), other (14,6%) Information Systems, and minority are Mathematical Computer Modelling (11%).

Table 3 Percentages of teacher respondents from four universities

University Name	Percentage
University 1	25%
University 2	25%
University 3	25%
University 4	25%

3.2. Research findings

3.2.1. Finding 1

This part shows the findings of students' perceptions of ESP teacher's performance (teaching method, content, teaching materials and assessment policy) and teachers' view of the teaching objectives in ESP.

(N=508)

strongly agree = 5, agree = 4, neither agree nor disagree = 3, disagree = 2, strongly disagree = 1.

Table 4 IT students' perceptions of ESP teacher's performance in Kazakhstani context

Criteria on teacher's performance	Questions	SA	A	N	D	SD	Interpretation
Needs analysis	I feel that good knowledge of English will give me an edge in competing with others	209	152	34	60	53	42% strongly agree
	Increasing my English proficiency will have financial benefits for me	334	130	23	10	11	66,8 % strongly agree
	to be fluent in English will help me to find a good/better job more easily	140	320	20	9	19	62,9 % agree
Teaching methods	I really love attending English classes because of my teacher's teaching	91	67	50	151	148	17,9 % strongly agree 29,7 % disagree
	Teacher understands the necessity and importance of ESP in IT sphere	120	80	44	129	135	23,6 % strongly agree 26,5 % strongly disagree
	Teacher conducts lessons with a diverse range of activities related to IT	67	56	34	185	166	13,1 % strongly agree 36,4 % disagree
	I like teaching method of my teacher	78	74	54	160	142	15,3 % strongly agree 31,4% disagree

As seen in Table 3, IT specialty students need English language to get well paid jobs and they are not satisfied with the teaching methods of their teachers. It seems teachers do not use a diverse range of activities related to IT since 36,4 % of participants disagreed with the statement "Teacher conducts lessons with a diverse range of activities related to IT". However, 23,6 % participants consider that teachers understand the importance of ESP in their sphere, but still, they do not like to attend English classes due to the poor teaching method.

Table 5 IT students' perceptions of ESP teacher's performance in Kazakhstani context

Criteria on teacher's performance	Questions	SA	A	N	D	SD	Interpretation
Content Subject/ Teaching Material	Teacher uses IT related topics in ESP classes	29	31	45	120	283	55,7 % strongly disagree 5 % strongly disagree
	Teacher prefers providing receptive activities rather than productive ones	140	320	20	9	19	62,9 % agree
	Teacher uses updated and relevant (IT related) materials in ESP class	20	31	44	124	285	56,1 % strongly disagree
	Teaching materials make us to perform and practice what we have learnt	113	87	44	135	129	23,6 % agree 22,2 % strongly disagree
	Teaching materials are given to develop our pragma-professional communicative skills	56	102	34	203	112	39,9 23,6 % agree
Assessment	The assessment takes place objectively	153	290	25	15	25	57 % agree
	Teacher uses both formative and summative assessments	305	93	34	50	26	60% strongly agree
	The assignments are given to assess our performance(production) rather than reception	83	87	44	165	129	16,3 % agree 32,4 % disagree
	Rubrics are explained and provided	187	178	25	15	103	36,2 % agree

In Table 4, it is evident that 56,1 % of respondents did not find the content of their ESP up to date and relevant to their sphere. Besides, 62,9 % of participants believe that teaching materials are designed to foster receptive skills rather than production, also 22,2 % consider that they do not practice what they have learnt. However, the assessment policy of teachers is clear and objective. Majority of the respondents agree that teachers use both formative and summative assessments, and all rubrics explained and provided beforehand.

3.2.2. Finding 2: Focus group findings

Material(textbook) code (Code MT)

Of all responses, the most frequent expressions referred to the textbook(materials) that their teachers use in ESP classes. Respondents with code “MT” mostly mentioned about the discrepancy of the textbook materials to their sphere. They also pointed out that the topics which were related to their sphere were presented with basic and simple things.

In our ESP class, we do not mainly focus on our profession, I mean we study with a textbook for engineering students, for example: we just passed a unit related to oil supply even though we are computer science students. (Student 1)

I am a computer modelling student, and our textbook is mainly related to general engineering science, and we learn only about basic computer-related things. It is not interesting because we have learned about basic ICT tools during our first semester in the ICT course. (Student 2)

In my English class, we have a textbook which is connected to my sphere, we learn new words related to my profession, but we don't revise new words as homework. We learn it and immediately forget. (Student 3)

Teacher makes us only read the text and retell it. Texts even not related to our sphere; I don't understand why we are reading them. We need more words to learn about my specialty. (Student 4)

Textbook was related to my sphere, but only simple (basic) things were mentioned during 14 weeks of our first semester study. (Student 5)

Participants express dissatisfaction with the alignment between textbook content and their field of study. They also highlight a concern regarding the redundancy on content covered in ESP classes, it provides a need for more advanced and tailored material in ESP instruction. There appears to be a disconnect between the content provided and the students' professional needs, with insufficient depth, relevance, and engagement in the learning materials and activities.

Respondents who responded within the code ‘E’ theme indicated the importance of IT related topics, terms in their classes, because it gives them the opportunity to be competent in their sphere. They emphasize that they expect in ESP classes activities which foster communication related to their profession and field-specific tasks to solve. Participants mostly expected to see in their ESP classes activities, topics, terminology related to their sphere.

I thought that this ESP class's content wouldn't be the same as my English course at educational center, but it was the same. (Student 4)

I expected that we will learn IT related terms, themes and will communicate on this topic. (Student 5)

I thought that our ESP class would focus on speaking and listening mainly, but it was focused on reading texts and writing essays. (Student 7)

I thought that we will learn things in English, which is related to our profession, but we learned only grammar. (student 8)

I expected activities which foster communication in foreign language professional sphere because the course title is called English for specific purposes. (Student 9)

Respondents who indicated responses considering the code ‘S’ emphasized the importance of both receptive and productive skills in ESP classes. The following responses are indicative of either one, or both of these skills.

I would suggest more activities related to our profession and speaking activities, because fluency is very important in our sphere. (Student 10)

Our teacher focused only on reading and retelling, but we need new terminology related to my profession in order to use that in my speaking or writing. So, it would be better if the teacher teaches how to use new words in context and teach more new words connected with our profession. (student 3)

As our profession is mainly related to the English language, we have so many materials in English, so therefore we need to read more scientific papers about our sphere. Because it will help us to use English and understand IT related texts.(student 5)

It would be better if teacher uses different activities (real-life situational activities) to use English in our sphere. Because in particular situation we don't know how to speak or say something. (student 6)

In our sphere, there are a lot of nationalities are working as programmers, web designer and so on and they have different accents, and it would be better if teacher bring us listening tasks with different accent speakers. (student 7)

3.2.3. Finding 3

Teachers' view of teaching goals of ESP

In general, teachers accept the fact that IT ESP classes should have up-to-date and relevant teaching materials. They understand that they need to use more IT-related or major related materials in their ESP classes. However, it is not always possible to have them due to the large class size, different levels and diverse majors of students in one class. For example, T5,8 explained,

I try to use some IT-related materials, however, as a technological university, I do have many diverse majoring students such as gas and oil engineering, construction engineering, and so on. Therefore, I cannot only pick IT-related teaching materials or topics for my English classes. T5

I have different levels (elementary- intermediate) of students in my class, and a large number of students over 27. It causes huge challenges in implementing IT-related materials, and activities, I rather choose to use common materials for all in the ESP classroom. T8

Another teacher mentioned about the goal of ESP, saying that

Actually in our syllabus we have topics covering the major ralted terms and so on. Still, we probably use ESP to improve my students' proficiency level so they can use it for practical purposes. T7

The respondents emphasize only general English goals as ESP teaching goals, due to the large class size, and major and level differences.

