Reconnecting ELT Professionals for Glocal Sustainability

Thailand TESOL Conference Proceedings 2024

26–27 January 2024

The Association of English Teachers in Thailand (Thailand TESOL)

Established under the Patronage of Her Royal Highness Princess Galyani Vadhana Krom Luang Naradhiwas Rajanagarindra

THE ASSOCIATION OF ENGLISH TEACHERS IN THAILAND is a professional non-profit and non-political organization established under the patronage of H.R.H. Princess Galyani Vadhana Krom Luang Naradhiwas Rajanagarindra. Its purposes are to support English language teaching and learning at all levels, to act as one of the ELT professional organizations, and to strengthen networking with ELT organizations nationally and internationally.

THE ASSOCIATION OF ENGLISH TEACHERS IN THAILAND is an affiliate of the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL), located in Great Britain; JALT and JACET, located in Japan; Korea TESOL, KATE, ALAK, and AsiaTEFL, located in South Korea; PALT, located in the Philippines; ETA-ROC, located in Taiwan; TEFLIN, located in Indonesia; MELTA and PELLTA, located in Malaysia; CamTESOL, located in Cambodia, RELC, located in Singapore; *China Daily*, located in China; and NELTA, located in Nepal.

Thailand TESOL Conference Proceedings 2024 Team

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CONTENTS

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Notes from the President

As we bring the 43rd Thailand TESOL International Conference 2024 to a close, the event's informative presentations, discussions, and workshops, along with the presence of dedicated educators, still linger. In my capacity as President of The Association of English Language Teachers in Thailand or Thailand TESOL, I extend my greetings through the pages of our Conference Proceedings.

The conference was a notable event, gathering educators, scholars, and practitioners to engage in the shared pursuit of advancing English language teaching all around the world. I would also like to acknowledge the contributions of our sponsors, speakers, volunteers, and the organizing committee for their roles in delivering one of the successful conferences.

On behalf of Thailand TESOL, I congratulate all the authors whose papers are included in the e-Proceedings of the 43rd Thailand TESOL International Conference 2024, held under the theme "Reconnecting ELT Professionals for Glocal Sustainability" from January 26th to 27th, 2024. These papers underwent a thorough peer review, assessed by both local and international experts, ensuring they meet academic and research standards. The content covers important issues, presents discoveries, and offers theoretical and pedagogical insights relevant to English language teaching, with implications for educators, policymakers, and researchers worldwide.

I would also like to recognize our editors: Assistant Professor Dr. Wutthiphong Laoriandee, Assistant Professor Thanis Tangkitjaroenkun, and Assistant Professor Dr. Athip Thumvichit, for their expertise and effort in making this publication possible. For those interested in further dissemination, research papers can be submitted to our THAITESOL Journal, indexed by ERIC and TCI (Tier 2), which accepts high-quality submissions year-round.

Looking ahead, our next conference, themed "Exploring the New Frontiers of ELT for a Better Tomorrow: Innovative Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Assessment," will take place at The Swissotel Bangkok Ratchada Hotel from January 24th to 25th, 2025.

Thank you for your involvement in Thailand TESOL. We look forward to seeing you at future events.

With warm regards,

Thanakorn Thongprayoon, Ph.D., SFHEA
President, Thailand TESOL

Notes from the Editor

Thailand TESOL Conference Proceedings 2024 is the culmination of the 43rd Thailand TESOL International Conference 2024 in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The Proceedings features 20 papers that cover topics related to English linguistics, materials development, intercultural competence and CLIL among others. All the papers have an overarching aim of promoting the quality of English language education that can be applied in other contexts, not limited to Thailand, Japan, Korea, Vietnam and China, from which the contributors come.

As the editor of the Proceedings, I am delighted to see a wide range of papers in this collection. Having disseminated their research findings at the Conference, the authors of the papers in the Proceedings have gone beyond the verbal fleeting mode. More permanently, this eProceedings is hoped to have some advantages for the future decisions of ELT practitioners, researchers, administrators, and policymakers, whether it be a decision on the teaching approaches, materials, or school administration.

Enjoy reading!

Wutthiphong Laoriandee
Editor


REGIONAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE OFFICE
U.S. Embassy, Bangkok
BRITISH COUNCIL
Australian Government
Department of Education and Training
The 44th
Thailand TESOL
International Conference 2025
"Exploring the New Frontiers of ELT for a Better Tomorrow: Innovative Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Assessment"
SUB THEMES
We welcome and invite TESOL members worldwide to submit their abstracts including but not limited to the following:
Bilingual and multilingual education
CLIL/EMI
Curriculum and materials development
Global Englishes
Inclusive education
Innovation, technology and AI
ELT professional development
Intercultural communication
Language awareness and literature
Language testing and assessment
Literacy and 21st century skills
Localization and globalization
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Psychology for language teaching and learning
24-25 January 2025
Swissôtel Bangkok Ratchada
Bangkok, Thailand
IMPORTANT DATES
Aug 1 – Sep 30, 2024
Call for Abstracts (200-250 words)
Within 4 weeks after the submission
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Early-bird Registration of Speakers
Nov 16 – Dec 15, 2024
Regular Registration of Speakers
Oct 15 – Nov 30, 2024
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Dec 1, 2024 – Jan 23, 2025
Regular Registration of Participants
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THAITESOL Journal
Call for Papers

THAITESOL Journal is a semiannual, peer-reviewed, official, international journal of Thailand TESOL. It publishes research papers, review articles and book reviews on applied linguistics and language learning and teaching. The journal serves as a platform for the scholars in the field to present their works to those who are interested.

Preparation of Manuscripts

To be considered for publication, please prepare **1) a manuscript** that adheres to the guidelines below, and **2) a cover letter** comprising: the author's affiliation, mailing address, telephone number, and email address; and a short biodata.

Language and font:	Manuscripts must be in English. Use Times New Roman 11 point and 1.5 line spacing. Set all margins to 2.5 cm.
Length:	Research papers and review articles should be between 5,000 and 7,000 words (excluding references and appendices). Book reviews should not be longer than 2,000 words.
Title:	The title should be concise and informative.
Authors:	Give the full name of all authors and their complete addresses, as well as contact information for the corresponding author, complete mailing address, and e-mail address.
Abstract:	The abstract should not exceed 250 words, clearly summarizing the important findings of the paper. It should contain hard facts such as objectives, methods and major results.
Keywords:	Provide 4–6 keywords which help direct readers through the article.
Standard English:	Before submitting articles for consideration, authors are solely responsible for ensuring that their manuscripts have been thoroughly proofread and edited to achieve the appropriate standard of professional English. Thailand TESOL should not be expected to improve the quality of the writer's English. Manuscripts that do not meet this requirement will be rejected or returned to the authors for revision before the peer review process is undertaken.
Publishing ethics	All the work reported in the manuscript must be original and free from any kind of plagiarism. The work should not have been published elsewhere or submitted to any other journal(s) at the same time. Any potential conflict of interest must be clearly acknowledged. Proper acknowledgements to other work reported (individual/ company/ institution) must be given. Permission must be obtained from any content used from other sources.

	Only those who have made any substantial contribution to the interpretation or composition of the submitted work, should be listed as 'Authors'. While other contributors should be mentioned as 'co-authors'. The ethics statement for *THAITESOL Journal* is based on those by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) Code of Conduct guidelines available at www.publicationethics.org.

*** Submissions that have not followed the above requirements will not be considered.*

Declaration of Generative AI in the Writing Process*

Authors are allowed to only use generative artificial intelligence (AI) and AI-assisted technologies to improve readability and language. Authors must disclose the use of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process by adding a statement at the end of their manuscript before the References list. The statement should be placed in a new section entitled 'Declaration of Generative AI in the Writing Process'.

Statement: During the preparation of this work the author(s) used [NAME TOOL / SERVICE] in order to [REASON]. After using this tool/service, the author(s) reviewed and edited the content as needed and take(s) full responsibility for the content of the publication.

This declaration does not apply to the use of basic tools for checking grammar, spelling, references etc. If there is nothing to disclose, there is no need to add a statement.

**The guidelines are adapted from "Declaration of generative AI in scientific writing" by System*

Review Policy

Manuscripts will be firstly screened by the editorial team. If a manuscript is of insufficient quality, it may be rejected at this stage. However, if approved, it will be passed on to two more anonymous reviewers according to their expertise. The double-blind review process will be used. The editorial team reserves the right to accept or reject articles and unpublished manuscripts will not be returned.

Submission of Manuscripts:

Prospective contributors are required to **submit a manuscript and a cover letter** as Word documents at https://so05.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/thaitesoljournal/about/submissions

All papers will be peer-reviewed by two readers. For further inquiries, please contact:
Asst. Prof. Dr. Wutthiphong Laoriandee at journal.thaitesol@gmail.com

Production of an ELT Magazine, Korea TESOL's *The English Connection*: Duties as Editor-in-Chief

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Abstract

The English Connection is Korea TESOL's (KOTESOL) English language teaching magazine, published quarterly continuously since 1997. The magazine is one of the main benefits of KOTESOL membership, and provides a venue for Asian based English teachers to share their research and practical teaching tips in all areas related to Korean ELT, in a genre perhaps more accessible than the more academic Korea TESOL Journal. The author has had the distinct privilege of being *The English Connection's* Editor-in-Chief for the last five years, and as such has unique perspectives on its management and production. This article will first outline a magazine editor's general duties and general characteristics of a magazine. Details on KOTESOL's history as an organization and *The English Connection's* contribution and benefits to the association will then be presented. A practical examination of the production of *The English Connection* will follow, highlighting a breakdown of the various sections of the magazine and the responsibilities of the editor-in-chief during the three-month production cycle of an edition. It is hoped that this article will shed some light on the benefits an ELT magazine can contribute to a teaching association, as well as a breakdown in the processes and collaborative efforts required by the editor-in-chief for successful production and publication to occur. Furthermore, it is hoped this article can motivate other Asian ELT associations to consider starting or reviving their own ELT magazine or newsletter publications.

Keywords: Magazine production, Association benefits, English Language Teaching (ELT), Editor-in-chief

INTRODUCTION

Having served as the editor-in-chief of *The English Connection*, Korea TESOL's (KOTESOL) English Language Teaching (ELT) magazine for the past five years, this author possesses a distinctive insight into the management of a national organization's publication for its members. This article will delve into the core responsibilities, production process, and audience engagement within such a role. Initially, it will explore the overarching duties of editors-in-chief, which encompass planning future content, coordinating writer assignments, overseeing design and layout, and collaborating with fellow organizational leaders to ensure the editorial direction aligns with the association's objectives and voice. Next, the author will introduce *The English Connection*, discussing the history and benefits to KOTESOL's membership, followed by a breakdown of the magazine's sections and content. Next, the three-month production cycle, focusing on the editor-in-chief's planning, duties and correspondence, will be explained.

This article aims to illuminate the intricacies of ELT magazine production, offering readers a blueprint for replication. Furthermore, it presents an opportunity for other Asian ELT associations to consider initiating their own magazine and newsletter publications. Doing so could foster community expansion and enhance the cohesion of their association's academic readership.

Overview of Magazine Editors' Duties

Magazine editors, as communication specialists, orchestrate the planning, management, and production of magazines to engage readers effectively. Their multifaceted responsibilities encompass crafting editorial calendars, fostering story concepts, overseeing writers, refining content through meticulous editing, and orchestrating the production process through efficient task delegation (Peters, 2021).

The editor-in-chief collaborates closely with business, marketing, and sales departments to shape the magazine's editorial direction. They work in tandem with business executives to craft an editorial vision that resonates with the target audience, particularly if the magazine relies heavily on advertising revenue. While ensuring content quality is vital, their primary focus is on attracting and retaining a specific demographic to achieve the desired circulation. They communicate the organization's business objectives to other editors and writers, guiding the editorial calendar's planning process. Overall, the primary responsibility of an editor-in-chief is to cultivate an engaging audience, often prioritizing this over content quality. Generating story ideas, including topics and story ideas for articles and features, helps to keep readers engaged, informed and interested in the magazine (Indeed Editorial Team, 2023). This entails curating content that resonates with a particular demographic, particularly crucial if the magazine relies heavily on subscription revenue. However, the ultimate goal remains achieving the optimal circulation, ensuring the publication reaches the right audience while maintaining editorial standards (Milano, 2018).

Different from the editor-in-chief, the managing editor (referred to at *The English Connection* as assistant editors) oversees the magazine's workflow, meticulously organizing feature stories, columns, department pieces, and other editorial content. They assign articles, set deadlines, word counts, and payment rates, ensuring smooth operations throughout the production cycle. Additionally, managing editors handle artwork coordination, budgeting, and advertisement scheduling. They maintain close communication with editors, writers, and advertising staff to prevent delays and address any potential issues promptly, guaranteeing the timely delivery of content and advertising materials.

Characteristics of a Magazine

What defines a magazine as a magazine? Every magazine carries its distinct mission, vision, audience, and thematic focus, alongside its roster of contributors, production methods, and strategies for engaging readers. Despite these individual nuances, there are key characteristics that set magazines apart within the media landscape. When asked about what makes a magazine a magazine, the following attributes are cited.

Magazines follow a structured format. When you compare the latest issue of your preferred magazine with an earlier one, you'll notice differences in the specific stories, but the overall framework remains consistent. In publishing terms, magazines typically consist of: 1) cover pages, front-of-book content comprising columns (including editorials), letters to the editor, news, short trend pieces, and content focused on the publisher, 2) the features, housing two to five long-form articles that are thoroughly researched and creatively presented, and 3) back-of-book content, which may include interactive elements like quizzes or puzzles, along with product-focused content like reviews (Clark, 2021).

Magazines offer diversity in content. Imagine if every story had the same length and each issue followed the same organization and design — it would result in a dull reading experience. If the feature articles are the main courses, then columns, editorials, and spotlights are the appetizers, sides, and desserts. If any of these elements are overemphasized, the reader might end up feeling either underwhelmed or overwhelmed, leading to dissatisfaction. A well-balanced reading experience provides a blend of quick insights and in-depth explorations, offering both informed opinions and factual information.

Magazines have a distinct personality. The individuals behind these publications have invested considerable effort into crafting a unique voice, tone, editorial philosophy, or viewpoint — essentially, a personality for the brand. This voice often originates from the values of the organization or the personality of the editorial team.

History of KOTESOL and *The English Connection*

KOTESOL was established in 1992 as a professional organization for teachers in Korea. It is the largest multicultural association of teachers in Korea. "Our main goals are to assist members in their self-development and to improve ELT in Korea. KOTESOL allows teachers to connect with others in the ELT community and find teaching resources in Korea and abroad through KOTESOL publications, conferences and symposia, and chapter meetings and workshops" (KOTESOL, Who and What We Are, para 1). "Korea TESOL is a not-for-profit organization established to promote scholarship, disseminate information, and facilitate cross-cultural understanding among persons concerned with the teaching and learning of English in Korea. In pursuing these goals, KOTESOL shall cooperate in appropriate ways with other groups having similar concerns" (KOTESOL, Who and What We Are, para 3).

Access to *The English Connection* is one of several benefits of KOTESOL membership. Several other benefits include the *Korea TESOL Journal, KOTESOL (Conference) Proceedings*, and other scholarly and professional publications, a member's discount to all KOTESOL events, opportunities to present at conferences, publish in our journals, and apply for grants and awards, and professional recognition as a member of the leading multi-cultural ELT organization in Korea (KOTESOL, Who and What We Are, para 15–16).

The English Connection is a seasonal magazine, published four times a year (March 1, June 1, September 1, and December 1). It has been published continually since 1997. Issues of *The English Connection* are available to members as both hard copies mailed to the members' address, or available for download as a PDF from the KOTESOL website. As stated on the KOTESOL website, "*The English Connection* (TEC) is KOTESOL's quarterly news magazine, featuring scholarly and classroom-based articles as well as teaching tips and articles on working and living in Korea. All issues of *The English Connection* are provided as free access to KOTESOL members. (If you are logged in as a current dues-paying member, you will be able to view and access the links to the most recent issues. Access becomes open to all six months after publication). Past issues of TEC are available for download in PDF format. During its early years, 1997–2003, TEC was issued bimonthly" (KOTESOL, *The English Connection*, para 1–3).

Benefits of *The English Connection* to the KOTESOL organization

The English Connection offers members a professional publication for publishing their various ELT research, especially those with practical classroom applications and reference to the Korean context. This could be in the areas of ELT research and studies, practical teaching tips, ideas on lesson plans and syllabus design, student motivations and interactions, or other related areas concerned with Korean ELT and English learning. Submissions can typically be in the form of articles, columns, book reviews, editorials, reviews on conference or presentation attendance, or photo documentaries.

Having a magazine for an association can yield several benefits, as seen in Figure 1 below. First is enhanced communication. Magazines serve as a valuable communication tool, allowing associations to disseminate information, updates, and insights to their members in a structured and engaging format. Second is community building. Magazines foster a sense of community among association members by providing a platform for them to share experiences, ideas, and best practices. This sense of belonging can strengthen member engagement and loyalty. Third is sharing knowledge. Magazines offer a medium for associations to share knowledge, research findings, and industry trends relevant to their field. This promotes professional development and facilitates the exchange of ideas among members.

Fourth is visibility and branding. A magazine can elevate an association's visibility within its industry or profession. By showcasing its expertise, achievements, and contributions, the association can enhance its reputation and brand recognition. Next is member engagement. A well-curated magazine can attract and retain members by offering valuable content that meets their needs and interests. Engaging articles, interviews, and features can keep members informed and connected to the association. Magazines can serve as a revenue stream for associations through advertising, sponsorships, and subscriptions. This additional income can support the association's activities and initiatives. And finally, advocacy and influence. Magazines provide a platform for associations to advocate for their members' interests, address industry challenges, and promote positive change within their field. This can help position the association as a thought leader and influencer (Waters, 2023). Overall, a magazine can be a powerful tool for associations to communicate, engage, and strengthen their community while advancing their mission and objectives.

1. enhanced communication
2. community building
3. sharing knowledge
4. visibility and branding
5. member engagement
6. revenue stream
7. advocacy and influence

Figure 1 Benefits of a Magazine for an Association

***The English Connection* and its Structured Sections**

As stated, an adherence to structure serves the fundamental purpose of providing continuity. Both readers and magazine producers find comfort in this predictability. And as Editor-in-Chief of *The English Connection*, this writer cannot stress enough the fact that magazine production will be greatly eased by knowing that the various sections will stay the same, providing the familiar boundaries and a consistent experience. Having to constantly reinvent the magazine's framework would be exhausting, and to have the canvas prefab so to speak, allows for the editor's energies to be better directed at the creativity and editorial focuses needed.

The various sections of a normal issue of *The English Connection* can be seen in Figure 2 below. Each section will then be discussed in terms of its content and production requirements and editors' responsibilities.

Front cover (p. 1)
Masthead (p. 2)
Contents (p. 3)
Editorial (p. 4)
President's Message (p. 5)
Articles, Interviews, News (pp. 6-25)
Member Spotlight (pp. 26-27)
Columns (pp. 28-31)
Back cover (p. 32)

Figure 2 Sections of *The English Connection* (with Page Number in Parenthesis)

The front cover is the eye-catching first impression of the magazine. Its creation allows the editor a creative artistic voice that perhaps illustrates the edition's special academic theme or seasonal imagery. The consistent necessities include the banner "The English Connection" and the issue date, volume and issue number. Cover text provides a preview into the edition's main contributing content, which is generally broken down into Articles, Interviews, Member Spotlight and Columns. The association logo and QR code are proved for recognizability and searchability. With these necessities in mind, the editor then has the freedom to visualize and search out artwork imagery suitable for the front cover, oftentimes in terms of seasonal and Korean themed imagery. Local artists and photographers have often been searched out and solicited, and responses have been overwhelmingly positive over the years, with artists being very appreciated at being given the chance to display their work with such a broad audience. The editor also is aware of the growing popularity of AI created imagery, and has worked together with local AI artists to produce more targeted images. The four front covers of *The English Connection* for 2023 can be seen in Image 1 below.

Image 1 The Four *The English Connection* Front Covers of 2023

The masthead is on the second page, inside the front cover. The following are the possible elements to include in a masthead: title of the publication; the publication logo; names of the editorial staff: publisher, editors, contributors, designers, and other staff responsible for creating the publication; ownership and contact information, such as an address and phone number; publication information such as the date and location of the publication, as well as the volume and issue numbers for periodicals; subscription information and details on obtaining copies of the newsletter or unsubscribing from the mailing list; information on how to submit material for the magazine (PublishDrive, 2024). Overall, a masthead provides essential information about the publication, including details mentioned earlier. It acts as a resource for readers and helps establish the publication's identity and the credibility of its editorial team. Additionally, it proves valuable when the publication is seeking advertisers, contributors, or paid subscribers.

In addition to the above elements, *The English Connection*'s masthead contains photo and image credits, submission deadline for the following edition, as well as a copyright message and the magazine's ISSN number. The contents page is the magazine's table of contents. It provided titles, writer's names and page numbers of the content, as well as referential photos and imagery for attractive illustration. The editorial is next, page 4, written by the editor-in-chief. This is generally a single page, 800–900 words, allowing the writer to share an opinion educated by academic topics of the day. As explained by Clementson (2024), magazine editorials, essential to print and digital media, influence public opinion and stimulate thought on key issues through carefully curated insights and analysis. These pieces reflect the publication's perspective, shaping the discourse on topics significant to their readership. As one of the biggest freedoms and privileges of the editor-in-chief's duties, this writer has enjoyed sharing his opinions and ELT related thoughts with *The English Connection* readers.

Page 5 is the President's Message, allowing the KOTESOL President a chance to voice his or her impressions on the current state of the organization, with regards to a bit of review and preview of current events and happenings, along with opportunities and optimistic unity.

Images of examples of these first four inner pages of *The English Connection* can be seen in Image 2 below.

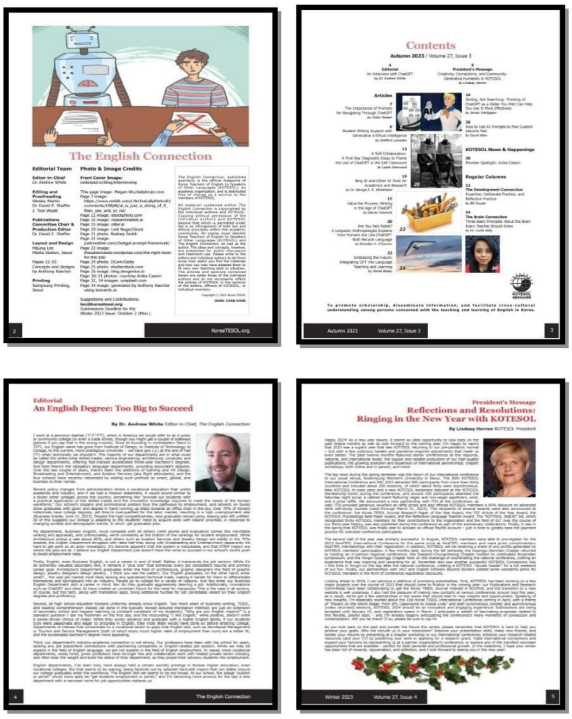


Image 2 Examples of Masthead, Contents, Editorial and President's Message Pages

With these first five pages of standard front matter now reviewed, the main content of *The English Connection* can be discussed — that of the articles, interviews, book reviews, and various organization chapter activities. This section can of course vary tremendously, but generally consists of 19–20 of the 32 pages in a regular edition (or 60% of the magazine). Articles create the main content for *The English Connection*, typically seven to 10 per issue. The standard length of an article is two to four pages (1500–3500 words). Articles arrive to the editor-in-chief typically in one of two ways: 1) a prospective contributor sends in a submission, and 2) the editor-in-chief solicits a potential writer, asking for a submission. The two regular columnists for *The English Connection* provide an established and additional four pages of content per issue.

In her 2015 piece for *The Atlantic*, esteemed writer Joy Lanzendorfer made two intriguing points. Firstly, she highlighted that the average published story often faces rejection around 20 times before finding its place; secondly, she noted that slush pile submissions typically only make up 1–2% of published works. In essence, the majority of content in literary circles tends to stem from personal connections or established recognition within the writing community. Despite the daunting rejection statistics and the persistence required for a story to land in a magazine, this underscores the significance of active participation within the writing community. Editors frequently seek submissions from familiar faces. To become familiar, one must engage actively within the literary community (Pueschel, 2023, para 4).

Publication in *The English Connection* is not nearly so daunting as perceived above. Success rates for prospective submissions would be estimated at roughly 80%, while articles from editor solicitations would be near 100% publication success. Despite perceived rejection statistics of typically reviewed academic publications, *The English Connection* just doesn't receive a large amount of submissions, on a rolling basis or quarterly deadline, and thus editors work closely with contributors to ensure their articles achieve higher quality standards. KOTESOL membership is not required for publications, and indeed it is estimated roughly 50% of article content is contributed by non-KOTESOL members, either by prospective submission or editor solicitation. As the editor-in-chief plans ahead and foresees the next edition's content, a dearth of submissions and thus article content will pressure him to envision and create a special themed edition on some aspect of ELT. This extrinsic motivation allows him to seek out potential contributors, those being experts in the desired field, and therefore solicited for article contributions. This will be explained in more detail in the following section.

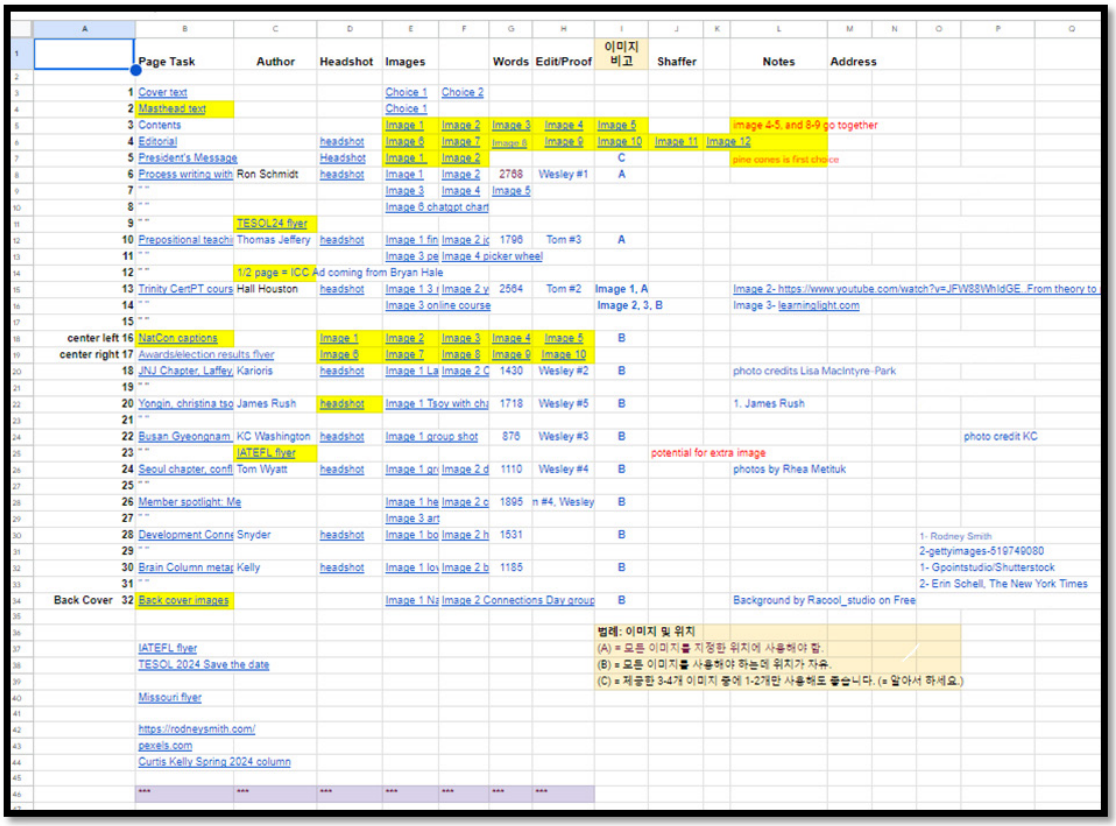
The Three-Month Production Cycle

In this section the three-month production cycle will be discussed by the author. The editor-in-chief's duties in each of the three months of the magazine's production cycle are vast and varied, so an examination and explanation is warranted. As mentioned above, the three-month production cycles in one year consist of the Spring edition (December through February, with a March 1st release date), Summer edition, (March through May, with a June 1st release date), Autumn edition (June through August, with a September 1st release date), and Winter edition (September through November, with a December 1st release date). It is hoped that by providing clarity to these various duties, other associations and possible editors will have better understanding to the process, and thus potentially be more motivated to perhaps initiate and begin the production of their own association's ELT magazine, for the betterment of their association in general as the benefits of such were mentioned in a prior section.

Month One. The very first steps in planning for the upcoming edition is to foresee what articles are available, or potentially coming in for submission in the near future. Preparing the content is the number one duty on the editor's plate, as it pertains to roughly 20 or so of the 32 pages (60%) in a normal edition. While the standard font matter is fixed, as is presumably the regular columnists, the irregular intake of submissions for general articles must be foreseen and projected, to ensure this content is received in the appropriate time to ensure inclusion. When planning for the upcoming submissions, it is of course important to determine the content that will appeal to the target audience. The target

audience for KOTESOL is already determined, of course, with the specific niche being written and published for. It is important, however, to take this step if the magazine is a concept or in the very early stages. There's a big difference between producing a magazine for an existing readership and creating one from scratch for a potential readership (Brown, 2024). After initial assessment of the current amount of submissions available, the editor can decide if the submission amount is large enough, and meets the editorial standards for the magazine, criteria for example being suitability to the ELT theme of the association, timeliness, being well-written and of suitable length, and of interest and use to KOTESOL members and its application to classroom practices. If submission numbers are low, on the other hand, the editor should quite likely plan on soliciting the KOTESOL membership or outside community for articles. This can either be a request for regular articles, or the opportunity of creating a special themed edition of *The English Connection* arises. In this case, the editor-in-chief can create a theme for the next edition, and thus target specialists and experts in this field for submission and inclusion. The editor has found this technique to be very satisfying, with the additional motivations of reaching out and contacting national and international experts, and the responses have generally been quite welcoming and supportive. In any case, submission guidelines can be explained, and deadlines for submission are set.

Month Two. In the second month of *The English Connection* production, deadlines are reached and the editor has a solid idea of what articles have been submitted, or still outstanding and near submission by the contributor. The editor now enters the editorial and proofreading stages of production, often with supportive back and forth communication with the writer. After submission decisions have been finalized, assistant editors are given the task of reading, editing and offering comments to the submissions. *The English Connection* is not a blind, peer reviewed publication, but rather could be described as having a supportive and collaborative acceptance of article submissions. Editors work together with writers, if needed, offering suggestions on content, readability, flow, usefulness and informative, and grammatical proofing, to name a few. Editors react quite positively to a supportive and open response from writers, in rewriting and editing their articles if needed, as we work together to improve the articles for inclusion in the upcoming edition. It is in the second month that the editor-in-chief attends to and writes their editorial for the edition, allowing for a certain freedom of expression and a viewpoint towards a chosen topic of aspect pertaining to Korean EFT. This has proven to be a singular benefit and outlet for academic writing for the editor, having such a voice with a large membership reach. In addition to articles being edited, the editor-in-chief also attends to the visual illustrations, charts and images accompanying each article. Articles and images are plotted and laid out on a spreadsheet, with an attention to article length and word count, and the amount of pages it will require. An example of an edition's spreadsheet can be seen in Image 3 below.



		Page Task	Author	Headshot	Images		Words	Edit/Proof	이미지 비고	Shaffer	Notes	Address
	1	Cover text			Choice 1	Choice 2						
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	4	Editorial		headshot	Image 6	Image 7	Image 8	Image 9	Image 10	Image 11	Image 12	
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범례: 이미지 및 위치
(A) = 모든 이미지를 지정한 위치에 사용해야 함.
(B) = 모든 이미지를 사용해야 하는데 위치가 자유.
(C) = 제공한 3-4개 이미지 중에 1-2개만 사용해도 좋습니다. (= 알아서 하세요.)

IATEFL flyer
TESOL 2024 Save the date

Missouri flyer

https://rodneysmith.com/
pexels.com
Curtis Kelly Spring 2024 column

Image 3 An *The English Connection* Edition's Spreadsheet Showing Page Layout

Month Three. At the end of the second month of *The English Connection* production, the spreadsheet is outsourced and sent to a layout design professional, who applies the spreadsheet's plotted links on to a 32 page magazine edition. Images should be balanced with text to create a symmetry in the layout. The magazine templates and creative designs are what brings out the visual appeal and additional reader interest in the magazine's content. As these proofs are received back to the editor-in-chief and assistant editors, they are edited and commented on for errors and visual imbalances. These comments can be related to typos, spacing and tab issues, word count length and fitting the page, caption referencing, and any number of stylistic and AP Stylebook inconsistencies. The number of proofs being sent back and forth between editors and layout design can be many, up to 10, as editors strive for a symmetric design free of errors. When this has been achieved, the editor-in-chief signs off on the edition, it is then put up as a PDF on the KOTESOL website on the first day of the following month, in its *The English Connection* site, under Publications. This PDF version offers many benefits to members, including accessing a wider audience, greater member value, archiving with ease and accuracy, and increased membership engagement (Bonotom Studio, 2024). It is then sent to the printers for printing. While many members opt out of hard copy versions (roughly 40%), 450–500 copies are printed of *The English Connection*, depending on current membership numbers, and then mailed out to members in the following weeks. This hybrid approach of digital and print is thought of as best, in that it provides more flexibility in the way the KOTESOL readership likes to read and archive the magazine and its content (The YGS Group, 2021).

CONCLUSION

As the incumbent editor-in-chief of *The English Connection*, KOTESOL's ELT magazine, for the last five years, this author possesses a unique perspective on the administration of a national organization's periodical catering to its English teaching members. This article has endeavored to scrutinize the

fundamental responsibilities, procedural intricacies, and strategies for audience engagement inherent to such a pivotal role. Primarily, it has discussed the overarching obligations assigned to editors-in-chief, encompassing the strategic curation of future content, the gathering of submitters' assignments, and the supervision of design and layout elements. This editorial direction has been done with the overarching objectives and ethos of the association through collaboration with other organizational stakeholders. Subsequently, the author has expounded upon the historical evolution of *The English Connection* and the advantages it offers to KOTESOL's membership, followed by a comprehensive analysis of its thematic segments and substantive content. Moreover, the editorial process, unfolding over a three-month production cycle, has been reviewed, emphasizing the planning, administrative duties, and correspondence entailed by the editor-in-chief's role.

It is hoped that this article has helped to make clearer the complexities intrinsic to ELT magazine production, aiming to furnish readers with a template conducive to replication. Furthermore, it may create a motivation for ELT associations across Asia to contemplate the initiation of their own magazine and newsletter publications, as such endeavors hold the potential to foster community proliferation and strengthen the coherence of their academic readership and association membership.

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From a Homemaker to a Train Conductor: Examining Female Representation in High School English Textbooks in the Japanese EFL

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Abstract

One of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasizes equity and equality across all genders, transcending the traditional male-female binary within the framework of our global society. Given the pivotal role of English in fostering mutual understanding and establishing a common language worldwide, a critical examination of gender representation in English textbooks is essential. This study entails a comparative analysis of the portrayal of females in Japanese high school English textbooks, comparing those issued in the 2000s with those issued in the academic years of 2017 and 2023. This study is grounded in the theoretical framework of unconscious bias. A dataset comprising 30 textbooks, representing 70% of those utilized by first-grade high school students nationwide, delves into gender ratios among characters and evolving depictions of women over time. Findings from the 2023 textbooks revealed an examination of 99 male characters (56%) and 73 female characters (41%). While this highlights a numerical gender imbalance, it signals a substantial improvement in gender representation compared with past textbook editions. The emergence of diverse female representation has been examined in various professions, breaking away from traditional gender roles. Despite these positive shifts, this study highlights the persistent binary gender structure entrenched in Japanese textbooks. This structure overlooks the presence of sexual minorities, including LGBTQ+ individuals, and the broader sexual minority movement. Consequently, there is a critical need for more inclusive representation that transcends conventional gender norms and embraces the diversity of identities in educational materials.

Keywords: Representation of women in textbooks, Gender, Unconscious bias

INTRODUCTION

Connell and Pearse (2015) mention that gender is not limited to the traditional binary distinction between biologically defined males and females but rather encompasses the relationships and positioning of individuals and groups within society. However, prevailing societal expectations and fixed norms regarding ideal role models for men and women have persisted in various phases of our daily lives and are deeply rooted in cultural norms. Banaji (2013) described unconscious bias as distortions and deviations in the perception and interpretation of individuals who are unaware. It involves automatic cognitive processes based on one's past experiences, knowledge, values, and beliefs, manifesting as casual remarks or behaviors. People often engage in these cognitive judgments without conscious awareness, making it difficult for them to recognize the biases and distortions present in their thinking and actions. In textbook making processes, authors tend to avoid topics that may give rise to prejudice or discrimination. However, when applying unconscious bias, it often manifests automatically and may not be evident in the textbook's core message or content. Instead, they tend to manifest as subtle descriptions or expressions. Although our investigation did not reveal previous studies that specifically focused on textbook analysis in the context of unconscious bias, research on gender studies in school textbooks has been actively pursued. The following section provides an overview of the literature.