Hence, teachers' responses showed that their teaching goals do not fully follow the ESP goals and students' interview responses revealed that they are not satisfied with the ESP content. Once focus group interview results gained, the researcher came up with survey questions to identify four university teacher's view of teaching goals with a help of survey.

Table 6 Teachers' view of teaching goals of ESP

Adopted from Smakova &Paulsrud (2020)

Teacher's view of ESP	Mean	SD
1. Improve a level of proficiency in the English language that will allow my learners to use English for practical and specific purposes	3.38	2.93
2. Encourage my students to communicate in the English language and behave pragmatically with people from any foreign countries.	1.79	1.49
3. Encourage my students to use terminology related to his sphere.	1.79	1.49
4. Increase my students' basic vocabulary.	3.07	2.69
5. Emphasize the acquisition of professional, specific knowledge.	3.06	2.67
6. Increase my students' understanding of difficult reading passages.	2.99	2.59
7. Improve my students' abilities to translate sentences from the English language into the mother tongue.	3.38	2.90
8. For communication, collaboration, organization and management, digital literacy, critical thinking and problem solving, etc.	3.35	2.90

The table presents teachers' perspectives on teaching goals within English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classes. Overall, teachers place a high priority on enhancing students' English language proficiency for practical use, with a mean score of 3.38 and a standard deviation of 2.93. Communication skills are also valued, albeit slightly lower, with a mean score of 2.79 and a standard deviation of 2.49. Encouraging the use of profession-specific terminology receives lower emphasis, as indicated by a mean score of 1.79 and a standard deviation of 1.49. Teachers aim to increase students' general vocabulary (mean = 3.07, SD = 2.69) and emphasize the acquisition of professional knowledge (mean = 3.06, SD = 2.67). Additionally, they prioritize improving students' understanding of complex grammatical structures (mean = 3.59, SD = 3.11) and difficult reading passages (mean = 2.99, SD = 2.59). Translation abilities from English to the mother tongue are also considered important (mean = 3.38, SD = 2.90). Lastly, teachers recognize the importance of fostering communication, collaboration, and critical thinking skills, with a mean score of 3.35 and a standard deviation of 2.90. These results highlight the multifaceted approach taken by teachers in ESP instruction, aiming to equip students with a broad range of language and professional skills. Teachers find it difficult to cater the needs of IT students since students do not possess the required general knowledge of English.

Table 7 Students' view on challenges in the formation of pragma-professional communicative competence

Adopted from Smakova &Paulsrud (2020)

Lack of real-life environment for students to master pragma-professional communicative competence
The curriculum/course book is not appropriate for teaching pragma-professionally oriented themes
Lack of experience and knowledge about how to teach pragma-professional communication in ESP classes
Lack of experience and knowledge about pragma-professional tasks
Lack of experience and knowledge about the assessment process of pragma-professional communicative competence
Lack of experience and knowledge about how students can demonstrate their PPCC
Lack of experience and knowledge about how to integrate and balance pragma-professional(subject-specific) and communication skill appropriately

The table summarizes students' views on challenges in the formation of pragma-professional communicative competence (PPCC). Several key challenges are highlighted, including a lack of real-life environments for students to master PPCC, indicating a gap between theoretical learning and practical application. Students also express dissatisfaction with the curriculum and course materials, suggesting that they are not adequately tailored to teach pragma-professionally oriented themes, hindering their ability to develop relevant communication skills. Furthermore, there is a notable lack of experience and knowledge among instructors regarding how to effectively teach pragma-professional communication using contemporary methods, as well as a deficiency in understanding pragma-professional tasks and assessment processes. Additionally, students feel ill-equipped to demonstrate their PPCC and struggle with integrating and balancing pragma-professional content with communication skills appropriately. Overall, these challenges underscore the need for targeted support and training for both students and instructors to address the complexities of developing pragma-professional communicative competence effectively within the educational context.

4. DISCUSSION

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a subject of increasing interest in language education. Kolomiets and Konoplenko (2015) proposed a model for teaching English to speak for specific purposes, especially in the context of information security. They emphasized the use of business games as an effective method of developing students' communicative competence. This finding is especially important for the development of pragma-professional communicative competence of IT students in Kazakh ESP classes.

The present study aimed to investigate IT students' perception of ESP teachers' performance in the Kazakhstani context; to explore the challenges that students face in the formation of pragma-professional communicative competence; and identify what is the teachers' view of the teaching goals of ESP. After the students' interview responses, the most commonly shared students' perceptions of ESP teacher's performance were divided into 4 items such as teaching method, content, teaching materials and assessment policy. Most of the students emphasize the need to improve the teaching methods and add sphere (IT) related topics into ESP classes, since they found that teaching materials are not up to date and sphere (IT) related. The result of the analysis of responses on teachers' view on teaching goals of ESP, it was revealed that teachers are aware of the importance of using major (IT) specific terms, topics, and activities in ESP classes to develop PPCC. However, they emphasize only general English goals as ESP teaching goals since there are some difficulties in incorporating ESP goals. They claim that class size, students' major(speciality) and level differences have a huge impact on incorporating the ESP goals. Therefore, they have to teach general English rather than ESP to their students. Moreover, Tulepova et al., (2024) found out that there are persistent challenges and noticeable gaps between the EMI practices teachers aim to implement and the actual experiences students report. It may show that not only teachers and students of ESP classes but also teachers and students of EMI classes have different visions towards English learning.

Similarly, Kondakova, Zimina, and Prokhorova (2020) advocate a differentiated approach to teaching ESP. They believe that in order to successfully acquire professional communicative competence, it is necessary to adapt the educational process to the

specific professional needs and language abilities of students. This insight highlights the importance of tailoring ESP lessons to the unique needs of IT students in Kazakhstan. Nabok and Borysenko (2022) study the content features of the study subject "Foreign language for professional purposes" in the context of psychology. Although their focus was not specifically on IT students, their results highlight the importance of aligning language learning with students' specific professional fields. This corresponds to the need to adapt ESP lessons to the professional needs of IT students.

In the present study, teachers are familiar with the concept and goals of ESP, the results indicate that practising and incorporating ESP goals in their classes are still challenging in the formation of PPCC. The findings of this study reveal several difficulties that students face during the formation of PPCC in ESP classes. First, students recognize the lack of a real-life environment to foster PPCC. Furthermore, this study identified no correspondence of teaching materials to ESP goals which makes it difficult to improve the PPCC of a student. Other important problematic aspects of the formation of PPCC include teachers' lack of experience and knowledge on how pragma-professional tasks can be given, how students can demonstrate their PPCC, and how PPCC can be assessed.

5. CONCLUSION

This study provides insight into how Kazakhstani EFL teachers view the teaching goals of ESP and students' perceptions of ESP in the formation of PPCC. Existing literature highlights the importance of teaching English for specific purposes and developing pragma-professional communicative competence. However, there is a significant gap in the literature regarding the unique needs and challenges of IT students in Kazakh ESP classrooms. This study leads to several educational recommendations. First, the university program should strengthen the focus on teachers' awareness of teaching goals of ESP and obedience of the ESP syllabus. Second, ESP classes should be divided into levels and spheres of different groups. Third, professional development programs should be arranged for all ESP teachers to enhance their ESP knowledge and support them with teaching materials. Fourth, future research should focus on exploring the unique language and professional demands of IT students and developing pedagogical approaches tailored to meet these needs.

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ENGLISH TEACHERS' ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN AI INTEGRATION: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY

Argie O. Suello¹, Rivika C. Alda²

¹Berlitz, Philippines

²College of Teacher Education, Cebu Normal University, Philippines

ORCID iDs: Argie O. Suello
Rivika C. Alda

<https://orcid.org/0009-0004-6174-2320>
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1546-9042>

Abstract. *Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become more widespread and has posed some concerns in terms of how it is being used in education. This study explored the ethical considerations of English language teachers while integrating AI into their teaching practices. Using a narrative approach to qualitative inquiry, teachers' experiences in using AI technologies were deduced from the semi-structured interviews. Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis framework was utilized to generate significant themes. These experiences are creatively described as follows: The Edge: Navigating the Pedagogical Skies using AI, Turbulence Ahead: The Pitfalls of AI Overdependence, Mapping an Ethical Pathway in the Digital Skies, Teachers as AI Pilots: Mastering the Skies Together, and The Sky Ahead: Venturing the Future of AI. Moreover, AI has significantly impacted teachers' pedagogy, allowing them to personalize lessons, save time, and learn from various resources. On the contrary, concerns about copyright, creativity, biases, and loss of human touch emerged. The findings of this study provide insights on the integration of AI in English language classrooms especially in formulating guidelines of use while adhering to ethical principles.*

Key words: *AI integration, English teachers, English language teaching, Ethical considerations, Narrative inquiry*

1. INTRODUCTION

As technology advances, Artificial Intelligence (AI) integration in education has also been expanding, which prompts discussions on its ethical and teaching-learning implications. AI offers various resources for both students and teachers to conveniently gather, process, and analyze large data tailored to their specific needs. AI-powered tools have proliferated and have addressed a wide array of needs in various industries, most notably education. These tools include chatbots (ChatGPT, Perplexity, Chatsonic, etc.), writing aid tools (Quillbot, Grammarly, Speedwrite, etc.), content creation tools (Grin, Creator.co, Upfluence, etc.), and other language learning tools (Duolingo and Memrise).

Teachers in second language classrooms use AI-generated writing tools like ChatGPT to support students (Tseng & Warschauer, 2023). Teachers use other AI-powered tools

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Corresponding author: Rivika C. Alda, Faculty, College of Teacher Education, Cebu Normal University, Philippines

E-mail: aldar@cnu.edu.ph

like Grammarly to fine-tune students' writing, Turnitin to check similarity and screen AI content, Quillbot to summarize and paraphrase texts. They also leverage the writing feedback via MS Word, Google Docs, etc. This not only promotes empowerment on AI use but also fosters digital literacy and critical thinking.

AI has unquestionably transformed the current educational landscape. However, pressing challenges like cheating have surfaced. According to an article from GMA Integrated News (2023), some students from UP-Diliman became the subject of an investigation after allegedly submitting academic requirements using AI. An AI detector was used to check the students' work. Thus, this has posed concerns among teachers, especially English language teachers who are in the forefront of using English language in the classroom and who deal with several writing outputs from students. Not only students but also teachers themselves use AI in their practices. Consequently, they are also faced with some ethical dilemmas on how to integrate AI in the classroom.

As Nassar and Kamal (2021) suggest, AI advancement has marked the beginning of new decision-making processes. This implies the necessity to develop appropriate policies, regulations, and guidelines to manage its use. Borenstein and Howard (2020) said that education can promote a professional mindset among future developers. Considering the educational facet, this suggests that teachers also need to adapt their teaching methods by fostering critical thinking and exploration with the advancements brought about by AI. Integration of AI in educational institutions could be advantageous but could also bring serious concerns (Remian, 2019).

While existing body of research tends to focus more on the general implication of AI integration into education, there has been no exploration on the nuanced perspectives of the English teachers as one of the front runners of language use. Gartner and Krašna (2023) showed that AI-based educational tools are increasingly employed. It is important to have comprehensive knowledge of AI concepts and ethical considerations to minimize the risk of future incidents due to misuse of AI. They also presented an ethical framework for AI, including privacy, autonomy, trust, and responsibility. However, if teachers are using AI, they still need to be careful about their own security as well as that of their students.

Baskara (2023) asserted that postulating questions regarding privacy, bias and shaping values is necessary in incorporating AI into education. This shows that there must be discussions among educators, school heads and other stakeholders on the protections against using AI. Slimi and Carbadillo (2022) suggested research by universities on ethical implications, policy implications as well as social consequences for successful and responsible application of artificial intelligence. They emphasized transparency and accountability in conducting studies. For this reason, schools can adopt artificial intelligence methods with less risks or concerns involved. AI affects both professional development and student outcomes, replacing some human interaction in the classroom (Rizvi, 2023). This means that the teachers must be effective and efficient by doing their assigned task without jeopardizing their relationship with learners.

Considering these concerns that have emanated from various studies, it is crucial to examine the English teachers' experience in integrating AI into their practices as well as looking at the ethical factors that are associated with its usage. It was also aimed at responding to responsible consumption and production, a component of United Nation's sustainable development goals. Thus, this narrative inquiry explored the experiences of English teachers as they integrate artificial intelligence (AI) technologies into their classroom practices and the ethical considerations adhered to while using them.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Design

This qualitative study employed narrative inquiry to examine different perspectives and experiences related to English teachers' incorporation of AI within their pedagogical practices from a moral point of view. Consequently, Sondag et al. (2020) stated that a narrative framework is adopted for organizing and interpreting data to understand informants as humans through their experiences.

2.2. Research Informants

The informants were English teachers who have integrated tools (Artificial Intelligence) into their pedagogy. The criteria set were as follows: a) they must be English teachers with at least three years of teaching experience; b) teaching in either public or private schools at basic or higher levels; c) have incorporated at least 2-3 AI tools in their pedagogy. Table 1 below shows the summary of the informants' demographic profile.

Table 1 Research Informants' Demographic Profile

Research Informants	Sex	Educational Attainment	Years of Experience
Informant 1	F	MAED-Graduate	5
Informant 2	M	MAED-Graduate	7
Informant 3	M	MAED-Graduate	8
Informant 4	M	MAED-Graduate	5
Informant 5	F	MA-Ongoing	25
Informant 6	F	MAED-Graduate	15

Based on the criteria mentioned above, informants were carefully chosen using purposive sampling. Narrative interviews were done starting with at least 5 participants until data saturated. Data saturation happens when there is a replication of existing themes and no new insight or information is brought up (Hennink & Kaiser, 2021).

2.3. Research Instruments

The researchers, responsible for the collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data, were the study's main instrument. The researchers used a semi-structured interview guide, which was validated by an expert, to draw out the rich experiences of the informants as they integrated AI in their practices. The interview lasted for at least forty-five (45) minutes to an hour. It was done online via MS Teams. The researchers used the auto-transcription feature of MS Teams to conveniently transcribe all the interviews.

2.4. Data-gathering Procedure

Prior to the actual collection of data, a semi-structured interview guide was crafted and validated by experts. After validation, invitation letters together with the Informed Consent Form were sent out via Facebook Messenger. The informants were given considerable time to confirm their participation in this study. Upon confirmation, the

researchers asked the informants about their availability for the online interview via MS Teams. In the actual narrative interview, the informants were given a brief background on what the study was all about and were informed about the data handling measures that the researchers ought to observe. To build rapport, preliminary questions were asked to know how they were feeling. The informants were also given the freedom to use the language of their choice to express themselves fully. Each narrative interview lasted for at least 45 minutes to an hour.

After each round of interviews, the researchers transcribed the data collected. Audio recordings were safely stored via personal drive. These recordings were deleted once results were finalized to guarantee safe data handling and confidentiality.

2.5. Data Analysis

The study used Braun and Clarke's (2006) coding framework for thematic analysis. The six phases are the following: familiarization of data, generation of codes, combining codes into themes, reviewing themes, defining significant themes, and reporting of findings.