LITERATURE REVIEW

An analysis of gender representation in almost all textbooks revealed a common trend: females have fewer appearances than males, and women are portrayed as engaging in traditional gender roles, predominantly household chores and childcare. This tendency transcends specific major subjects and extends beyond history and literature to various disciplines. For instance, Elgar (2004) investigated illustrations and photo descriptions in science textbooks, revealing a bias in which males were predominantly depicted as conducting scientific experiments. By contrast, topics related to pregnancy, childcare, and reproductive genetics featured more female representations. Examining pictures and illustrations in physical education textbooks, Táboas-Pais and Rey-Cao (2012) reported that males were depicted more frequently than females. Competitive and outdoor sports often involve males, whereas graceful dances and light physical activities are associated with females. Regarding conventional gender inequality and stereotypical descriptions in textbooks, Mustapha et al. (2012) highlighted that recent textbooks still contain numerous depictions that reinforce fixed gender roles and stereotypes such as males are engaged in work, females are engaged in childcare and housework. In the analysis of English textbooks, studies have focused on textbooks used for second language acquisition by U.S. immigrants since the early 1970s. Considering the global use of English as a common language, the research has expanded to include textbooks used in both peripheral and expanding countries. Five key characteristics emerged from the gender analysis of English textbooks.

1. Males being the primary protagonists (with fewer female appearances)
2. Depictions of females engaging in household and childcare roles
3. Use of words containing “man” (e.g., salesman, human)
4. Use of titles determined by marital status (e.g., Miss, Mrs.)
5. Male preference in mixed-gender scenarios (e.g., he or she, Mr. or Ms.)

Sakita’s (1995) analysis of Japanese high school English textbooks revealed an increase in the dominance of male characters as difficulty levels and grades progressed. Matsuno (2002) qualitatively analyzed six volumes of the radio English conversation textbook “Gentle Business English,” noting descriptions that evoked a fixed image of women in Japanese society. In the past, word-counting methods in textbook research were mostly manual; however, around 2010, computer-assisted analysis became more prevalent. Yang (2012) analyzed English textbooks in Hong Kong primary schools, reporting higher frequencies of “he” than “she” and identifying gender-based differentiation in verbs and adjectives. Suezawa (2018a) compared high school textbooks from Japan, Korea, and China and observed that while Korean textbooks portrayed numerous female characters, traditional gender role divisions persisted. Chinese textbooks often used adjectives like “rich” and “brave” for males but not females. Japanese and Korean textbooks used terms like “aged” and “young” for females but not males, reinforcing stereotypes. Lee’s (2014) analysis of four Japanese high school English textbooks indicated a significant male bias, with adjectives such as “rich,” “strong,” and “tough-looking” often co-occurring with male nouns. Conversely, adjectives related to appearance, age, and emotions are associated with female nouns. Suezawa (2018b) examined 11 Communication English 1 textbooks in public high schools and found a male-centric composition with females appearing more frequently in only one textbook. The study also noted the prevalence of male figures in textbooks. While gender is acknowledged to extend beyond the binary opposition of males and females, current research has not yet fully escaped this framework. Therefore, this study investigated the following research questions:

RQ1: Did the construction of the binary between male and female change in the latest Japanese English textbooks?

RQ2: How have the roles of women and gender evolved compared with past English textbooks?

METHODOLOGY

Currently, 31 types of high school English textbooks are published by 13 companies in Japan. In this study, the author analyzed the latest textbooks published in 2023, by four major publishers that collectively represent an adoption rate of approximately 70% of the market share. The comparison included 30 textbooks in total: those published in 1990 and the early 2000s, as well as those issued in 2017, to confirm how females were displayed over the years. Table 1 shows the titles of the textbooks used in this study. First, characters appearing in textbooks were quantitatively categorized based on their respective genders. Characters corresponding to LGBTQ+ people were classified into this category. In cases where only the occupation, such as doctor or student, is mentioned, they are categorized as unknown. Subsequently, a quantitative analysis of real individuals or well-known figures, such as politicians and sports players, will be conducted based on gender. Finally, qualitative analysis was conducted to examine the representations and portrayals of female characters in the textbooks. This analysis aimed to explore how gender is displayed in the latest English textbooks in Japan and how gender norms have been depicted and changed.

Table 1
The title of English textbooks examined in this research

2000s	2017	2023
Tomorrow	CROWN	CROWN
New Scope 1 Second edition	VISTA	VISTA
UNICORN	MY WAY	MY WAY
APRICOT	All aboard	All aboard
CROWN	Power On	Power On
Orbit	PROMINENCE	ENRICH LEARNING
Evergreen Reading	POLESTAR	BLUE MARBLE
The New Age English	BIG DIPPER	BIG DIPPER
MILESTONE	COMET	COMET
ACORN English Course Ⅰ	ELEMENT	ELEMENT

RESULTS

As evident in Tables 2 and 3, a remarkable increase in the presence and appearance of female characters was observed. However, as indicated in RQ1, gender diversity equivalent to LGBTQ+ was not identified. The results are summarized in Table 4. The social attributes and occupations of females were examined. Compared to past editions of textbooks, the analysis reveals not only an increase in the representation of real female characters in terms of numbers but also a diversification in their occupations and social attributes. Historically, educational materials have primarily featured figures associated with significant historical achievements or professional sports, making them less familiar to learners. However, in the latest 2023 editions, a notable shift is evident. In addition to a variety of professions, women are now portrayed in roles traditionally dominated by men, such as professional athletes, railway drivers, and traditional storytellers. This proactive representation underscores the active involvement of women as societal contributors and advancers, challenging and reshaping traditional gender-fixed occupational norms.

Table 2
The number of characters by gender-specific attribution

	2000s	2017	2023
Female	102 (35.9%)	47 (26.0%)	73 (41.2%)
Male	174 (61.3%)	134 (74.0%)	99 (56.0%)
Unknown	8 (2.8%)	0	5 (2.8%)
LGBTQ+	0	0	0
Total	**284**	**181**	**177**

Table 3
The number of well-known figures and real individuals in textbooks

	2000s	2017	2023
Female	3 (25.0%)	8 (27.6%)	25 (32.5%)
Male	9 (75.0%)	21 (72.4%)	52 (67.5%)
Total	**12**	**29**	**77**

Table 4
The social attributes and occupations of real female individuals in textbooks

2000s	**UNICEF ambassador (actress), politician, professional tennis player**
2017	adventurer (in 2 textbooks), human rights activist (in 2 textbooks) scholar, author (in 2 textbooks), interpreter
2023	environmental activist, facility-dog handler, elementary school student, a little girl, nurse, smoothie truck attendant, Yakushima guide, dog handler, sport climber, photographer, railway driver (in two books), organizing consultant, animal behaviorist, anti-war activist, Queen of England, Japanese fairy tale writer, teacher, journalist, author, Princess of Wales, journalist, environmental conservation activist, traditional storyteller performer, peace activist

As indicated in RQ2, the following presents the results regarding gender representation in the descriptions of women in textbooks. The representation of women in the textbooks varied significantly across the three temporal sequences. In textbooks of the 2000s, the perspectives of textbook creators on gender roles and discussions on gender inequality are prominently highlighted. For instance, the story of a female professional tennis player deeply portrays how she overcame despair by accepting a proposal for marriage from a man after her tennis career was ruined because of an injury. In essence, marriage is depicted as an escape from difficult situations, with a focus on dedicating oneself entirely to family happiness, without dwelling on the past. Through this expression, learners are often reminded of the societal notion of associating female happiness with marriage, which reflects the prevailing values and attitudes of the time.

> *The next three years were her best years as a tennis player. They ended when she broke her leg in a terrible accident. Maureen was helped out of her despair by a young man. He asked her to marry him. In a few years they had two children. She did not look back on her past glory but did everything to keep her family happy.*
>
> Apricot ENGLISH COURSE 1, Lesson 5, p. 50 (underlining by the author)

In contrast, in the story of a female politician (Janet Rankin), despite both men and women facing equal burdens in society regarding labor from a young age, she explicitly addresses gender inequality by expressing the lack of suffrage for women. Throughout her lifetime, Ms. Rankin, as the first female member of the U.S. House of Representatives, advocated for an anti-war stance, and consistently promoted the message of gender equality. The very nature of her story serves as compelling subject matter that strongly conveys the message of gender equality.

> *Jeannette Rankin was born on a ranch in Montana in 1880. In those days, Montana was till frontier state, and life there was hard. Men and women shared much of the difficult outdoor work. They had to work as equals to survive. But young Jeannette noticed men and women were not equal in many ways. For instance, at election time, women were not allowed to vote. Jeannette thought this was not fair.*
>
> UNICORN ENGLISH COURSE 1, Lesson 9 p. 96 (underlining by the author)

Furthermore, textbooks published in the 2000s contained descriptions that deeply addressed topics such as changes in gender roles within the household and the division of household tasks associated with the advancement of women in society. These descriptions highlight that Japanese men's understanding regarding changes in the roles of men and women within the household, lags behind that of their counterparts in Western countries. Additionally, explicit depictions showcase the traditional Japanese view of household chores and childcare as women's work, portraying it as an obsolete mindset.

> *Japanese men are too far removed from household affairs, and Japanese women are too far removed from society. But this can change. More men should agree to help take care of their homes and families, and more women should be willing to keep their jobs after marriage. This can do no harm to the Japanese family; indeed, it can make Japanese family even stronger.*
>
> Evergreen READNG, reading 11, p. 118 (underlining by the author)

> *More and more women have jobs outside the home. Most of them want to continue to work after they get married. When both husbands and wives work outside the home, who does housework? You might think sharing housework is the best way, but some surveys show this doesn't happen. In three cities around the world, people were asked question, "Do you think man and his family should share house-work equally with his wife if she has a job?" to this question, over 90 percent of men in New York and London said "yes" but only about 50 percent of men in Tokyo answered positively.*
>
> ACORN English Course 1, Lesson 12, p. 94 (underlining by the author)

In textbooks issued in 2017, unlike those from the 2000s, no descriptions related to gender inequality or gender roles were detected. In the introduction to the female explorer, while it was mentioned that the first Japanese crew member aboard was a woman, there was no explicit acknowledgment that she was the first female crew member. Similarly, in the portrayals of other female figures, there are no descriptions addressing gender inequality in social contributions or accomplishments. For instance, in the case of Joanne Rowling, the author of the Harry Potter series, the reason for using the pen name "J.K. Rowling" was attributed to the belief that stories written by female authors were not read by boys. Although this reflects a bias against female authors, there is no mention of the author's feelings or struggles regarding this aspect. Consequently, the immense global popularity of the Harry Potter series may give the impression that concealing the name of a female author is beneficial.

> *In addition, boys might not read a book written by a woman. Joanne had hoped to find a publisher quickly, but it took her a whole year. To make the book more attractive to boys, Joanne chose the pen name J.K. Rowling.*
>
> BIG DIPPER, Lesson 6 p. 72 (underlining by the author)

The only prominent figure addressing inequality due to gender was 2014 Nobel Laureate, Malala Yousafzai, who advocated the importance of girls' education in Pakistan. This was the only section in which gender inequality was addressed explicitly.

> *Terrorists controlled her town. They believed that women should stay at home. They tried to stop girls from going to school. "Why are terrorists against education?" Malala did not understand. Her father explained, "Because they are afraid of the pen." (中略) Malala continued to go to school. She also spoke about her ideas in public. "We have the right of education. We have the right to speak up."*
>
> BIG DIPPPER, Lesson 9, p. 98 (underlining by the author)

> *In 2014, a seventeen-year-old girl won the Nobel Peace Prize. Why did she win this prize? In Pakistan a group of people, claimed that girls should not receive education and all schools should stop teaching girls. However, one girl believed education for girls was as important as for boys.*
>
> All aboard! Lesson 10, p. 90 (underlining by the author)

In the textbooks of 2023, various occupations held by women were described, and women-centered illustrations and photographs depicted leadership roles. Additionally, descriptions were found highlighting the past difficulties faced by women in society and emphasizing their important roles as members of society in modern times. While there is no explicit mention of gender equality or the roles of women, there has been an increase in the number of chapters depicting female representation in traditionally male-dominated occupations, such as professional sports players and train conductors.

> *It has been difficult for women to get a job and work until retirement age. Now some companies have flextime and remote work programs. They also offer a nursery near the office and longer maternity leave. Hiring many women has merits for companies. One is that they can get successful products. Women-led teams have developed brand-new products.*
>
> BIG DIPPER, Lesson 10, p. 120 (underlining by the author)

DISCUSSION

Based on the above findings, it can be observed that in the latest English textbooks of 2023, there is a significant improvement in female disparity issues previously pointed out in the literature review, such as the absence of women or their traditional gender roles. In 2017 textbooks, gender was perceived as a highly sensitive issue and was avoided as one of the controversial topics, even though gender inequality, gender values and roles were explicitly mentioned in the 2000s editions. This highly conservative stance of textbooks in 2017 seems to have forsaken the educational significance of raising awareness about gender, rather than contributing to gender equality. However, in the latest textbooks of 2023, there is an active description of women's social advancement and their role as integral members of society. In particular, textbooks that challenge traditional gender roles, such as professions traditionally considered male dominated, including professional athletes and train

conductors, were detected, confirming the context in which women are embedded in society. However, LGBTQ+ equivalent characters have not appeared yet, and Japanese textbooks are composed only of male and female characters. In other words, Japanese textbooks do not address gender diversity. In some English-speaking countries, as the matter of fact, same-sex marriage is legal, and nations exist with strict laws against discriminatory behavior towards LGBTQ+ individuals. As English is lingua franca in the world, the English textbooks should play an important role to convey the one of the real lifestyles and cultures of people worldwide.

CONCLUSION

In this study, the author examined the issue of diversity in English textbooks from a gender perspective by comparing textbooks published in the 2000s with the most recent ones. Improvements were found in areas previously highlighted in gender-based textbook analyses, such as women's societal advancement and the increased representation of female characters. However, the absence of sexual minorities, including LGBTQ+ individuals, was also noted. Given the recent global momentum towards gender equality, their invisibility in textbooks indicates Japan's lagging international position. This may stem from the unconscious bias of textbook creators, who are predominantly male, towards LGBTQ+ individuals, reflecting their prejudice and discrimination. Future research should explore the factors contributing to this absence, considering the age and sociocultural backgrounds of the textbook authors, the policy of the ministry of education.

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Students' Learning through Virtual Exchange in High School -with the Perspective of Language Use, Intercultural Understanding and Motivation-

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the effectiveness of Virtual Exchange via Zoom as conducted in Japanese high school, with the perspective of students' language use, international understanding, and motivation towards English learning. According to O'Dowd (2018), Virtual Exchange has evolved in various contexts and areas of education since the 1990s, becoming popular in Japan as the spread of COVID-19 made it easier for schools to utilize ICT in classes or during other educational activities (Kataue & Hosoi, 2022). The author conducted a Virtual Exchange using Zoom with a high school in Singapore as an alternative to carrying out an exchange program in a Japanese high school. The research method is textual analysis, in other words, text-mining utilizing KHCoder. As seen through the textual analysis of the Japanese students' reflections after the program, the Virtual Exchange provided students with opportunities to communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds in English, motivated them to study English, and, in part, cultivated their awareness of intercultural understanding. Though there were some issues, such as: the difficulty of being aware of one's audience while giving a presentation through digital screens; the limit of one-shot implementation considering the depth of cultural understanding; and so on, the author believes Virtual Exchange will prove to be an effective choice for international education.

Keywords: Virtual exchange, Intercultural understanding, Presentation, Discussion, Motivation

INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to contribute to the development of online international exchange by discussing the educational effects and issues of Zoom-based Virtual Exchange implemented in Japanese high school as an extracurricular activity.

As globalization progresses, the demand for international understanding education continues to increase. The Guidelines for the Course of Study for High School Students announced in 2018 by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) in Japan outlines the following four perspectives on subject selection in the "Considerations for Teaching Materials" section of the English language course.

(a) To help students deepen their understanding of diverse ways of thinking, develop fair judgment, and cultivate rich emotionality.

(b) To help students develop an interest in and an attitude of deepening their understanding of Japanese culture and the culture behind the English language.

(c) To deepen international understanding from a broad perspective amidst the globalization of society, to increase awareness of Japan as a member of a nation that is expected to deal with the international community, and to help foster a spirit of international cooperation.

(d) To help students deepen their ideas about people, society, and nature.

(p. 139)

The Courses of Study also states that it is necessary not only to passively learn about foreign cultures (including lifestyle cultures, national characteristics, academics, technology, and art) and values, but also to disseminate Japan culture and ways of thinking to the world. Furthermore, in addition to deepening students' international perspectives, cultivating their language skills such as presentations, discussions or debates, and enhancing their communicative abilities including exchanging opinions with people from different backgrounds are also required (MEXT, 2018).

To meet this demand, the high school had offered a variety of opportunities for international experiences, such as exchange programs or overseas English-training excursion, for decades. However, the impact of the COVID-19 has made it difficult to ensure face-to-face international exchange opportunities. With this circumstance, the author implemented a Virtual Exchange (hereafter VE) as an alternative. This paper investigates the effectiveness and issues of the VE in terms of the students' language use, international understanding, and motivation towards English learning.

RESEARCH BACKGROUNDS

Definition and classification of virtual exchange

Online collaborative learning and interaction has developed since the 1990s, mainly in the fields of foreign language education and cross-cultural communication education, and has been applied in various fields (O'Dowd, 2018; Murata & Sato, 2022). As of its variety of use and definition, O'Dowd (2018) examined the disparate branches, collectively defined them as "Virtual Exchange" and stated that "virtual exchange involves the engagement of groups of learners in extended periods of online intercultural interaction and collaboration with partners from other cultural contexts or geographical locations as an integrated part of their educational programs and under the guidance of educators and/or expert facilitators" (p. 5).

O'Dowd (2018) also attempted to classify them into four types: (a) subject-specific virtual exchange (1), (b) subject-specific virtual exchange (2), (c) shared syllabus approaches, and (d) service-provider approaches and summarized the characteristics of each. (a) is mainly aimed at foreign language education and cross-cultural communication education. Among them, one stream focuses on language acquisition and self-directed learning and the other one focuses not only on language acquisition but also on cross-cultural understanding and intercultural communication by connecting classrooms or groups of learners online and have them work collaboratively on projects, tasks, and so on. (b) is business training, etc., and (c) is a large-scale cooperative program, also known as COIL, which is implemented not only by classroom teachers but also by the institution. (d) includes online classes provided as a service and programs by NPOs. The current study of VE has been centered on (a) subject-specific virtual exchange (1), the latter stream.

Virtual exchanges in Japan

In the past, according to Beltz (2002) and O'Dowd (2018), despite the advantages, there were also some issues such as students' access to technology and teachers' lack of digital competency. However, recently, Kataue and Hosoi (2022) mentioned that because of the COVID circumstance, the online

environment is better developed, and the hurdles to work on VE have been lowered. As a result of that, some VE practices in Japan have been reported during the pandemic. Kataue and Hosoi (2022), for example, connected Japanese and Chinese university students for a 60-minute theme-talk session. As a result, they reported that it was effective on students' motivation, however, it did not lead to deeper intercultural understanding due to time constraints. As for time constraints, Honjo and Noritomi (2022) reported that in their practice connecting Japanese elementary school students with Indonesian elementary school students, they partly overcame the difficulty of depth of understanding by having video-exchange in advance to the actual Virtual Exchange.

THE CURRENT PRACTICE

Participants

The author has implemented the VE in Japanese high school, and the partner school was the junior college in Singapore. Twelve Japanese students and eight Singapore students volunteered to participate in the VE. Participants on both sides were around 15–17 years old. All Japanese participants had an English proficiency level of at least EIKEN Grade-2 and had either never traveled abroad or had stayed for less than one month.

Activities in the program

The program included a pre-study period of about three months to prepare for presentations and discussions. The Zoom exchange lasted about three hours, and the students exchanged self-introductory videos with each other in advance. The flow of actual exchange is shown in Table 1.

In the discussion session, they divided into four groups with their buddies, and had a group discussion. Students needed to include their perspectives on "Economy", "Education" and "Environment" to talk about the main theme. As a pre-assignment, Japanese students researched how COVID-19 influenced to each country and practiced discussing it in Japanese.

After the actual exchange, they sent letters and souvenirs to each other and answered a post-event reflection. In this paper, I would like to analyze results of it.

Table 1
The flow of actual exchange

Activity	Explanation
Greeting	Self-introduction, icebreaking
Group-presentation	Theme: "food culture and schools"
Group-discussion	Theme: "Positive / Negative Impacts of COVID-19" *With perspectives on "Economy" "Education" and "Environment" *Using break-out rooms
Group-sharing, closing	

DATA AND METHODS

The research method is textual analysis, in other words, text-mining utilizing KHCoder. According to Higuchi (2020), text mining is a data-mining technology to extract information by two streams. First, it separates text data by words and phrases. Second, it analyzes the frequency of word occurrence, co-occurrence tendency and correlations. KHCoder is the Japanese free software to conduct a text mining, invented by Koichi Higuchi.

The data is from 12 Japanese students' reflection texts on the Virtual Exchange. They were written in Japanese, so the analysis is also conducted in Japanese. In the paper, the questions and results are shown with English translation.

RESULTS

Extraction of words and the frequency of word occurrence

Table 2 indicates three questions, token frequency and type-frequency for each question. Token-frequency (hereafter token-F) means the number of total words they used, and type-frequency (hereafter type-F) is the number of kinds of words. Table 3 shows the top eight words and their frequency of occurrence. The two words "think" and "feel" and the name of each school were excluded from the analysis, due to the absence of special meaning of these words despite their frequent occurrence.

Table 2
Three questions, token frequency and type-frequency for each question

	Questions (Number of valid answers: 12)	Token-F (use)	Type-F (use)
1	プレゼンテーションについて思ったことなど (What did you feel and learn from the presentation session?)	435 (167)	174 (120)
2	ディスカッションについて思ったことなど (What did you feel and learn from the discussion session?)	498 (203)	189 (132)
3	オンライン交流を体験しての感想 (Your reflection on whole this virtual exchange)	1422 (573)	367 (267)

Table 3
The top eight words and their frequency of occurrence

Q1		Q2		Q3	
Word	N / O	Word	N / O	Word	N / O
難しい (difficult)	5	話す (speak / talk)	8	交流 (exchange)	21
意外と (unexpectedly)	3	英語 (English)	7	英語 (English)	15
長い (long)	3	言う (say)	5	自分 (myself)	11
短い (short)	3	シンガポール (Singapore)	4	シンガポール (Singapore)	10
話す (speak / talk)	3	意見 (opinion)	4	話す (speak / talk)	10
シンガポール (Singapore)	2	自分 (myself)	3	オンライン (online)	8
スライド (slides)	2	伝える (convey / communicate)	3	学校 (school)	7
プレゼン (presentation)	2	難しい (difficult)	3	言葉 (words)	6

(N / O: Number of Occurrence)

Co-occurrence network from question 3

Figure 1 is a co-occurrence network diagram created from the texts of students' reflection to Question 3. The size of the circle indicates how frequently the word occurred. The more the words co-occur, the closer the circle will be located. As it is created in Japanese, English translations are provided for the sections I would like to focus on; marked as A, B and C in the diagram.

Figure 2 depicts the co-occurrence of words related to intercultural understanding. This bubble looks related to intercultural understanding, referring to co-occurred words. The original texts are shown in Table 4. They primarily wrote messages pertaining to the differences in both countries' responses to the COVID pandemic. They also enjoyed talking with Singaporean students and found it interesting and unique to hear about life in Singapore, the multicultural society.

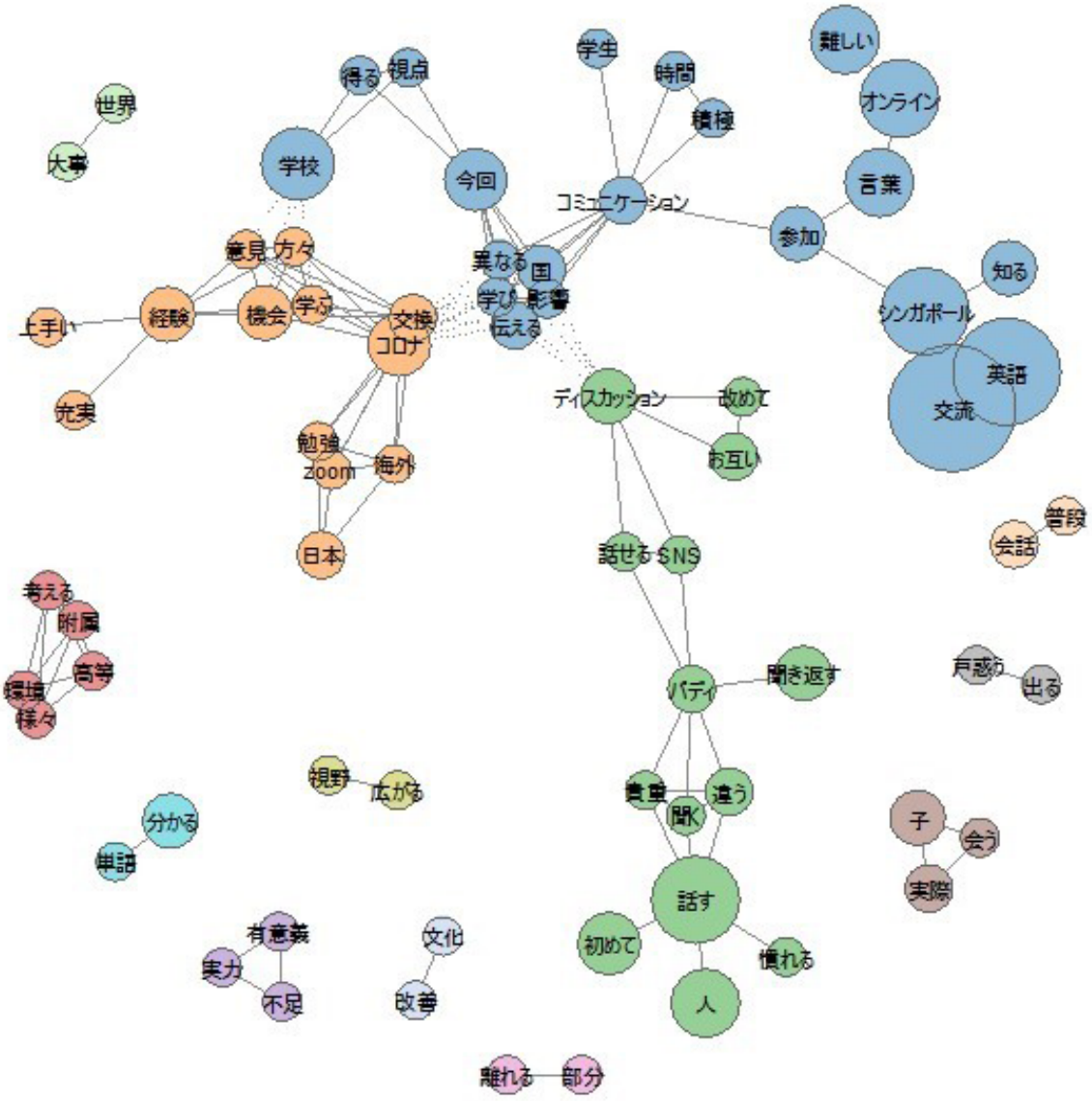

Figure 1 A co-occurrence network diagram created from the texts of students' reflection to question 3

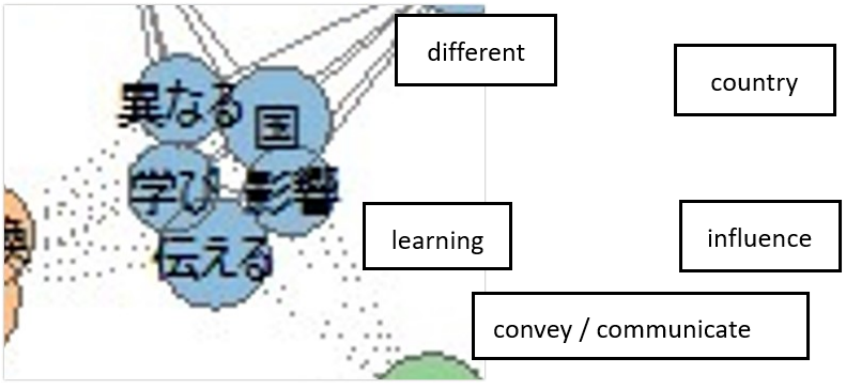

Figure 2 An enlarged version of A in figure 1

Table 4
Original text with「国」(country) and 「異なる」(different) with English translation

1	地元の人の割合が新型コロナウイルスの影響で増えたという変化は日本にはなく、多国籍な国ならではですごく興味深いと感じました。
	There is no change in Japan that the proportion of locals has increased due to the influence of the new coronavirus, so I found it very interesting because it is unique to a multinational **country**.
2	異なる国の文化を知り意見交換する良い機会になった。
	It was a good opportunity to learn about the cultures of **different countries** and exchange opinions.
3	同じ新型コロナウイルスの影響という話題でも国の背景などによって全く異なるということは実際に海外の子と話さないとわからないことだと思うので、貴重な勉強になり、すごく楽しかったです。
	I think that the fact that the topic of the impact of the new coronavirus is completely **different** depending on the background of **the country** is something that you can't understand unless you actually talk to children from overseas, so it was a valuable experience and a lot of fun.

The enlarged versions of B & C in the diagram illustrate the relationship between motivation and English learning. These bubbles appear to be related to the motivation towards English learning. Figure 3, marked as B in Figure 1, shows that the word “English” and “exchange” have a strong co-occurrence relationship. That is to say, the exchange provided the opportunity to look back at their English ability. According to the original text shown in Table 5, many of students reflected that they were able to introspect on their English skills through the exchange, and that they got motivated to study English because they want to interact with people from other countries more. Figure 4 marked as C in Figure 1, also shows that students recognized their own English proficiency through the exchange. According to the original text, some students stated that they were aware of the inadequacies in their English proficiency through the exchange, and they would like to study harder to improve it. They also wrote that the exchange was meaningful for recognizing the areas in need of improvement.

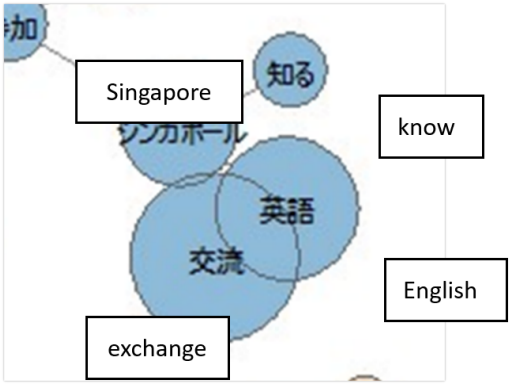

Figure 3 An enlarged version of B in figure 1

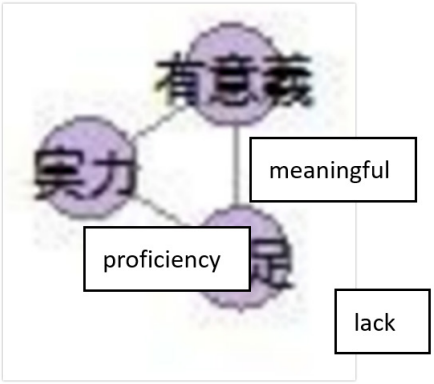

Figure 4 An enlarged version of C in figure 1

Table 5
Original text with「英語」(English) and「交流」(exchange) with English translation

1	この交流を通して、自分に足りない部分や改善点を見つけることができた。
	Through this **exchange**, I was able to find out what I was lacking and what I could improve.
2	これから更に英語を勉強し彼らとまた楽しく交流したいと思いました。
	I would like to study **English** more and have fun **interacting** with them again.
3	今回の交流で、英語が少しでも話せると世界が一層広がることが分かったので、これからも英語の勉強を頑張ろうと思いました。
	Through this **exchange**, I learned that if I can speak even a little **English**, the world will expand even more, so I decided to continue to study **English** as much as possible.

DISCUSSION

Language use

With the perspective of language use, I would like to delve into students' response on Question 1 and Question 2. As mentioned in the previous section, On Question 1 about presentation, "difficult" was the word most frequently used, followed by "long" and "short" talking about their presentation time. This implies that students were concerned more to achieve their task, rather than to communicate with other participants or convey their messages to their audience. One possible reason for this tendency was that since the presentation was given via Zoom, the presenters primarily focused on their

own PowerPoints instead of their audience. I could say there was a difficulty being aware of audience through digital screens. On the other hand, on Question 2 about the discussion session, words such as “speak” and “communicate” were used and the word “Singapore,” the exchange partner, appeared frequently. From these findings, compared to the presentation sessions, the students seemed likely to pay more attention to their partners. Also, this session apparently provided an opportunity for the students to “communicate with others in English,” which is difficult to secure in a classroom setting.

Intercultural understanding

Although the author had anticipated the presentation session as an opportunity for cross-cultural understanding, the analysis indicated that the students were more focused on achieving their tasks and there was no mention of the cultural introduction by the partner. In this regard, as mentioned earlier, the facilitators should have kept it in mind that this activity was through a screen, so further effort to draw students’ attention to the partners was needed. Rather than that, they seemed to have been aware of different cultures in the discussion session, as different societies were affected differently by the new coronavirus. Also, since they discussed in breakout rooms, it also allowed them to chat about each culture casually with their partners from Singapore in the discussion session. The pre-study on Singapore country might have also helped them to develop interests in interculturality as a country.

In sum, with the flamework of Intercultural Understanding, this Virtual Exchange provided the opportunity to communicate with people from different backgrounds and partly cultivated students’ awareness of intercultural understanding. However, even though they did video-exchange, the one-shot implementation did not lead them to any serious depth of understanding.

Motivation towards English learning

In term of motivation towards English learning, most students mentioned their desire to learn English on Question 3. Some students wrote that they found the joy of communicating with people from overseas and that they would like to continue their studies for such exchanges in the future, while others were painfully aware of their low English proficiency and the notion inspired themselves. Either way, we could say the Virtual Exchange provided the opportunity to use English authentically, and as a result, students could find their clear aim or ideal self on English learning.

CONCLUSION

From the students’ reflections, the VE provided them with opportunity to use English authentically, experience of communicating with people of different backgrounds, awareness of intercultural understanding in part, and the further motivation towards English learning. In addition, although it did not appear in students’ reflections, some of whom stated that: “It was difficult to take turns online because I could not feel the atmosphere” or “I could not use gestures, so I tried hard to at least give a friendly impression with my facial expressions”. Therefore, this was also an opportunity for students to realize the importance of non-verbal communication, such as gestures, facial expressions, and the mood of the room.

There were also some issues such as the difficulty of instilling awareness through digital screen while giving a presentation, and the fact that one-shot implementation could not provide a depth of understanding. With continuous implementation, or at least two or three times, the exchange could guarantee more efficient learning both in language skills and intercultural understanding.

The findings of this study faced certain limitations. Firstly, the number of participants were only 12 students at one high school. In addition, since the practice was implemented as an extracurricular

program, the participants' English proficiency and motivation might differ from ordinal high school students. With these limitations, for more reliable results, it is recommended that there should be an increased number of participants, hopefully with more varieties of background. Moreover, with more focused theme settings for presentation and debate, students might deepen their understanding of diverse cultures. Lastly, students' reactions would differ depending on the content of the pre-study and how teachers support students' preparation.

Although there were still some issues and difficulties, Virtual Exchange provides a window that allows you to connect with people around the world without moving. Hopefully, it will continue to be worked on not only as an alternative to face-to-face exchange, but also as an option for international exchange and education for intercultural understanding.

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The Evolution of Korean EFL Learners' Opinions on Oral Corrective Feedback

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Abstract

This study explores Korean university freshmen's attitudes towards oral corrective feedback (OCF) practices in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings. Data was collected using a modified Questionnaire measuring Attitude Toward Error Correction (QATEC) first implemented in Jong-Duk Jang's research on Korean EFL learner attitudes towards error correction (2003). Findings were in line with previous research highlighting a prevailing trend that Korean EFL learners are in favor of the implementation of oral corrective feedback in classroom contexts. The insights gained from this study provide pedagogical implications for English educators in tailoring feedback methods that resonate with learners' preferences thereby enhancing the effectiveness of EFL instruction.