2.6. Ethical Considerations and Trustworthiness

The researchers went through the entire informed consent process and formally asked teachers to participate in the narrative interviews. The informants were given the assurance that personal and sensitive pieces of information collected were handled and kept with high confidentiality. Recordings and other files are to be deleted after the conduct of the study. The informants were also given a chance to withdraw their participation if they found any drawbacks. There is no known physical, psychological, social, or legal danger in this study. The researchers asked the informants about the interpretations of their statements to ensure that their experiences were accurately described. A reflexive journal was also used to note the researchers' biases about the topic. Transcripts were meticulously checked for obvious errors. Codes and themes generated were also checked and validated by an expert.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section explores the heart of the study, narrating the various experiences and perspectives of the informants on the integration of AI in their practices. Through these narrated experiences, the study aimed to deeply understand the realities, benefits, and challenges of teachers while using AI. The transformative power of AI has impacted the way educators do things in their everyday practices. Like pilots, they navigate the pedagogical skies of AI to continually seek innovation and professional development. In this study, the researchers brought to light 5 themes based on the codes extracted from the transcripts using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. The themes are classified as follows: The Edge: Navigating the Pedagogical Skies using AI, Turbulence Ahead: The Pitfalls of AI Overdependence, Mapping an Ethical Pathway in the Digital Skies, Teachers as AI Pilots: Mastering the Skies Together, and The Sky Ahead: Venturing the Future of AI. Figure 1 below shows the thematic map illustrating how these themes are connected. This thematic map was anchored on the 5 themes that emerged from the analysis. The visualization model took inspiration from a plane's journey, which exhibited the connections of each theme.

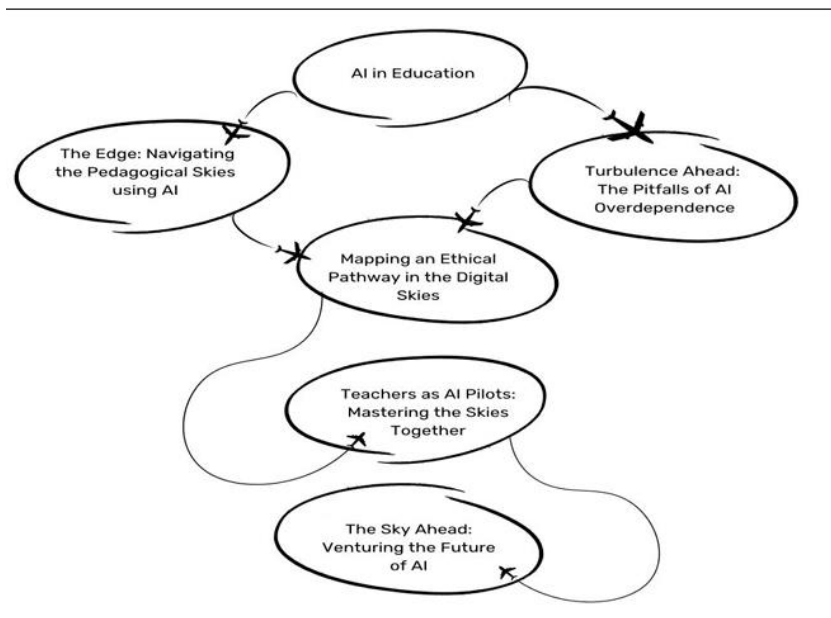


Fig. 1 Thematic Map

3.1. The Edge: Navigating the Pedagogical Skies using AI

This theme highlights the innovative ways in which AI has transformed teachers' pedagogical practices and focuses on AI's potential to assist teachers when it comes to personalizing instruction, analyzing data, making decisions, accessing various ideas and materials, assessing students' outputs and performance, etc. The teachers shared their experiences and insights on how AI has substantially helped them when it comes to lesson preparation and actual classroom instruction.

"It [AI] nourished my understanding of the topic, and it gives confidence in terms of how I would deliver it to my classes. So, I guess AI is helping me a lot in terms of my understanding of the topic." (Informant 2, page 1, lines 38-40)

Leveraging AI tools can aid teachers in gaining deeper insights from complex chunks of information, which also impacts how they convey concepts to their students. They can also enhance class engagement by using interactive AI-powered tools, which provide a more dynamic and immersive experience for the students. This implies that, through AI, teachers can create effective and inclusive classroom environments that meet the various needs of learners in the digital age. This claim is affirmed by Chica et al. (2023) as they stated that AI facilitates personalized learning by matching educational content to individual student's needs, which consequently enhances student comprehension and engagement and leads to a better learning outcome.

The informants also expressed that AI can be useful in creating assessments and checking various student outputs and even correspondence. It drives efficiency and time-

saving measures for teachers as these AI-powered tools can automate generating questions and identifying errors in written outputs. This implies that teachers' productivity might skyrocket considering that they can still allocate time for other important tasks or spend more time on lesson preparation and instruction. According to Chica et al. (2023), AI allows the automation of repetitive tasks, which paves the way for more time doing "meaningful learning experiences." Furthermore, this also significantly impacts quality assurance as AI can detect and correct errors. Hence, it contributes to maintaining the quality of work that teachers do and adhering to the standards set.

"When I edit their work, I always integrate AI, you know, for me to check and edit mechanical errors or errors in general, and it's faster. You can use AI to proofread or to check the projects, the letters or any documents you have made, but I make sure that it's only used for proofreading." (Informant 3, page 1, lines 27-40)

According to the informants, AI is also advantageous in terms of getting access to a wide array of ideas and resources. With just a click and the right prompt, teachers can explore hundreds or thousands of contents online. The high exposure to these materials fosters a deeper and wider understanding of various concepts. It can also spark the creativity and innovativeness of the teachers as they explore different trends, pedagogies, and other educational practices, promoting a culture of continuous learning and improvement. Moreover, Köprülü et al. (2023) stated that AI in teacher education enables continuous learning.

"Without AI, you're limited to only the texts that are in the box that you find in the different books that are given to you are the ones that are in the library. But now with AI, you can search as many different articles as there are and then you can vary the different genres. You can even shorten some of the texts that you think can be worked on by students." (Informant 5, page 7, lines 278-282)

In summary, AI offered some real benefits to teachers in their practices. It helped them craft personalized teaching materials, find resources easily, and automate some classroom tasks, which are all crucial to creating dynamic and engaging lessons and interactions in the classroom. Overall, AI empowered teachers to better their craft and meet the diverse needs of the students in this digital era.

3.2. Turbulence Ahead: The Pitfalls of AI Overdependence

Despite the many benefits AI has brought to education, some concerns come to surface due to the users' excessive dependence on it. Considering the convenience that AI offers, teachers, as well as students, have become prey, too. This theme explores concerns such as AI overdependence, loss of human touch, and biases.

"It's a different thing when they would just rely on the AI without actually doing their part. There's a little reminder of being responsible users of these tools." (Informant 1, page 1, lines 38-39)

Some users often misunderstand whether they are using AI out of necessity or dependency. There is a clear distinction between using AI to aid users complete some

tasks and totally relying on it to the extent of abusing AI and just letting it do everything for them. This situation suggests that teachers must strike a balance between efficiency and responsibility. They can leverage these available AI tools but should make sure that they are held accountable and should encourage their students to use AI responsibly, too. It calls for promoting digital literacy in the classroom. Kreinsen and Schulz (2023) emphasized the importance of AI literacy in teacher education because of the increasing technological advancements and accessibility to AI like ChatGPT.

In connection to overdependency on AI, the teachers also raised another concern about connectivity. The use of AI is dependent on the internet. If there's no internet, then it would be difficult to use AI. Some schools, especially those from remote areas, are struggling with slow to no internet connection. This has affected how teachers integrate AI in the classroom. It also means that teachers have less exposure to these AI tools and resources, which could eventually affect the quality of content and instruction. The study by Polak et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of "enhancing the teachers' AI-related skills to effectively integrate contents into the subject they are teaching."