Keywords: Oral Corrective Feedback (OCF), Error correction, Corrective feedback, English as a foreign language

INTRODUCTION

Learning English as a Second or Foreign Language is a difficult process and learners are faced with challenges. One of these challenges is overcoming linguistic mistakes and errors. Learner mistakes and errors have become focal points for pedagogical intervention, or feedback. The role of oral corrective feedback (OCF) in this context is of particular interest to scholars and educators alike. This paper seeks to explore Korean university freshmen's attitudes towards OCF within EFL settings utilizing a modified version of the Questionnaire measuring Attitude Toward Error Correction. The questionnaire, hereby referred to as the QATEC, is a tool for gathering learner opinion on OCF first implemented in Jong-Duk Jang's seminal research (2003). This paper's findings aim to align with the existing body of research and update the current understanding of learner opinion on OCF as well as introduce new demographic data to further enrich the pedagogical approach for English educators.

Research questions

1. Primary Question: How do remedial college-level ESL students perceive the effectiveness and impact of OCF in their language learning process?

2. Secondary Question: Does the duration of English language study and the geographical context of previous language education influence ESL students' attitudes towards OCF?

3. Tertiary Question: Are there discernible patterns in student preferences for OCF based on their linguistic backgrounds and prior educational experiences?

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND & LITERATURE REVIEW

OCF is a teaching strategy used in language learning where a teacher or peer provides immediate feedback on a learner's spoken errors. It is a universal and complex instructional strategy in language teaching and learning. Feedback on learners' oral production can have profound implications for their language acquisition, motivation, and self-confidence. The evolution of attitudes towards error correction in language learning reflects a shift in pedagogical paradigms. From the audiolingualism of the 1950s and 1960s, which saw language learning as a process of habit formation where errors were to be avoided (Chastain, 1988), to the nativist perspective considering errors as an incidental and inevitable result of language acquisition (Krashen, 1982), the treatment of errors has been diverse. This diversity is further enriched by interactionist views that emphasize language learning through negotiation of meaning and implicit feedback (Long, 1996; Schmidt, 1990).

Previous studies have explored learners' and educators' perceptions, preferences, and beliefs about OCF, especially in ESL (English as a Second Language) and EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts across Asia. Jang's 2003 study on Korean learners serves as the foundational work in understanding the preferences and perceptions of students in EFL students in Korea. The study established the first use of the QATEC in Korea. Jang's findings revealed an overall positive opinion among Korean learners on receiving OCF. Specifically, students exhibited a strong inclination towards receiving corrections that were immediate and explicit as these were believed to be more effective in preventing the reinforcement of erroneous language patterns. The study also indicated that student proficiency levels impacted opinion on OCF. Higher proficiency learners tended to favor less frequent correction and preferred feedback that encouraged self-correction.

A more recent study conducted in Thailand emphasized the importance of feedback's contextual appropriateness (Wiboolyasarin et al., 2020). A study in the Philippines linked OCF with language anxiety shedding light on the impact of feedback delivery methods (Guibangguibang, 2020). A 2020 study on Saudi Arabian EFL students focused on the importance of balancing appropriate OCF methods and timing to promote spontaneous communication without demotivating learners (Hameed, 2020). A study in Vietnam that conducted a survey on student and teacher opinion on OCF echoed the importance of aligning OCF strategies with both learners' and teachers' needs and advocated for a balanced approach to OCF that prioritizes learner development (Nhac, 2022). Together, these studies highlight the importance of considering cultural, educational, and individual factors in optimizing OCF strategies, directly aligning with the overarching goal of understanding diverse learner attitudes towards OCF.

The diverse approaches and findings from previous studies in Asia demonstrate the complex and context-specific nature of OCF in ESL and EFL settings. They reveal not only the varied preferences and impacts of OCF on learners across different cultural and educational contexts but also the evolving understanding of its role in language learning. This stresses the necessity of this study to deepen the understanding of OCF, tailor its application more effectively to diverse learners, and ultimately refine OCF practices to better support language acquisition, motivation, and self-confidence in global EFL/ESL classrooms.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The study involved 481 first-year university students enrolled in remedial English language courses. Participants were required to be first-year university students, meaning no transfer or non-traditional students were included in the study. Additionally, all participants had to be Korean citizens and have

attended primary and secondary school in South Korea to ensure a consistent educational background among the sample. Three responses were incomplete and not included in data calculation resulting in a total of 478 participants included in the study.

Instrument

A modified version of the 14-item Questionnaire measuring Attitude toward Error Correction (QATEC), originally developed by Jang (2003), was employed to assess students' attitudes towards OCF. The QATEC uses a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (neutral), 4 (agree), to 5 (strongly agree). To gain deeper insights into the demographic variables that might influence perceptions of OCF, three additional questions were integrated into the survey to gather data on:

1. The onset of English language study.
2. History of attending after-school academies or receiving private English tutoring.
3. Experience with English in native-speaking countries.

Data collection procedure

The survey was administered in person using Google Forms to facilitate ease of distribution and data compilation. This method allowed for real-time data capture and ensured a high response rate due to the controlled environment in which the surveys were conducted.

Ethical considerations

Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and the voluntary nature of their participation. Anonymity and confidentiality of the responses were maintained throughout the research process.

Key findings

The demographic data provided by the first three items of the QATEC provides valuable insights into the participants' educational background and experiences with English adding further insight into their attitudes towards OCF.

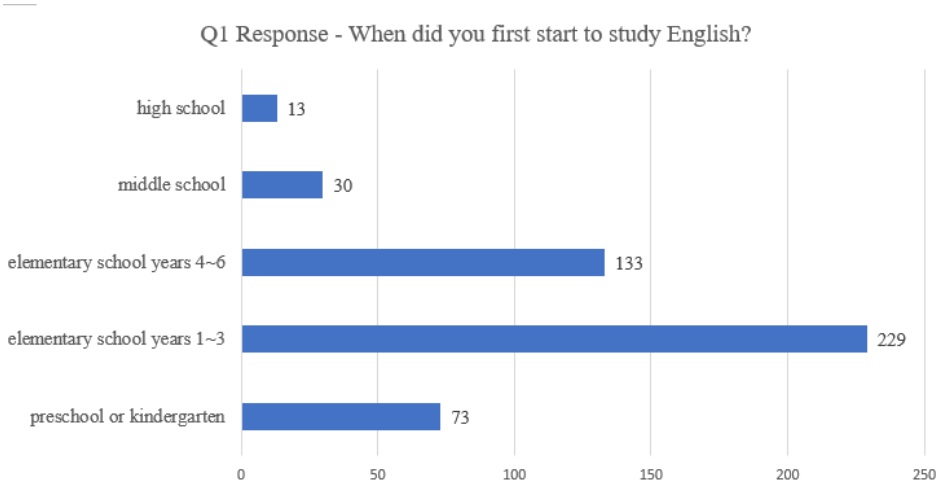

Figure 1 Item 1 Beginning of English Study Responses

The first question on the QATEC, Item 1, asks students to share when they first started studying English. Figure 1 demonstrates the majority of students started their English education early with 229 (approximately 48%) beginning in elementary school (years 1-3) and 133 (approximately 28%) in elementary school (years 4-6). The trend of early exposure demonstrates the strong emphasis on early English language education in Korea. A smaller percentage of participants began learning English during preschool or kindergarten (73 participants, about 15%), while fewer still started in middle school (30 participants, about 6%) and high school (13 participants, about 3%). These figures suggest that most of the participants had a considerable amount of experience with English before entering university which may influence their attitudes towards OCF.

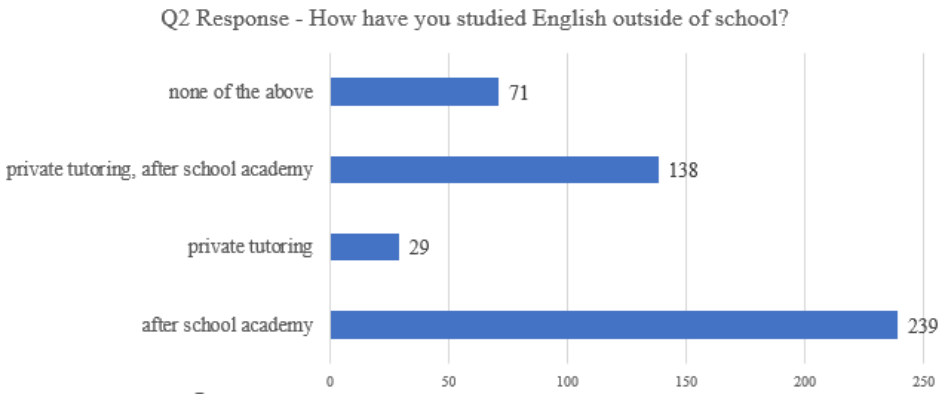

Figure 2 Item 2 Additional English Study Responses

Figure 2 shows Item 2 responses relating to how participants have supplemented their English education outside of formal school settings. The most common method was attending after-school academies with 239 participants (approximately 50%) indicating this form of study. Another significant group of students, 138 participants (about 29%), combined after-school academy attendance with private tutoring. A smaller number relied solely on private tutoring (29 participants, about 6%), while 71 participants (about 15%) reported no additional study outside of school. The prevalence of after-school academies reflects the importance of supplemental education in the Korean context which likely shapes the participants' perspectives on OCF and their overall English proficiency.

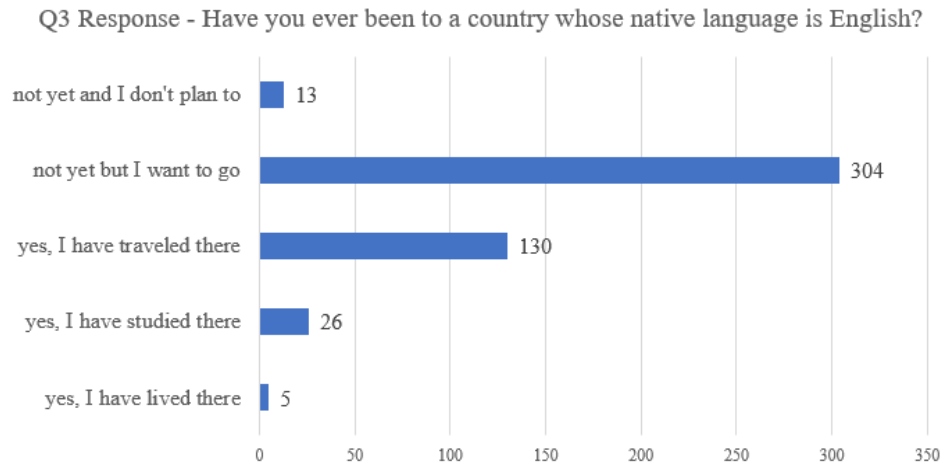

Figure 3 Item 3 Experience in English-speaking Countries Response

Figure 3 represents the participants' response to Item 3 and their exposure to English-speaking environments. A large majority (304 participants, approximately 64%) have not yet traveled to

an English-speaking country but express a desire to do so. This suggests a strong motivation among students to immerse themselves in an English-speaking environment. Additionally, 130 participants (about 27%) have traveled to an English-speaking country, an experience that may have provided them with direct exposure to native speakers and different forms of feedback. Fewer participants have studied (26 participants, about 5%) or lived (5 participants, about 1%) in such countries. Thirteen participants (approximately 3%) indicated that they have neither been to nor plan to visit an English-speaking country. This variation in exposure is important as it may influence participants' comfort with and attitudes toward receiving OCF in a classroom setting.

Table 1
Student responses to the QATEC (Likert Scale)

Item #	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
4	96	214	99	61	8
5	5	46	75	270	82
6	4	25	58	298	93
7	84	191	93	82	28
8	103	192	82	80	21
9	64	177	174	55	8
10	6	11	71	292	98
11	111	223	109	31	4
12	4	43	108	258	65
13	93	244	100	39	2
14	8	32	82	279	77
15	90	223	124	39	2
16	49	192	155	74	8
17	112	214	119	26	7

Table 2
Student Responses to the QATEC (%)

Item #	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
4	20.08%	44.77%	20.71%	12.76%	1.67%
5	1.05%	9.62%	15.69%	56.49%	17.15%
6	0.84%	5.23%	12.13%	62.34%	19.46%
7	17.57%	39.96%	19.46%	17.15%	5.86%
8	21.55%	40.17%	17.15%	16.74%	4.39%
9	13.39%	37.03%	36.40%	11.51%	1.67%
10	1.26%	2.30%	14.85%	61.09%	20.50%
11	23.22%	46.65%	22.80%	6.49%	0.84%
12	0.84%	9.00%	22.59%	53.97%	13.60%
13	19.46%	51.05%	20.92%	8.16%	0.42%
14	1.67%	6.69%	17.15%	58.37%	16.11%
15	18.83%	46.65%	25.94%	8.16%	0.42%
16	10.25%	40.17%	32.43%	15.48%	1.67%
17	23.43%	44.77%	24.90%	5.44%	1.46%

Student response data from Items 4 through 17 of the QATEC reveals several distinct trends in the attitudes of first-year university students towards OCF which can be categorized into three main themes: acceptance of OCF as a teaching tool, concerns about the social and emotional impact of OCF, and preference for the frequency and timing of OCF.

1. Acceptance of OCF as a teaching tool

A strong consensus among the students underscores the perceived importance of OCF in language learning. For instance, Items 6 and 10 indicate that a majority of students (over 80%) believe that error correction is a teacher's duty (Item 6) and that it facilitates quick and efficient improvement in their English-speaking ability (Item 10). Similarly, a significant proportion of students (around 74%) in Items 14 and 5 express that without OCF, they would likely repeat the same speaking errors and they rely on OCF to be aware of their mistakes. This data shows a strong acceptance of OCF as an integral and necessary component of language instruction which reflects students' trust in their teachers' corrective role and their recognition of OCF's effectiveness in enhancing language proficiency.

2. Concerns about the social and emotional impact of OCF

Despite the overall acceptance of OCF, the data reveals notable concerns regarding the social and emotional impact of being corrected in class. Items 7, 8, 11, and 17 suggest that a considerable number of students experience anxiety or apprehension related to peer judgment and the potential negative impact on their self-confidence. For example, although a majority of students are not overly concerned about being laughed at by others (Item 7), there remains a significant minority (about 28%) who are sensitive to peer reactions. Similarly, concerns about "losing face" (Item 8) and the impact of frequent corrections on self-confidence (Item 17) show that while many students are resilient, there is a non-negligible portion of the class that might find frequent correction to be emotionally challenging. These findings suggest that while OCF is valued, it must be delivered with sensitivity to the social dynamics and emotional well-being of students.

3. Preference for the frequency and timing of OCF

The data also illustrates varied preferences regarding the frequency and timing of OCF as reflected in Items 12, 13, 15, and 16. A significant number of students express a desire for consistent and immediate feedback with over half of the respondents (around 67%) in Item 12 stating that they want to be corrected on every speaking error. This indicates a strong preference for regular feedback as a critical part of their learning process. However, Items 13 and 15 reveal a tension between this preference and concerns about the potential for frustration and disruption to the class pace. Although a majority disagrees that frequent correction leads to frustration or impedes class flow, a sizable minority is concerned about these issues suggesting that while frequent correction is generally appreciated, it needs to be balanced carefully to avoid negative outcomes. Item 16 further complicates this picture showing that some students fear making repeated errors without correction even as others feel confident in their ability to self-correct. These mixed responses highlight the need for a differentiated approach to OCF that considers individual student preferences and the broader classroom context.

DISCUSSION

Shift in Korean learner perspective

Comparing the results of this study to those of Jang's 2003 study conducted 20 years ago reveals notable trends and shifts in Korean EFL learners' attitudes towards error correction. The results of Jang's study indicated a generally positive attitude toward error correction with significant variations across proficiency levels. The data in this research, however, reveals a more nuanced perspective. While there is still a broad acceptance of error correction (evidenced by the majority disagreeing with disliking corrections and strongly agreeing that error correction is a teacher's duty), there is an increased sensitivity to peer reactions and a concern about the impact of frequent corrections on class pace and self-confidence.

Interestingly, the fear of repeating errors without correction remains consistently high across both studies emphasizing the perceived necessity of OCF. This study also indicates a strong preference for more immediate and consistent feedback, contrasting with Jang's (2003) findings where learners showed apprehension towards frequent corrections.

These changes suggest an evolution in Korean EFL learners' confidence and their expectations from the language learning process. The increased concern about peer judgment and class pace might reflect a shift towards a more communicative and learner-centered approach in language education where learners are more conscious of their social environment and the dynamics of the classroom.

OCF attitudes across Asian EFL contexts

By comparing this study's results with other recent studies across Asia, it is possible to observe cross-cultural similarities and differences in attitudes toward OCF. This study's finding on the preference for immediate and consistent feedback mirrors the importance of context-sensitive feedback emphasized by studies in Thailand and the Philippines (Wiboolyasarin et al., 2020; Guibangguibang, 2020). Korean learners' concerns about peer judgment and class pace are echoed by a recent study in Saudi Arabia (Hameed, 2020). The results of this study support the necessity of aligning OCF with learners' needs, a theme that appears consistently across the studies (Nhac, 2022).

Additionally, these cross-cultural investigations into OCF attitudes suggest an evolving landscape of EFL instruction where the tradition of teacher authority and infallibility are increasingly giving way to more learner-centered, collaborative approaches to error correction. This shift emphasizes the role of corrective feedback not just as a tool for linguistic accuracy but as a pivotal component of the broader educational experience that supports learner autonomy as students become more aware of the social and psychological impacts of feedback.

The congruencies across studies from Thailand, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam, and this study from Korea suggest practical applications in developing OCF strategies that are sensitive to cultural and individual differences in order to optimize the learning process. These countries share a common educational challenge: using OCF to improve language learning while balancing correction, encouragement, and learner engagement. As TESOL evolves, these comparative analyses highlight the need for teaching practices that are responsive to the different learning environments and emotional needs of EFL learners across Asia and beyond. This body of research not only deepens our understanding of OCF in various contexts but also encourages educators to develop feedback strategies that meet the diverse needs of their learners.

CONCLUSION

Building on the findings discussed, this research has shed light on the evolving attitudes of Korean EFL learners toward OCF over the past two decades, drawing parallels and contrasts with similar studies in other Asian countries. The findings indicate a general acceptance of OCF's role in language learning balanced with an awareness of its social and psychological impacts. These insights reflect broader shifts in educational paradigms, moving towards more learner-centered approaches. The study highlights the need for nuanced, context-sensitive OCF strategies that address diverse learner preferences and anxieties. Ultimately, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of OCF in EFL contexts and offers valuable implications for enhancing language teaching methodologies in a culturally responsive manner.

The grouped analysis of the survey data, which identified trends in acceptance, social sensitivity, and preferences for feedback, suggests that while there is strong support for OCF as a critical teaching

tool, educators need to be mindful of the varying emotional and social sensitivities of students. The preference for consistent and immediate feedback underscores the importance of OCF in the students' learning process, but this must be balanced with an understanding of the potential negative impacts on self-confidence and class dynamics such as increased anxiety or reluctance to participate. To maximize the effectiveness of OCF, it may be beneficial for educators to adopt a flexible, context-sensitive approach that tailors feedback to the needs of individual students and the classroom environment as a whole.

For further research, exploring the long-term impacts of different OCF strategies on language proficiency and learner motivation would be valuable. Additionally, investigating the specific needs of learners with varied linguistic backgrounds and proficiency levels could provide deeper insights in terms of tailoring OCF strategies to individual learner contexts. Studies focusing on the effectiveness of OCF in virtual learning environments could also be pertinent given the increasing prevalence of online education.

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Appendix 1

Modified QATEC survey

1. When did you first start to study English?
2. Have you attended after school academies or received private tutoring in English?
3. Have you ever been to a country whose native language is English?
4. I dislike it when I am corrected in this English-speaking class.
5. I am afraid that without error correction, I am not aware of where or when I make errors.
6. Error correction is a teacher's duty.
7. I am afraid that other students laugh at me when my teacher corrects my mistakes.
8. I am afraid of losing face when my teacher corrects me.
9. A lack of error correction confuses the other students.
10. Error correction helps me to improve my English-speaking ability quickly and efficiently.
11. I will lose interest in learning English because of frequent error correction.
12. I want to be corrected every time I make a speaking error in this class.
13. If my teacher corrects me frequently, it makes me very frustrated in learning English.
14. Without error correction, I will repeat the same speaking errors again and again.
15. I am afraid that frequent error correction slows down the pace of the class.
16. I am not afraid of making the same speaking errors in this English class, as a result of lack of corection.
17. Correcting every error reduces my self-confidence in speaking English.

Vicarious Contact and the Effects on English as a Foreign Language Attitudes and Intercultural Communication Apprehension in Japanese University Students

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Abstract

The technique of vicarious contact has been shown to improve explicit and implicit attitudes toward out-groups. However, there is little research on what changes are possible in intergroup attitudes and communication apprehension among university students who have relatively little direct contact with outside groups or who have English language barriers. This study targets Japanese participants (n = 61) and investigates whether the vicarious contact approach (derived from contact theory in which individuals watch videos of interactions between members of the in-group and out-group) is effective in improving intergroup communication apprehension and attitudes toward English use. Data were drawn from university students from institutions in central and eastern Japan, with participants answering a survey featuring standardized instruments related to willingness to communicate in English and intercultural communication apprehension one week before and after a vicarious contact treatment. Participants viewed videos of either a Japanese/non-Japanese pair working together on projects in English (experimental group) or two Japanese nationals working in Japanese (control group). The results indicate that both intercultural attitudes, as well as willingness to use English with out-group members, were improved to significant degrees using vicarious contact methods as demonstrated through a series of t-tests. Implications therefore exist for educational institutions and foreign language courses where the viewing of vicarious contact-style videos may help improve students' motivation toward learning English as a foreign language and interacting with out-group members.

Keywords: Vicarious contact, Intercultural communication apprehension, Foreign language attitudes, Intergroup attitudes

INTRODUCTION

Despite the progression of globalization, negative feelings toward out-group members (e.g., immigrant groups) is an ongoing problem in many societies (Otake, 2021). As a result of the continuing interconnectivity between nations and efforts toward foreign language education (including English), methods for improving attitudes toward out-groups will become increasingly necessary if countries and local communities are to incorporate these individuals into society in a productive and mutually beneficial manner (UN Department of Economic & Social Affairs, 2019). This study uses the technique of vicarious contact, the observation of positive interactions between intercultural groups, to explore possible avenues to help in this regard, targeting Japanese students and their feelings toward English-speaking non-Japanese people living in the country. As will be explored in this article, vicarious contact can be a powerful tool for improving intergroup attitudes (Mazziotta et al., 2011), but its use as a technique for improving attitudes toward English as a foreign language use is an area that must be explored further as more foreign nationals with limited Japanese abilities immigrate to Japan (UN Department of Economic & Social Affairs, 2019).

As noted above, vicarious contact is a technique that appears to hold potential for positively affecting intercultural relations and attitudes toward outgroups that reside in a foreign country. In Japan, this would mean the increasing number of immigrants that have entered the country's workforce in recent years (Green, 2017). Vicarious contact has been found to help reduce prejudice, improve intergroup attitudes, and encourage actual contact with out-group members through viewing friendly interactions between in-group and out-group individuals (Vezzali & Stathi, 2021). Vicarious contact accomplishes these often positive results through the viewing of interactions between intercultural pairs, often in the form of pre-recorded videos. Previous studies were mainly conducted in multicultural settings such as within European countries and in the U.S. (Schemer & Meltzer, 2019; Mazziotta et al., 2011). In such globalised settings, individuals have more chances to contact out-group members on a daily basis. However, how cross-cultural attitudes of citizens living in more homogenous communities can be affected by techniques such as vicarious contact is an ongoing question. As immigration and refugee relocation remain complicated social, political, and practical issues, the need for improved relations with out-group members is necessary for the successful reception of future immigrants and for meaningful intercultural communication to occur (Ministry of Justice - Japan, 2017). Much has been written previously about the unique characteristics of Japanese society and the types of social pressures present within the culture. These societal influences can often manifest themselves as a fear of the unknown and a reduced willingness to speak with strangers, which would include many out-group members (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). These unique features of Japanese culture, as well as historically low rates of immigration (Green, 2017) imply that new and effective techniques for reducing intercultural communication apprehension are necessary, and vicarious contact may be an effective tool for this effort.

The study described in the paper builds on previous work done in this area using imagined contact and its effects on intergroup attitudes in Japan when participants are exposed to intercultural interactions through reading imaginary scenarios (Hu & Takai, 2020). This study broadens this effort to include the viewing of pre-recorded intercultural interactions, with the hope that a more sensory experience that includes witnessing out-group and in-group members successfully working together may create the opportunity for more effective interventions between these individuals, such as within intergroup contact activities in a university setting. In addition, the current study looks not only at the effects of vicarious contact on intercultural attitudes, but feelings related to foreign language use among students as well. English has become a priority foreign language in Japan, with the Ministry of Education placing particular emphasis on students gaining communication skills during their time in school (Yashima, 2002). As English proficiency becomes increasingly important on the world stage and English cements itself further as the dominant global language (Crystal, 2012), searching for methods toward improving willingness to communicate (WTC) in English and attitudes toward learning English as a foreign language (EFL) may prove crucial to countries hoping to place themselves in advantageous positions in global business, academics, and other critical areas (McCormick, 2013).

Techniques used within vicarious contact are based on the theoretical framework laid out by previous researchers such as Allport (1954) and the development of contact theory. Techniques derived from contact theory have been shown to be successful at significantly improving intergroup attitudes (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). However, several key components must be utilized within studies employing contact theory, including those using vicarious contact. These include equal status between those engaged in the intercultural interactions, common goals being strived for by those interacting, intergroup cooperation between the interlocuters, and the support of authorities. In the case of the study described in this article, equal status was obtained within the vicarious contact videos by having both of the speakers be current university students in undergraduate programs. Common goals and intergroup cooperation were achieved by having the actors in the videos engage in cooperative activities related to studying for a test, preparing for an event, or other situations in which both speakers must help each other achieve a mutual aim. Support of authorities in the case of this current study related to support the speakers in the vicarious contact videos received in relation to their shared

projects, including support/feedback from teachers that were implied in the scenes or the support of the host institution in regard to creating shared spaces for joint events the students were engaged in. In this way, the tenets of contact theory within vicarious contact were maintained through this study's methodology (Allport, 1954).

As will be explored further below, vicarious contact has been found to positively influence feelings toward out-groups, including improved intergroup attitudes and higher levels of willingness to communicate with members of a foreign community residing within a host country (Vezzali & Stathi, 2021). However, further investigation must be conducted into how vicarious contact could influence intercultural communication apprehension (ICA) and attitudes about foreign language use specifically. Therefore, the researchers were motivated to conduct this study and fill this gap in the literature. Since the evidence from previous studies shows that vicarious contact appears to hold potential in the area of improving intercultural attitudes and targeting feelings toward communication in particular, the need to investigate how this technique might impact issues like ICA and attitudes toward English as a foreign language use are crucial. This gap in the previous studies related to vicarious contact, along with the growing need in Japan to reduce apprehension related to interacting with foreign nationals and speaking English within intercultural communication situations, lead to the formation of this current study and the goal of exploring how this technique could benefit attitudes held by university students. The objective of this research was to investigate whether vicarious contact could be used to improve feelings in these areas, as evidence for the effectiveness of these methods would help further the argument that intercultural relations in Japan can be improved if evidence-based techniques are used and key demographics such as university students (who will soon enter the larger society) are targeted. The practical implications of this study might be, especially in light of this university-age population engaging in vicarious contact, that future adults within Japanese society might have better attitudes, reduced anxiety, and more willingness to engage in English-language conversations with out-group members of the community, potentially benefiting intergroup relations within Japan as a whole.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Vicarious contact

This study focused on vicarious contact theory (Mazziotta et al., 2011), which posits that observing positive intergroup interactions between an in-group member and an out-group member leads to learning positive contact behaviors with the out-group, reduced prejudice, and more favorable future direct contact. It is a form of intergroup contact that has been shown to have positive effects on intergroup attitudes and behavior (Vezzali & Stathi, 2021). Vicarious contact is based on social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) and vicarious self-perception theory (Goldstein & Cialdini, 2007), and is positioned as a new indirect contact approach to learning behavior when making direct contact with out-groups, influencing individuals at not only the cognitive level but also the behavioral level. Other techniques such as imagined contact (imagining scenarios related to positive intergroup interactions, often through reading passages) appear to have more of an impact on the cognitive level, affecting general attitudes about out-group members and allowing for more accurate information related to the out-groups to be disseminated (Turner et al., 2007). Vicarious contact is considered to be a technique more on the behavioral side of the cognitive-behavioral range of techniques found within contact theory (Mazziotta et al., 2011), and the potential that participation in this type of intervention holds toward directly affecting real-world behaviors led to its inclusion as a method used in this current study. The observation of these intercultural exchanges within the video interactions observed by participants when undergoing vicarious contact appear to help teach new, more positive behaviors directed at the out-group by members of the in-group (Vezzali et al., 2019), and evidence that this shift in intercultural attitudes and reduction in intercultural apprehension applies to both the individual out-group member level as well as the entire out-group as a whole has been presented (Schemer & Meltzer, 2019).

This shift toward potential behaviors related to interacting with out-groups also made the use of vicarious contact in this study useful for the purposes of testing whether changes to willingness to communicate in a foreign language may be affected as well, and for testing whether changes in intercultural attitudes may also accompany changes to language-use attitudes.

Mazziotta et al. (2011) investigated the role of vicarious contact as a tool for improving intergroup relations. Their study expanded previous research on indirect intergroup contact and provides evidence for an increase in people's willingness for direct intergroup contact when these techniques are used. Two video-based experiments found that vicarious contact improves attitudes towards the out-group and increases participants' willingness to engage in direct cross-group contact. The study suggests that self-efficacy expectancy and perceived intergroup uncertainty are mediating factors in the relationship between vicarious contact and intergroup attitudes. Vezzali et al. (2019) conducted a study aimed at creating a school-based intervention that uses intercultural videos to implement vicarious contact among high school students in Italy. The participants were shown videos created by their peers that depicted intercultural friendships, and their attitudes toward the out-group were evaluated. The study found that vicarious contact through these videos improved attitudes towards the out-group, reduced negative stereotypes, and increased willingness to engage in contact with the out-group. It was also found that projecting oneself onto others was a significant mediator of the effects of the videos on outcomes. The study highlights the potential of using intercultural videos as an engaging and dynamic tool for promoting positive intergroup relations in schools, and therefore its use at the university level should be explored further.

The previous studies conducted related to vicarious contact and its potential benefits were helpful in expanding contact theory and investigating how the observations used in this technique could improve intercultural attitudes. Of particular interest was the finding in Vezzali et al.'s (2019) study that participants imagined themselves as the in-group member while they were watching the videos of the intercultural interactions. This feedback gained from the study demonstrated that vicarious contact can be successful at helping participants identify with the in-group member in the videos and imagine themselves also engaging in such intercultural interactions, which may have also led to the improved attitudes toward out-group members that the study demonstrated. Despite this previous success with vicarious contact, however, this technique is still relatively new, and has yet to explore how issues such as intercultural communication apprehension and attitudes toward foreign language use might be impacted as well. Studies, such as the one described in this article, should continue to build on this previous research and provide evidence as to what other aspects of intercultural attitudes vicarious contact may affect.

Language anxiety and willingness to communicate

Language departments and programs within universities (including EFL courses) can be important settings for discussions of cross-cultural attitudes and shaping positive feelings toward out-group members, including promoting students' motivation toward learning foreign languages. Anxiety in foreign language learning has been studied extensively by researchers such as Horwitz (1986), with the result that now the reduction of language-learning anxiety is something that modern EFL instructors are expected to be conscious of while teaching and preparing lessons. Without proper consideration of language learners in this way (e.g., types of activities used in class, students' potential difficulty with social interactions, etc.), learning outcomes can be negatively affected, with high levels of EFL-related anxiety often leading to poorer results in terms of language acquisition, grades, and more (Hewitt & Stephenson, 2012).

Similarly, modern EFL instructors often must consider the concept of willingness to communicate (WTC), which relates to an individual's level of interest in engaging in use of a foreign language with others (MacIntyre et al., 1998). Researchers in Japan have found that levels of WTC, communication

apprehension, and confidence in EFL use are all interconnected (Yashima, 2002). Judging by these past findings, it can be considered that language anxiety and WTC are crucial to consider when exploring methods for improving intercultural attitudes, and the use of a second language is often critical for engaging with out-group members and working to integrate those communities into host cultures. Therefore, this study gauged these EFL and communication-related attitudes within the survey instrument, posing the question of whether vicarious contact may be effective at targeting issues related to English as a foreign language use as well.

Although concepts related to WTC, language use attitudes and anxiety, and other related topics have been studied extensively (and highlighted in the section above), more studies must be conducted that use techniques derived from psychology and research related to intercultural communication in an effort to explore how interventions (like the use of vicarious contact in this current study) could influence feelings related to foreign language use and anxiety in students.

The current Japanese context

Negative feelings toward out-groups have persisted in Japan, despite the fact that Japan is a leading member of the globalized economy. Sixty percent of Japanese people consider higher immigration rates a cause of increased crime levels (Otake, 2021), despite a lack of substantial evidence for this conclusion. In addition, one in three foreign nationals living in Japan have experienced insults related to their status as out-group members (Ministry of Justice - Japan, 2017). Despite this seemingly widespread negative public sentiment, Japan is expected to increase immigration rates in coming years as the country deals with an aging population and declining workforce (UN Department of Economic & Social Affairs, 2019). However, despite this reality Japan has yet to put into place an effective strategy for improving existing immigration systems (Green, 2017).

Many studies on intergroup attitudes and behaviors, in which foreigners are regarded as an out-group, have been conducted in settings with active international exchange, such as Europe and the United States (Mazziotta et al., 2011). Although contact theory suggests that prejudice can be reduced through direct contact with out-groups, it can be difficult to apply these research methods in countries such as Japan, where few opportunities for direct contact with out-groups exist due to geographical and cultural conditions. Therefore, due to these restrictions, indirect contact approaches (e.g., imagined contact and vicarious contact) are often required, which may be expected to reduce prejudice, improve attitudes, and change behavior even in the absence of direct contact with the out-groups. Previous studies on indirect contact approaches in Japan have focused on the imagined contact theory, which states that imagining friendly contact with members of an out-group can improve attitudes toward the out-group and reduce prejudice (Hu & Takai, 2020). The applicability of imagined contact theory to Japanese people, its influence on the attitudes of Japanese people toward foreigners, and its persistent effect were examined, and its effectiveness has been supported through previous studies.

Hu and Takai (2018) found that Japanese people tend to feel more anxious, rather than feel threatened, toward foreign groups, and tend to be socially distant from out-group members. However, the effects of the imagined contact approach were found to persist outside the laboratory, and therefore the use of these types of interventions appears worth exploring further. Importantly though, simply changing attitudes toward the foreign group to become more favorable does not necessarily lead to friendly direct contact, and the effects of imagined contact faded after about a one-month interval (Hu & Takai, 2020). Furthermore, changes in attitudes among Japanese nationals related to direct contact with foreign groups and changes in behavior during actual direct contact experiences have not yet been clearly identified by previous research. Based on previous evidence, imagined contact effectively alters intergroup attitudes at the cognitive level, such as imagining and thinking, but has only a limited effect in leading to friendly direct contact behavior with the out-group. Therefore, a psychological approach at the behavioral level that provides more engaging audio-visual stimuli and encourages social

learning, such as vicarious contact, is considered necessary to promote favorable out-group attitudes and direct contact behavior in groups such as university students.

Examining this evidence related to the current situation of intercultural relations within Japan, the future of immigration in this country, and the previous findings on the potential for imagined contact to improve intercultural attitudes, more should be done to explore what the optimal interventions in this setting might be. As a way to help with this effort and expand on the previous findings related to the possible benefits of techniques derived from contact theory, this current study explored how vicarious contact might influence intercultural and language-use attitudes in Japan – an area that is still largely unexamined. The previous literature, along with this motivation to continue exploring best practices for positively influencing in-group attitudes toward out-group members and foreign language use, led to the research questions and hypotheses explained below.

Research questions & hypotheses

Based on the aims of the current study and the existing gap in the literature, the following research questions were posed.

RQ1: What impact will a vicarious contact approach have on Japanese attitudes toward out-groups?
RQ2: What impact will a vicarious contact approach have on Japanese attitudes toward English as a foreign language use?

Based on the above literature review, the following hypotheses were also formulated.

H1: After completing the vicarious contact intervention, participants in the experimental group will demonstrate more positive intercultural attitudes and a greater willingness to communicate with out-group members compared to those in the control group.
H2: After completing the vicarious contact intervention, participants in the experimental group will show decreased levels of anxiety related to EFL use compared to those in the control group.