"Not everybody has access to good Internet and at the same time the technology and then, as I've said, if teachers are not trained, then they might teach dependency on technology, which is also wrong because the AI tools have limitations to these were just created by, you know, people. And then they only process that's been inputted into their system." (Informant 5, pages 3-4, lines 132-135)

Another drawback of AI overdependence is the loss of human touch/tone and authenticity. An informant reported that AI's language has gradually affected their writing style. The more they are exposed to AI's language, the more they sound like AI. This poses several implications in terms of one's communication skills, creativity, and originality. First, higher exposure to AI could eventually weaken people's ability to communicate effectively in their own tone and voice because AI's language is too robotic. Humans do not communicate the way robots do. Humans are emotional beings. Robots are not. This could also result in a decrease in authenticity and rawness of communication. Second, overdependence on AI could also have a lasting effect on people's creativity in generating concepts or ideas. This claim is backed up by Sorin and Pagani (2022) when they stated that the decrease of novel ideas produced is a trade-off because of using AI. Even though AI helps with generating ideas, it could have an impact on originality and uniqueness.

Because I noticed it when we keep on reading AI or generated output, sometimes our way of writing also looks like that, so I was like...I wrote this line why it's captured as an AI... It's difficult now to humanize. (Informant 2, page 4, lines 166-168)

They also narrated an issue about biases and stereotypes because of the algorithms. Since it is programmed by humans, AI has biases, too. The language model that AI uses is based on the preferences of the developers. The data used to train an AI model may reflect gender and racial biases. Marinucci et al. (2022) claimed that stereotypes and biases, especially when it comes to gender, are common in both human thinking and artificial intelligence. It implies an impact on the content that teachers are delivering and would impact the students' learning later. This kind of biased content does not promote diversity and inclusion in education.

“Sometimes it has issues on the biases because of the algorithms. Perhaps, depending on who keeps on using or giving prompts, this prompts AI. It can have some biases to in terms of, let's say, race perhaps, or gender perhaps.” (Informant 5, page 4, lines 143-145)

Overall, AI in education brought up concerns about relying too heavily on it, which calls for training programs to better educate teachers on how to deal and leverage AI tools responsibly, without compromising the ethical standards. Additionally, connectivity issues, which led to limited accessibility to AI tools, along with bias issues, were the other concerns raised. To mitigate the impact of these issues, teachers can investigate some apparent biases in their teaching contents and strategies which kill off inclusivity and diversity in the classroom.

3.3. Mapping an Ethical Pathway in the Digital Skies

The great power of AI comes with a great responsibility among its users. This theme discusses the ethical aspects that teachers need to consider while using Artificial Intelligence. It explores fairness, accountability, and transparency in the decision-making processes while using AI. This theme also highlights the need for clear-cut guidelines to ensure that responsible AI use is observed.

“There's no clear-cut policy yet, but there was an initial survey that was circulating in our email. They're still trying to establish clear-cut guidelines on the use of AI.”
(Informant 6, page 4, lines 142-143)

This highlights that there are no established guidelines in their respective schools yet. Without these guidelines in place, there would be apparent confusion among teachers about what is really expected from them. They would be too subjective on what to do and what not to do when they use AI. This confusion would result in inconsistency in decision-making practices. Additionally, this paves the way for a higher chance of potential AI misuse. Ronanki (2023) revealed the inconsistencies in ethical guidelines used across various organizations. This suggests the need for a standardized ethical principle when using AI.

Another point worthy of discussion is whether teachers should allow or not allow students to use AI in the classroom, which has also implications for the teachers' ethical considerations. This suggests a more structured approach to using AI. This approach can be in the form of an agreement within a class - specifying the kind of AI to use, what time of the day they can use AI, and what kind of activities students are allowed to do. Doing this promotes accountability and transparency among teachers, as well as students. It also strengthens the culture of collaboration of thinking or decision-making because not only the teachers are involved but also the students.

“I allow them to use AI, but what I do is that I tell them when to use it and then I would also ask them as to what kind of AI you're going to use, and you must declare that to me. I guess the practice I do is that agreement... agreement as to what AI are they going to use and how far AI should be used.” (Informant 2, page 2, lines 45-47).

In connection to the discussion above, it suggests teachers set boundaries regarding the students' use of AI. It is a good practice to have better control in facilitating AI use in

the classroom. Yang et al. (2021) mentioned that teachers prefer sharing control with AI to minimize their workload facilitating in the classroom. This means that it has become a shared responsibility between the teacher and the students. Of course, it is also expected that students are guided and mentored well to minimize the risks of AI misuse.

"We have just so to limit students' dependency on the use of the gadgets or the AI tools. We set the limit. We set the boundaries so students can only use a certain kind of AI material or, you know, use their gadgets in." (Informant 5, page 8, lines 324-326)

Furthermore, the informants shared their decision-making procedures when it comes to using AI content or AI-supported content. They expressed that they only use AI as a scaffold to conceptualize, but they never totally rely on it in creating content. In other words, they use AI to enhance their content and not generate the entire content for them. This kind of practice preserves their creativity in the thinking process and their credibility as professionals. On the other hand, using AI alone for generating content poses risks for copyright issues. Cho (2022) stated that human and AI works are similar when it comes to copyright use. Additionally, the use of AI works entails considerations of copyright infringement judgments.

"I only use AI as you know as a scaffold or as a tool, but I never use AI like totally it's AI generated to uh with the things I need to make. I always make it sure that you know I get to have personal touch." (Informant 3, page 6, lines 255-258)

An informant also expressed their sentiment on promoting AI inclusivity. The narrative below underscores this.

"So now it becomes a challenge to a teacher how he or she will use the different AI tools to cater to all the needs of the students. But at the same time, it has to be inclusive, not exclusive. So it should not only be limited to those students who have their gadgets, but, you know, try the teacher has to try his or her best to and allow everybody in the classroom to take part in the activity, even if others do not have their gadgets." (Informant 5, page 3, lines 127-131)

The statement above places a responsibility among teachers in making AI inclusive. This means that teachers need to carefully integrate AI tools and content that meet the diverse needs of their students. They also need to consider factors like students' equipment, connectivity, and accessibility to these tools. They need to be mindful of their activities and strategies so that all students will be engaged (no student shall be left behind). In this case, teachers do away with bias and discrimination. Hence, they foster equity and fairness.

3.4. Teachers as AI Pilots: Mastering the Skies Together

As AI pilots, teachers have a critical role in propelling AI use in the teaching-learning processes. This theme accentuates the need for professional development, more training, and collaborative efforts among teachers and other stakeholders. It also emphasizes the role of teachers in this digital age. The informants expressed the following:

“Remember the principle that you are the master and AI is just basically a servant. AI will only give us opportunity to make our job easy, but AI cannot teach...cannot teach human in terms of in terms of, you know, socialization.” (Informant 2, page 3, lines 95-96).

“Teachers are irreplaceable since AI doesn’t have an emotion, but teachers have. With confidence, AI cannot replace totally the teachers. However, teachers should adapt.” (Informant 4, page 3, lines 108-110)

The narratives above suggest that teachers should gain control over AI use. It also implies that they must keep autonomy in the decision-making regarding their practices while using AI. No matter how fascinating AI is, it can never replace the teachers’ ability to make human-to-human connections, which AI is incapable of/lacks. Teachers can understand the complexities of human communication and behaviors, but AI cannot. AI teaches the mind, but a teacher touches the heart. According to Felix (2020), AI is not able to replace teachers because teachers have unique qualities that AI does not have. However, human teachers and AI can work well together to achieve a common goal. Human teachers just need to embrace the changes in the digital landscape with the help of AI. With this kind of collaboration, the quality of education in this digital age would prosper.

Aside from the human teacher and AI collaboration, teachers can also collaborate with other professionals to learn new strategies and best practices. This human-to-human collaboration can provide valuable insights to help enhance the teachers’ craft. Contextually, this is made possible through professional conversations, seminars, and training. As they say, more heads are better than one.

“We don’t use AI for show, we use AI for teaching enhancement. So, I think it’s important that teachers are, uh, constantly innovating themselves, and then at the same time, schools or administrations have to provide more trainings to the teachers.” (Informant 5, page 9, lines 375-377)

Teachers play a vital role in spearheading the integration of AI into education. To keep pace with the changes in the educational landscape, they need continuous professional development through workshops, collaboration with other teachers, and professional conversations. Through this, they can maximize the potential of AI while reducing some risks and maintaining autonomy.

3.5. The Sky Ahead: Venturing the Future of AI

AI’s ‘infiltration’ in the educational system is going places. It is to stay, and it will thrive even more. Teachers need to keep up with it, so they will not be left behind. However, the future of AI in education depends on how we use it today. This theme looks into the future of AI in education. It speculates on the reach of AI, and it explores the attitudes of teachers toward AI use in the years to come. Teachers need to have an open mind to embrace the constant changes in the educational landscape. Teachers should be willing to see AI as a friend, not an enemy. AI is not a rival but a collaborator. AI is a servant, not a master. AI is neither good nor bad the distinction depends on how we use it. The statements below highlight this:

“It really becomes a problem and maybe number one that we have to work on is the acceptance of our teachers, because the more that we refrain ourselves using

it, the more that we cannot guide our students so. Yeah. For me, for me, that's the entire point. I always tell them you cannot leave. You know, we cannot be like a blind leading another blind, so we need to really make ourselves ready for this." (Informant 2, page 6, lines 255-260)

The informants expressed that they need to keep up with the pace and maximize the benefits of AI instead of evading it.

"We have to be on the first line. We have to be the frontliners. We don't just let our students explore it and that's it and become better than us. So as a teacher, we need to be the first people to explore it and then help our students and guide them and direct them." (Informant 2, page 7, lines 268-270)

"I think AI is there to stay, and there are more AIs popping out. But the teachers always have to try them, you know, different ones, depending on what will work in your classroom. But it doesn't mean to say that you are an effective teacher if you can use that same more than 10 AI tools. It doesn't mean that way, regardless of how many AI tools you can use. I think the question there is how effective you can use this AI in your classroom so that you can maximize learning at the same time the learning of the students becomes meaningful." (Informant 5, page 9, lines 367-373)

To reap the maximum benefits from AI, it is important that teachers fully embrace and maximize using it to keep up with the emerging trends. As technology leaders, they need to actively explore and effectively integrate AI into their craft. Teachers need to be more proactive in looking for opportunities to integrate AI into their practice and adapt their pedagogy to the students' evolving needs. Aside from leveraging AI, teachers should also focus on the quality of their pedagogy rather than the quantity of AI tools used. This calls for carefully evaluating tools that work best for them and align best with the student's diverse needs. It also encourages teachers to embrace continuous learning in their profession.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The use of AI has significantly impacted the teachers' pedagogy - assisting them with lesson preparation and delivery. Through AI, teachers can personalize their lessons to cater to their students' diverse needs. In terms of productivity and efficiency, they can accomplish more important tasks as they can save time creating assessments and checking students' outputs. Since teachers have access to a wide array of teaching-learning resources and ideas, they can continuously learn, unlearn, and relearn some concepts, especially teaching strategies and practices. However, overdependence can lead to copyright infringement, loss of creativity, loss of human touch and connection, and some biases. To mitigate these ethical concerns, it is essential to set clear-cut guidelines on the use of AI to avoid uncertainties among users and set specific limits on how much AI is permissible. Furthermore, AI will not replace teachers. AI will continue to stay to aid teachers in their pedagogy. However, it is a challenge for teachers to keep up with the emerging technologies. Teachers need to embrace this digital era, so they will not be left behind. They can work together and grow professionally by sharing some best practices in integrating AI.

The study recommends that educational institutions may consider establishing guidelines and policies to promote responsible AI use. They can conduct training programs promoting

responsible AI use and digital literacy among teachers, students, and other stakeholders. Teachers are encouraged to look at AI as a collaborative tool, not something that will replace them. Teachers may leverage AI for productivity but still maintain responsible use. Teachers may continue to collaborate with other teachers and seek more opportunities for continuous professional growth. In terms of future research, continuous research on AI's impact on teaching-learning is highly encouraged to evaluate and refine the present guidelines in place. Further study on productivity and efficiency gains to quantify the amount time saved by teachers as they use AI in their tasks may be done.

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ENHANCING WRITING SKILLS OF ESP LEARNERS THROUGH BLOGGING: INSIGHTS FROM ENGINEERING STUDENTS

Sunanda M. Shinde¹, Mahesh B. Shinde²


¹D. Y. Patil College of Engineering and Technology, (Autonomous) Kolhapur, India

²KIT's College of Engineering (Autonomous), Kolhapur, India

ORCID iDs: Sunanda M. Shinde

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3078-0864>

Mahesh B. Shinde

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9767-5615>

Abstract. *The study explores students' perspectives on utilizing blogs as a supplementary tool for language learning activities within the classroom. Blogs serve as an easily accessible platform for students to sequentially publish their work, enabling online interactions and promoting independent learning, thus enhancing writing skills. The research assesses the integration of blogging into a Professional Communication/Business Communication course involving 250 first-year engineering students across two prestigious autonomous engineering institutes in Western Maharashtra. Participants were tasked with selecting topics of their choice and composing blogs during practical sessions. Analysis of collected data suggests that while students encountered difficulties, they generally held a positive outlook on the incorporation of blogs into their English learning journey.*

Key words: *Blog writing, ESP Learners, Writing Skills, Business Communication*

1. INTRODUCTION

Blogs, or weblogs, have been a familiar concept since the early days of the World Wide Web, with their emergence acknowledged by Winer (cited in Campbell 2004). These online writing spaces, easily editable and publicly publishable through web browsers (Zhang 2009), function as digital journals allowing individuals to independently share day-to-day experiences (Oravec 2002). Blood (2000) notes that the widespread use of blogs gained momentum around 1999, as the platform was developed to assist web users in various areas.

The traditional method of teaching languages through lectures is no longer sufficient. There exists a plethora of new technologies that can enhance the language learning experience for students, making it more interactive and engaging. These technologies aim to shift the focus from rote memorization to practical application, analysis, and comprehension of language concepts.

Among these innovative tools is the utilization of blogs. Blogs have revolutionized online interaction, evolving from mere platforms for reading to spaces where individuals

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Corresponding author: Sunanda M. Shinde, D. Y. Patil College of Engineering and Technology, (Autonomous) Kolhapur, India

E-mail: sunandagpatil@gmail.com

can freely express and share their ideas. Essentially, blogs serve as accessible online diaries, easily set up and navigated with just internet connectivity. This accessibility makes them an ideal medium for students to showcase their writing abilities to a global audience, akin to sending an email. Blog posts are typically arranged chronologically, with the latest entries displayed first, and can incorporate text, images, and hyperlinks to related websites, enriching the learning experience. A blog serves as a practical choice when there is a need for a platform to showcase students' work publicly or facilitate the sharing of experiences, opinions, or creative endeavours that highlight their learning achievements.

Mastering academic writing is a gradual process involving techniques like word choice, proper structure, and language skills (Pratiwi, K. D. 2016). Proficiency in English, crucial for EFL students, relies on honing writing abilities (Jones, S. J. 2006). To achieve this, students should engage in creative writing through methods like weblog practices, making the learning process engaging and exciting. The traditional or offline method of learning writing relies heavily on teacher feedback and may be less effective for a large student group.