The goal of this current study is to explore the research questions and hypotheses above using the technique of vicarious contact with a sample of current Japanese university students, and observe any changes to both intercultural attitudes and language use attitudes that may occur. As explained in the literature review, this study will help fill the gap in the literature in relation to the effects of vicarious contact in more culturally homogenous societies such as Japan and test the effectiveness of these methods in this particular setting. The study will also help provide evidence as the potential ability to target both the reduction of foreign language anxiety and the reduction of intercultural communication apprehension simultaneously using vicarious contact techniques with university students.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Participants were drawn from two Japanese universities - one in central Japan and the other in eastern Japan. All participants (n = 61) were Japanese undergraduates currently enrolled at the time of the study, with the age of participants ranging from 18 to 26 and the average age being 19.56 years old. Participants were randomly assigned to either the control (n = 28) or experimental (n = 33) groups. There were more male than female participants overall, with the control group including 21 men and 7 women and the experimental group including 22 men and 11 women.

Ethical review procedures were completed and approval given before any data were collected (Ibaraki University Ethics Review Board, approval number: 21K0100). All participants were told of the voluntary

nature of the study, how the study data would be used, the ability to opt out, and other relevant information related to informed consent of participants.

Research instruments and data collection

In order to test for changes in participants' levels of intercultural communication apprehension, willingness to communicate, and anxiety related to the use of English, three standardized measures were chosen to create the survey instrument. These included the Self-Perceived Communication Competence (SPCC) scale (MacIntyre & Charos, 1996), which features 12 questions answered on a 5-point Likert scale, the Personal Report of Intercultural Communication Apprehension (PRICA) scale (Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997), which includes 14 questions answered on a 5-point Likert scale, and the English Language Anxiety Scale (ELAS) (adapted from Mochizuki, 2008), which has 22 questions answered on a 6-point Likert scale. The Self-Perceived Communication Competence scale (SPCC) contains seven factors related to various forms of communication, including Public (presenting to a group of people), Meeting (talking in a large meeting) , Group (talking in a small group), Dyad (talking with an individual), Stranger (talking or presenting to strangers), Acquaintance (talking or presenting to acquaintances), and Friend (talking or presenting to friends), with several items related to each distributed throughout the survey. The other two instruments (PRICA and ELAS) are not divided into subfactors, and instead only the total score from those surveys are used for analysis purposes. In the case of Mochizuki's instrument (ELAS), the original items were related to anxiety about the use of Japanese by foreign nationals living in Japan. The wording of these items was changed to reflect English as a foreign language use to fit the purposes of this study. All survey items were presented in Japanese to ensure the comprehension of participants.

Data were collected electronically using the Qualtrics online survey system, with the first responses given at least one week before the vicarious contact treatment, and then again directly after participants underwent vicarious contact.

Vicarious contact videos

For the purposes of the experiment, the participants were divided into two groups, control and experimental, with separate videos prepared for each group. Each set of videos (three videos for each group) featured two students working together on various university projects, including a class presentation, an open campus event for an English club, and studying together for a test. The control group videos did not feature vicarious contact, and instead consisted of two Japanese nationals discussing these school events in Japanese. The experimental group videos consisted of two actors (one Japanese and one non-Japanese) discussing the same events but in English. For the intent of realism and participant identification with the individuals in the videos, the actors consisted of current university students close in age to the study participants.

The scripts for the videos for each participant group were identical, with the control group scripts translated into Japanese based on the original English (with consistency confirmed through backwards translation by one of the researchers). All videos featured the key components required by contact theory: 1. equal status between interlocutors, 2, a common goal the group is working toward, 3. personal interaction between interlocutors, and 4. support of the authorities in the given scenario (e.g., the academic institution) (Allport, 1954). Video sessions were held using the online video conferencing service Zoom, with meeting times divided based on participant groups.

Experimental design

In order to test H1 and H2, participants were asked to complete the survey instrument at least one week before the vicarious contact or control group videos were viewed, and then again directly after

viewing. In order to not influence the participant responses, concealment of the research aims was necessary. Participants were told that these two components (the survey and the viewing of the videos) were two separate studies – one concerning intercultural attitudes and attitudes toward English use, and another about the creation of videos for the purposes of language teaching. For the purposes of this concealment, participants were asked to complete a short survey about the videos after viewing, but this survey was used for distraction purposes only. Upon completion of the second main survey, the relationship between the two components of the study was presented to participants, along with an explanation of the need for concealment. Considerations for the ethics of concealment for research purposes were followed based on guidelines laid down by Ciccarello (2013).

RESULTS

Paired-sample t-tests were used for each measure to determine whether there was a statistically significant mean difference within the separate participant groups (control and experimental) from before to after the treatment. There were no outliers in any of the data, as assessed by inspection of boxplots. The experimental group and the control group results were normally distributed, as assessed by visual inspection of Normal Q-Q Plots.

First, the researchers tested H1 to determine whether vicarious contact has a positive influence on intercultural attitudes and willingness to communicate with out-group members. A manipulation check was performed on the pre-treatment survey data (n = 61) using an independent-samples t-test to measure any significant differences between the experimental group and control group at the beginning of the study period, as a balance between the two groups in regard to the intercultural attitudes-related variables is necessary for inferences related to any subsequent changes after the treatment to be able to be drawn. For the pre-treatment survey responses to the SPCC (n = 61), there were no significant differences between the control (n = 28, M = 2.43, SD = 0.88) and experimental group (n = 33, M = 2.46, SD = 0.83) participants before the vicarious contact or control treatment, $t(59) = 0.32$, p = 0.38. In addition, for the pre-treatment PRICA responses (n = 61), there were no significant differences between the control (M = 45.29, SD = 10.26) and experimental group (M = 48.82, SD = 9.06) participants before the vicarious contact or control treatment, $t(59) = 1.43$, p = 0.08. Therefore, both groups could be considered balanced in terms of SPCC and PRICA scores before the study treatment was implemented.

The results showed that for the total SPCC scores, the vicarious contact participants (experimental group; n = 33) showed a significant increase between before and right after the vicarious contact treatment, indicating a significant increase in overall confidence related to self-perceived communication skills for that group. When the individual factors within the SPCC were analyzed for changes from before to after the vicarious contact treatment for the experimental group, significant increases were found for the Dyad factor, Acquaintance factor, and Friends factor. See Table 1 for the data related to changes in SPCC scores for the experimental group.

Table 1
Changes to SPCC scores and significant factors from before to after the program treatment in the experimental group (n = 33)

	Before mean	After mean	CI (95%)	t(32)	p	d
SPCC total	2.36(±0.83)	2.50(±0.66)	-0.278, 0.000	2.034	0.025	0.35
Dyad	2.49(±0.95)	2.74(±0.79)	-0.435, -0.050	2.57	0.008	0.45
Acquaintance	2.45(±0.92)	2.61(±0.75)	-0.349, 0.016	1.86	0.036	0.32
Friends	2.67(±1.09)	2.86(±0.77)	-0.400, 0.021	1.84	0.038	0.32

There were no significant differences in terms of total SPCC scores between before and after the treatment in the control group (*n* = 28). Additionally, none of the factors within the SPCC demonstrated a significant change between before and after the control treatment. See Table 2 for the data related to changes in SPCC total scores for the control group. See Figure 1 for a visualization of the changes in SPCC total scores from before and after the treatment in the experimental and control groups.

Table 2
Changes to SPCC scores from before to after the program treatment in the control group (*n* = 28)

	Before mean	After mean	CI (95%)	*t*(27)	*p*
SPCC total	2.43(±0.88)	2.45(±0.79)	-0.271, 0.224	0.197	0.423

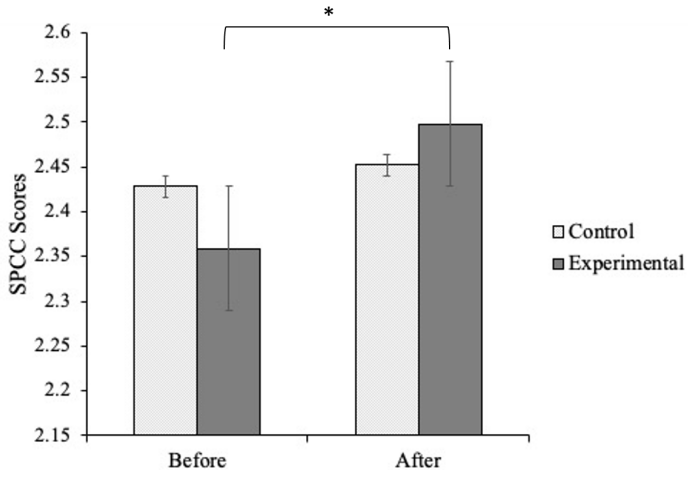

Figure 1 Effects of vicarious contact treatment (or control treatment) on SPCC scores

Note: The SPCC scores in the experimental group (*n* = 33) and the control group (*n* = 28) participants were measured before and after the treatments. The data are mean ± standard deviation. *: $p < 0.05$.

For the PRICA scores, there was a tendency for a reduction within the vicarious contact participants (experimental group; *n* = 33) between before and right after the treatment. A reduction in PRICA scores indicates a reduction in the apprehension related to intercultural communication situations as measured by this instrument. See Table 3 for the data related to changes in PRICA scores for the experimental group. The fact that the PRICA scores only demonstrated the tendency for reduction and did not show a statistically significant reduction in the experimental group is a matter that should be explored in future studies. Perhaps only participating in the vicarious contact treatment once was not enough for significant changes to intercultural communication apprehension to occur, and further training or participation in vicarious contact or other techniques may lead to more significant reductions. The fact that a tendency for reduction was noted in this group is a positive sign however, and indicates further investigation is warranted into how vicarious contact could affect this type of communication apprehension.

Table 3
Changes to PRICA scores from before to after the program treatment in the experimental group (*n* = 33)

	Before mean	After mean	CI (95%)	*t*(32)	*p*	*d*
PRICA total	48.82(±9.06)	47.42(±9.86)	-0.357, 3.144	1.622	0.057	0.28

There were no significant differences in terms of PRICA scores between before and after treatment in the control group (*n* = 28). See Table 4 for the data related to changes in PRICA scores for the control group. See Figure 2 for a visualization of the changes in PRICA total scores from before and after the treatment in the experimental and control groups.

Table 4
Changes to PRICA scores from before to after the program treatment in the control group (*n* = 28)

	Before mean	After mean	CI (95%)	*t*(27)	*p*
PRICA total	45.29(±10.26)	45.93(±9.32)	-3.463, 2.178	0.468	0.32

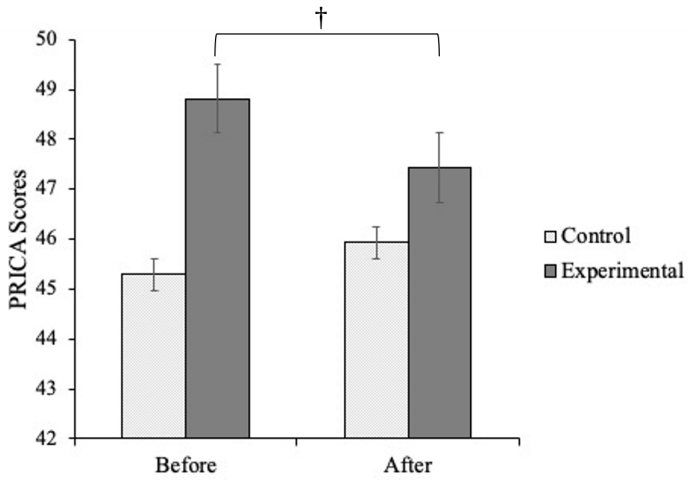

Figure 2 Effects of vicarious contact treatment (or control treatment) on PRICA scores

Note: The PRICA scores in the experimental group (*n* = 33) and the control group (*n* = 28) participants were measured before and after the treatments. The data are mean ± standard deviation. † : $p < 0.10$.

This significant increase in SPCC scores and tendency for reduction in PRICA scores in the experimental group, along with the lack of significant change for both scales within the control group, supports H1 and indicates that vicarious contact treatments hold potential for increasing communication confidence and reducing intercultural communication apprehension for those who engage in it.

Second, the researchers tested H2 to examine whether vicarious contact will have a positive effect on the English foreign language anxiety of Japanese participants. A manipulation check was performed on the pre-treatment survey data (*n* = 61) using an independent-samples t-test to measure any significant differences between the experimental group and control group at the beginning of the study period, as a balance between the two groups in regard to the English foreign language anxiety-related variables is necessary for inferences related to any subsequent changes after the treatment to be able to be drawn. There were no significant differences between control group (*n* = 28, *M* = 88.19, *SD* = 21.67) and experimental group (*n* = 33, *M* = 95.88, *SD* = 20.27) participants before the vicarious contact treatment or control treatment in terms of English Language Anxiety Scale (ELAS) scores, *t*(58) = 1.42, *p* = 0.081. Therefore, both groups could be considered balanced in terms of ELAS scores before the study treatment was implemented.

The results showed that ELAS scores within the vicarious contact participants (experimental group; *n* = 33) showed a significant decrease between before and right after the contact treatment. A decrease in ELAS scores indicates a reduction in anxiety related to English as a foreign language use for these participants. See Table 5 for the data related to changes in ELAS scores for the experimental group.

Table 5
Changes to ELAS scores from before to after the program treatment in the experimental group (*n* = 33)

	Before mean	After mean	CI (95%)	*t*(32)	*p*	*d*
ELAS total	95.88(±20.27)	92.06(±18.83)	0.388, 7.249	2.27	0.015	0.40

Within the control group (n = 28) there were no significant differences in terms of ELAS scores between before and after the treatment. See Table 6 for the data related to changes in ELAS scores for the control group. See Figure 3 for a visualization of the changes in ELAS total scores from before and after the treatment in the experimental and control groups.

Table 6
Changes to ELAS scores from before to after the program treatment in the control group (*n* = 28)

	Before mean	After mean	CI (95%)	*t*(27)	*p*
PRICA total	88.19(±21.67)	90.07(±24.07)	-6.79, 3.012	0.79	0.218

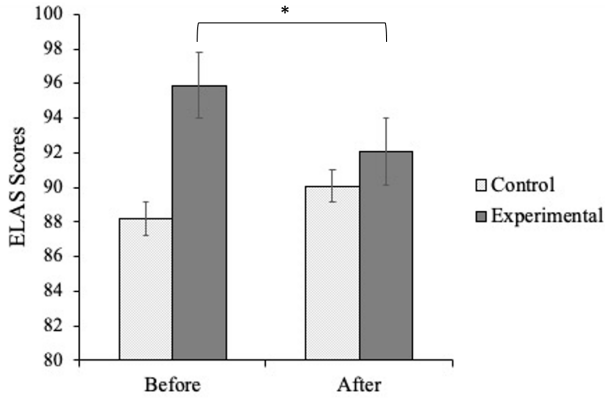

Figure 3 Effects of vicarious contact treatment (and control treatment) on ELAS scores

Note: The ELAS scores in the participants of the experimental contact group and the control group were measured before and after the treatments. The data are mean ± standard deviation. *: $p < 0.05$.

This significant reduction in ELAS scores in the experimental group, along with the lack of significant change within the control group, supports H2 and indicates that vicarious contact treatments hold potential for decreasing anxiety related to English as a foreign language use for those who engage in it. The evidence from this study supporting both H1 and H2 also demonstrates the potential ability for vicarious contact to influence various types of communication-related feelings and cultural attitudes, including the use of foreign languages and confidence related to interacting and communicating with out-groups.

DISCUSSION

Changes to intergroup attitudes and willingness to communicate

There was a significant increase in self-perceived communication competence for the experimental group, which was a positive result of this study. Participants felt more confident about having interactions with out-group members (i.e., willingness to communicate with English native speakers, an out-group in Japan) after the vicarious contact treatment, while the control group showed no significant changes

in these areas. In particular, perceived competence significantly increased within the experimental group participants in relation to talking in small groups, with acquaintances, and with friends for individuals who observed the vicarious contact videos (based on the results for the factors of the SPCC scale). Additionally, there was a tendency to decrease intercultural communication apprehension for the experimental group but not the control group. Although this finding was not significant, the observation of this tendency toward decreased intercultural communication apprehension is positive as well, and indicated that vicarious contact may be able to impact this factor in a meaningful way given the right utilization. The fact that PRICA scores were not reduced to a significant degree is a sign that participating only once in a vicarious contact treatment might not be enough to positively impact intercultural communication apprehension to the degree the researchers hoped. The fact that there was a tendency for reduction is still positive, however, and is evidence that vicarious contact may lead to significant changes if it is repeated or improvements to the precise methodology were made.

Overall, these results indicate that compared to the control, experimental group participants showed improvements in key areas measured by the survey instruments. It provides evidence that the vicarious contact approach has potential to improve the intergroup attitudes of Japanese students to interact with English native speakers, even when they have few direct contact experiences in their daily lives. This result supports findings from earlier studies (e.g., Vezzali et al., 2019) that vicarious contact can affect participants on the cognitive level in regard to intercultural attitudes, likely through the mechanism of observing positive intercultural interactions that feature a member of their in-group. This study also helps fill the gap in the literature that vicarious contact can affect these attitudes related to communicative competence and intercultural communication apprehension in more homogenous countries such as Japan. Therefore, these results support H1.

The results of this study indicate that the vicarious contact approach and the underlying hypotheses of the theory may be effective for Japanese nationals who tend to be reluctant to undergo direct contact with foreign nationals (Mifune & Yokota, 2018), and have few opportunities for actual interaction with out-group members. It was suggested that vicarious contact treatments can lead to confidence for future direct contact with out-groups, as previous studies using only imagined contact techniques have found that participants may consider it difficult to imagine the specifics of contact situations due to limited knowledge of the out-group (Ito, 2021). However, the vicarious contact approach solves this problem by allowing the participants to actually observe intergroup interactions directly and view scenes of friendly interaction between in-group and out-group members. This holds implications for EFL instructors hoping to improve their students' attitudes about English speakers and encourage higher levels of WTC, as viewing videos using the vicarious contact method could be utilized within classroom settings.

Changes to English as a foreign language attitudes

The significant reduction to anxiety related to English language use for the experimental group was a positive finding and provides support for H2. It was shown through this study that the use of vicarious contact can significantly reduce feelings of anxiety related to English as a foreign language use, likely as a result of observing the positive interactions between the Japanese national and foreign national in the videos discussing school projects in English. The fact that this study has helped provide evidence of a method that can help reduce English language use anxiety is a positive one, as many instructors are searching for more effective methods for aiding students within their courses in this way. What is noteworthy is that the experimental design did not target English language use or learning attitudes directly, or attempt to provide participants with language support or frame the videos as an exercise toward improving their English abilities. For the purposes of concealment, the videos were framed in the context of language-learning materials development, so the viewing aspect was presenting in a more metalinguistic fashion regarding their usefulness as teaching aids in general. As was noted in the literature review, anxiety related to foreign language learning can have a serious and negative impact

on the ability for students to learn and succeed when learning English as a foreign language, and these feelings of anxiety can be especially impactful during speaking and listening activities (Hewitt & Stephenson, 2012). The researchers therefore would like to encourage others to continue exploring this technique of vicarious contact for foreign language anxiety reduction purposes, as the need for such interventions is clear.

The vicarious contact approach may be a much more indirect method for targeting English as a foreign language-related anxiety and other EFL-related attitudes than techniques used in previous studies related to English education, and helps support the idea that language anxiety is complex and related to other internal phenomena in learners (including intergroup and intercultural attitudes). Previous researchers, such as Yashima et al. (2009) have demonstrated that EFL-related anxiety is correlated with language use motivation, gender, and other factors, but previous attempts at reducing anxiety have largely focused on targeting English attitudes or learning methods directly. The evidence provided in this current study that attitudes related to English language use can be targeted with more indirect means, such as vicarious contact approaches centered on intergroup attitudes, is promising, and offers further tools for language instructors and other educators to use in improving EFL teaching approaches and potentially raising language learning and language use motivation levels among students.

Examining the results of this current study as to how vicarious contact approaches can be effective at targeting attitudes toward both EFL use and feelings related to members of out-groups, the incorporation of these techniques within university course curricula is an area that should be explored further. Although for EFL teaching purposes videos of foreign nationals speaking English may often be used for listening or discussion practice, videos featuring both members of the students' in-group (non-native English speakers) and members of the English-speaking community may not be as common, and therefore materials development for the specific purposes of vicarious contact has potential for both EFL teaching and WTC-raising/anxiety-reduction purposes.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the researchers believe that the use of vicarious contact on university students is a methodology that holds potential for the improvement of intergroup attitudes and reduction of anxiety related to EFL learning and use. The methods used in this study could be used in a variety of settings, as the video viewing aspect of vicarious contact can be conducted online and could easily be repeated within various international education contexts. It can be argued, based on these findings, that vicarious contact treatment has the potential for application as psychoeducational training for intergroup attitude improvements in Japan and beyond. In the future, it is hoped that researchers in Japan and other contexts will continue to develop the vicarious contact approach further and explore its practical application in EFL education settings.

The researchers of this current study would argue, therefore, that language instructors in Japan, Asia, and other settings may see the potential of addressing intercultural attitudes and the use of vicarious contact techniques in the effort toward encouraging students to study foreign languages, as well as attempt direct communication with out-group members (i.e., English speakers) in their countries and abroad using their second language. At the institutional level, the researchers would encourage universities and other centers of learning to continue exploring and potentially adopt vicarious contact approaches within language-learning curricula, with the potential end result of improvements to learning outcomes and decreased anxiety within students related to using the new languages they have acquired. With some preparation and the cooperation of both in-group and out-group member students studying at a teacher's host institution, vicarious contact videos could be created that match a particular cultural setting and could be used within language teaching environments. The potential power of vicarious contact techniques, as demonstrated by this research and other previous studies,

is that intercultural attitudes can be improved to significant degrees, and at the same time these materials could be used for both language-teaching purposes and foreign language anxiety reduction purposes. With this wide potential for having a positive impact on a variety of factors in the lives of language learners around the world, the need to use and continue studying vicarious contact techniques is clear. The importance of supporting exploration of vicarious contact treatments at the institutional level as well should be considered, as the wide-scale viewing of these types of positive interactions (e.g., as part of whole-school training sessions, lessons aimed at all incoming students, etc.) between in-group and out-group members could allow these benefits toward intercultural and language learning attitudes to be spread to an even wider degree.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

As a technique that has so far had limited use in the realm of intercultural communication and second language acquisition research, the effectiveness of vicarious contact on improving student attitudes toward out-group and EFL use should be investigated further. Although the sample size used in this study (n = 61) was considered robust enough for the research purposes, replication studies should be conducted to provide further evidence about the effectiveness of vicarious contact in Japan and in other contexts with few chances for intergroup contact. Although the findings could be considered potentially generalizable in other settings, further studies must explore the effectiveness of vicarious contact in environments outside of Japan that also display limited access to out-group members on a daily basis. In addition, the effectiveness of vicarious contact should be explored with larger samples of student populations both at the university and other educational levels both inside and outside of Japan, as the results of this current study need to be tested through replication studies and within a variety of cultural contexts.

A potential limitation to the study was the researchers' lack of ability to enforce the exact timing of the participants answering the second application of the survey instrument (after the vicarious contact treatment was complete). Due to the nature of conducting this study over Zoom and having a methodology that required remote explanations for participants at several different universities, the use of online surveys using Qualtrics, and other aspects of our study design, the researchers could not confirm that all participants took the second survey directly after viewing the vicarious contact (or control) videos, with participants being asked to complete the survey sometime during the same day (after completion of the video portion of the study). Although the researchers found no evidence that this variation in completion of the second survey affected the results, future studies should attempt to standardize the exact timing of the application of survey instruments upon completion of the vicarious contact treatment. Such enforcement may require in-person treatment models, although the use of the Zoom format may have benefited this study through ease of participation. Finally, the current study did not examine the long-term effects of vicarious contact, as it was designed to only examine whether the vicarious contact had an effect on Japanese students in regard to these attitudes. The sustainability of vicarious contact treatment over longer time scales through longitudinal studies should be examined in future research.

Through this current study, evidence has been provided that vicarious contact may be a powerful tool for positively influencing the attitudes toward interacting with out-group members, feelings about communication competence in a variety of settings, and anxiety related to the use of a foreign language like English. This evidence should encourage institutions, educators, and other researchers to continue exploring the potential benefits vicarious contact might hold in these fields and for the lives and educational prospects of students around the globe.

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Data accessibility: https://figshare.com/s/d38eda7bbf432f6fa600

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Action Research on Providing Effective Student-Centered Feedback in a Transnational Pedagogical Context

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Abstract

Formative feedback is essential in the development of students' writing skills. However, despite its acknowledged importance, challenges persist in feedback perception differences and translation into improvements. To address them, this action research study adopts a student-centered approach and aims to investigate the effectiveness of student-centered formative feedback in a transnational pedagogical context, particularly its impact on students' engagement and self-regulation in revising academic writing. The participants were a cohort of Year 1 Chinese students from an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program of an English-medium-instruction university. Pre- and post-intervention questionnaires, interviews, and observations were employed to gather the data and three interventions were implemented based on the pre-intervention investigation. The results indicate that by adapting formative feedback in the way students prefer, their engagement and perceptions concerning the clarity and comprehensibility of feedback were improved. In addition, a writing workshop offering general feedback and guided instruction was well-received by students by bridging understanding gaps within time constraints. Lastly, self-regulation practices were implemented, which motivated students to actively interpret feedback, set revision goals, and take proactive steps, though not without limitations. Rationales and future suggestions for interventions designed to improve feedback effectiveness will be shared to optimize formative feedback practices.

Keywords: Language assessment, Formative feedback, Student-centered learning and teaching, Action research

INTRODUCTION

Writing skills in academic contexts have received much attention in recent years. Writing serves as a fundamental tool for honing academic communication abilities, allowing students to effectively articulate their thoughts, ideas, and arguments with coherence (Irvin, 2010). Moreover, it serves as a catalyst for cultivating critical thinking skills, as writing assignments necessitate students to critically analyze diverse perspectives and ideas, thereby enhancing their capacity to formulate well-reasoned arguments (Irvin, 2010). However, despite all the benefits, mastering academic writing poses considerable challenges for first-year non-native-speaker students in university settings, owing to factors such as language proficiency levels, cultural influences, and educational backgrounds (Kruse, 2003). In addition, the challenges arise from the fact that academic writing requires them to transfer their general writing skills to the specific discipline, to 'use discipline-specific rhetorical and linguistic conventions' (Berkenkotter et al., 1991, p. 19). Particularly for students enrolled in English-medium-instruction (EMI) institutions with aspirations of furthering their studies in English-speaking countries, proficiency in English academic writing becomes imperative.

Within the framework of this study, the focal point is the year one English for Academic Purposes (EAP) module. This module, spanning the academic year, is strategically designed to cater to the specific

linguistic and communicative needs of students transitioning into academic discourse. In consideration of the needs for academic writing, one of the learning outcomes of the module was to enable students to produce written texts for academic purposes. To fulfill this objective, the curriculum incorporated two formative writing coursework tasks aimed at nurturing writing skills. Initially, students were tasked with composing a formative writing coursework in the form of a body paragraph, followed by receiving comprehensive feedback from instructors during tutorials. Subsequently, during the winter holiday, students started writing an essay for the first time, with general feedback provided in semester two week two. The rationale behind this pedagogical design was to encourage students to actively engage with formative feedback, reflect on areas for improvement, and apply acquired knowledge to enhance subsequent writing assignments.

However, a pertinent inquiry arises: Do students genuinely engage with the feedback provided? According to the observation from the previous semesters and my discussion with peer teachers, most students came to the tutorials without even reading the written feedback, let alone revising their drafts accordingly. Neither did they bother to think about what to do with their writing after tutorials. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate how to augment students' engagement in the formative writing process.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Formative feedback

Formative feedback plays a pivotal role in cultivating writing skills and critical thinking. Carless (2006) identifies it as a key characteristic of quality teaching, as it provides students with insight into the gap between their work and the expected standard (Arts et al., 2016), with which, students can generate better work and develop their writing skills for the future (Van Heerden et al., 2016). In addition, to enhance the effectiveness and engagement of it, feedback should not only identify areas for improvement but also offer solutions (Lundahl, 2014), elicit understanding of how to use it to develop (Wiliam, 2011), and foster metacognitive thinking and reflection (Wiliam, 2011; Topping, 2010). Furthermore, Sadler (1989) raises three conditions for effective feedback: a clear understanding of the standards, the ability to compare their work against these standards, and the initiative to close the gap between them. Similarly, Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) propose seven principles (Table 1) for good feedback practice.

Table 1
Seven principles of good feedback practice

Good feedback practice:
1. Helps clarify what good performance is (goals, criteria, expected standards);
2. Facilitates the development of self-assessment (reflection) in learning;
3. Delivers high quality information to students about their learning;
4. Encourages teacher and peer dialogue around learning;
5. Encourages positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem;
6. Provides opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance;
7. Provides information to teachers that can help in shaping the teaching.

Source: Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006).

Student-centered approach and formative feedback

Student-centered learning emphasizes active student involvement in the learning process, encouraging them to connect new knowledge with prior understanding and engage in discussions with peers (Brophy, 1999, p. 49). Teachers facilitate learning by empowering students to take responsibility for their own learning, guiding their actions and thoughts, ultimately enabling them to construct their

own knowledge (Overby, 2011). With its potential to cultivates desired skills from critical thinking to problem solving, along with the increasing student population and diverse learning experiences, student-centered learning has gained growing interests in higher education (Todorovski et al., 2015).

However, while formative feedback is integral to the learning process, it is often a one-way transmission from teacher to student, lacking a student-centered approach in higher education (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). There is a need to shift from a teacher-dominated model to a student-centered one, empowering learners to actively construct their own knowledge and skills (Barr & Tagg, 1995), while the teachers act more as facilitators (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

Self-regulation and effective feedback

Self-regulation, according to Zimmerman and Kitsantas (2014), means that learners plan and use thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to achieve their personal goals. In tertiary education, multiple studies have proved that high self-regulation ability can enhance students learning outcomes (Kauffman et al., 2008; Tsai et al., 2011). Therefore, effective feedback should raise students' awareness of self-regulation and empower them to become self-directed learners. Hattie and Timperley (2007) also emphasizes the importance of feedback in facilitating students' ability to plan and utilize their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to achieve personal goals. In this situation, self-regulated learners should firstly interpret external feedback actively, then or at the same time, generate their internal feedback and set goals. They also take actions to use the feedback to achieve their goals and become high achievers (Butler & Winne, 1995). This is in correspondence with what Sadler (1989) has argued for formative feedback to be effective. In order to make this happen, teachers should design pedagogical strategies to scaffold the development of self-regulation (Chen & Hwang, 201; Zheng et al., 2018).

Empirical studies

Despite the guidance provided by existing literature, empirical studies have revealed several challenges associated with formative feedback. Teachers and students often hold differing perceptions of feedback (Adcroft, 2011), and issues such as delayed, general, or vague feedback have been identified (Carless, 2006). Additionally, Arts et al. (2016) points out that students frequently struggle to comprehend the rationale behind feedback and its relevance to assessment criteria, leading to a lack of guidance on actionable steps for improvement. These shortcomings undermine the intended purpose of formative feedback, which is to facilitate learners' ongoing development (Van Heerden et al., 2016).

In light of these concerns and my personal reflections, this study aims to address three research questions.

Before Intervention

1. What are the students' perceptions and preferences regarding formative feedback in EAP writing?

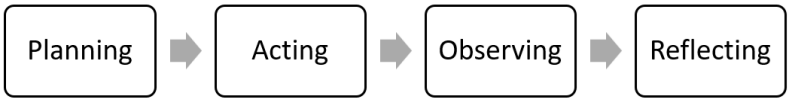
After Intervention

1. What is the impact of student-centered formative feedback in students' motivation and engagement in the revising process?

2. Does scaffolding self-regulation enhance students' engagement with formative feedback?

METHODOLOGY

To address these research questions, the study adopts an action research approach, drawing inspiration from Williams et al. (1948).



Context

As mentioned in the introduction, students received formative feedback twice before the research started: individual feedback on a body paragraph and general feedback on an essay. However, the results were not satisfactory because students did not take the feedback seriously or act on it to improve. Therefore, this research was conducted in the second semester from Week 5 to leverage another opportunity for providing feedback. In Semester 2, students were required to complete a summative writing assignment, which presented a chance to conduct the action research. For this assignment, students submitted an initial draft by Week 6, received feedback from their instructor by Week 8, and participated in one-on-one tutorials before submitting their final draft.

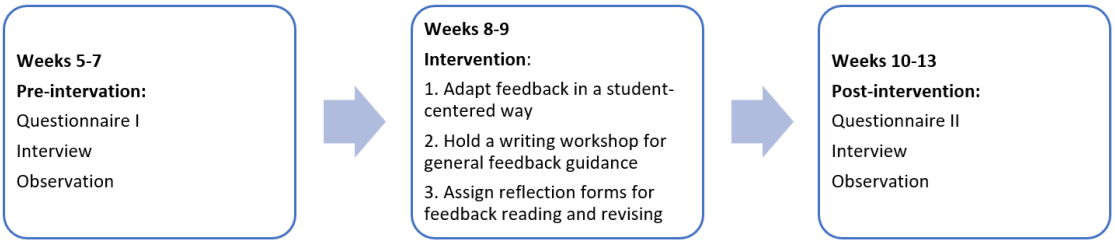
According to school policy, students were assigned to a new class taught by a different teacher in the second semester. This meant that feedback was also given by different teachers in the two semesters. The table below outlines the details.

Table 2

Feedback	Time	Feedback giver
Individual feedback on a body paragraph	In Semester 1	Teachers of their previous class
General feedback on an essay	In Week 2, Semester 2	The researcher
Individual feedback on an essay	From Weeks 5–13, Semester 2	The researcher

Instruments

Questionnaires, interviews, and observations were conducted both before and after the interventions. Questionnaire I and a pre-intervention interview were employed during Weeks 5 and 7 to gather students' perspectives and insights based on their experiences in Semester 1 regarding formative feedback. Subsequently, based on the data acquired and drawing on the seven principles of Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006), three interventions were implemented during Weeks 8 and 9. These interventions included adapting feedback in a student-centered way, holding a writing workshop for general feedback guidance, and assigning two reflection forms adapted from Huttenga (2022) for feedback reading and revising. Following the interventions, Questionnaire II and a post-intervention interview were used to assess the effectiveness of the methods employed. Additionally, observations were conducted to better understand students' preferences and the effects of the feedback on their behavior.



Participants

40 Y1 students on the EAP module completed the questionnaires voluntarily and anonymously. Twelve of them also volunteered to be interviewed.

RESULTS

According to the results of questionnaire I, as shown in Figure 1, students expressed a strong preference for receiving feedback on organization and coherence, followed by paraphrasing and grammar. In terms of feedback types (Figure 2), students indicated a desire for specific feedback that encompasses both positive and constructive aspects, although they showed a greater preference for constructive feedback.

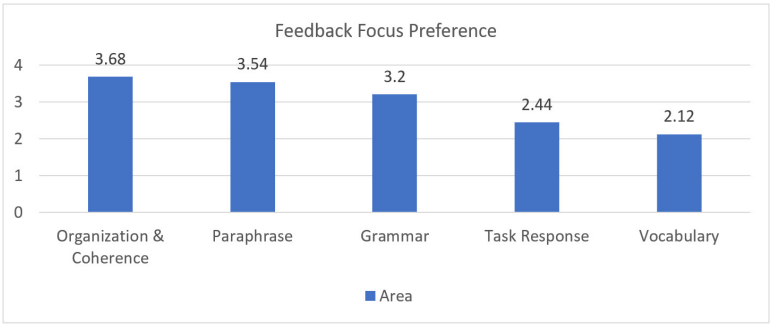


Figure 1

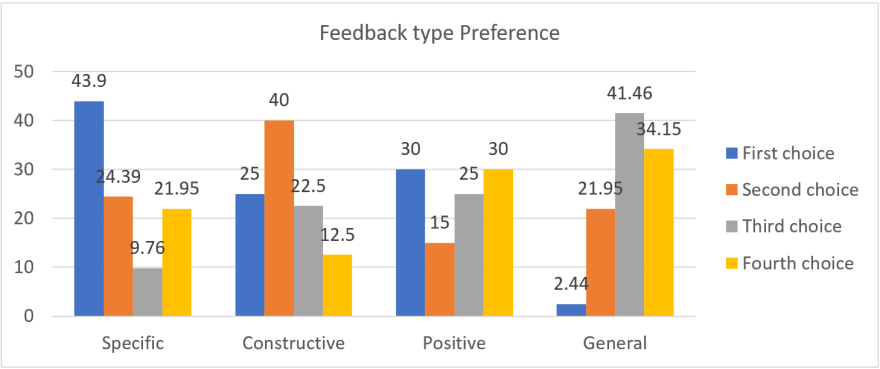


Figure 2

When queried about their understanding of the feedback received, the scores indicated a moderate level of comprehension, averaging around 4 out of 5. Nonetheless, these scores still reveal certain areas for teachers to consider. Also, when students were asked for suggestions in the questionnaire, several responses revolved around uncertainties in their understanding and a desire for additional guidance.

In terms of anticipated future benefits, the average score remained at approximately 4. Students commented that the revisions made based on the feedback did not leave a lasting impression, and they even struggled to recall the feedback they had received in the previous semester.