On the other hand, the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) offers an alternative approach, potentially addressing the limitations of the traditional method by providing more comprehensive feedback and engagement opportunities for students. Advancements in learning include the adoption of weblogs as a tool in writing classes. The increasing popularity of weblogs among young students is attributed to the continuous improvement and progression of technology and modern lifestyles. Nowadays, students utilize weblogs for academic purposes, posting their writings on this platform.

2. USING TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION

The educational potential of blogs has garnered widespread recognition in academic circles due to their multimedia capabilities, user-friendly web publishing tools, interactive features, and capacity to facilitate collaborative and independent learning. Through blogs, users can engage with a global audience, read, and comment on other blogs, and reference external sources in their posts.

Numerous studies support the notion that blogs can effectively support language teaching and learning by enhancing learners' language complexity, grammatical accuracy, and fluency. Moreover, bloggers often feel more empowered to express their thoughts and construct arguments compared to traditional classroom settings. Blogs also broaden users' exposure to diverse perspectives and experiences, fostering a greater sense of interconnectedness.

Within educational settings, particularly in the realm of English language learning, blogs have gained popularity among both teachers and students (Noytim 2010). The appeal of blogging lies in its emphasis on sharing written content and engaging in discussions through comments (Oravec 2002). The creation of personal blogs proves to be a motivating endeavor for students, offering them the opportunity to publish content aligned with their interests. In this context, blogs enhance learners' engagement and sense of ownership by enabling them to independently author and search for information to include in their updates (Ferdig & Trammell 2004). Additionally, students have the flexibility to upload various types of data, including audio-video files, hyperlinks, visual content, and text data on their blogs (Du & Wagner 2007).

The integration of blogs in educational contexts and English language learning is a relatively recent development (Zhang 2009). Currently, there is limited research dedicated to the use of blogs in these areas, with experts in blog technology primarily providing insights into the functions and utilization of blogs while overlooking their educational advantages (Du & Wagner 2007). In the context of English language learning, the inclusion of blogs in course design has the potential to be an effective tool for language acquisition (Wu 2005). Consequently, this study specifically investigates the advantages of incorporating blogs into English language learning, as well as the challenges associated with blog authoring.

3. SIGNIFICANCE OF WRITING SKILLS IN ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) refers to a specialized approach in language education tailored to meet the linguistic needs and communication requirements of learners within specific professional or academic contexts. Its importance lies in providing targeted language instruction that equips individuals with the skills necessary for effective communication in their chosen fields, ensuring practical language use in professional or academic settings.

Writing is a primary mode of communication in various professional fields, such as academia, business, law, medicine, and engineering and technology. Developing strong writing skills ensures that professionals can convey their ideas clearly, concisely, and persuasively to their intended audience. Well-written documents reflect positively on an individual's professionalism and competence. Employers often value employees who can produce high-quality reports, proposals, emails, and other written materials tailored to specific purposes and audiences.

Writing for specific purposes requires attention to detail, accuracy, and precision. Whether drafting technical manuals, legal briefs, scientific research papers, or marketing materials, writers must convey information accurately to avoid misunderstandings or errors. Writing for specific purposes necessitates an understanding of the intended audience's needs, interests, and background knowledge. Tailoring the language, tone, and content to resonate with the target audience enhances the effectiveness of the communication. Different types of writing serve distinct purposes, such as informing, persuading, instructing, or entertaining. Developing writing skills for specific purposes involves mastering the conventions and techniques necessary to achieve these objectives effectively.

Proficiency in writing for specific purposes can enhance career opportunities and advancement prospects. Whether applying for jobs, seeking promotions, or pursuing entrepreneurial ventures, individuals with strong writing skills are better equipped to succeed in various professional contexts. English is widely used as a global language in business, academia, diplomacy, and other fields. Proficiency in writing English for specific purposes enables individuals to participate effectively in international communication and collaboration.

4. BLOG WRITING AS A TOOL FOR ENHANCING WRITING SKILLS

Writing blog posts regularly provides consistent practice, helping writers develop and refine their skills over time. The more often one writes, the more comfortable and proficient they become. Blogs often allow for reader comments and feedback, providing valuable insights into how an audience responds to the writer's style, tone, and content. Engaging with readers can help writers understand their strengths and areas for improvement.

Writing for a blog requires considering the interests and preferences of the target audience. This encourages writers to develop audience awareness and tailor their content to engage and resonate with specific readers. Blogging allows writers to explore a wide range of formats (e.g., listicles, how-to guides, opinion pieces) and topics, providing opportunities to experiment with different styles and voices. This diversity can help writers discover their strengths and preferences.

Learning about search engine optimization (SEO) and incorporating relevant keywords into blog posts can improve writers' understanding of how to structure content effectively and increase its visibility online. Blogging can serve as a platform for writers to showcase their work and build an online portfolio. Having a collection of well-written blog posts can demonstrate writing proficiency to potential employers, clients, or collaborators. Engaging with other bloggers and writers within the blogging community can provide opportunities for collaboration, feedback, and learning from peers. Networking within the blogging sphere can also lead to new connections and opportunities.

Blogging allows writers to express their ideas, opinions, and experiences in a creative and personal manner. This freedom of expression fosters creativity and encourages writers to develop their unique voice and style. Overall, blog writing offers a dynamic and interactive platform for writers to hone their skills, engage with audiences, and build a professional presence online. Through regular practice, feedback, and exploration, writers can improve their writing abilities and achieve their goals.

Utilizing blog writing as a tool for improving writing skills involves leveraging the interactive and dynamic nature of blogs to foster language proficiency. Blog writing encourages learners to express their thoughts, ideas, and analyses more informally and engagingly, thereby enhancing their overall writing abilities. Through this platform, students can receive feedback, engage in discussions, and refine their writing skills, making blog writing an effective and interactive approach to bolster proficiency in expressing ideas through written communication.

5. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Writing is considered one of the essential language skills alongside reading, speaking, and listening (Spratt, M., Pulverness, A., & Williams, M. 2005). Brown, H. D. (2001) emphasizes that writing involves thinking, drafting, and revising, requiring specialized skills such as setting goals, brainstorming ideas, organizing drafts, ensuring coherence, editing for grammar, and producing a final product.

Writing in FL is significant for improving creative and critical thinking skills. It promotes learners' thinking skills to use the language creatively, to express and organize their thoughts, and to improve their critical thinking skills (Rao, 2007).

Papalazarou, C. (2015) argues that creativity has an important role in culture and societal development; therefore, it should be incorporated into the process of language teaching and learning.

Alkhalidi (2019) maintains that creativity helps students to develop their thinking skills and language skills, creating new and different things that stimulate their creativity and motivate them to stretch their imaginative thinking.

Education aims to enhance students' critical thinking and problem-solving capabilities, which are crucial for skill development alongside acquiring content knowledge (K.W. Platts (2004)).

Anderson (2001) Bloom's taxonomy highlights those higher levels of learning entail activities such as application, analysis, evaluation, and creation, which involve active engagement and reflective thinking. Engaging students in small-scale projects enables better comprehension of content, fosters a deeper appreciation for the discipline, and yields optimal outcomes, particularly when these activities align with course material and are coupled with reflective exercises like directed writings, group collaboration, and class presentations.

These studies collectively highlight the potential of creative writing to complement traditional engineering education by fostering creativity, communication skills, and innovative thinking among students. They suggest that integrating creative writing into engineering curricula can produce well-rounded engineers capable of addressing complex challenges in both technical and humanistic dimensions.

The present research outlines the study conducted within language courses at engineering colleges in India, detailing the integration of blogs into the classroom environment. It discusses the study's methodology and explores how participants perceived the use of blogs to enhance language learning activities conducted in the classroom.