Based on the findings, a series of interventions were implemented in response.

Intervention 1: Adapting feedback in a student-centered way

To align with students' preferences, the feedback was tailored in a student-centered manner. This involved incorporating specific examples to enhance understanding and placing emphasis on aspects such as organization, coherence, paraphrasing, and grammar. The feedback encompassed both constructive criticism and positive reinforcement. To provide students with clearer guidance on how to proceed, suggested priorities were highlighted with a different color, along with suggested solutions and tools. The effectiveness of this intervention was evident from the results presented in Table 3, where students expressed a high level of engagement with the feedback, as indicated by scores above 4.5.

Table 3

Positive	4.75
Constructive	4.63
Task	4.78
Organization & Coherence	4.63
Grammar	4.55
Vocabulary	4.55

Intervention 2: Holding a writing workshop for general feedback guidance

A writing workshop was conducted to aid students in comprehending the feedback and knowing how to implement it. The workshop commenced with guidance on a feedback checklist, followed by detailed explanations of specific comments and demonstrations of potential solutions through examples. This workshop was well-received by the students, as evidenced by their improved understanding of feedback and the teacher's expectations (Figure 3). More than half of the students found the workshop highly beneficial, while none expressed disagreement.

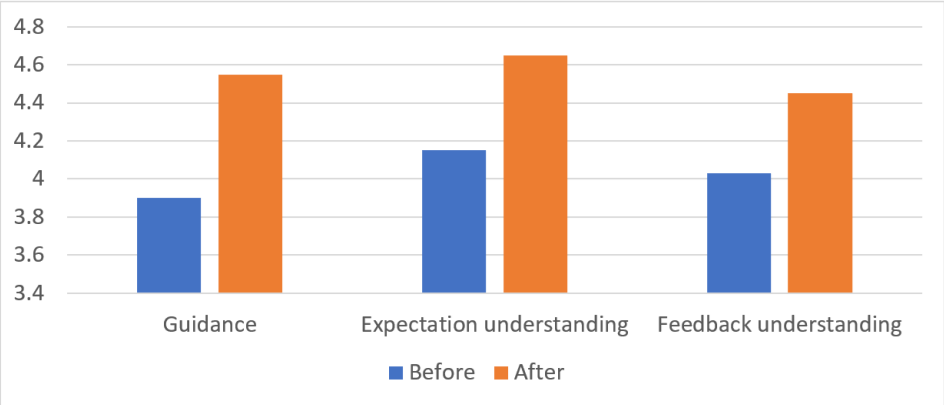


Figure 3

Intervention 3: Assigning reflection forms for feedback reading and revising

Two reflection forms adapted from Huttenga (2022) were assigned to foster self-regulation among students. After receiving the feedback, students completed the first reflection form, wherein they recorded their questions and specific action points for revision. This exercise aimed to raise their awareness of interpreting and internalizing the feedback, enabling them to generate internal feedback based on the external feedback. A total of 34 out of 40 students completed the form as required, and it seemed to motivate them to take action, as those who completed the form also revised their drafts before coming to the tutorials. The average score for students' opinions on the benefits of this form was 4.65 out of 5, indicating an overall positive response. However, three students chose 'neutral' and two chose 'disagree.'

In interviews, students mentioned that while the form was helpful in organizing their thoughts and motivating them to take action, some found it repetitive since the necessary steps were already provided in the teacher's comments.

After the revision process, students completed a second reflection form to contemplate their revision process, outlining what they did, how they did it, and why. They also reflected on how they could apply their newfound knowledge to improve their future writing. Perceived benefits from this form were higher compared to the previous one, with an average score of 4.75 out of 5, and all students expressing agreement or strong agreement. Students believed that this form facilitated review, deepened their understanding, and aided in retention. Some indicated that they might consult the form before future writing tasks, although their certainty varied. Overall, the two reflection forms seemed to have enhanced the utilization of teacher's feedback (Figure 4).

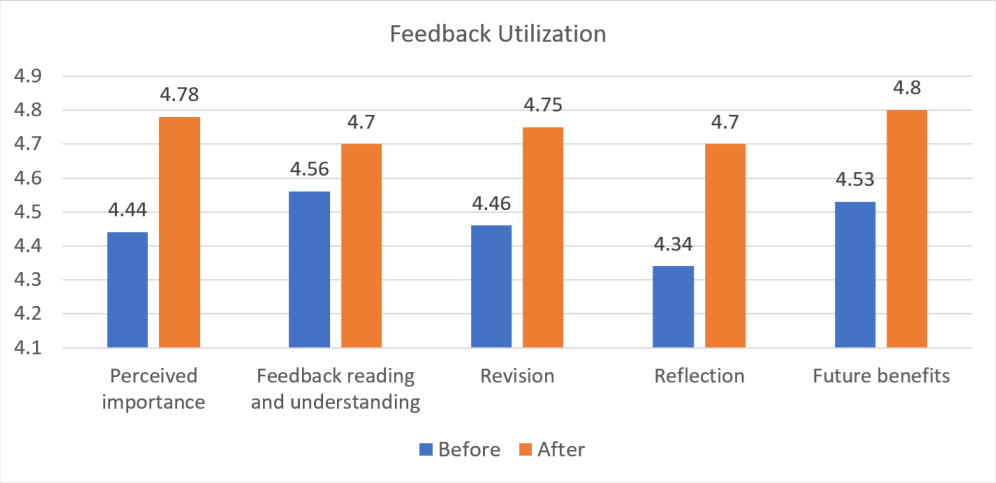


Figure 4

DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

Regarding the first intervention, soliciting students' opinions and preferences initiated a dialogue between teachers and students (Laurillard, 2002; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). This approach demonstrated that the teacher valued their input, creating a platform for students to share their ideas and questions while receiving guidance. Addressing students' questions directly motivated them to read and act upon the feedback (Jones, 2011), thereby enhancing their self-regulation and the effectiveness of the feedback received (Bloxham & Campbell, 2010).

The preference for organization and paraphrasing expressed by my students could be attributed to several reasons based on my observations and interviews. Firstly, since this was their first experience writing a complete essay, they often felt uncertain about the structure they should follow. Similarly, with paraphrasing, they were introduced to the techniques only in the second semester. Furthermore, they believed that focusing on revision in these two areas would be more practical compared to grammar and vocabulary. Language issues could permeate the entire essay, making it challenging to elevate the overall quality. Interestingly, in the initial survey, most students considered vocabulary to be the least important area, assuming they could rely on translation tools for assistance. However, after receiving feedback, they were not as satisfied with the vocabulary feedback as they had anticipated, as indicated by the lowest satisfaction rate of 4.55. This suggested that students may have underestimated their vocabulary-related issues and still required guidance from the teacher.

Additionally, students expressed a preference for specific feedback accompanied by examples. Such personalized feedback conveyed individualized care from teachers and facilitated better understanding, particularly when dealing with technical terms. It also helped students identify their own errors when they were unable to do so independently. For instance, when a teacher commented on "poor academic style," students needed specific examples of informal usage to grasp the concept accurately. This need was also heightened in an EMI setting, where feedback was delivered in English rather than their native language, adding cognitive load. Hence, specific examples with explanations significantly aided students' understanding.

Furthermore, students welcomed both positive and constructive feedback, aligning with previous research findings (Lunsford, 1997; Freeman & Lewis, 1998). Positive feedback fostered confidence and prevented demotivation (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006), while constructive feedback provided quality information for identifying areas for improvement, a key characteristic of formative feedback. When providing constructive feedback, in addition to pointing out areas requiring improvement, teachers should also provide corrective advice. By telling what students should do and how they should approach it, it guided students to take appropriate actions.

Intervention 2, the writing workshop, was positively perceived by Chinese students. One student highlighted that they were accustomed to receiving instructions from teachers rather than exploring on their own. In this case, a writing workshop provided them with a sense of security. This practice was also efficient and effective, especially under time constraints. In my case, one-on-one tutorials lasted only ten minutes each, insufficient to address all issues. The writing workshop focused on addressing common mistakes and providing model examples as solutions, thereby clarifying criteria and expected standards (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006) and saving time for more individualized issues during the tutorials. Additionally, positive examples used in the workshop helped students understand the assessment criteria and teacher's expectations more tangibly, enabling them to emulate desired writing standards (Orsmond, Merry, & Reiling, 2002).

Intervention 3, the two reflection forms, offered another opportunity for dialogue between teachers and students. These forms allowed students to pose questions and receive answers later, enabling teachers to assess whether students correctly understood the feedback and provide confirmation. This interaction empowered students to confidently take appropriate actions and see the desired effects on their writing. Both parties actively engaged in constructing meaning and discussions, transforming the process into a less unidirectional path for students. By encouraging students to self-reflect, ask questions, and take action, the two forms effectively provided scaffolding for students' self-regulation.

Specifically, Form one scaffolded students in reading, interpreting, and internalizing the feedback, motivating them to initiate the revision process and close the gap (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). This cultivated awareness and appreciation for formative feedback, fostering beneficial habits for future learning. However, some students noted that when the teacher's comments were already clear and explicit, Form one seemed redundant. Form two supported students in self-reflection, consolidating their acquired knowledge and skills, enabling them to apply these not only to the current piece but also to future writing tasks. Despite recognizing the benefits of reviewing completed forms, students expressed uncertainty about actually doing so due to the challenge of keeping the print version. Therefore, adopting an electronic version or having students create physical writing portfolios for future practices was recommended based on their feedback.

LIMITATIONS

Although the results seem satisfying in terms of student engagement and self-regulation enhancement, this study has two limitations. First, the comparing conditions were not the same. Previously, students

received feedback for the formative coursework, which would not be marked and counted toward their final grade. Thus, they may have felt less pressure to read the feedback and act on it. By contrast, in Semester 2, they needed to receive feedback on a summative writing coursework, which was related to their grade. This could be an important factor in why students were more engaged and self-regulated.

Furthermore, since students had different teachers for the two semesters, the feedback provided by different teachers might have played a role in the varying results. Each teacher may have employed distinct instructional strategies, assessment criteria, or personal styles when giving feedback, which could have affected the students' motivation, engagement, and self-regulatory processes differently.

To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of teacher feedback strategies on student engagement and self-regulation, future research should aim to set more controlled conditions. This would involve ensuring that the comparing conditions are identical, such as by implementing a grading system that is consistent across all participants and assigning the same teacher to provide feedback to all students. By addressing these methodological limitations, a clearer picture of the factors influencing student engagement and self-regulation in writing coursework can be obtained.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study successfully addressed the research questions posed. For the first research question, the findings indicated that students preferred receiving formative feedback on organization and coherence, followed by paraphrasing and grammar. However, teachers should strike a balance and not neglect other aspects based on individual cases. In terms of feedback types, students expressed a strong preference for specific feedback with explanations and examples to help them comprehend and act upon the feedback provided. The inclusion of both positive and constructive feedback was crucial to enable students to enhance their work without feeling discouraged.

Secondly, the implementation of student-centered formative feedback demonstrated its effectiveness in improving students' motivation levels in terms of reading and interpreting the feedback, thereby enhancing their engagement. By tailoring the feedback to students' preferences and needs, teachers can enhance students' engagement and commitment to the revision process. Moreover, the writing workshop, which provided general feedback, proved to be particularly valuable for students. It allowed them to receive guidance on feedback checklists and provided explanations and model examples to address common mistakes. The workshop served as an effective method for closing gaps in understanding within limited time constraints.

Lastly, the adoption of strategies to scaffold self-regulation practices by teachers proved beneficial in improving students' utilization of feedback, not only for their immediate revisions but also for their future writing endeavors. By providing reflective tools and opportunities for students to actively participate in the feedback process, teachers facilitated students' development of self-regulation skills and their ability to independently apply feedback to improve their writing.

In the future, while retaining most of the interventions that have proven successful, I propose several recommendations for improvement. Firstly, I plan to consolidate the two forms into a single electronic format, which will enhance efficiency and ease of review for students. By streamlining the process, students will have a more seamless experience when engaging with their coursework. Allocating dedicated class time for students to work on their assignments can encourage a higher completion rate among students. This dedicated time will serve as a reminder and create a sense of accountability, prompting students to actively engage with their writing tasks. Additionally, I intend to introduce a timeline for students to self-monitor their progress throughout the assignment. This self-regulatory

strategy will enable students to track their actions and milestones, fostering a greater sense of ownership over their learning process. By incorporating this element of self-reflection and self-assessment, I aim to enhance their self-regulation skills. Finally, I strongly believe in the power of self-evaluation and peer feedback. By implementing these practices, students will have the opportunity to assess their own work against the given criteria and provide constructive feedback to their peers. This not only encourages a deeper understanding of the assessment criteria but also nurtures their ability to become effective assessors themselves. Ultimately, these measures will greatly contribute to the development of their self-regulation skills and overall growth as writers.

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Appendix I Questionnaires

Questionnaire I

Introduction:
The purpose of this questionnaire is to explore your perceptions and preferences regarding formative feedback on your writing. Your responses will be used to inform the development of more student-centered formative feedback practices. Please reflect on the feedback you have received for EAP writing coursework in semester 1 and choose the item that can best describes your feelings.

Perceptions of feedback
Clarity of feedback

1. I have received guidance on how to understand and use feedback.
   1-very little 2-a little 3-somewhat 4-quite a lot 5-a very great deal
2. I understand the marking criteria for my writing.
   1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly agree
3. The feedback I received contained specific examples to help understanding.
   1-very little 2-a little 3-somewhat 4-quite a lot 5-a very great deal
4. The language in the feedback I received was easy to understand.
   1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly agree
5. Feedback tells me what the expectations of the lecturer are.

Developmental

6. The comments helped me focus on areas I could improve.
7. The feedback was on not just what was wrong, but also what to do about it.
8. The comments made me think further about the topic.
9. The comments I received could also be used in my future assignments.

Encouraging

10. The feedback identified what I did well.
11. The feedback recognized the efforts I had made.
12. The feedback motivated me to study.

Tutorial

13. I received sufficient help from my teacher during the feedback tutorials.
    1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly agree
14. I was able to have some comments clarified by the teacher.

Preferences of feedback

15. Please rank the areas of feedback that you think you need most.

Task response	
Organization & coherence	
Grammar	
Vocabulary	

16. Please rank the areas of feedback that you think you need most.

Positive	
Constructive	
General	
Specific	

Feedback utilization
Usefulness of feedback
Written Feedback

17. I believe the written feedback for my writing from the teacher is _____.
    1-not at all important 2-unimportant 3-neither important nor unimportant 4-important
    5-very important
18. I read and understand the feedback on my writing.
    1-very untrue of me 2-not really true of me 3-don't know 4-a little bit true of me
    5-very true of me
19. I revised my writing according to the feedback after I receive it from my teacher.
    1-very untrue of me 2-not really true of me 3-don't know 4-a little bit true of me
    5-very true of me
20. Feedback has helped me to reflect on what I have learned.
    1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly agree
21. I use the writing feedback to improve my future writing.
    1-very untrue of me 2-not really true of me 3-don't know 4-a little bit true of me
    5-very true of me
22. Are there any challenges you face in utilizing the feedback you receive on your writing assigment?
23. What are your suggestions for improving feedback on this module?
24. Do you have any other comments or suggestions?

_____

25. Are you willing to participate in a follow-up interview?
If you do, please leave your contact information (email) here:_____

Questionnaire II

Introduction:
The purpose of this questionnaire is to explore your perceptions and preferences regarding formative feedback on your writing. Your responses will be used to inform the development of more student-centered formative feedback practices. Please reflect on the feedback you have received for EAP writing coursework in Semester 2 and choose the item that can best describes your feelings.

Clarity of feedback

1. I have received guidance on how to understand and use feedback.
    1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly agree
2. I understand the marking criteria for my writing.
    1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly agree
3. The feedback I received contained specific examples to facilitate understanding.
    1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly agree
4. The language in the feedback I received was easy to understand.
    1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly agree

Usefulness of feedback
Written Feedback

5. The feedback I received was sufficient.
   1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly agree
6. The feedback I received provided me with useful suggestions for improvement.
   1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly agree

Tutorial

7. I received sufficient help from my teacher during the feedback tutorials.
   1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly agree

Type of feedback

8. Rate how much you like to have this type of feedback (1-least, 5-most)

Positive	1	2	3	4	5
Constructive	1	2	3	4	5
Task response	1	2	3	4	5
Organization & coherence	1	2	3	4	5
Grammar	1	2	3	4	5
Vocabulary	1	2	3	4	5

How much did you use the feedback

9. I acted on the feedback accordingly after I receive it from my teacher.
   1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly agree
10. Feedback has helped me to reflect on what I have learned.
   1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly agree
11. I use the writing feedback I have received to plan for my future writing.
   1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly agree
12. Do you have any other comments or suggestions?

_____

13. Are you willing to participate in a follow-up interview?
If you do, please leave your contact information (email) here:_____

Appendix II Reflection Forms

Student Reflection of Feedback Form

Now that you have been given feedback on this piece, please perform all of the following steps and respond to the following questions.

☐ What is the topic of the writing?_____

☐ Carefully read the feedback you received for this piece.

1. What questions do you have for the teacher that you need clarified?
2. Based on this feedback, what *actions* could you take to improve your work for? (write down at least 3 actions)

- Keep these actions very specific and measurable. E.g., *I will deliberately use at least two supporting details for each supporting idea* is more specific and easier to measure than *I will use more supporting details.*

- Arrange them according to the importance. The first one should be the most urgent action step.

	Action point
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

Adapted from Huttenga (2022)

Student Proof of Revision Form

Using your previous Feedback Reflection forms please perform all of the following steps and answer the questions completely.

1. Below, list the action points that you created for yourself. Next to each action point, write an excerpt from your piece which you believe strongly showcases the results of incorporating that action into your writing.
2. In the third column, write down the effects of each action point have on your piece. In your response, please frame this effect either on the piece as a whole, or the effect you believe it will have on the reader's experience

Action point	*Excerpt Selection*	*Action Effect*
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

3. What was the most difficult part of writing this piece? What are the proudest part in this piece?
4. What has this revision process taught you (Things you will try to incorporate into your future writing)? Remember, keep these actions very specific and measurable.

Adapted from Huttenga (2022)

LGBTQIA+ Diversity and Inclusion in the Language Classroom

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Abstract

Martha Nussbaum's central human capabilities highlight the importance of affiliation. This can be summarised as being able to live with, recognise and have empathy for others, in addition to treating and being treated with self-respect, dignity and fairness without discrimination "on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, caste, religion, national origin and species" (Nussbaum, 2007. p.4). Diversity and inclusion are essential for everyone to feel a sense of belonging, to feel safe, respected and heard. During Pride Month events, workshops and special-themed classes are often held in educational environments; however, outside of Pride Month LGBTQIA+ issues may often be absent, especially from curriculum and classroom materials. Fostering an LGBTQIA+ inclusive environment does not demand expertise but instead awareness and a willingness to educate oneself and create opportunities for students and colleagues. As educators who wish to create learning environments which are both safe and nurturing for all, consideration must be given to the impact of overlooking LGBTQIA+ issues. This paper is a reflective discussion and thematic analysis of three educators' experiences integrating LGBTQIA+ issues in the classroom and navigating numerous challenges. It provides strategies and recommendations based on the findings and existing literature for other educators who are interested in creating a more diverse and inclusive space, whilst adding to the ongoing discussion on the importance of these issues in education.

Keywords: Diversity and inclusion, Belonging, Inclusive education, LGBTQIA+, Safe spaces, Intercultural communication

INTRODUCTION

Diversity and inclusion are essential for human beings to feel a sense of belonging, to feel safe, respected and heard (Allen et al, 2021). Fostering an LGBTQIA+ inclusive environment does not demand expertise, but rather an awareness and willingness to educate oneself. Educators who wish to create learning environments which are both safe and nurturing for all must consider the impact of overlooking LGBTQIA+ issues in their teaching practice. As LGBTQIA+ issues continue to be at the forefront of social justice and the fight for equity and quality in education, it is the responsibility of all educators to take steps towards fostering safe and inclusive spaces for all.

In the language classroom, LGBTQIA+ issues may be brought up directly or indirectly during instruction. Even if teachers do not prepare these topics or feel qualified to discuss them, students might ask about them. Even if teachers do not explicitly include issues related to diversity and inclusion, they need to

be prepared. Students may be asked to be global citizens who think about the world beyond their classroom - do they know what is going on in the world around them and can they talk about these issues? Are they interested in news and current events? Some language classrooms may task students with discussing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or human rights, and students need to have both understanding and linguistic knowledge of these issues in order to participate. The language classroom is a place where students can learn about the work that needs to be done for equality for all, be more knowledgeable about the world around them, and prepare themselves for a future in which understanding, equality, and empathy are paramount. Finally, intercultural communication and competence are necessary skills that educators should be fostering, especially in a language classroom.

In this paper three educators share their experiences, challenges and reflections on creating a diverse and inclusive environment in the language classroom in Japan, as well as their participation in a learning community dedicated to LGBTQIA+ awareness at the university where they worked. The purpose of this research is to use narrative analysis to identify commonalities in themes across reflections. The findings will then be used in combination with literature to identify recommendations for other educators interested in incorporating LGBTQIA+ topics, knowledge, and awareness into their institutions, both inside and outside of the language classroom setting.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations General Assembly, 1948), Article 26 states:

> Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups [...] Education is not only a human right but a gateway which leads to the realisation of multiple freedoms that have an impact not only on the individual but the community as a whole.

This demonstrates the fundamental responsibility educational institutions have in ensuring that they meet these requirements. As laid out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), it is further outlined that education should develop and prepare students for life in a free society in which there is understanding, respect of human rights, equality of sexes, and peace and friendship among all groups of people regardless of their background. While the focus of this convention is on those under the age of 18, further and higher education institutions should continue to support and promote this education as it becomes no less important as students age.

The importance of dignity, freedom and well-being through choice, human agency and opportunity has been demonstrated extensively in the works of capability theorists Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum. Nussbaum's ten central human capabilities is based on the work of Sen who considered human rights from a social justice perspective. Sen's capability approach focuses on the freedoms individuals have based on their capabilities (what they are able to do) and not their functioning (what they could or have the right to do) (Robeyns & Byskov, 2023). Nussbaum further developed this theory with her list of ten central human capabilities which she argued was a moral entitlement for all to live a dignified life (Robeyns & Byskov, 2023). The list consists of the following capabilities: life; bodily health; bodily integrity; senses, imagination and thought; emotions; practical reason; affiliation; other species; play; and control over one's environment (Nussbaum, 2007). Originally created to explore inequalities between nations, the list has been utilised both at the international and national levels to analyse social inequality and human rights on women, the poor and people with disabilities (Nussbaum, 2007). For educational institutions this list can be utilised to guide education and ensure that learning environments are not only supportive but conducive to students' wellbeing and development. When focusing on

LGBTQIA+ issues within education, the importance of the capability affiliation is crucial as it focuses on the ability to live with, recognise and have empathy for others, whilst treating and being treated with self-respect, dignity and fairness without discrimination. For students and indeed all those in the educational environment to feel safe, respected and a sense of belonging, inclusion and diversity needs to be in every space.

The importance of showing up for LGBTQIA+ students and colleagues is paramount, with research on LGBT individuals and mental health consistently showing that people in this community are at a higher risk than their heterosexual peers of experiencing higher distress and are more likely to self-harm, attempt suicide and succeed in suicide (Glazzard & Stones, 2021; Jadva, 2023; McDermott et al, 2024; Miranda-Mendizábal et al., 2017). In Japan, a recent survey conducted by the non-profit organisation ReBit reported that 48.1% of youths between 10-19 experienced suicidal ideation while 14% of this group had attempted suicide and 38.1% had self-harmed (ReBit, 2022). This data was contrasted with that taken from The Nippon Foundation's 4th Suicide Awareness Survey in 2021 which showed that LGBTQIA+ youths (when compared to their heterosexual peers), experienced suicidal ideation 3.8 times more and attempted suicide 4.1 times more (ReBit, 2022). This well-established body of literature and the ongoing research that continues to be published should be a grim reminder that LGBTQIA+ inclusion cannot and should not be ignored by educators and their organisations in Japan.

Studies focusing on protective measures and support for LGBTQIA+ students in schools has shown that awareness raising, creating supportive and inclusive environments, and taking an official stance against discrimination is crucial (Jadva, 2023; McDermott et al, 2024; Russel et al, 2021). Furthermore, educational organisations need to support student autonomy by facilitating and providing opportunities for students to be involved when these provisions are being outlined (McDermott et al, 2024). This demonstrates the importance of empowering students; placing them in decision-making roles equips them with the skills necessary to "[respond] to the changing world and social landscape of interpersonal relationships with compassion, self-awareness and emotional intelligence," thus emphasising their capabilities (Dellenty, 2019, p. 96). In turn, these experiences have the potential to prepare students for life outside of the familiar realm of school life, where challenges could be amplified by the harsh realities the LGBTQIA+ community often faces. Through education, we can nurture the basic human capabilities, rights and needs of marginalised students and emphasise their importance as leaders.

BACKGROUND

LGBTQIA+ issues in Japan

At present Japan does not have an LGBTQIA+ inclusive curriculum nor are LGBTQIA+ topics explicitly integrated into the national curriculum. This is reflective of national legislation and the lack of laws which both limit the rights and protections of LGBTQIA+ individuals. Japan provides the illusion of being LGBTQIA+ friendly with Pride celebrations taking place in its major cities, non-legal same-sex partnership certificates offered (in some areas), and laws which do not criminalise same-sex acts between consenting adults (Amnesty International, 2021). However, Japan is the only G7 nation which does not recognise same-sex marriage and lacks non-discrimination protection of LGBTQIA+ individuals (Amnesty International, 2021). This illustrates the limitation of freedoms of those in the LGBTQIA+ community in Japan. Furthermore, it demonstrates the way in which the government treats this community as though they are second-class citizens undeserving of basic human rights such as the freedom to express themselves and love who they love without legal protection or recognition.

Institutional context

The university where the three authors of this paper worked, however, does have some support for LGBTQIA+ individuals through a group on campus. The Rainbow Forum is a learning community in the university's self-access learning centre (SALC), which meets once a week during lunchtime. Learning communities are typically created and organised by students. However, the Rainbow Forum is something of an exception; teachers also join and organise events and activities. Lunchtime meetings include social time, discussions on LGBTQIA+ issues, and planning events on campus. Over the years, the Rainbow Forum has hosted movie nights, collected English and Japanese language resources for Pride Month, and created interactive displays and posters to teach on a variety of topics from introducing pronouns to sharing LGBTQIA+ culture. Everyone is welcome to join the learning community, and weekly meetings typically include Japanese students, international exchange students, and faculty members. Members can join as much or as little as they would like. The Rainbow Forum has a dedicated Google Classroom with resources, links to LGBTQIA+ media recommendations, news articles, and even an anonymous question and answer form. Finally, it is important to note that though teachers are present, students are empowered to take leadership when it comes to generating ideas, participating in events, and maintaining the positive environment of the learning community.

METHODOLOGY

This is a small-scale qualitative study that explores the experiences of the three authors through narrative analysis. First, reflections were written with the following prompts in mind:

- What were our roles in the Rainbow Forum learning community?
- How did our involvement affect us both personally and professionally?
- What were some challenges we encountered?
- What did we take away from the experience?

Although the questions above were used to guide the writing, the authors were careful not to influence or interfere with the reflection process by writing individually, as they wanted to authentically express each of their unique perspectives.

The reflections then underwent a text analysis through an inductive approach, and recurring codes (sub-themes) were identified across reflections. After the codes were marked using open-source qualitative research tool, Taguette, the integrative framework for belonging by Allen et al. (2021), was employed to sort each code into the four major components: competencies for belonging, opportunities to belong, motivations to belong, and perceptions of belonging. Together with Nussbaum's concept of affiliation, this framework could use belonging as a measurement to further explore the "different social, environmental, and temporal contexts and experiences" found in each of our reflections (Allen et al., 2021, p. 8).

REFLECTIONS

Author 1: Andria (she/her)

In 2018 I started a full-time position at a university in Japan, and not long after was invited by a fellow teacher to join the Rainbow Forum Learning Community during lunchtime. I had always considered myself an ally to the LGBTQIA+ community but had never put my allyship into practice. It was at Rainbow Forum that I learned the importance of showing up to meetings and listening to members of the community. I gradually became more active, eventually becoming a co-leader of the learning

community when the original organisers moved on. As a co-leader, we created a Google Classroom to share resources with students and faculty, organised movie nights, created displays for Pride Month, and during the academic year in which COVID-19 shifted everything online, we continued to keep Rainbow Forum active by hosting weekly meetings on Zoom.

As my involvement grew, I became cognizant that more could be done to support the LGBTQIA+ community, even in seemingly small ways. During the first year of COVID-19 when all classes were taught online, I noticed that a few colleagues included their pronouns in parentheses directly after their name. I quickly did the same, and hoped that modelling this best-practice would encourage both students and colleagues to follow suit. Students occasionally asked about the inclusion of my pronouns on Zoom (usually in breakout rooms or during office hours), and I was more than happy to raise awareness and explain that it was a small step towards being more inclusive. It was also during this time that Instagram announced that users would be able to include pronouns in their profile (Instagram, 2021). It felt to me like this was the beginning of a cultural shift in which it became common to share pronouns, however Japan, and my university, still felt far behind. This may be because educators don't understand why pronouns are important (especially if their pronouns match their perceived gender identity) or don't know how to discuss them with colleagues and students. They might feel they need qualifications or expertise to discuss pronouns in the context of LGBTQIA+ identities, or they may feel that the cultural or linguistic differences of Japanese students makes the subject difficult to understand.

After we returned to face-to-face instruction, I wanted to encourage the shift toward sharing pronouns, especially since I noticed that some colleagues were being addressed with the wrong pronouns. I felt that as an ally I could remove some of the emotional labour that these colleagues faced by bringing up the issue myself. I hoped that if our university normalised the sharing of pronouns among faculty and staff, this would trickle down to the students and we could create a more inclusive environment for everyone. However, there was not a lot of institutional support and the onus was placed on teachers at the individual level to introduce pronouns and educate others on pronoun use. For me, this meant including my pronouns when I introduced myself on the first day of class, encouraging students to share their pronouns, and including pronouns in my email signature to all students, faculty and staff. During Pride Month, our Rainbow Forum Learning Community designed and displayed posters about pronouns to raise awareness, and also gave away pronoun buttons/badges for students and teachers to wear on their clothing or on their bags or backpacks.

Through all of this I learned that allies can (and must) create a more inclusive environment for everyone through their actions. Change can be slow at the institutional level, but individuals can still make an impact and changes can begin in the classroom.

Author 2: Sammy (they/them)

When I first arrived in Japan in 2014, there was a sense that mainstream discussion of LGBTQIA+ topics was still in its infancy. The proliferation of Western-influenced LGBT terminology began to noticeably accelerate in 2010, which contributed to an increase in widespread national discourse (Fotache, 2019, p. 28). As a queer educator of colour from Canada, I had experienced working in institutions where these conversations existed openly and frequently in the form of student events and professional development activities. Entering a new professional and cultural context in Japan, I felt that while there was acceptance, understanding was still on its way; heteronormative ideology often contributed to a feeling of being misunderstood, unseen, and without a safe space to be myself both as an individual and a professional. In such situations, many of us in the LGBTQIA+ community opt to hide away, to close off from the world and operate in a way where we cannot be truly authentic. Questions formed through assumptions about my personal life ("do you have a girlfriend?") were unavoidable in the English language classroom, especially at the elementary and junior high school level where questions

about romantic love were naturally hot topics. Even more difficult to navigate were conversations with coworkers who only sought to build stable, friendly connections. In retrospect, it can be easy to take an ethnocentric approach and paint all of these experiences abroad in a negative light. However, years later, I feel that the acceptance I felt early on was key to incorporating diversity and inclusivity into my educational repertoire and allow both students and colleagues to understand where I was coming from.

Several years later in spring 2022, I started at a workplace which, for the first time in my career in Japan, had a dedicated group for LGBTQIA+ individuals and allies. Although its presence was and still is limited in ways, the impact that the Rainbow Forum has in the context of the university is profound; it continues to provide education, exposure to LGBTQIA+ issues, and a safe space for both students and teachers to be themselves in a context where they otherwise would not feel comfortable doing so. It is here that I learned the true importance of community. After attending regularly and connecting with people of all walks of life, I began to slowly feel emboldened in other aspects of school life. Seeing other students and teachers alike bravely share their pronouns when introducing themselves had me reflect: why could I not do the same? I had every right to exist as I am in every space, and so I began to share mine in the classes that I taught. Doing so made me feel seen by my students, and soon enough they were sharing theirs with me.

To me, this simple action is one of defiance, one that rebels against societal norms that have for so long limited the dignity, freedom, and well-being of minorities in the LGBTQIA+ community at large. By claiming space and authentically sharing who we are with our students and colleagues, we fight against forced societal definitions of who we are or ought to be; as Denny (2010) puts it, “as we mark who we are, we signify the operation of social and cultural forces on us” (p. 88). In short, both our right to self-determination as individuals and autonomy as students and educators are put at risk by not having the support necessary to be our true, authentic selves. Started as a learning community for students, the Rainbow Forum has evolved to support all members of the university community. Its true beauty, as seen through my experiences and those of many others, lies in its ability to empower LGBTQIA+ individuals to find their voices, validate their experiences, provide a safe space for them to be themselves, and to educate the school community at large. It has become my mission to continue the work of the teachers who started the learning community and someday operate at a larger scale in the context of the university.

Author 3: Michelle (they/them)

Having lived in Japan as a child in the late 1990s, I had grown up experiencing an absence of LGBTQIA+ education, acknowledgement and representation in schools, which had little changed during my time teaching in a small Japanese city at public schools in 2012. As part of the LGBTQIA+ community I experienced firsthand the impact that a lack of legal protection and legislation can have on life here. This included being advised during my JET orientation that ‘staying in the closet’ as a teacher may be the best and easiest option, being told by my Board of Education that I would need to find my own guarantor as they did not have the ability to support a same-sex couple, and being told by my university employers that they were unable to sponsor or support a visa for my same-sex spouse. Of course, while I understand that these organisations are bound by Japanese law and are limited in their capacity to take action, the lack of follow-up support, guidance, after care and empathy of being in those situations was inexcusable. During these emotional and challenging moments, and in the absence of legislation, were some incredible members of the LGBTQIA+ community and allies who offered support. It was a reminder of the importance of community in the face of adversity and what encouraged me to be more active in the LGBTQIA+ community here in Japan.

While the educational curriculum in Japan is not inclusive of LGBTQIA+ issues, I have taken action to include LGBTQIA+ representation and education into my language classroom and surrounding

environment at every opportunity. My undergraduate thesis focused on taboo issues in the language classroom and explored why teachers avoid particular topics (politics, sex and sexual orientation, and drugs). My research concluded that while teachers saw the benefit and believed in the importance of the inclusion of these topics, they were often hesitant to include them for fear of offending students or instigating uncomfortable discussions. However, the benefits far outweigh the negatives and as educators it is our responsibility to provide students with a safe space and the opportunity to discuss topics which are not only relevant to daily life but reflective of our experiences and the world we live in. Which is why when I worked in the Japanese public school system, my monthly English board display included positive LGBTQIA+ stories alongside other news, in addition to creating Pride displays and teaching students and staff vocabulary and terminology. Sharing these experiences with other English teachers, I found allies and individuals keen to integrate these topics into their own spaces which started an exchange of materials and ideas for how else we might push back to a system that renders a community invisible. The feedback I (and my colleagues) received from our schools was positive and sparked clear interest which led to interesting conversations and unexpected interactions, further demonstrating the need for LGBTQIA+ topics to be given the space it deserves.

In British universities, LGBTQIA+ spaces in the form of social and activist groups are the norm and Pride events are often hosted with special events, workshops and guest speakers from the LGBTQIA+ community. As I began a new job in 2018 at a city-based university outside of Tokyo, I expected at a minimum, for there to be an LGBTQIA+ group and for the university to recognise and celebrate Pride. The absence of this was disappointing; however, I quickly learned that while there was not an official LGBTQIA+ group, there was a learning community called the Rainbow Forum. The English lecturers told me that they had created this group following a lack of support when trying to meet the university's requirements in forming an official group. My first experience with the Rainbow Forum was during my first semester where I joined a weekly lunchtime meeting with a few students and staff who gathered to share lunch and conversation. The atmosphere was peaceful and safe, with opportunities for all present to raise topics they were interested in, ask questions or present ideas for future meetings. During my time at the university, I became an active member before becoming a co-leader. The Rainbow Forum has flourished over the years and become an active community that hosts events, raises awareness and provides a welcoming environment for students and staff to join. I proudly describe the existence of this group as blossoming in protest against those who have failed to provide the LGBTQIA+ community with the same protection, recognition and space that everyone deserves.