6. STUDY

The present study was carried out in two top autonomous engineering institutes from Kolhapur district in Maharashtra, India. These institutes are in the western region and affiliated to Shivaji University. The students admitted to these engineering colleges are from different parts of Maharashtra. Not all students have the same level of proficiency in English, especially in writing. Generally, students from urban areas, from convent, English medium background have better writing skills than those who are from rural areas, regional medium background. Students from English medium and convent backgrounds can complete written tasks properly on the other hand, vernacular medium students face many difficulties in writing thus, they hesitate to write. The present study aimed at encouraging all such students to write.

7. PARTICIPANTS

Using simple random sampling method, 250 (85 Female and 165 Male) first-year undergraduate engineering students from various branches such as Computer Science and Engineering (CSE)-Data Science, CSE-AIML, Mechanical Engineering, Chemical Engineering, and Computer Science and Business Systems were selected from the two select autonomous engineering institutes affiliated to Shivaji University, Maharashtra, India.

8. METHODOLOGY AND DATA SOURCES

Selected engineering students were given the task of blog writing as a part of their practical activities. Initially, the instructors (the researchers) explained the term blog writing to them. They were told the history of writing blogs, various types, and major

points to be considered while writing blogs. The instructors also demonstrated the students how to open an account on bloggers.com. They were encouraged to identify the areas of their interests on which they wish to write a blog and share their blogs with at least 3 of their friends and get comments. Also, each student was told to read at least three blogs of their friends and comment. A questionnaire was prepared and administered to check the perceptions of 250 selected students on writing blogs and its role in improving their writing skills. The purpose was to identify and quantify the areas in which students faced problems.

9. METHOD OF ANALYSIS

The questionnaire on blog writing to check students' perceptions was analyzed and studied. Retrospective interviews of selected students were analyzed to learn about their experience of writing blogs.

10. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The provided data (table 1) presents the results of a questionnaire or self-assessment regarding the impact of writing blogs on the participants' writing skills and motivation. The responses are presented in a structured format, with each statement (QN) followed by the frequency of agreement (SA, A) and disagreement (SD, D), represented in both absolute numbers and percentages. The responses indicate a generally positive impact of blogging on various aspects of writing, with most participants agreeing with statements such as improved carefulness about sentences, paragraphs, word choice, spelling, grammar, and the use of academic writing style. Additionally, there is a consensus that blogging has positively influenced motivation, creativity, imagination, and the reception of feedback on their writing.

Furthermore, the data suggests that blogging has led to increased attentiveness to various aspects of writing, such as sentence and paragraph structure, word choice, spelling, grammar, and academic writing style. Many participants also noted that blogging has enhanced their motivation and interactivity in writing, as well as their imagination skills. Additionally, the feedback loop, including comments from readers and teachers, has been identified as a significant source of motivation and improvement. The participants also expressed enthusiasm for incorporating multimedia elements, such as pictures and videos, in their blogs and sharing their work with friends and relatives.

Additionally, it indicates that blogging can motivate students to be more active and interactive in their writing, use academic writing style and vocabulary, carefully revise their arguments, and engage in creative writing. Furthermore, the data suggests that incorporating relevant pictures and links to videos in blogs, sharing blog links with friends and relatives, and receiving feedback from readers and teachers can all serve as motivating factors for students to write and publish more. Finally, the high percentage of participants recommending weblogs as a writing medium in writing classes further supports the potential benefits of incorporating this platform into the curriculum.

Table 1. Students' responses to the questionnaire

QN	Statements	SA,A	%	SD,D	%
01	Writing blog made me more careful about sentences and paragraphs.	235	94	15	6
02	Writing a blog made me check word choice and word spelling more carefully.	228	91.2	22	8.8
03	Writing blog made me check my grammar more carefully.	229	91.6	21	8.4
04	I enjoyed writing blogs for developing my writing skills.	231	92.4	19	7.6
05	I think that my argumentation and description in writing can be improved by blogging on the internet.	224	89.6	26	10.4
06	Blogging can improve the quality of my writing.	227	90.8	23	9.2
07	Writing blog motivated me to be more active and interactive in writing.	220	88	30	12
08	Writing blog made me use academic writing style, register, and vocabulary.	219	87.6	31	12.4
09	Writing blog made me carefully revise the way I present my argument.	219	87.6	31	12.4
10	I think creative writing like Blogs can improve my writing skills.	230	92	20	8
11	I think writing a blog can help me to improve my vocabulary.	223	89.2	27	10.8
12	I think blog writing has helped me to improve my imagination skills.	221	88.4	29	11.6
13	I think writing and publishing blogs on online platforms can be better than traditional ways of expression	212	84.8	38	15.2
14	I think inserting relevant pictures, and links to videos in blogs excites me to write more and publish.	221	88.4	29	11.6
15	I think sharing links of my blog with my friends and relatives encourages me to write and publish more.	222	88.8	28	11.2
16	I think when readers read and provide comments below my blog, I get motivated to write and publish more.	224	89.6	26	10.4
17	I think when the teacher reads my blog and provides suggestions, it helps me improve my writing.	231	92.4	19	7.6
18	I think doing creative writing on the Weblog has benefits to my writing skills.	223	89.2	27	10.8
19	This blog writing activity was very interesting.	223	89.2	27	10.8
20	I recommend Weblogs as a writing medium in writing classes.	214	85.6	36	14.4

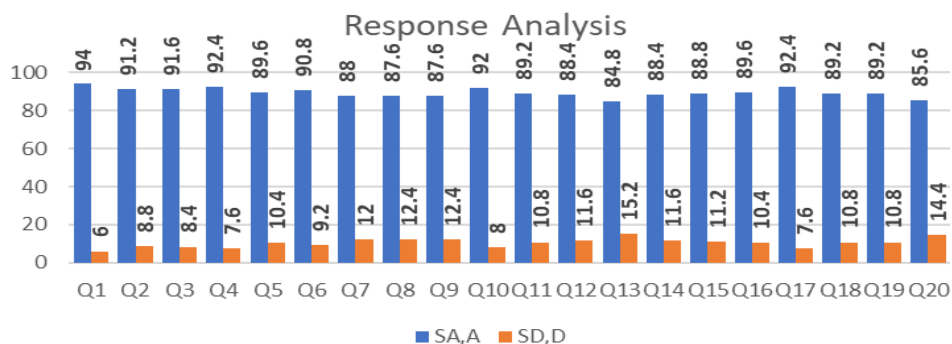


Fig. 1. Response analysis

11. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

In this study, the researchers offer insights into the pedagogical benefits of incorporating blogging into English language teaching and learning. The findings are based on feedback from 250 undergraduate engineering students in India who participated in structured blogging assignments. Results from a questionnaire reveal that students responded positively to the blogging activities. A majority enjoyed posting, reading classmates' posts, and receiving comments. Many students involved in the study expressed a desire to continue writing activities and reported high satisfaction with blog usage. Despite some drawbacks, such as those mentioned above, the study found that blogging experiences can enhance students' writing skills, particularly in grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation. Blogs were seen as encouraging, active and constructive participation among students, fostering independence while promoting collaborative learning.

They particularly appreciated feedback from peers and the teacher. Blogging's appeal lies in its global readership, instant publication, creation of e-portfolios, and interaction through comments. These features make it a valuable tool for enhancing language skills. Pedagogical relevance is crucial for motivating student engagement in blogging activities. Students may be more inclined to participate if they see a link between blogging and language proficiency or course grades. Educators should carefully consider the integration of blogs into course content and address issues such as topic assignments. However, there were some divergent views regarding the preference for traditional versus online expression and the use of weblogs in writing classes, indicating areas where further exploration and discussion may be beneficial. Further research is also needed to explore the impact of factors like gender, age, field of study, computer literacy, and learner personality on the blogging process and its potential contributions to language learning.

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