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Table 1
Theme 1: Competencies for belonging

Author	Passage	Sub-theme
1	"It was at Rainbow Forum that I learned the importance of showing up to meetings and listening to members of the community."	awareness, community, empathy, prosocial behaviour
2	"...I had experienced working in institutions where these conversations existed openly and frequently in the form of student events and professional development activities."	awareness, community, cultural competence, prosocial behaviour
3	"... my monthly English board display included positive LGBTQIA+ stories alongside other news, in addition to creating Pride displays and teaching students and staff vocabulary and terminology. [It] sparked clear interest which led to interesting conversations and unexpected interactions…"	awareness, cultural competence, prosocial behaviour

The first theme discusses competencies for belonging, which are the social skills necessary to cultivate awareness, emotional and behavioural regulation, and abilities such as active listening (Allen et al., 2021; Blackhart et al., 2011). Awareness was a sub-theme that was present in all three accounts. In the case of authors 1 and 2, awareness can be interpreted as a form of personal and professional development where both educators gained knowledge, experience, and/or new skills and abilities through particular events. In the account of author 3, it is clear that their activities were meant to raise awareness of LGBTQIA+ topics for their students and other staff who may not have had prior knowledge or exposure to such topics. Moreover, all three accounts highlight the open communication around LGBTQIA+ topics and issues experienced at educational institutions past and present.

All three experiences show instances of prosocial behaviour, where action is taken for the benefit of other people. This is perhaps closely linked to factors such as cultural competence and empathy, which can be regarded as social skills necessary to forming and raising awareness. The prosocial nature of these actions may support the idea that resources in the form of a learning community, groups, and educational displays are not only attempts at creating safe spaces for LGBTQIA+ students and staff, but also important ways to raise awareness, gain key competency-related skills, and spread cultural competence at educational institutions. It appears that all of these factors coalesce to show that school climate, which research shows is an important indicator of the well-being and mental health of students, relies heavily on the awareness both held and raised by teaching staff (Heck et al., 2014).

Table 2
Theme 2: Opportunities to belong

Author	Passage	Sub-theme
1	"Change can be slow at the institutional level, but individuals can still make an impact and changes can begin in the classroom."	initiative, leadership, in/out of classroom, support (lack of)
2	"It has become my mission to continue the work of the teachers who started the learning community."	community, empowerment, initiative, leadership, out of classroom
3	"While the educational curriculum in Japan is not inclusive of LGBTQIA+ issues, I have taken action to include LGBTQIA+ representation and education into my language classroom and surrounding environment at every opportunity."	initiative, in/out of classroom, leadership

The second major theme involves opportunities to belong, which Allen et al. (2021) argue go hand in hand with competencies: we may have the ability to connect with others, but without opportunity we are deprived of the necessary "groups, people, places, times, and spaces that enable belonging to occur." Across all reflections, it was evident that initiative was taken both inside and outside of the classroom to introduce and integrate inclusive practices, make LGBTQIA+ representation more visible, maintain a sense of consistency with community, and create institutional change from the ground up. A lack of institutional support was identified in all reflections. Although this can be seen as a negative aspect, the lack of support from the top seems to have empowered each author to take on various forms of leadership out of the necessity to create more opportunities for community, awareness, inclusivity, and–the theme that ties them all together–belonging. Despite barriers being identified at the social, political, and institutional levels, an attempt to override or remove these obstacles through individual action was apparent in each reflection.

Table 3
Theme 3: Motivations to belong

Author	Passage	Sub-theme
1	"I felt that as an ally I could remove some of the emotional labour that these colleagues faced by bringing up the issue [of pronoun usage] myself."	awareness, community, cultural competence, empathy, inclusivity, initiative, leadership, respect
2	"It is here that I learned the true importance of community. After attending regularly and connecting with people of all walks of life, I began to slowly feel emboldened in other aspects of school life."	acceptance, community, cultural competence, empowerment, inclusivity
3	"My first experience with the Rainbow Forum was during my first semester where I joined a weekly lunchtime meeting with a few students and staff who gathered to share lunch and conversation. The atmosphere was peaceful and safe, with opportunities for all present to raise topics they were interested in, ask questions or present ideas for future meetings."	acceptance, community, empowerment, inclusivity, safety

The third theme addresses motivations to belong, or the social desire to make connections with others. Many of the insights from this analysis are deeply connected to the removal of barriers that allow for opportunities to belong. A common sub-theme (or motivation) that was found was the need for inclusivity. Author 1, who identifies as an ally, exhibited a strong sense of moral obligation and responsibility to address the issues surrounding pronoun usage that her queer colleagues experienced. This is perhaps motivated by both empathy and a need or desire to connect with colleagues and students in an authentic manner. Author 2's motivation to belong to the learning community is seemingly based on a need to connect with a diverse group of people while gaining acceptance and a sense of empowerment. Similarly, author 3 shares the initial positive impression the Rainbow Forum left on them, and the resulting sense of acceptance and safety that presumably motivated them to keep attending and, eventually, allowed them to become a co-leader.

Table 4
Theme 4: Perceptions of belonging

Author	Passage	Sub-theme
1	"...I wanted to encourage the shift toward sharing pronouns, especially since I noticed that some colleagues were being addressed with the wrong pronouns."	authenticity, awareness, empathy, inclusivity, support
2	"...heteronormative ideology often contributed to a feeling of being misunderstood, unseen, and without a safe space to be myself both as an individual and a professional. In such situations, many of us in the LGBTQIA+ community opt to hide away, to close off from the world and operate in a way where we cannot be truly authentic."	authenticity, safety (lack of), support (lack of)
3	"As part of the LGBTQIA+ community I experienced firsthand the impact that a lack of legal protection and legislation can have on life here. This included being advised during my JET orientation that 'staying in the closet' as a teacher may be the best and easiest option…"	authenticity, support (lack of)

The fourth and final theme deals with perceptions of belonging, which is how an individual thinks and feels about their experiences and whether they belong in certain social contexts (Allen et al., 2021).

Author 1 discusses her perceptions of belonging as they pertain to others, particularly her colleagues who were misgendered through the use of incorrect pronouns. Author 2 identifies a dominant ideology that could explain author 1's observations, and further explains barriers to belonging and authentic social interactions in both personal and professional situations. Author 3 expands on these perspectives by commenting on social and political aspects that affected their ability to participate as a member of society in a way that was true to themselves. The common thread that runs through these reflections is authenticity, especially in the way that individuals perceive themselves to be seen by particular communities in light of social, political, and cultural ideologies. Furthermore, each reflection touched on ideas of support, whether given or lacking.

DISCUSSION

Through the use of the four major components of the integrative framework for belonging, our analysis revealed that awareness, prosocial behaviour, empathy, initiative, support (given and lacking), and authenticity were all major sub-themes in the reflections.

FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

In the reflections, awareness, empathy, and prosocial behaviour were often influenced by activities that occurred outside of the language classroom. These are a vital part of how competencies for belonging are formed. In particular, social and emotional competence are attributed to how well teachers can create positive classroom climates and are typically characterized by a high degree of social awareness, cultural sensitivity, and prosocial values (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Positive educational environments, in turn, create more opportunities for belonging among teachers and students. The interpersonal stability and sense of belonging offered by supportive communities within an educational institution are particularly beneficial for language learners, and further benefits can be seen when they are given the opportunity to interact and collaborate with other English speakers (Finley, 2018). There is further evidence that out-of-class learning affects students in positive ways, including an increase in critical thinking, humanitarianism, and interpersonal and practical competence (Guo, 2011; Kuh et al., 1994). These skills and abilities contribute to Nussbaum's (2007) definition of affiliation, which describes the ability to "live with and toward others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings," and to partake in social interaction (p. 23). These are all essential to student success in a classroom setting, regardless of the subject.

In addition to language learner benefits, our analysis may also highlight the benefits of belonging and affiliation for educators. In her reflection, author 1 surmises that educators at her institution may have felt under-qualified when it came to discussing pronouns with colleagues and students. In the field of EFL as a whole, LGBTQIA+ topics are often not explicitly represented in materials, are heavily influenced by heteronormative ideology, or are distilled into one simplified unit of study (Seburn, 2018). These factors create barriers to awareness and understanding of LGBTQIA+ topics and can lead to hesitation and a lack of confidence among educators when discussions spontaneously come up in classrooms (Rhodes & Coda, 2017). Furthermore, hesitance or unwillingness to create a safe space to address these topics in the classroom can drive students who are interested or affected directly to seek knowledge and conversations elsewhere (Paiz, 2019). Along with being major sources of belonging and affiliation, communities and other safe spaces that exist outside of the classroom can then be seen as the key to gaining awareness and understanding of LGBTQIA+ topics and issues among both educators and students. As displayed in the reflections, a greater sense of belonging and affiliation that permeates the classroom setting from the outside in can allow educators and students to show up in an empowered and authentic way. This, in turn, results in greater awareness, acceptance, and empathy for one another, which in turn may be the first step toward greater inclusivity at an institution and a vehicle for positive change.

LIMITATIONS

The small-scale, short-termed nature of the reflections may have limited the scope of our findings. Future research may benefit from reflections gathered over a longer period of time (i.e. a full academic year). Additionally, the insights of other teachers and students could contribute to a more accurate and detailed picture of belonging and affiliation as it pertains to diversity and inclusion at this particular institution.

CONCLUSION

This reflective paper has provided a first-hand account of three English language university lecturers' experiences in integrating LGBTQIA+ issues into their educational environments and their experiences in being part of their institution's LGBTQIA+ learning community. The reflections shared by the three authors provides insight into each individual's background, experience with the LGBTQIA+ community, their role and actions taken within the Rainbow Forum, and how this experience has impacted and inspired them. The resulting analysis provides insight into how concepts of belonging and affiliation affect educators and students both inside and outside of the classroom environment.

Existing research illustrates the sad reality of LGBTQIA+ individuals experiencing distress, self-harm, attempted suicide and success in suicide at a rate multiple times that of their heterosexual peers (Glazzard and Stones, 2021; Jadva, 2023; McDermott et al, 2024; Miranda-Mendizába et al.l, 2017). LGBTQIA+ inclusion in education is crucial in meeting the UN's requirements that education should focus on the development of students in respecting the human rights and freedoms of others (United Nations General Assembly, 1948). The first step is an increased effort on the part of educational leadership to include greater LGBTQIA+ representation in curriculum and classroom materials that so often overlook these marginalised voices. Everyone deserves to feel safe, included, and respected regardless of their background. Nussbaum's (2007) list of ten central human capabilities outlines ten key areas that must be satisfied for people to live dignified and fulfilled lives.

As human beings we have a responsibility to show love and compassion to others, and as educators we have a responsibility to develop, foster and nurture these in our students. It is the duty of educators to cultivate an environment that is unwaveringly inclusive and celebratory of the diverse individuals that inhabit it, even in the presence of opposing voices and perspectives that may stem from "personal, political, faith-based or any other form of prejudice" (Dellenty, 2019, p. 95). Without this steadfast leadership and protection, the rights and needs of students cannot be guaranteed or fulfilled, which in turn affects their educational opportunities. We hope that by sharing our own stories, we can help empower other educators to make a positive difference in their institutions and, more importantly, in the lives of their students, colleagues, and communities at large.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are a number of strategies that can be employed in the language classroom to ensure better representation of LGBTQIA+ voices. First, materials created for use in the language classroom can be more mindful of including LGBTQIA+ references for greater representation. This includes shows, movies, books, articles, and other relevant media. This is referred to as "queering" the materials, and Paiz (2019) suggests that this can be achieved by "incorporating locally constructed, authentic materials" that undergo careful revision and are scaffolded appropriately in the classroom (p. 6). One simple example of material creation is the use of extensive reading adapted from young queer literature (Merse, 2015). Creating writing prompts and research project assignments that provide the students with opportunity for deeper thought and critical thinking about LGBTQIA+ issues could also be an easy

way to be more inclusive with already existing activities and practices. In our context and on a larger scale, local organisations such as Pride House Tokyo, which is a fantastic information centre set up in 2018 to educate the public and "...create a permanent safe space for the next generation of LGBT youth", can be contacted and collaborated with to create appropriate, informed, and authentic classroom content (Pride House Tokyo, n.d.). By promoting external organisations, educators can create real-world connections to the content they are teaching in their respective institutions, thus showing students the importance of learning about LGBTQIA+ content and becoming active and involved members of the community.

An important point to consider is the representation of not only negative aspects of the community, but also positive ones, too. In particular, members of the Rainbow Forum enjoyed watching and discussing LGBTQIA+ themed shows such as Heartstopper, which sheds light on serious topics such as mental health, bullying, and transphobia, but also depicts compelling LGBTQIA+ characters that are happy and in love. It is important for students to see these positive aspects in order to envision a world–the one they exist in–where these situations can and do exist harmoniously. Alongside popular media, celebrating and acknowledging LGBTQIA+ events such as Pride month and awareness days also helps to educate and foster a greater understanding of the issues and challenges still faced by the community. This also ensures that LGBTQIA+ topics are not covered as one-off units of information in the classroom, but rather weaved into everyday life. This is essential to challenging potentially damaging heteronormative narratives that exist in so many materials and ensuring that students acknowledge diversity as being an inherent and positive trait of society. As mentioned extensively, asking students for preferred names and pronouns is one simple way of taking action toward diversity and inclusivity in the classroom, as it gives them an opportunity to come as their authentic selves. As educators, pronouns can be incorporated in email signatures, syllabi, and through the use of name badges. Finally, small gestures such as using LGBTQIA+ themed badges, keychains, and stickers can help show students that you are an ally and/or safe person to approach.

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Some Common Errors in Pronunciation Made by the First- Year English Majored Students at Faculty of Foreign Languages at Hanoi Metropolitan University, Vietnam

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Abstract

Like learners of English elsewhere in Vietnam, students at our university encounter great difficulties in learning English pronunciation. Most of them find that Vietnamese speakers find it more difficult to pronounce words correctly in English because English speakers pronounce the last sounds or lax and tense sounds entirely differently than Vietnamese speakers do. In an attempt to deal with the pronunciation problem, I have conducted this study to investigate some common errors in pronunciation made by first- year English majored students at Faculty of Foreign Languages at Hanoi Metropolitan University, Vietnam, the causes of making errors and discuss some solutions to overcome the problems. The author hopes that both teachers and students will find this study to be a helpful resource in improving phonological instruction and learning.

Keywords: English pronunciation, Errors, Errors in pronunciation, Communicative approach, Incomprehensible speech

INTRODUCTION

Pronunciation plays a very important role in language learning. Derwing and Munro (2005) asserted that "having good pronunciation of the language can help in normal communication, particularly intelligibility" (as cited in Nation & Newton, 2009. p. 75). In fact, English language learners tend to have high expectations for speaking English like a native speaker. However, during the process of learning it, they face up with numerous obstacles. Pronouncing words from a different sound system correctly is one of the typical challenges that they encounter. One of the factors that affect the way of pronouncing English is the mother tongue. Avery and Ehrich (1992) argued that, “the native language affects both the ability to produce English sounds and the ability to hear sounds”.

In this paper, I will analyse some common errors in pronunciation made by first- year English Majored students at the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Hanoi Metropolitan University, Vietnam in the light of segmental units, not suprasegmentals. Segmentals refer to the basic inventory of distinctive sounds (consonants and vowels) and the way they combine to form a spoken language. From the analysis, some solutions are given to help them to overcome the obstacles. The objectives of this study are:

(1). To investigate the pronunciation errors on vowels and consonants made by the first- year English majored students at the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Hanoi Metropolitan University.

(2). To analyze the causes of the English pronunciation errors on vowels and consonants made by the first- year English majored students at the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Hanoi Metropolitan University.

(3). To give suggestions to overcome these problems

AN OVERVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDIES

Overall scientific research globally aims at understanding common mistakes made by English language learners regarding pronunciations while also developing effective instructional strategies tailored towards addressing these issues both within Vietnam and worldwide context.

One area of research involves analyzing the specific errors made by learners. Studies have identified common errors such as mispronouncing consonant sounds, vowel sounds, word stress, intonation patterns, and rhythm. Researchers have found that learners from different linguistic backgrounds tend to make specific types of errors due to the influence of their native language phonology. One prominent author in this field is Elkhair Muhammad Idriss Hassan (2014). He did a case study about pronunciation problems at Sudan University of Science and Technology". According to his research, Sudanese students of English (SSEs) frequently mispronounced sounds, such as /b / and /p /, /s / and /θ /, /z / and /ð/ sounds. He claimed that since there were more Arabic consonants than English ones, some scholars figured that this was not an important matter and that SSEs should be proficient in English consonants. The researcher thought that these issues were still a major concern for English language learners who wished to pronounce words correctly and interact with native speakers with confidence. The dental fricative /θ/, the alveolar fricative /s/, /z / and /ð /, voiceless bilabial /p / and voiced bilabial /b /, / v / and / f /, / ʃ / and / tʃ / were among the sounds he mentioned that SSEs confused. Another notable researcher is Islam Abbeneh (2018), he reported on a new study regarding pronunciation problems made by Saudi learners in English. The pronunciation errors Saudi students made when pronouncing words that are challenging to Arabs in general were identified by this study. The results of this study revealed that the majority of Saudi students mistook vowel sounds for other phonemes or sounds, such as the /e/ sound for /i/, /ie/, /ae/; the /i/ sound for /ɛ, ai, ei, ai/; and the /a/ sound for /e, ɛ, ae/. In addition, students frequently substituted the English sounds /b, f/ for the absent Arabic consonants, such as /p and v/.

In Vietnam specifically, scientific research addresses the challenges Vietnamese learners face when acquiring English pronunciation skills. The Vietnamese phonological system differs significantly from English's system; thus, learners often struggle with sound distinctions not present in their native language. Dang, T. N. (2013) delve into a comprehensive examination of the specific challenges faced by Vietnamese learners when acquiring English pronunciation skills. They also shed light on the underlying linguistic factors contributing to these difficulties. Other studies conducted in Vietnam explore various approaches for teaching English pronunciation effectively. These approaches include explicit instruction focusing on specific sounds or features where Vietnamese speakers commonly face difficulties while also utilizing technology-assisted methods such as computer-based programs or mobile applications designed for practicing pronunciation. For example,

Nguyen Minh, H. (2024) identified numerous difficulties that Vietnamese speakers encounter in mastering English pronunciation. This may arise from the challenge of differentiating between tense and lax vowels in English. Moreover, the differences in consonant placement, consonant clusters, vocabulary, and tone variations present significant challenges for Vietnamese learners of English. Consequently, Vietnamese speakers frequently experience pronunciation difficulties when communicating in English. The author suggested some strategies to deal with pronunciation difficulties such as intensive and extensive listening techniques through *British Broadcasting Corporation* (BBC), *Voice Of America* (VGA) and books published by *Oxford University Press* và *Cambridge University Press* as well as regular practice.

Tuan, D. A. (2021) stated that If L2 pronunciation teaching focuses on the approximation of L2 sounds rather than imitation, then L2 learners' effort to enhance their pronunciation involves adjusting their own L2 speech to ensure comprehensibility to other L2 speakers. Consequently, instruction in L2 pronunciation should enhance students' ability to adjust their L2 outputs. The L1POR (the L1 Point of

Reference) Approach methodology for pronunciation teaching can assist L2 educators in effectively performing their duties. However, empirical evidence regarding the efficacy of the L1POR approach for pronunciation instruction, as well as potential modifications for its enhanced application in a classroom setting, is recommended.

Overall, these authors' scientific research contributes significantly to our understanding of common errors in pronunciation made by learners worldwide and provides valuable insights for language teachers seeking effective strategies to address these issues both globally and specifically within Vietnam's context.

CONCEPTS OF ENGLISH SOUNDS, ERRORS, DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN ERRORS AND MISTAKES

1. English sounds

a. English consonants

In the Oxford dictionary (1995), English consonant is defined as “a speech sound made by completely or partly stopping the flow of air through the mouth or nose”

The definition of a consonant in English phonetics and phonology is "sounds in which there is obstruction to the flow of air as it passes the larynx to the lips" (Peter Roach, 2009, p.10). He also states that consonants are categorized using three dimensions: voicing, the manner of articulation, and place of articulation. The place of the articulation refers to the location at which two speech organs approach or come together to produce a speech sound. The eight locations where articulation occurs include Bilabial, Labiodental, Interdental/ dental, Alveolar, Palatal – Alveolar, Palatal, Velar and Glottal. The way the airflow gets affected when it exits the mouth and nose after leaving the lungs is known as the manner of articulation. There are six ways to articulate such as Stops/Plosives, Fricatives, Affricates, Nasals, Lateral and Approximants. In terms of voicing, Certain sounds are voiced, meaning that when the sound is generated, the vocal chords vibrate, whereas voiceless sounds are produced without vibration in the vocal chord. Fifteen voiced consonants are /b, d, g, v, ð, z, ʒ, ʤ, m, n,ŋ, l, r, j, w/ and nine voiceless ones (/p, t, k, f, θ, s, ʃ, tʃ, h/)

b. English vowels

Vowels are produced by voiced air traveling through various mouth shapes; these forms are a result of the tongue and lips being in distinct places. The specific arrangement of the vocal tract influences the quality of the vowels. The tongue may be raised or lowered in different places. Lips can be pursed or stretched apart. However, the passage that the air passes through is never so small as to obstruct the air stream's free movement. Vowels have therefore historically been categorized using the following three questions: What is the tongue's height? What part of the tongue is elevated, or which section is involved? Which part is lowered? Does the vowel have a rounding or not?

2. Rules of pronunciation in learning

Pronouncing words, phrases, and sentences correctly in terms of stress, rhythm, intonation, or individual or isolated sounds are all part of pronouncing English. Although articulation and enunciation are related, pronunciation specifically relates to sound utterances in syllables and words. According to Harmer (2001), there are several components of pronunciation that need to be mastered. These components include intonation, rhythm, sound, and intonation.

According to Peter Roach (2009), there are 3 criteria to classify vowels in English as follows: (1) The place of tongue, (2) The height of the tongue; (3) The position of the lips. Consonants are identified along three major dimensions such as (1) manner of articulation; (2) Voicing; (3) place of articulation.

3. Error definitions

Language sound systems differ from one another. Errors are viewed as a necessary component of learning. Errors are considered a normal part of the learning process. These errors need to be examined in order for them to be seen as a crucial stage in the teaching and learning process since they provide the teacher with information about how well the students are picking up the target language.

Hornby (1995) defines error as an act of wrongdoing or a state of being incorrect in thought or behavior. The term "error" also refers to the deficient aspects of learners' speech or writing. Dulay, H. C., Burt, M. K., & Krashen, S. D. (1982:138) state that errors are elements of speech or composition that diverge from the established standards of proficient language use. An error made by second or foreign language learners in speech or writing is when they use linguistic elements (such as words, grammar, speech acts, etc.) in a way that a native or fluent speaker of the language would consider to be flawed or incomplete learning.

Two elements contribute to errors: interference from the native language and the target language being acquired. An error resulting from interferences or reflections of the native language structure is termed an interlingual error. The other error arises from the target language and does not reflect native language structure, typically resulting from overgeneralization due to poor target language proficiency. It is referred to as an intralingual error.

4. Distinctions between errors and mistakes

Corder, S.P. (1967) points out that an error is distinct from a mistake. Consequently, it is essential to differentiate between them to study learners' language accurately. Error represents a divergence from the established norms of learners' structure, as learners have not fully understood the rules of the language they are acquiring. He further asserts that the errors are structural deviations, arising from the learners' inability to select expressions appropriately in relation to the context.

According to Brown (1994, p.257), a mistake is defined as a performance fault that is either a random guess or a "slip" in that it is an inability to appropriately apply a recognized system, whereas an error is a discernible departure from adult grammar or natural speech, indicating the learner's interlanguage competency.

Slinker, 1972 (in Richard, 1974, p.37) reiterated that language transfer, training transfer, second language learning strategies, second language communication strategies, and overgeneralization of target language linguistic content are the five sources of errors.

In the study of language learning in general and the study of second and foreign language acquisition in particular, errors have played a significant role. It is thought that errors can provide important insights on the methods that individuals use to communicate in a language.

5. Ending sound errors

Treiman, R. (1989) states that ending sound errors are described as "the inaccurate pronunciation of the final consonant in a word". He categorized ending sound errors as follows based on his findings.

- Cluster reduction: This is the "deletion of one or more consonants from a target cluster so that only a single consonant occurs at syllable margins"

- Cluster Simplification: An error arises when a cluster's constituent elements are generated differently from the targeted phoneme.

- Epenthesis: this is the insertion of a vowel, usually a schwa, between cluster consonants.

- Coalescence: This is the process by which a new consonant made up of characteristics from the original consonants is added to the yielded sound.

- Omitting nasal and liquid sounds: Nasal and liquid sounds are frequently omitted from consonants clusters that are composed of pre-final + final consonants with nasals (/n/,/m/) or liquids (/r/,/l/) as the first element (/m, n, l, r/ + final consonant)

- Phonetically possible spelling: Speakers frequently indicate the initial consonant of a cluster by spelling words incorrectly but phonetically reasonable. Three categories of ending sound problems were identified in her research: (1) *Reduction* is an elimination of one cluster element or the final consonant. (2) *Insertion* is the process of adding a consonant to a word's end. (3) *Substitution* is the process that changes an English consonant to a Vietnamese sound that is phonetically comparable. The current study will assess the data from the class observations and an oral examination based on the three types of faults previously indicated.

METHODOLOGY

The data were collected from two sources including (1) class observations and an oral examination to find out the errors made by the students; (2) survey questionnaires delivered to the students to get the student's perceptions about the causes and solutions. The researcher observes the English-speaking competence in the class when they study the course "English pronunciation in practice" with 2 credits. The subject of this study is 105 first- year English Majored students at Faculty of Foreign Languages at Hanoi Metropolitan University in the 1st term of the academic year 2022- 2023.

The instruments used to collect the data consist of a small individual interview of pronunciation errors in an isolated word and interrogatives sentences. There are two parts in the interview. The purpose of the first one is to demonstrate the errors that students make when creating vowels and diphthongs, and the second one aims to demonstrate the errors that students make when it comes to intonation. The results are recorded and class observation in the course of Pronunciation in use.

After collecting and sorting out the data, we found out some common errors in pronunciation our students made in both segmental units and suprasegmental ones. In the scope of this article, we focus on the students' errors in producing vowels and consonants (segmental units).

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Here are some common errors in pronunciation made by first- year English majored students at Hanoi Metropolitan University that were collected and sorted out from class observation and oral test in the 1st term of the academic year 2022- 2023.

Table 1
Common errors in pronunciation made by 105 first- year English majored students at Hanoi Metropolitan University

N0	*Types of pronunciation errors*	Errors	
		Number	**Percentage (%)**
1	Omission of final consonants	52	15.1
2	Omission of medial sounds	39	11.3
3	Confusing /ð/ for /d/ or /z/	32	9.3
4	Confusing /r/ for /z/	25	7.2
5	Confusing /l/ for /n/	18	5.2
6	Confusing /ɪ/ for /iː/	20	5.8
7	Confusing /ʌ/ for /æ/	42	12.2
8	Confusing /uː/ for /ʊ/	20	5.8
9	Confusing /ɔː/ for /3:/	24	7.0
10	Confusing /e/ for /eɪ/	28	8.1
11	Confusing /ɔː/ for / əʊ/	26	7.5
12	*Confusing the schwa sounds /3:/ or /ə/*	19	5.5
	Total (1-12)	**345**	**100.0**

1. Some common errors in pronunciation made by the first- year English Majored students at Faculty of Foreign Languages at Hanoi Metropolitan University, Vietnam

The research findings in this study found out 12 kinds of pronunciation errors made by the first- year English Majored students at Faculty of Foreign Languages at Hanoi Metropolitan University.

1.1 Omission of sounds

a. Omission of final consonants

According to Peter Roach (2009), final sounds in a syllable structure which occur at the end of the syllable or the word are called coda. The maximum of consonants in the part of coda is no more than four consonant sounds (consonant clusters) that go together without having a vowel between them.

Vietnamese does not contain words ending with consonants; so naturally, learners are usually very confused with final consonants and thus end up deleting most of them. The consonants commonly omitted are: /**z**/, /**s**/, /**t**/, /**v**/, /**ks**/, /**ʤ**/
For example: /z/: tabl**es**; ro**se**; ri**se**; bag**s**
/s/: mi**ce**; cla**ss**; me**ss**; ri**ce**
/t/: righ**t**; figh**t**; ha**te**; fruit; star**t**
/v/: lo**ve**; dri**ve**; retrie**ve**; Ste**ve**
/ks/: si**x**; la**kes**; coo**ks**; ha**cks**
/ʤ/: mana**ge**; bri**dge**; enga**ge**

b. Omission of Medial sounds

Some sounds occurring in the middle of words are also omitted by Vietnamese learners as such occurrence is an unfamiliar phonetic phenomenon: These sounds are: /**z**/, /**s**/, /**t**/, /**v**/, /**ks**/, /**ʤ**/
For example:
/z/: Wedne**s**day; pre**s**ident; ri**s**ing
/s/: ma**s**ter; we**s**tern
/v/: se**v**ere; sa**v**age; ri**v**al; ne**v**er

/ks/: mi**x**er; Fo**x**tel; e**xc**el; va**cc**ine
/ʤ/: ple**dg**er; vir**g**in; mi**dg**et; blu**dg**er

1.2 Sound confusion

a. Confusing /ð/ for /d/ or /z/

Since most English language learners find it challenging to position the tongue tip between the teeth, students turn to an easier fix: they press the tip against the back of the teeth, or the alveolar, which can occasionally take the form of /d/ or /z/.
For example: /ð/: wea**th**er; **th**en; ra**th**er

b. Confusing /r/ for /z/

Unlike the majority of native English speakers worldwide, the Vietnamese language does not have the consonant /r/ in its phonetic system. As a result, it frequently gets confused for /z/, particularly in the north of Vietnam. To clear up any uncertainty, teachers must once more thoroughly explain to the students how to make that sound.
For example:
/r/ (initial): **r**ight; **r**eally; **r**est; **r**at; **r**eason;
/r/ (medial): ca**r**ing; pa**r**king; fe**r**tile; ba**r**tender.
/r/ (final): close**r**; radiato**r**; lette**r**; awa**re**

c. Confusing /l/ for /n/

There is no equivalent of the English sound /l/ in Vietnamese. As such, people usually mistake it for /n/. When trying to make that sound, teachers should assist students in releasing their nasality and freeing the sides of their tongues while maintaining contact between the tip and the alveolar ridge.
For example:
/l/ (initial): **l**earn; **l**ight; **l**augh; **l**ace; **l**ead;
/l/ (medial): ro**ll**ing; fau**l**t; swo**ll**en; rea**ll**y; fa**ll**ing;
/l/ (final): fa**ll**; ro**ll**; reca**ll**; identica**l**; availab**le**;

d. Confusing /ɪ/ for /i:/

Another common mistake resulting of the confusion between spelling and pronunciation. The majority of my students were unable to tell the difference between these two sounds when I was teaching them. I used simple pair terms like "seat" and "sit," "sheep" and "ship" in my lessons. Vowel /ɪ/ is quite frequently spelled as letter [i] in English and since Vietnamese rely on spelling to produce the English sounds, they confuse /ɪ/ for /i:/. I made an effort to make the /i:/ sound longer so they could hear the differences. They informed me that the reason there was a distinction between the two of them was that the /i:/ sound is longer than the /I/ sound. In fact, the students uttered both sounds precisely the same when they practiced saying them, though.
For example:
/i/: N**ee**d; r**ea**d; t**ea**t; l**ea**ve; m**ea**t; wh**ee**l; s**ea**t
/ɪ/: Kn**i**t; r**i**d; t**i**t; l**i**ve; m**i**tt; w**i**ll; s**i**t

e. Confusing /ʌ/ for /æ/

The most significant issue Vietnamese speakers face when learning to speak English vowels is probably the confusion between /ʌ/ and /æ/. They are unable to recognize the differences.

This error is among many generated by the learners' unawareness of the gap that exists between the English spelling and pronunciation.

Vowel /æ/ is quite often spelled with letter [a] which learners would then read as /ʌ/ or /a/.
For example:
/æ/: m**a**n day; b**a**dge; tr**a**mp; b**a**d; h**a**t;
/ʌ/: b**u**d; h**u**t; tr**u**mp; M**o**nday; b**u**dge;
Teachers have to constantly remind learners that pronunciation and spelling are two very distinct things in English.

f. Confusing /uː/ for /ʊ/

At times, these two vowels are spelled identically, as in [foot] and [food].
For example:
/ʊ/: h**oo**d; c**oul**d; w**oul**d; B**oo**k; p**u**t; f**oo**t;
/uː/: f**oo**d; m**oo**d; R**oo**m; t**oo**th; r**u**de; w**ooe**d

Instructors need to train these sounds and help students distinguish between lax versus tense as well as short versus long vowels. They should also do some simple pairs activities.

g. Confusing /ɔː/ for /3:/

Most English language learners, especially Vietnamese speakers, find the vowel /3:/ challenging. It is frequently mispronounced as /ɔː/, which can significantly impair speech comprehension.
For example:
/ɔː/: b**o**rn; c**a**ll; F**o**rced; s**oa**r; w**ar**m; w**al**k; l**aw**n;
/3:/: F**ir**st; l**ear**n; w**or**m; s**ir**; b**ur**n; c**ur**l; w**or**k;
h. Confusing /e/ for /eɪ/

When learning English, students usually end up removing the consonant /j/ and keeping the vowel /e/ since diphthongs entail combining one vowel and one consonant in one sound, which makes them extremely complex sounds.
For example:
/e/: K**e**n; w**e**dge; f**e**d; d**e**bt; w**e**t; tr**e**nd; b**e**ck;
/eɪ/: w**ai**t; tr**ai**ned; f**a**de; d**a**te; b**a**ke; c**a**ne; w**a**ge

i. Confusing /ɔː/ for / əʊ/

Another diphthong containing the vowel /o/ and the consonant /ʊ/ is the vowel /əʊ/. The consonant is omitted and just the vowel is kept.
For example:
/ əʊ/: c**oa**t; m**o**de; **o**ld; b**oa**t; r**oa**d; sh**ow**ed; wr**o**te;
Teachers must encourage the students to circle their lips at the conclusion of that sound /ɔː/.

k. Confusing the schwa sounds /3:/ or /ə/

In class, the learners could distinguish the differences between /3:/ and /ə/. /3:/ is classified as a long, tense, mid-center neutral vowel in English, whereas /ə/ is described as a short, lax, mid-close, neutral vowel. However, they had difficulties in pronouncing the tense and lax vowels in English correctly.
For example:
/ə/: penc**i**l; el**o**quent; **a**bout; tak**e**n; s**u**pply; sib**y**l

2. Some factors affecting English learners in pronunciation

The findings of the survey questionnaire identified some subjective and objective factors affecting English learners in pronunciation as follow.
In terms of subjective causes, first of all, since English is not our first language, learning English can occasionally seem awkward when pronouncing words. It is more difficult for the majority of them (90%) to pronounce words correctly in English since English people pronounce the last sounds entirely differently from Vietnamese speakers do. Second, because there isn't much time for practice in the classroom, students seldom practice pronouncing English sounds at home.

Thirdly, as English and their mother tongue have distinct sound systems, learners find it challenging to speak English. In addition, the test format is one of the elements influencing students' speaking proficiency. Vietnamese students must take a written, not an oral, university entrance exam at the end of the 12th grade. Lastly, some students lack motivation to learn English because they see it to be a difficult subject.

In terms of objective causes, in the first place, there are a few sounds in the English sound system that are unfamiliar to Vietnamese speakers. Second, Vietnamese speakers find it more challenging to pronounce words correctly in English because English speakers pronounce the last sounds entirely differently than Vietnamese speakers do. As a result, it has been seen that Vietnamese language learners make phonetic mistakes that result in unintelligible English speaking.

They may have issues with four main characteristics. First of all, Vietnamese learners find it confusing because of how complicated English's tense and lax vowels are. Second, a range of consonant placements and dialect variations may be confusing. Vietnamese speakers also tend to mispronounce consonants when speaking English. Finally, there is a vast range in the emphasis and tones used in the English language. The English language has stress timing, whereas the Vietnamese language uses syllable timing.

3. Suggestions to minimize pronunciation errors

To improve English speaking competence and minimize pronunciation errors made by the first- year English Majored students at Faculty of Foreign Languages at Hanoi Metropolitan University, some suggestions are given.

First and foremost, learners need to constantly practice and learn new things. Second, the instructor needs to create a classroom environment that is as conducive to the process of teaching and learning English as possible. As a result, teachers are supposed to support the students by providing them with excellent opportunities to actively use English during class activities. In the classroom, the teacher must also devise a teaching technique, particularly for pronunciation. Some examples of this include singing an English song and playing a cassette. As a result, the pupils would be familiar with English. Furthermore, English learning tools and software like *Pronunciation Power* and *ELSA Speak* should also be introduced for students to practice their pronunciation.

Another important method for learning English is to practice listening frequently. Learners might become more accustomed to English sounds by listening. Speaking English will not be as challenging as it was in the beginning once they hear it. Through listening to music, watching videos and English-language films, they have chances to train their ears to detect every unfamiliar or challenging sound by setting up their own environment in which to engage with English. Furthermore, copying native speakers is considered as a good strategy to pronounce words correctly, especially rhythm and intonation.

Last but not least, the department should make some improvements and remedies as they are the ones that make decisions on the system used in English teaching and learning. A frequent meeting to discuss the teaching strategy that accounts for pronunciation problems in the classroom activities should be held.

CONCLUSION

The first-year English majored students at Hanoi Metropolitan University who are learning a foreign language encounter a variety of challenges while attempting to acquire English pronunciation. The most common errors made by the students, according to the data gathered and categorized, were omission of final consonants, confusing /ʌ/ for /æ/, omission of medial sounds, and confusing /ð/ for /d/ or /z/. Learning the complexities of English vowels, especially the differences between tense and lax vowels, can be challenging. Additionally, they face many challenges due to differences in consonant placements, consonant clusters etc. As a result, some parts of a conversation deviate from a set norm of mature language competence due to pronunciation problems. The pronunciation errors that happened were not all the result of students making errors. One of the prominent causes of making pronunciation is that English is not their first language; the fact that they practice pronouncing words correctly very infrequently; and the distinctions between the sound systems of Vietnam and England. There exist specific explanations for the faults that may arise during language acquisition. These errors are referred to as intralingual errors if they have similarities to those made by learners of their native tongue. On the other hand, similar errors are referred to as interlingual errors if they are impacted by the learner's native tongue. Within a minor study, the writer would like to give the readers to have an overview of some typical errors that first year majored students at my university have made. This helps not only learners but also teachers have the right attitudes and suitable teaching - learning methods to minimize the pronunciation errors and learn English more effectively.

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Exploring Machine Translation: Output Quality, Learner Reflection, Teacher Detection

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Abstract

Continued advancements in Machine Translation (MT) have improved accuracy and quality significantly in recent years. There is now substantial evidence that language students are using the technology with increasing frequency for academic purposes (e.g. Enríquez & Sánchez, 2020; Jolly & Luciane, 2022; Valijärvi & Tarsoly, 2019), highlighting the need to explore its potential benefits and limitations further. This paper presents the findings of a mixed-methods study that was carried out at a Japanese university. It explored three crucial elements of machine translation (output quality, learner engagement, and teacher assessment) and its influence on second language (L2) learning. The output quality of three freely available MT services (DeepL, Google Translate, and Bing Microsoft) was compared by having six Japanese English Language professors evaluate various texts translated from Japanese into English. The capacity of MT to promote metalinguistic awareness was gauged by analysing Japanese university student output from a reflective writing task and post-survey feedback. Finally, the ability of thirteen native English language instructors to detect differences between texts generated by machine-translated and students was tested. The results showed differences in the quality of translations produced by MT services, depending on text type. At the same time, the capacity of MT to promote metalinguistic awareness during the reflective writing task was evident. It was also found that the native English language instructors experienced little difficulty in identifying the MT-generated texts. By understanding the strengths and limitations of MT technology, educators can better make informed decisions about its integration into L2 education. This study contributes to ongoing efforts to optimize the application of MT in L2 learning contexts.

Keywords: Machine translation, Task-based learning, Metalinguistic awareness

INTRODUCTION

Progress in artificial intelligence over the past decade has resulted in better Machine Translation (MT) output. The technology now utilises artificial neural networks to autonomously learn how to precisely translate complete sentences, frequently achieving levels of accuracy comparable to accredited human translators. As a result, second language (L2) learners can now generate work with MT that might surpass what they can do by other means (Innes, 2019). With free online MT services readily available to foreign language students, the convergence of machine translation and language education has been gaining momentum. MT use by learners, which already became considerable in the early 2010s, has become even more so in recent years (Jolly & Luciane, 2022). Even though many language instructors might still be hesitant to permit students to use it due to ethical concerns, there is an undeniable surge in its popularity (Briggs, 2018). Consequently, the potential pedagogical consequences of MT use in the language classroom must be addressed.

Research to date on the capacity of MT to promote L2 learning has yielded varying results. In a study by Resende and Way (2021), learners who encountered new English sentence structures via MT were

observed to use them in later speech. Through student feedback, Lee (2019) found that learners using MT for revisions had a positive impact on their writing strategies. In addition, Lee (2020; 2022) also found that MT had a positive impact on learner output, particularly in terms of vocabulary and grammar. On the other hand, research by Fredholm (2019) indicated that higher levels of lexical diversity in learner output decreased once MT was no longer used. Additionally, Garcia and Pena (2011) noted that less proficient students tended to over-rely on MT when writing L2 output, likely having a negative effect on their learning. Exploring how MT can aid language acquisition through empirical research is critical. It is important to identify both the potential advantages and disadvantages that MT poses to L2 education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In 2016, Google introduced its Google Neural Machine Translation (GNMT) service. Subsequently, translation technology has been able to learn from examples and encode sentence semantics, resulting in improved, more fluent translations of entire sentences. Currently, three of the best-known translation services that are freely available online are Google Translate, DeepL, and Bing Microsoft (Alsan, 2022). Ducar and Schocket (2018) noted that modern MT effectively handles infrequently used vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, spelling errors, and informal language, mainly due to its utilisation of extensive online databases. In an investigation by Chon et al. (2021), Google Translate was found to decrease the number of grammatical mistakes learners made when using it for L2 writing. At the same time, the translated compositions were seen to exhibit increased instances of mistranslation and a higher frequency of inappropriate word selections. In another study, Lee (2022) examined the quality of MT output compared to texts translated by intermediate English learners. Analysing the texts' vocabulary, grammar, and context, the translations from both groups were judged to be equally comprehensible. However, the quality of MT output was also noted to surpass student output across most aspects under investigation. Only two elements in the source texts, punctuation and sentence intricacy, were found to have negatively impacted the quality of the MT output. Conversely, factors like lexical and grammatical precision, lexical variety, and contextual comprehension had no bearing.

Exploring the capacity of MT to promote metalinguistic awareness in L2 writing, Lee (2019) had students first translate their L1 writing to English unaided and then compare it to MT-generated texts. Analysis of the students' later revisions indicated that using MT in such a manner led to reduced language errors and enhanced editing skills. Additionally, incorporating MT in the revision process had a favourable impact on the students' writing approaches and fostered a procedural view of writing. In another study by Nino (2020), MT was also found to have a positive effect on metalinguistic reflection. Incorporating four tasks (reading comprehension, audio translation, written translation, voice translation) into the investigation, MT use was noted to enhance prior learning, facilitate understanding and L2 production skills, and provide opportunities for students to discuss language forms with their classmates. Fredholm (2019) also carried out a comparative pre-test and post-test study to compare the lexical density of 31 learners' writing (15 with the aid of a printed dictionary and 16 with the aid of Google Translate) over one school year. The learners' output was evaluated by examining alterations in lexical variety over time. The findings indicated that Google Translate contributed to greater lexical variety while it was used, which diminished once it was discontinued.

Considering the capacity of teachers to detect MT use, Jolly & Luciane (2022) noted in their review of MT research literature over the past thirty years that only a handful of studies (Innes, 2019; O'Neill, 2013; Stapleton & Kin, 2019) had investigated the human rater's ability to detect MT use by learners. With a detection rate of 74.04%, Innes (2019) found that some big red flags for the 17 teachers who acted as raters in his study in Japan were preposition errors and incorrect use of the passive voice. Compiling post-task feedback from the rates, Innes listed several lexical features that were thought to indicate either human translation or MT translation (See Table 1). In Stapleton and Ka Kin's (2019)

study, assessors evaluated a random selection of essays that were either produced with or without the assistance of Google Translate. The essays created with Google Translate obtained slightly higher scores. However, differences in the results were not statistically significant, with the researchers deducing that the raters could not accurately identify Google Translate use due to the enhanced quality of the translations. On this point, Ducar and Schocket (2018) surmise that:

> As MT technologies continue to improve, identifying translation "mistakes" will likely become increasingly difficult for language instructors. Instead, it will be the technology's subtle successes, rather than its breakdowns, that will signal MT use. Telltale signs of MT use by students include producing verb tenses that have not yet been studied, using excessively advanced vocabulary, producing subordinated complex clauses, and the absence of prepositional errors that are typically produced by lower- and intermediate-level learners. (p. 787)

Table 1
Examples of lexical features of human and machine translation (Adapted from Innes, 2019)

Lexical features suggesting human translation	Lexical features suggesting machine translation
1. Common grammar mistakes by Japanese speakers / learners. 2. Use of simple sentence structures. 3. Simple spelling mistakes 4. Use of casual terms 5. Incorrect use of the possessive term.	1. Technically correct but awkward sentences. 2. Advanced phrases not usually used by students. 3. Inappropriate use of passive tense. 4. Unnatural use of "by all means", suggest machine translation (two similarly worded responses). 5. Random capital letter in first sentence (sic). 6. Wrong pronouns. 7. Inappropriate choice of subject pronouns. 8. Unnatural use of personal pronouns.

Note. Adapted from "Differentiating between translation and student translation: Red flags salient lexicogrammatical features" by A. Innes, 2019, DOI: 10.17951/lsmll.2019.43.4.1-13

The aim of this study was to gauge the impact of MT in relation to output quality, learner reflection, and teacher detection. The research questions were as follows:

1. Which is the most effective translation service, Google Translate, DeepL, or Microsoft Bing?
2. How effective is MT at promoting metalinguistic reflection during a writing task?
3. How easy is it for teachers to distinguish between texts produced by learners or MT?

METHODOLOGY

This mixed-methods study was carried out at a university in Japan and included three separate groups of participants. The first group consisted of six Japanese university professors who taught at the university. They were selected because they were fluent in Japanese and English and had experience living and studying in an English-speaking country. The second group comprised 12 Japanese university students who were fourth-year English majors in the researcher's seminar class at the same university. The last group consisted of 13 native English language lecturers who worked at a number of universities

in the same prefecture. Each lecturer was selected because they had five years or more experience teaching in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts.

To compare the translation quality of Google Translate, DeepL, and Microsoft Bing, three Japanese text samples were selected (Appendix A): an academic writing sample (550 characters), a news article sample (588 characters), and a narrative story sample (543 characters). Each sample represented a different writing style. To select these samples, keyword searches were carried out on the Yahoo Japan search engine to find texts with similar word counts. An article on second language acquisition was selected as the academic writing sample, a news article about recent electricity shortages in Japan was chosen as the news sample, and a short story describing the daily events in a Korean man's life was used as the narrative sample. The Japanese professors were separated into three groups of raters and sent two of the Japanese texts, along with the three translated English versions of each MT service (Group 1: academic sample and news sample; Group 2: news sample and narrative sample; Group 3: narrative sample and academic sample). The professors were asked to rank the quality of the English translations of each Japanese text from 1 to 3 based on their own impressions. The eight lexical features of MT in Table 1, suggested by Innes (2019), were shared with the professors to give them some guidance. They were then asked to provide written feedback on the way they chose to rank the translations.

For the reflective writing task (Appendix B), the students were asked to write their opinions in Japanese about the following statements: 1) Marriage is no longer necessary in society, 2) Social media overall harms people and their relationships, 3) Children must pay rent to their parents if they live at home after getting a job. Japanese translations were provided next to each statement to ensure clarity, and instructions were given to write a three-sentence response for each one. Next, the students were instructed to translate their Japanese responses using the online Japanese-English dictionary jisho.org. After that, they used DeepL to translate their English sentences back into Japanese to see how well their meaning had been conveyed. Finally, they were asked to revise their English translations where needed. At the conclusion of the task, the students submitted both their original English translations as well as the revised versions and took a short post-task survey (Appendix C).

To gauge the capacity of the native English instructors to distinguish between machine-translated texts and student-generated texts, 12 sets of translations from the reflective writing task were used (Appendix D). Each set consisted of a student's online dictionary translation and a DeepL translation of their Japanese sentences. Through a Google survey, the teachers were asked to select the MT-generated text from each set. At the end of the survey, the teachers were asked how difficult it was to spot the MT texts, explain why they thought so, and indicate whether particular texts were more challenging to determine than others.

For the data analysis, the professors' translation rankings were first scored: first = 3pts, second = 2pts, and third = 1pt, and their feedback was examined for similar comments or differences of opinion by the researcher individually. Next, the students' original online dictionary translations were compared to their revised versions. The number of changes made per student was counted, and the quality of these revisions was examined by two raters (the researcher and another native English teacher). Each revision was rated as being either 1) an improvement in sentence grammar and/or meaning, 2) no improvement or unnecessary revision, or 3) a revision mistake. The researcher went through the first 10% of the sample with the English teacher to clarify how the variables were to be rated. The remaining 90% of the sample was examined by each rater independently. Their results were then compared and discussed, with the interrater agreement reaching 94%. These results were then compared to the students' post-task feedback. Finally, the quantitative and qualitative data from the native English teachers' MT detection survey were compared. The percentage of times the teachers correctly identified the MT translation for each set was then compared with their feedback regarding how easy they felt it was.

RESULTS

Examining the translation quality of the three MT services, the results from Table 2 show that the point tally for DeepL was overall higher than for either Google Translate or Microsoft Bing. In several incidences, the raters could not decide which translation was better; instead, they preferred to give two versions the same score. The most notable difference in translation quality was seen in the academic sample, with DeepL receiving 5 or 6 points more than the others. The most evenly rated translations were for the narrative text, with DeepL and Google Translate scoring evenly and Microsoft Bing scoring only 2 points below that. These findings suggested that variations in translation quality between MT services become more noticeable in complex texts.

Table 2
Machine translation output quality results

	Google Translate	DeepL	Microsoft Bing
Academic Sample	3rd, 2nd, 3rd, 2nd = 6 pts	1st, 1st, 1st, 1st = 12 pts	2nd, 2nd, 2nd, 3rd = 7 pts
News Sample	3rd, 2nd, 3rd, 3rd = 5 pts	1st, 1st, 2nd, 1st = 11 pts	2nd, 2nd, 1st, 2nd = 9 pts
Narrative Sample	2nd, 1st, 1st, 2nd = 10 pts	1st, 2nd, 1st, 2nd = 10 pts	3rd, 2nd, 2nd, 1st = 8 pts
Total	21 pts	33 pts	24 pts

* 1st = 3pts, 2nd = 2 pts, 3rd = 1 pt.

Tallying the number of revisions made in the reflective writing task (see Table 3), there were 53 in total. That equalled 4.4 per student on average. Of the total revisions made, 33 (62%) were judged to be improvements on the original translations, 16 (30%) were judged to be unnecessary, and 4 (8%) were judged to be incorrect revisions. The following are examples of each type taken from the students' translations:

1. *Improvement: Social media does not get worse - Social media does not make relationships worse (Student 5)*

2. *No improvement: I think people do not need to pay parent for rent - I think people do not have to pay parent for rent (Student 2)*

3. *Mistake: In Japan, the initial salary is low, and it is not enough money - In Japan, the initial salary is low compared to home rent (Student 12)*

Table 3
Translation revisions

Revision Types	Tally
Improvement in sentence grammar and/or meaning	33
No improvement or unnecessary revisions	16
Revision mistakes	4
Total number	53

The results of the post-task survey (see Figure 1) showed that the majority of students (10/12) felt that using DeepL to translate their original English translations back into Japanese helped facilitate metalinguistic awareness somewhat (6 - 50%) or a lot (4 - 33%). Comments from the students included:

> *Student 1 - I could notice that words and meanings were different from my intention. I found it useful to consider words that have similar meanings but slightly different applications.*

> *Student 6 - I think DeepL was very useful to improve my written English. I was able to learn correct wording. I also learned how to write more concisely by translating parts that were difficult or didn't feel right when I was writing my own English sentences with the dictionary.*

Did using DeepL to translate your English translations back into Japanese help you to improve your English sentences?

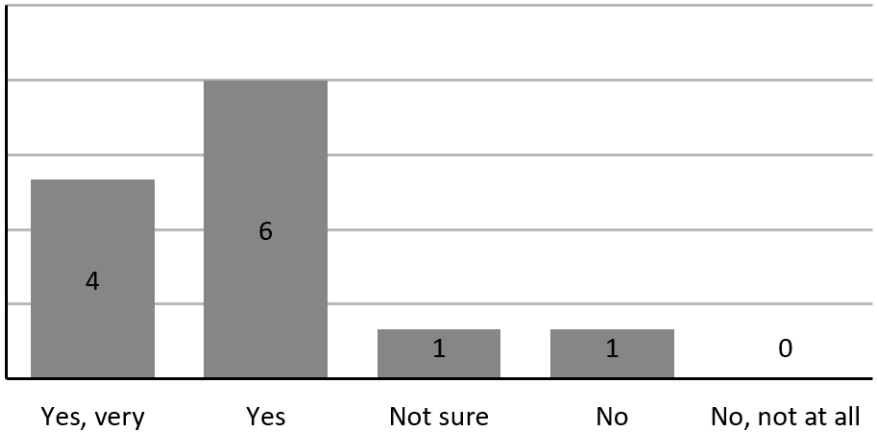

Figure 1 Translation task survey results

For the MT detection task, the native English teachers had a mean error rate of 1.67 for the 12 sets of translations (see Figure 2). On average, they selected the correct answer 87% of the time. The teachers had the most difficulty distinguishing between the students' dictionary translations and MT translations for T4 and T5. In the post-task feedback (see Figure 3), two teachers noted that:

> *Native English Teacher 6 - No. 4 was tricky because it was so short, and the student's translation seemed fairly natural.*

> *Native English Teacher 7 - No. 5 I originally thought [MT was] the first response, but changed it due to the Japanese word still being included. This is something I have noticed translation software doing when it doesn't know the word, whereas a student can try to find alternatives for it.*

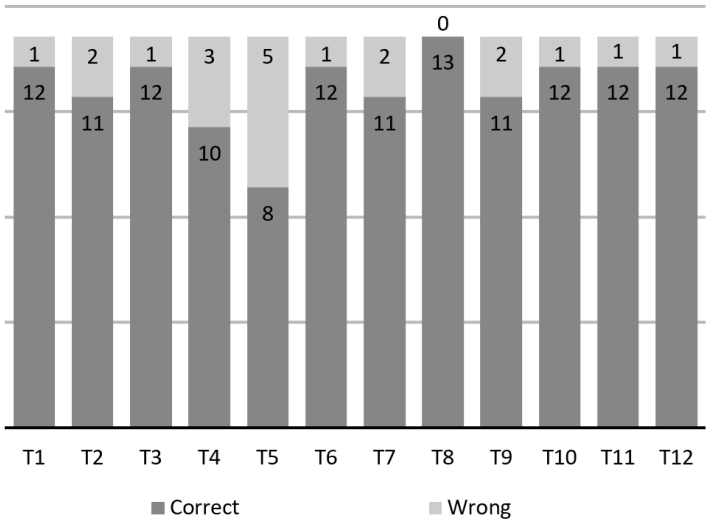

Figure 2 MT detection rate by native English teachers

How difficult was it to spot MT text?

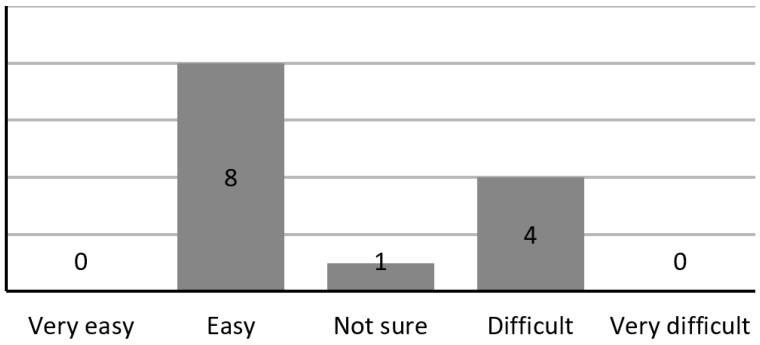

Figure 3 MT detection survey results

Of the 12 teachers, 8 (61%) stated that it was easy to detect the MT texts, while 1 (7%) stated they were not sure, and 4 (31%) said it was difficult. Some reasons given why it was easy were:

> *Native English Teacher 3 - The machine translation was written in more natural English. I didn't have to read the sentences twice to understand the meaning. It also seems that the machine translation often gave longer answers with more details. I could also notice some Japanese-English words/phrases in the student's translation.*

> *Native Teacher 13—Simply, if it is too perfect grammatically or uses low-frequency words, then it's machine-translated. A sentence that contains common mistakes is not.*

DISCUSSION

Considering the translation quality of the three MT services, rater feedback suggests that DeepL maintained a more natural English rhythm overall. At the same time, Microsoft Bing and Google Translate provided more literal translations of the Japanese texts. In the Microsoft Bing and Google Translate versions of the academic text, the Japanese sentence *Hito ha donoyouni kotoba wo oboerunoka* was translated as "How do people remember/learn words?" However, as the article was about second language

acquisition, DeepL's use of the term "learn a language" appears to have been more appropriate. As pointed out by two raters, variations in the translations of sentence 8 of the article (see the underlined sentence in appendix A) highlighted DeepL's capacity to convey more natural and grammatically correct English: DeepL) Some English language learners may also ask, "What kind of method is second language acquisition?" However, second language acquisition itself is not a specific learning method, but rather a theory of the language acquisition process; Microsoft Bing) Also, some English learners may ask, "What kind of method is second language acquisition?", But second language acquisition itself is not a specific learning method, it is just a language acquisition process. It becomes a theory about; Google Translate) In addition, some English language learners may wonder, "What kind of method is second language acquisition?", but second language acquisition itself is not a specific learning method, but it is just a theory about the language acquisition process. The examples above show how Microsoft Bing and Google Translate struggled to translate the long, somewhat complex sentence, which led to the misuse of a capital letter, incomplete sentence (Microsoft Bing), or repeated use of the same conjunction (Google Translate). In two other studies (Lee, 2022; Stapleton & Kin, 2019), Google Translate's inability to contextualise language was also noted to lead to more literal translations that contained a number of errors.

The quantitative and qualitative results of the reflective writing task indicated that the students' use of DeepL to revise their original English translations helped promote metalinguistic awareness. All students ended up editing their original translations, with 11 out of 13 going on to make improvements to varying degrees. Analysis of the post-questionnaire showed that the students felt that using DeepL to translate their English sentences back into Japanese helped them to 1. foster awareness of word and meaning discrepancies; 2. make better word choices and improve sentence expressions; 3. identify and correct grammar mistakes; and 4. build their confidence to construct longer and more complex sentences. Describing in the feedback how they used DeepL, Student 1 explained:

> *First, I copy-pasted my English sentences to DeepL and checked if they were correct in Japanese. I then used DeepL to search for words I wanted to add or fix, and fixed them. Finally, I copy-pasted all the English sentences again to DeepL to make sure I was satisfied with them.*

Regarding DeepL's usefulness, Student 10 also stated that:

> *DeepL was helpful. I was able to notice and improve on my dictionary translations by correcting them with the Japanese translation by DeepL.*

The current study corroborates Lee's findings (2020; 2022) by demonstrating that MT can aid EFL students in rectifying lexical and grammatical errors during revisions and enhance output quality.

With an 87% success rate, the results of the MT detection challenge showed that it was relatively easy for the native English teachers to distinguish between MT output and student output. The teachers' post-task feedback stated that the MT texts tended to exhibit near-perfect grammar, advanced vocabulary, and longer and more complex sentences. The native teachers appeared to have difficulty only when both translated versions were shorter or contained fewer mistakes. In another study by Innes (2019), 17 English teachers had an identification rate of 74.04%. In this instance, short news articles were translated by either Japanese volunteers or Google Translate. In the results, it was noted that MT was better at translating conditionals and employing more sophisticated expressions. However, for this identification task, the longer and possibly more complex texts saw MT make mistakes, particularly with the passive voice and pronouns. In the present study, Google Translate was seen to make only one pronoun mistake in the 12 short translations. In accordance with Ducar and Schocket (2018), the ongoing advancements of MT technology now seem to make its nuanced achievements a stronger indication of its use rather than its failures. Such signs include the inclusion of sophisticated vocabulary, complex subordinate clauses, and a lack of prepositional errors.

CONCLUSION

First, the results of this study showed that of the three MT services, DeepL was the most effective overall. This was particularly true for the translation of the academic sample text. However, for the more simple narrative sample text, the quality of each MT service was much more evenly judged. Next, the study showed how MT can be used in a controlled task-based learning situation in a classroom setting to promote individual students' metalinguistic awareness. By having the students translate from their L1 to the L2 with a dictionary and then use MT to translate their L2 output back into their L1, they could judge how well they could convey their messages and reflect on their language use. Finally, this study's findings also indicated that it was relatively easy for the native English teachers to distinguish between DeepL's high-quality translations and those produced by the students. MT now has the capability to assist students in generating content that potentially can surpass their own abilities. Although not originally created for L2 learning, it is possible that MT use can benefit language learners. However, this is only likely to occur if students are motivated and receive proper guidance. That is why more research is needed to better understand student perceptions and use of this technology and any potential ramifications its use may have in classroom environments.

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APPENDIX A

MT Quality Rating Task

Academic Writing Sample (Original Text)

第二言語習得とは、人間が母語以外の第二言語を習得するプロセスを科学的に解明する学問のことを指します。第二言語の習得プロセスには言語学だけではなく脳科学や心理学、社会学など幅広い領域が関わってくるため、第二言語習得研究は非常に学際的な領域となっています。

人はどのように言葉を覚えるのか。第二言語の習得プロセスが分かれば、そのプロセスに沿った適切な英語学習トレーニングを積んでいくことで、効率的に英語力を高めることができます。残念ながら第二言語習得研究そのものはまだ完全な学問というわけではなく、第二言語習得のプロセス全てが科学的に解明されているわけではありません。

しかし、逆に人がどのように第二言語を習得していくのかについて既にある程度明らかになってきていることも数多くあります。そのため、第二言語習得について一定の知識を持っておくことは、英語学習の効率を高めるうえでとても役立つのです。

また、英語学習者の中には「第二言語習得はどんなメソッドなの？」と疑問を持つ方もいるかもしれませんが、第二言語習得自体は特定の学習メソッドではなく、あくまで言語習得プロセスに関する理論となります。そのため、英語学習を行う上では、実際にその理論を具体的な学習メソッドに落とし込む必要があります。

Academic writing sample (DeepL version)

Second language acquisition refers to the scientific study of the process by which humans acquire a second language other than their native language. The process of second language acquisition involves not only linguistics but also a wide range of other fields such as brain science, psychology, and sociology, making second language acquisition research a very interdisciplinary field.

How do people learn a language? If we understand the process of second language acquisition, we can improve our English language skills efficiently by following that process with appropriate English language learning training. Unfortunately, second language acquisition research itself is not yet a complete science, and not all processes of second language acquisition have been scientifically elucidated.

On the contrary, however, there are many things that have already been clarified to some extent about how people acquire a second language. Therefore, having a certain amount of knowledge about second language acquisition is very helpful in improving the efficiency of English language learning.

Some English language learners may also ask, "What kind of method is second language acquisition?" However, second language acquisition itself is not a specific learning method, but rather a theory of the language acquisition process. Therefore, it is necessary to actually incorporate the theory into a specific learning method when learning English.

Academic writing sample (Google translate version)

Second language acquisition refers to the study of scientifically elucidating the process by which humans acquire a second language other than their mother tongue. Second language acquisition research is

a very interdisciplinary area because the process of second language acquisition involves a wide range of fields, including not only linguistics but also brain science, psychology, and sociology.

How do people remember words? Once you know the process of learning a second language, you can improve your English proficiency efficiently by accumulating appropriate English learning training along that process. Unfortunately, second language acquisition research itself is not yet a complete discipline, and the entire process of second language acquisition has not been scientifically elucidated.

However, on the contrary, there are many things that have already become clear to some extent about how people learn a second language. Therefore, having a certain amount of knowledge about second language acquisition is very helpful in improving the efficiency of learning English.

Also, some English learners may ask, "What kind of method is second language acquisition?", But second language acquisition itself is not a specific learning method, it is just a language acquisition process. It becomes a theory about. Therefore, in order to learn English, it is necessary to actually incorporate the theory into a concrete learning method.

Academic writing sample (Bing microsoft translator version)

Second language acquisition refers to the study of scientifically elucidating the process by which humans acquire a second language other than their native language. Since the process of acquiring a second language involves not only linguistics but also a wide range of fields such as brain science, psychology, and sociology, research on second language acquisition is a very interdisciplinary field.

How do people learn words? Once you understand the process of acquiring a second language, you can efficiently improve your English skills by accumulating appropriate English learning training according to that process. Unfortunately, second language acquisition research itself is not yet a complete discipline, and the entire process of second language acquisition has not been scientifically elucidated.

However, on the other hand, there are many things that have already become clear to some extent about how people learn a second language. Therefore, having a certain level of knowledge about second language acquisition is very useful for improving the efficiency of English learning.

In addition, some English language learners may wonder, "What kind of method is second language acquisition?", but second language acquisition itself is not a specific learning method, but it is just a theory about the language acquisition process. Therefore, in order to learn English, it is necessary to actually incorporate the theory into a concrete learning method.

News article (Original text)

この夏、7年ぶりに節電要請が行われるなど、国内の電力需給が厳しくなる中、この5年間で火力発電所の供給力がおよそ1600万キロワット540万世帯分、減ったことがわかりました。再生可能エネルギーの普及で採算が悪化したことを背景に、火力発電所の廃止や休止が相次いでいて、専門家は、安定供給に向けて国が、より強く関与すべきだと指摘しています。

国内では、去年から電力の需給が厳しくなっていて、この夏、政府は大規模な停電を避けるため、7年ぶりに全国で節電要請を行います。

こうした中、2017年度からの5年間で、火力発電所の廃止や運転休止が相次ぎ、新たに稼働した分を差し引いても、供給力がおよそ1600万キロワット減っていたことが、資源エネルギー庁への取材でわかりました。

これは、標準的な家庭に換算すると、およそ543万世帯分に当たり、急激な火力発電の減少が、今の電力不足を招いていることが浮き彫りとなりました。

また、去年以降、発電を始める予定だった主な発電所で建設が中止となったのは13基、合わせておよそ1000万キロワットにのぼっています。

背景には、太陽光発電が普及する中、火力発電所の稼働率が低下し、採算が悪化していることや、世界的な脱炭素の流れで、二酸化炭素の排出が多い火力発電所への投資に厳しい目が向けられていることなどがあるとみられます。

News article (DeepL version)

Amid the tightening supply and demand of electricity in Japan this summer, including the first request for electricity conservation in seven years, the supply capacity of thermal power plants has decreased by approximately 16 million kilowatts for 5.4 million households over the past five years. Experts have pointed out that the government should be more strongly involved in ensuring a stable supply of electricity.

In Japan, the supply and demand of electricity has been tightening since last year, and this summer, for the first time in seven years, the government will request power saving throughout the country to avoid large-scale blackouts.

Amidst this situation, an interview with the Agency for Natural Resources and Energy revealed that during the five years from fiscal 2017, thermal power plants were shut down or suspended one after another, resulting in a decrease of approximately 16 million kilowatts in supply capacity, even after subtracting the amount of new power plants that were put into operation.

This is equivalent to about 5.43 million standard households, highlighting that the sharp decrease in thermal power generation is causing the current power shortage.

In addition, since last year, construction of 13 major power plants that were scheduled to start generating electricity has been cancelled, totaling approximately 10 million kilowatts.

This is due to the fact that the operating rates of thermal power plants are declining and their profitability is deteriorating as solar power generation becomes more widespread, and that the global trend toward decarbonization is making investments in thermal power plants, which emit large amounts of carbon dioxide, more difficult.

News article (Google translate version)

It was found that the supply capacity of thermal power plants has decreased by about 16 million kilowatts of 5.4 million households in the last five years while the domestic power supply and demand has become severe, such as the request for power saving for the first time in seven years this summer. With the spread of renewable energy deteriorating profitability, thermal power plants have been abolished or shut down one after another, and experts point out that the country should be more involved in achieving a stable supply.

In Japan, the supply and demand of electricity has been tight since last year, and this summer, the government will request power saving nationwide for the first time in seven years to avoid a large-scale power outage.

Under these circumstances, in the five years from FY2017, the supply capacity was reduced by about 16 million kilowatts even after deducting the amount of new operation due to the abolition and suspension of operation of thermal power plants, to the Agency for Natural Resources and Energy. I found out in the interview.

This is equivalent to about 5.43 million households when converted to standard households, and it is clear that the sharp decrease in thermal power generation is causing the current power shortage.

In addition, since last year, 13 major power plants that were scheduled to start power generation have been discontinued, totaling about 10 million kilowatts.

In the background, with the spread of solar power generation, the operating rate of thermal power plants is declining and profitability is deteriorating, and due to the global decarbonization trend, thermal power plants that emit a lot of carbon dioxide It seems that there is a strict eye on the investment of.

News article (Bing microsoft translator version)

This summer, amid the tightening of domestic power supply and demand, including the first request to save electricity in seven years, it was found that the supply capacity of thermal power plants has decreased by about 16 million kilowatts to 5.4 million households in the past five years. Against the backdrop of deteriorating profitability due to the spread of renewable energy, there has been a series of decommissioning and suspension of thermal power plants, and experts have pointed out that the government should be more strongly involved in ensuring a stable supply.

In Japan, the supply and demand of electricity has become severe since last year, and this summer, the government will request electricity saving nationwide for the first time in seven years to avoid large-scale power outages.

Against this backdrop, in the five years since fiscal 2017, thermal power plants have been discontinued or suspended one after another, and even after deducting the amount newly put into operation, the supply capacity has decreased by approximately 16 million kilowatts, according to an interview with the Agency for Natural Resources and Energy.

This is equivalent to approximately 5.43 million households when converted to standard households, highlighting that the rapid decline in thermal power generation is causing the current power shortage.

Since last year, construction of 13 major power plants that were scheduled to begin generating electricity has been halted, bringing the total to about 10 million kilowatts.

This may be due to the fact that the utilization rate of thermal power plants has declined amid the spread of solar power generation, and profitability has deteriorated, and investment in thermal power plants that emit large amounts of carbon dioxide has been closely watched due to the global trend toward decarbonization.

Narrative (Original text)

同じ日の日中、保険会社に勤めるサンフンは、妻スジンの知り合いの、娘が交通事故にあった母親の訴えを聞いていました。

事故現場には目撃者を求める看板が立っていましたが、事故を証言する者もなく、サンフンは力になれないと告げ、形通りに頭を下げます。

サンフンは事故の件を会社の同僚に警察を頼っても無駄と語り、妻には他人の事は放っておけと告げます。彼はそんな男でした。

居酒屋で同僚たちと飲み、マンションを購入した事を持ち上げられ泥酔するサンフン。皆と別れ深夜、独りで家路につきます。

郊外の山のふもとに建つマンションに住むサンフン。先程男から逃れた女が、その明かりを目指し必死に進んでいました。

エレベーターで4階の住人の女と乗り合わせた際、彼女を驚かせてしまったサンフンは詫びます。不安そうな表情の彼女は、悲鳴が聞こえたと訴えますが、何も聞いていないサンフンは困惑します。彼女を見送ってサンフンは自宅のある6階に向かいます。

午前2時頃、帰宅したサンフンは、暗い部屋で起こさぬ様に愛娘ウンジの寝顔を眺め、缶ビールを開けソファーで飲み始めます。

外から女の悲鳴がします。何事かと思うサンフンに、今度は助けて下さいと叫ぶ、女の声が聞こえてきます。サンフンは窓から様子を窺います。

Descriptive narrative (DeepL version)

During the same day, Sang-hoon, who works for an insurance company, hears a complaint from a mother whose daughter was in a car accident, an acquaintance of his wife Su-jin.

A sign asking for witnesses was posted at the accident scene, but no one testified to the accident, and Sang-hoon told her that he could not help her and bowed his head formally.

Sang-hoon tells his co-workers about the accident that it is useless to rely on the police, and tells his wife to leave other people alone. He is that kind of man.

Sang-hoon and his colleagues go out for drinks at a tavern, where Sang-hoon gets drunk after being told that he has purchased a condominium. He leaves everyone and heads home alone late at night.

Sang-hoon lives in a condominium at the foot of a mountain in the suburbs. A woman who has just escaped from a man is desperately trying to get to the light.

Sang-hoon apologizes for startling her when he meets the woman, who lives on the fourth floor, in the elevator.

She looks anxious and complains that she heard a scream, but Sang-hoon, who heard nothing, is puzzled. Sang-hoon sees her off and heads to the sixth floor where his home is located.

Around 2:00 a.m., Sang-hoon returns home and watches his daughter Eun-ji sleep in a dark room without waking her, then opens a can of beer and starts drinking it on the sofa.

A woman screams from outside. Sang-hoon wonders what's going on, but this time he hears a woman's voice asking for help. Sang-hoon looks out the window.

Descriptive narrative (Google translate version)

During the same day, Sang-hoon, who works for an insurance company, hears a complaint from a mother whose daughter was in a car accident, an acquaintance of his wife Su-jin.

A sign asking for witnesses was posted at the accident scene, but no one testified to the accident, and Sang-hoon told her that he could not help her and bowed his head formally.

Sang-hoon tells his co-workers about the accident that it is useless to rely on the police, and tells his wife to leave other people alone. He is that kind of man.

Sang-hoon and his colleagues go out for drinks at a tavern, where Sang-hoon gets drunk after being told that he has purchased a condominium. He leaves everyone and heads home alone late at night.

Sang-hoon lives in a condominium at the foot of a mountain in the suburbs. A woman who has just escaped from a man is desperately trying to get to the light.

Sang-hoon apologizes for startling her when he meets the woman, who lives on the fourth floor, in the elevator.

She looks anxious and complains that she heard a scream, but Sang-hoon, who heard nothing, is puzzled. Sang-hoon sees her off and heads to the sixth floor where his home is located.

Around 2:00 a.m., Sang-hoon returns home and watches his daughter Eun-ji sleep in a dark room without waking her, then opens a can of beer and starts drinking it on the sofa.

A woman screams from outside. Sang-hoon wonders what's going on, but this time he hears a woman's voice asking for help. Sang-hoon looks out the window.

Descriptive narrative (Bing microsoft translator version)

During the same day, Sang-hoon, who works for an insurance company, listened to the complaint of a mother whose daughter was in a car accident, an acquaintance of his wife Su-jin.

There was a sign at the scene of the accident asking for witnesses, but there was no one to testify about the accident, and Sang-hoon said that he could not help but bow his head in a formal manner.

Sang-hoon tells a colleague at the company that it is useless to rely on the police about the accident, and tells his wife to leave other people's affairs alone. He was such a man.

Sang-hoon gets drunk after drinking with his colleagues in a tavern and buying an apartment. I say goodbye to everyone and go home alone in the middle of the night.

Sang-hoon lives in an apartment building at the foot of a mountain in the suburbs. The woman who had just escaped from the man was desperately trying to get to the light.

When he meets a fourth-floor resident woman in an elevator, Sang-hoon apologizes for surprising her.

With a worried look on her face, she complains that she heard screams, but Sang-hoon, who has not heard anything, is puzzled. Seeing her off, Sang-hoon heads to the sixth floor of his home.

When Sang-hoon returns home around 2 a.m., he looks at his beloved daughter Eun-ji's sleeping face so as not to wake her up in a dark room, opens a can of beer, and starts drinking on the sofa.

I hear a woman's scream from outside. Sang-hoon wonders what is going on, but now he hears a woman's voice screaming for help. Sang-hoon watches from the window.

APPENDIX B

Reflective Writing Task

1. Read the following statements. Give your opinion in Japanese (3 sentences for each).

- Marriage is no longer necessary in society. 結婚はもはや社会的に必要ない。

- Social media overall harms people and their relationships. ソーシャルメディアは全体的に人と人との関係を悪くする。

- Children must pay rent to their parents if they live at home after getting a job. 就職して実家に住む場合、子どもは親に家賃を払わなければならない。

APPENDIX C

Post-Task Survey

1. Which task did you use the translation software more?
Translation Task
Writing Task
About the same

2. Did you use the translation software the same way or differently for both tasks?
Same way
Different way
Other...

3. How did you use the translation software for both tasks?
Long-answer text

4. Which task was more difficult for you?
Translation task
Writing task
About the same

Please explain why.

5. Which task did you enjoy more?
Translation task
Writing task
Both
Neither

Please give your reasons.

6. Which task made you think more deeply about English?
Translation task
Writing task
About the same

Please write the reason.

7. Do you think about English more or less now that you use translation software?
More
Less
No difference

Please give a reason.

APPENDIX D

Translation software detection challenge

Which of the following was translated using machine translation?

1) * 1 point
People do not need marriage. Each other feeling is important, to obiligate marriage is not necessarily good. So, I think people can variety choice whether they want to marry or not marry.

I don't think it is necessary. I don't think it is necessarily a good idea to make marriage obligatory, because I think mutual feelings are important. Therefore, I think it would be a good idea to allow people to make a variety of choices: those who want to get married should do so, and those who don't want to go through the trouble should not.
Which of the following was translated using machine translation?

2) * 1 point
It is not harmful. People can communicate and know recent state with friends living far, so friendship may be continue longer. In addition, I had an experience that I become talking a friend who were not close because of SNS.

I don't think it will be bad. I think friendships will last longer because I can keep in touch with friends who have moved away and find out what they are up to. Also, I have talked with people I was not so close with because of the content of social networking sites.
Which of the following was translated using machine translation?

3) * 1 point
We believe that rent should be paid. The reason for this is that we believe that getting a job means that one should be financially independent as well. Since parents did a lot for us and raised us until we became adults, we should manage and pay for our own finances as well

I consider that children who live at home after getting a job should pay rent. This is because getting a job also means an independent economic aspect. We give many things and are grew up for parents until we are adults, so we should manage monetary by myself and we should pay things that involved with us.
Which of the following was translated using machine translation?

4) * 1 point
I do not think so. Because marriage is a big turning point in life and this is connected to preventing decreasing birthrate and aging population.

Against. Marriage is one major milestone and is necessary to increase the birthrate and aging population.
Which of the following was translated using machine translation?

5) * 1 point
Social media can make or break relationships with people. The fact that anyone can say or express anything in any language without being able to see the other person's face can be hurtful to the other person. However, for children who are shut-ins or truants, it can be the only place where they can communicate with others.

Depending on using social media, it is for good and bad relationships with other people. It is afraid of somebody state whatever else, because it is not in directory. However, hikikomori and truant can easy to communicate with other person and place for relaxation.
Which of the following was translated using machine translation?

6) * 1 point
If the parent's income alone is not sufficient to cover the rent, then the child should also be responsible for the rent. However, if not, I do not believe that the child should be responsible for having to pay the rent. Also, if they have just started working, it would be difficult for them to bear the rent right away because they do not have a large income.

If it is difficult to pay with only salary of parents, I think that children should pay. However, except this situation, I consider that children do not have responsibilities which they have to pay rent. In addition, the salary of people who just start working is not so much, it is difficult to pay rent immediately.

7) * 1 point
Marriage is necessary for the children's life, such as attending kindergarten and school. I do not know the details of the laws and rules, but I think it would be inconvenient if we are not married when making contracts related to our children. It is better to be able to prove it on documents for the sake of the children.

Marriage is necessary for children to live such as go to kindergarten and schools. I don’t know much about laws or rules of marriage, but I think it’s inconvenient if couples don’t get married when they contract about children. People need to prove marriage for children.
Which of the following was translated using machine translation?

8) * 1 point
I think that the way of using social media affect human relations. Offensive posts or these denigrating a person make the personal relationships bad, but thoughtful of others and friendly posts improve the relationships and make new friends. This is important for not only social media but also meeting face-to-face communication.

I believe that a person's use of social media can greatly affect their relationships. If a person posts a lot of offensive or demeaning posts, the relationship between people will deteriorate, but if they are friendly and considerate, social media can be a tool to deepen friendships and build new relationships. This is not only true in social media, but in real communication as well.

9) * 1 point
Whether or not to pay rent depends on the family's situation, and we do not believe that it is possible to say that one should or should not pay rent in general. This is because the situation differs from family to family, such as whether or not the child is responsible for housework, whether or not a scholarship is being repaid, and whether or not the family home is affluent. In addition, whether or not a child pays rent is a family matter, so it is not up to others to decide what should be done.

Whether children bill rent or not is different from the situation of the families, so it is impossible to pronounce that children must bill or not have to do. The reason is the situation is different each family like children do housework or not, they have repayment of scholarship or not and home is wealthy or not. Also, it is the problem in the home whether children bill rent or not, so unrelated person should not decide what is correct.
Which of the following was translated using machine translation?

10) * 1 point
Not always need it. Recently, due to diversity is regarding highly, the relationship between partners became changing. Young people are thinking that marriage is not only make happiness, so it is not necessary need in Japanese society.

It is not always necessary. In recent years, the importance of diversity has led to changes in the relationship between partners. Since many young people are beginning to believe that marriage is not the only form of happiness, it is no longer a social necessity. While I believe that some benefits of marriage exist, it depends on the case, as there are many cases where it is difficult to get married due to financial and other issues.
Which of the following was translated using machine translation?

11) * 1 point
I think social media is bad influence on people's relationships because it could be the people's relationships more complicated. I often see the news of bully.

I believe that social media makes people's relationships with each other worse overall because I feel that since social media has expanded, it has made people's interactions with each other more complicated. I often see in the news that bullying issues are happening more insidiously, especially when compared to when social media was not developed. There are many benefits to social media becoming more common, but in terms of relationships with people, I think social media makes them worse.

12) * 1 point
They must pay rent. Working adult can make money, so even if they live with parents, they must pay rent. To do filial piety, they should pay rent.

I think I have to pay for it. Becoming a member of society means that you are independent and can earn your own money, so you have to pay for your own place to live, even if it is with your parents. You should pay for your own place to live, even if it is with your parents. You should also pay for it to show filial piety to your parents.

How difficult was it to spot the machine-translated text?
Very easy
Easy
Not sure
Difficult
Very difficult

Please explain what things made it easy or difficult.
Your answer

Which ones were you least confident about? Please indicate the numbers 1 to 12 and explain why. If you were confident about all of them, just state that.
Your answer

Promoting Cross-Cultural Understanding and Acceptance of Global Englishes: An Innovative Curriculum for Japanese University Students

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Abstract

English is a subject of great importance in Japan where it was integrated into the curriculum of all elementary schools in April 2011. However, English language teaching (ELT) in Japan currently emphasizes native English and does not adequately incorporate non-native English speakers or intercultural understanding. This discrepancy emphasizes the need for innovative approaches to improve students' awareness and acceptance of different varieties of English. This study introduces and evaluates the effectiveness of a pioneering course called "Global Englishes" that has been incorporated into the curriculum of a Japanese college. The course aims to raise students' awareness of Global Englishes, promote intercultural understanding, and empower non-native English teachers. The course is a compulsory one-year course for second-year students and taught by six teachers from countries where English is not the first language. The course exposes students to different accents and cultures through interactive teaching methods. Past studies showed that students gained confidence in using their English and developed greater curiosity about other cultures after taking the Global Englishes course. To delve into the effects of this course on the teachers, a pilot research study was conducted. The results showed the course has empowered non-native English teachers, improved their teaching skills, and increased their career opportunities. The Global Englishes course demonstrates an effective approach to overcoming the limitations of traditional ELT practices in Japan by promoting cross-cultural awareness and acceptance of different Englishes. Using similar programs could enhance the global competitiveness and communication skills of Japanese students.

Keywords: Global Englishes, cross-cultural understanding, motivation, college course, teacher empowerment

INTRODUCTION

The reality of English education in Japan

The Japanese government considers English an essential subject, making it a compulsory part of the curriculum in all elementary schools since April 2011 (MEXT, 2008; 2013). The government's aim is to improve English language skills from a young age in order to increase Japan's global competitiveness and promote international communication skills. Despite these efforts, it is still difficult for Japanese students to achieve a high level of English proficiency.

According to the results of the 2023 National Achievement Test conducted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), the average number of correct answers on a national English language test among senior students in junior high school was only 12.4%. This indicates a significant gap in students' ability to express themselves in English ("Zenkoku gakuryoku tesuto",

2023). Japan was also ranked 87th in the Education First (EF) English Proficiency survey among 112 non-English speaking countries, dropping from 26th to 87th in the last 10 years (EF, 2023), as shown in Figure 1. Despite the government's efforts to improve the English proficiency of Japanese students, the population remains stubbornly bad at learning it (Margolis, 2020).

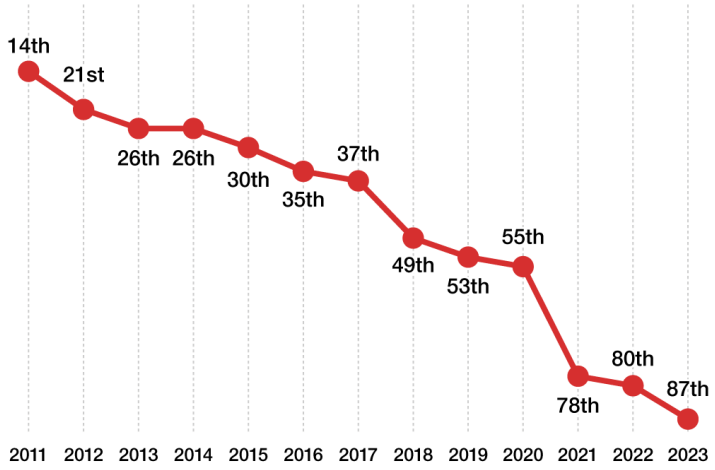

Figure 1 Japan's EF English proficiency index ranking
Source: "Japan's English Proficiency" (2023)

This persistently low performance suggests that existing methods of teaching English may not be meeting the needs of Japanese students.

Several factors may contribute to the low proficiency of Japanese students. One of the main problems is the emphasis on native English, particularly American and British English, which is considered the standard (Fang & Ren 2018). Morizumi (2009) highlights that the majority of English textbooks used in schools in Japan primarily emphasize standard English, which limits students' exposure to the diverse varieties of English. Honna (2008) explains that many Japanese students perceive American English or British English as the most spoken variety of English, emphasizing the idea that they must learn standard English more than any other variety. However, as Yadav (2018) explains, although English is the most spoken language worldwide, only 4% of the interactions in English involve native-speaker to native-speaker. Overall, the mainstream English Education in Japan neglects the fact that most Japanese students will interact more frequently with non-native English speakers in global contexts. The current curriculum does not adequately prepare students for these interactions as it often undervalues the non-native accents and varieties of English.

Furthermore, there is a widespread belief among students that English spoken with a Japanese accent is wrong, which undermines their confidence and willingness to use the language. This scenario reflects a broader problem within the English education system in Japan, where the goal of achieving native speaker proficiency overshadows the practical need for effective communication skills.

Considering these issues, innovative and effective approaches to language teaching are needed to overcome these challenges. Programs that focus on practical communication skills and exposure to different varieties of English can better prepare Japanese students to interact with the real world. The introduction of such programs is crucial to improving English proficiency and promoting an inclusive and effective language learning environment in Japan. This paper introduces an innovative English course that introduces as many different Englishes as possible to second year college students.

The Global Englishes course

To address the latent challenges of English education in Japan, the course "Global Englishes" was added to the curriculum of one Japanese university as a required one-year course for second year students in April 2017. This innovative course aims to enhance students' English proficiency and cultural awareness, equipping them with the skills needed for global communication. The course was designed to accomplish three main goals:

1. Introduce as many different Englishes as possible to increase students' awareness and acceptance of Global Englishes.
2. Emphasize communication and not grammar as the majority of English classes in Japan do.
3. Give the students confidence using their own English.

The teachers and course system

To achieve these goals, six non-native English speakers teach students about life and culture in their home country using plain English. Each teacher meets with the students twice a week for ten consecutive lessons over five weeks. A rotation system as illustrated in Figure 2 ensures that the small classes will have enough time with each teacher to gain an understanding of the teacher's English accent, syntax, and vocabulary while maximizing interaction.

Spring semester				
Teacher	Classroom	Session 1 (4/10 – 5/15)	Session 2 (5/18–6/19)	Session 3 (6/22–7/27)
	S0405	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3
	S0501	Class 3	Class 1	Class 2
	S0601	Class 2	Class 3	Class 1
	S0605	Class 4	Class 5	Class 6
	S0701	Class 6	Class 4	Class 5
	S0705	Class 5	Class 6	Class 4

Fall semester				
Teacher	Classroom	Session 4 (9/18–10/19)	Session 5 (10/26–11/30)	Session 6 (12/4–1/22)
	S0405	Class 4	Class 5	Class 6
	S0501	Class 6	Class 4	Class 5
	S0601	Class 5	Class 6	Class 4
	S0605	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3
	S0701	Class 3	Class 1	Class 2
	S0705	Class 2	Class 3	Class 1

Figure 2 Class rotation system

Although one of the primary goals of the course is to increase students' awareness of Global Englishes by studying with teachers from different areas of the world, students should also gain confidence in their own English by observing that effective communication does not rely on adhering to native speaker norms. By interacting with teachers who use a variety of English accents and styles, students learn that clarity and understanding can be achieved through diverse linguistic expressions. This realization helps students appreciate the value of their own English proficiency and encourages them to use English confidently in global contexts.

Course content

The content of the Global Englishes course is designed to provide students with a rich and varied learning experience that goes beyond traditional textbook-based instruction. Instead of standard English textbooks, the course uses teacher-created materials tailored to students' specific needs and interests. This approach allows for greater flexibility and relevance in the classroom and makes the learning process more stimulating and effective.

The course is structured around ten recommended cultural themes to guide teachers and ensure a consistent learning experience across different classes. These topics include:

1. Introduction to the target country: this includes basic information about the teacher's home country, including geography, weather, official language, and national symbols. Interactive quizzes and games are often used to familiarize students with these topics. A few of the teachers have students try to draw the national flag.

2. Culinary arts: exploration of traditional foods, culinary practices, and table manners. Some courses include hands-on activities, such as cooking demonstrations, to provide a more immersive experience. The teacher from Syria brings in the ingredients for falafel and helps the students prepare their lunch (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 Syrian food: Cooking falafel as a hands-on activity

3. Education: comparison of educational practices of the target country with Japan. Also, a look at access to education. The teacher from China arranged for the students here in Japan to ask students in China questions via Zoom.

4. Children's stories: a look at the stories that children in the target country are raised with. Teachers use creative approaches to introduce these stories. One popular method is to give the students the illustrations from the story and have the students put them in the correct order; then students create a story that matches the illustrations they have arranged.

5. Superstitions: what are the common beliefs that should be followed for good luck or to avoid bad luck. Quizzes and mock game shows are used to introduce superstitions.

6. Music: from the unique instruments to the genres of music, this topic is usually quite popular. Some of the teachers have music from their countries playing in the background during every class. The teacher from Brazil introduces representative ethnic instruments and has students play them (see Figure 4). Often this lesson is accompanied with dances and sometimes costumes from the target countries.

Figure 4 Class about music: Traditional instruments

7. Holidays & Celebrations: for this class the teachers often introduce the religious practices in their countries. Japanese have a pattern of plurality in their religious affiliations (Britannica, 2024); most Japanese follow Buddhism practices at birth and death, Shintoism for marriage, and celebrate Christmas every December. Thus, students are surprised to find the influential role religion plays in some countries. They learn how Muslims enjoy Eid al-Fitr after the month of fasting, Ramadan, and how Christianity plays a role in many of Brazil's holidays. The Russian teacher teaches about Maslenitsa, a celebration at the end of winter when people feast before Lent on "blini", which they make in class.

8. Business practices: this topic was added to link students' education with practices they may encounter after graduation in an international company. Teachers typically highlight business differences between Japan and the target country. Students are taught how to greet professionally in a business environment, how to write a curriculum vitae for job hunting, and other topics. In the class about Egypt, the teacher introduces jobs that are unique to the country like the "baweb", a combination door man, security guard, gofer, and chaperone.

9. Gestures: all countries have unique hand gestures. These lend themselves to interactive games. It is especially helpful to learn which gestures should never be used in which country.

10. Review of the course: the tenth day of the class has an interesting assortment of projects for students to review what they have learned in the prior nine classes. A few of the teachers have students do presentations by expanding on a topic they covered in class. The teacher from Brazil asks students to prepare a collage featuring all of the elements they found interesting in the class (see Figure 5). Another tenth day activity is a quiz based on notes (see the next section for details on note-taking) where the students are divided in groups with their notes from the class and asked to choose difficult questions from their notes that they can answer but will stump the other groups.

Figure 5 Examples of collages done by students in the Brazil class

Again, these ten topics are only recommendations. Teachers are free to focus on what they feel is important. For example, at one point an American teacher needed to take over a class and she added "car culture" as a class topic. The teacher from Indonesia taught about notable islands in her country. The teacher from France taught about the spiral layout of Paris and the public transportation there.

It is important to note that there is no textbook for the classes or for any of the topics. The teachers use pictures and short videos through PowerPoint in order to aid in students' understanding. Most teachers have no text in their PowerPoint to motivate the students to listen more closely.

Note-taking system

Note-taking is a vital skill for English learners that offers several benefits (Kobayashi, 2006). Firstly, it aids in retention by reinforcing memory and comprehension of key points and vocabulary. Secondly, notes provide a structured way to organize information, allowing learners to clarify concepts and create a study roadmap. Thirdly, it promotes active engagement with the material, fostering a deeper understanding compared to passive listening or reading.

As explained by Vandergrift and Cross (2004), note-taking is a powerful strategy for enhancing listening comprehension in language learning. In other words, it teaches students how to listen effectively. Additionally, notes serve as a valuable reference tool for review and reinforcement, enabling learners to revisit and reinforce their understanding of previously covered material. Lastly, note-taking allows for customization, as learners can develop their own style tailored to their preferences and learning needs, whether it's bullet points, mind maps, or annotated diagrams.

Note-taking plays a vital role in Global Englishes classes. As explained in section 2.2, this course does not utilize traditional textbooks. Instead, students effectively create their own material by listening and writing down the points they catch from the teacher or from the white board. Students are given a blank handout titled "Global Englishes Class Notes" to start preparing for the next topic. Before going to class, students need to prepare three questions on the next topic (see section 2.4 for details). In *Figure 6*, the student has three questions for the class theme "Children's Stories in Brazil":

1. Are children's story used in Brazilian textbooks?
2. Are there any Japanese children's story known in Brazil?
3. Who are the most famous literary authors in Brazil? What did he/she write?

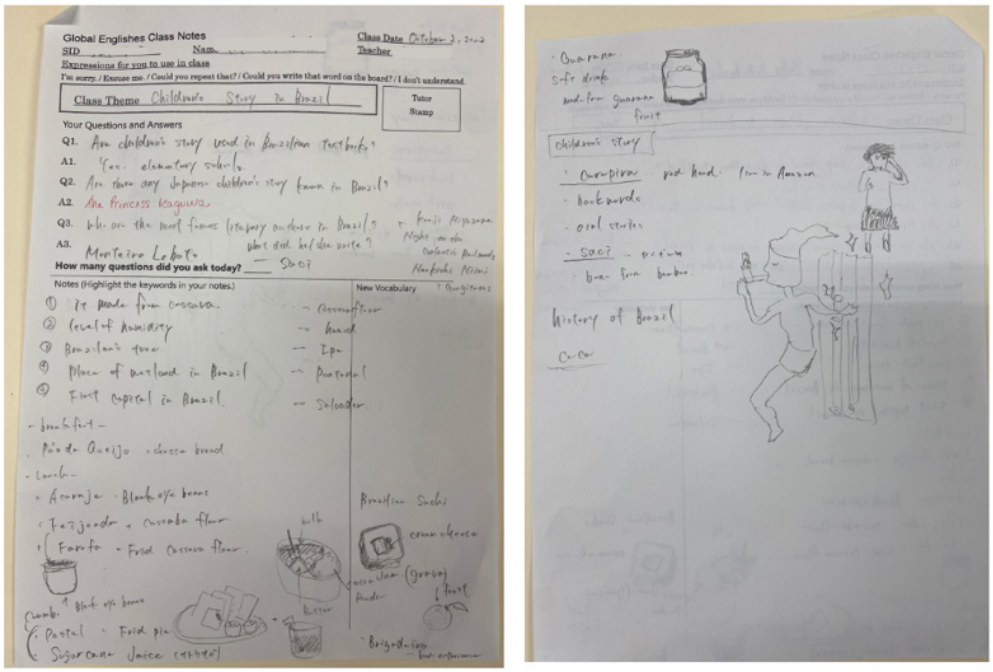

Figure 6 Examples of student's notes on the prepared Global Englishes class notes sheet

Evaluation and grading system

As mentioned in section 2.1, the course is designed so that it is taught by six teachers simultaneously. However, the Global Englishes course is actually seven people working together as a team. There are

the six teachers who are responsible for teaching the students as they rotate through the countries, and there is one coordinator who maintains continuity, takes care of exams, and troubleshoots the course. To ensure consistency across classes, students' performances are assessed through various methods following a rubric (see Figure 6). These evaluation methods are:

Continuous Assessment (Class-notes and Class Participation)

As explained in section 2.2, classes follow a list of recommended topics and for each class the students are required to create three questions to ask the teacher about that day's topic (1). During class the students will ask the teacher one to three of their questions and write down the answers. When their teachers speak, the students need to listen and write down what they believe are the main ideas. Students also need to take notes as they watch short videos on the target countries or see photographs of different events.

Class notes are collected at the end of each class, graded following the rubric (see Figure 7), and returned at the beginning of the next class. As shown in the rubric system, students receive extra points if they have their questions checked by a GCI tutor[1], conduct some research about the country and topic, and ask an interesting question.

Finally, students are also graded on their participation in class. Students who ask questions and actively participate in class-activities receive better scores.

Written Assessment (Semester Exams)

The end of semester requirements are different depending on whether it is the spring semester or the fall semester. For the spring semester, students have to write a paragraph on one of four listed topics (see Appendix 1). Writing practice and feedback are important as only students majoring in English have writing classes past the first year. GCI is an interdepartmental course so having assigned writing helps non-English majors to review the writing basics they were taught in GCI courses in their freshman year.

In the fall semester, students are given an exam for which they can use their notes from class. In fact, relying on their notes is the point of the final exam (see Appendix 2). The students are given ample time to prepare and review their notes. They are also encouraged to check their notes and study with other students from the course so that they can find any points that are missing from their notes.

In the end, the semester grade is a combination of the grade from each of the three Global Englishes teachers from the semester and the 10 percent from the final assignment or exam, which is graded by the coordinator.

[1] A GCI tutor (2) is an upperclassman in the GCI program who is chosen and paid to assist students with their assignments, offer advice about studying for standardized tests like the TOEIC and TOEFL, has experience in study abroad programs, and supplements students' English practice between classes.

Evaluation Criteria	Satisfactory (5 points) AA	A (4 points)	Needs Development (3 points) B	C (2 points)	Unsatisfactory (1 points) C / F	F (0 Points)
Preparation	Arrives fully prepared with all assignments completed, and notes on readings, observations, and questions. Creates all three questions (1) on the class notes for the theme and gets the GCI tutor's (2) signature.	~	Arrives with only superficial preparation. There are less than three questions but with GCI tutor's signature or three questions w/o a signature.	~	Arrives unprepared. Has no questions or signature.	~
Listening	Actively and respectfully listens to peers and instructor.	~	Sometimes displays lack of interest in comments of others or the lecture.	~	Projects lack of interest or disrespect for others.	~
Participation	Actively participates at appropriate times.	~	Sometimes participates but at other times is "tuned out".	~	Seldom participates and is generally not engaged.	~
Note-taking (Evaluated After Class)	Answers all three prepared questions and notes all main and supporting ideas of the topics in class.	~	Misses some topics in class or answers of prepared questions.	~	No notes taken.	~

Figure 7 Rubric for evaluating class participation

Impact of the Global Englishes course: The pilot study

As explained in section 2, Global Englishes is a pioneering course mainly designed to increase students' awareness of Global Englishes and foster students' confidence in their own English. A study conducted by Feijo et al. (2023) showed that the Global Englishes course enhanced students' confidence in using the English language. Additionally, by engaging with teachers from diverse foreign countries, students have enriched their comprehension of various cultures and gained diverse perspectives. These results suggest that the Global Englishes course significantly contributes to the English learning trajectory of Japanese students.

To further identify the impact of the Global Englishes course, a pilot research study was conducted with five English teachers between November and December 2023 to analyze the influence of the Global Englishes course on teachers' identities and teaching careers in Japan.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

The narrative inquiry, which is a way of doing research that focuses on the participants' life stories (Barkhuizen, 2015; Barkhuizen et.al., 2014) was used to study teachers' teaching stories. As Barkhuizen (2011) explains, one of the main characteristics of the narrative approach is the co-construction of knowledge as it focuses on specific situations in the past. Therefore, the researchers opted for narrative inquiry to delve into and analyze the teaching experiences of Global Englishes teachers.

The main data collection procedure was narratives written by the teachers. All five teachers were asked to write a one-page summary about their experience teaching the Global Englishes course. To gain more insight into Global Englishes teachers' experiences, following the submission of the narratives, individual interviews were conducted with participants to clarify certain aspects of their stories.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overcoming native speakerism

The results showed that despite teachers feeling pressure and lacking confidence for not being "native speakers", they find confidence in teaching the Global Englishes course. As an example, a teacher from Syria reported:

> Before I started teaching this course, **I had several worries**. As a non-native speaker, I never thought that I was good enough to teach English in a world full of natives. I have an accent, I cannot spell many words, and I feel anxious when I try to use complicated grammar. **However, after a year of teaching, it is safe to say that the weaknesses I have are my strengths in teaching "Global Englishes"**. (Mr. Syria)

Here it is important to note that one of the core principles of the Global Englishes course is to challenge the prevailing ideology of native-speakerism, which often places native speakers of English above non-native speakers. As Hung (2012) highlights "prejudice against non-standard and regional varieties of English is very much alive and well today" (p. 61). By recruiting teachers from countries where English is not the first language, the course emphasizes the legitimacy and value of different English accents and backgrounds. This inclusive approach helps to break down the prejudices associated with being a native speaker and promotes a more equitable view of English language proficiency.

Career opportunities

Holliday (2006) highlights that this perceived ideology within the ELT field, in which standard English is the golden English, reinforces the idea that English should be taught only by so called native-speakers and that the standard variation of English has a higher status compared to the other varieties of English. Japan has a history of separating teachers who are English native speakers and those who are not.

Many of the teachers hired for this program were able to acquire more classes and jobs in other universities in Japan after gaining Japanese university teaching experience by teaching Global Englishes (see Figure 8).

Teacher	Number of Universities
Ms. Brazil	Part-time lecturer: 3 Full-time teacher: 1
Ms. Egypt	Part-time lecturer: 1
Ms. Korea	Full-time teacher: 1
Ms. France	Part-time lecturer: 2 Full-time teacher: 1
Ms. Russia	Part-time lecturer: 3
Mr. Kenya	Full-time teacher: 1

Figure 8 Teaching jobs acquired after teaching global Englishes

Building trust and cultural pride

The Global Englishes course not only instills confidence in the teacher but also helps them rediscover pride in their own cultures. As the teachers from Thai and Russia remarked:

> Regarding the advantages of teaching Global Englishes, the first thing is that I get to be a student again. While in Thailand, I had no opportunity or interest in learning about my own cultural traditions. **But now I have come back to learn and understand my own culture again,** such as dancing, making krathongs, dressing in Thai costumes, etc. (Ms. Thai)

> While preparing for the course **I had to reflect to my own personal awareness of my own country's values,** strong and weak points and huge differences with Japanese social norms and interpersonal relations. (Ms. Russia)

By focusing on their strengths and cultural backgrounds, teachers can deliver lessons that match their personal experience and knowledge. This process not only boosts their self-esteem, but also allows them to take pride in their cultural heritage.

Reflective practice

Finally, the Global Englishes course helps teachers to reflect on their own teaching methods. The course encourages teachers to engage in reflective practice, which is essential for continuous professional development. By teaching the same content to three different groups within a semester, teachers gain insight into effective pedagogical approaches and adapt their methods to meet the needs of different groups of students. This reflection helps teachers to refine their teaching strategies and improve their overall effectiveness. Teachers from Egypt and China noted:

> **Teaching identical content to three distinct groups [of students] provided insights into effective pedagogical approaches** for higher-level students and the methods that motivate slightly silent students. (Ms. China)

> I have been teaching Global Englishes since 2019, and over the years, I have acquired valuable insights into effective teaching and learning approaches, as well as strategies to engage and motivate students actively… **I have witnessed a positive transformation in my approach to instruction, even when the content remains the same**. I now emphasize not only gaining the knowledge about Egypt but also the acquisition of skills during my class. (Ms. Egypt)

Overall, the Global Englishes course successfully addresses and overcomes the challenges of native-speakerism, as evidenced by the confidence gained by non-native English-speaking teachers. Teachers find that their perceived weaknesses become strengths in this inclusive teaching environment, challenging the prevailing ideology that places native speakers above non-native speakers. Furthermore, the course opens up career opportunities for teachers, enabling them to secure more teaching positions in various universities in Japan. Additionally, the course fosters cultural pride and trust, allowing teachers to rediscover and celebrate their own cultural heritage. By encouraging reflective practice, the course also helps teachers continuously improve their pedagogical strategies and adapt to diverse student needs, ultimately enhancing their teaching effectiveness and professional development.

CONCLUSION

This paper has argued that mainstream English Language Teaching (ELT) practices in Asia, especially Japan, still emphasize native English, predominantly American or British varieties, and consider non-standard English incorrect. This approach overlooks the reality that most Japanese students will interact with non-native English speakers in global contexts far more often than native English speakers.

Global Englishes is a unique new course to increase acceptance in many ways. First, the integration of the Global Englishes course into the curriculum of a Tokyo-based Japanese university has demonstrated its efficacy in not only bolstering students' English proficiency but also by nurturing their cross-cultural awareness (Feijo et al., 2023). In today's landscape, characterized by the diversification of English, Global Englishes holds significant relevance. Moreover, as shown in this study the Global Englishes course not only has benefits for students, but also has benefits for the teachers because it empowers non-native English teachers and gives them vital university teaching experience that is necessary

to secure additional teaching positions. Japan has a tradition of dividing English teachers based on whether they are native speakers or not, a practice that does not correlate with their teaching ability. By hiring and giving teaching experience in a Japanese university to English teachers who are "non-native English speakers", the hiring potential of non-native English teachers, who are far more abundant in foreign countries than "native English speakers", will be more widely accepted. These teachers can be role models for Japanese students in accepting and taking pride in their identity as non-native English speakers.

Regarding the drawback of this study, further studies and analysis are necessary in order to clarify the long-term impact of Global Englishes on students and teachers. This paper mainly focuses on analyzing teachers' experiences, but longitudinal studies could provide insights into the long-term impact of being taught by non-native English teachers on students' language proficiency, cultural competence, and attitudes towards English learning. Furthermore, the Global Englishes course has been implemented in only one university. It would be valuable to explore its potential impact in another university in Japan or even overseas. Comparative studies involving universities with similar courses could illuminate better practices and innovative approaches to integrating Global Englishes into higher education, promoting acceptance and diversity.

By addressing these areas, future research can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the role of Global Englishes in Japanese universities and beyond, thereby enhancing English language education effectiveness and inclusivity. Opening the doors to non-native English teachers is a provocative way to break down the prejudices towards non-native English. In summary, we have the need for good teachers, and we have a need to eliminate the fear students have of making mistakes in their L2 language. The Global Englishes course succeeds at both.

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Appendix 1

Example of the spring semester final assignment

Global Englishes Spring Semester Final Assignment

Warning: Please read these instructions carefully.
You have a final assignment for your Global Englishes class that is 10% of this semester's grade. For this assignment you need to write:

1) one paragraph and
2) ten questions for the final exam that will be given in January 2024.

This assignment must be typed in a Word file and uploaded to your personal channel on your Global Englishes class team.

The Paragraph—Choose one of the topics below:

> **Choice 1:** What do you think of the Global Englishes class? If you had control in changing the class, what would you change? Why?
>
> **Choice 2:** Which of the three countries that you studied this semester would you most like to visit? Why? What would you like to do there?
>
> **Choice 3:** Which of the three countries that you learned about this semester has a culture that most resembles Japan's culture? Why do you think so?
>
> **Choice 4:** Of the 30 classes you had this semester in Global Englishes, what one class was the most interesting? Describe the class and explain why you enjoyed it.

When you write your paragraph you need to write using paragraph format. This means that you need to have an **indentation** (a space that is at least five letters long) and a title. The **title** needs to be original, capitalized correctly, centered, and have the correct punctuation.

Be sure that the paragraph is well organized. The paragraph needs to have at least five sentences: one topic sentence, three supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence.

The GCI tutors can help you to write a better paragraph. (**Do not** ask Chat Partners.) Also, you will get extra credit if you submit both a first draft with a GCI tutor's stamp (or screen shot) and your final paragraph. However, please be careful of the following:

- The subject and verb need to match. (He is / People were / I am)
- The spelling needs to be correct. Be sure to check anything that is underlined by your computer.
- If you use the word "many," you need a plural noun (many people / many days).
- Do not start sentences with "and," "so," "but," or "because."
- The tutors may be extremely busy at the end of the semester, so visit them with your writing as soon as possible.

The Questions:

In addition to the paragraph, you need to write ten questions based on the information you gained in your Global Englishes classes this semester. You will have an exam in January at the end of the course

that covers **all sixty classe**s. You will be able to use your notes to answer the questions on the exam. If you write good questions, they may be used on the final exam. Please try to make interesting questions that students will be able to answer using the notes they have taken in class. Also, please add the answers to your questions!

You should write these questions by yourself. I do not want to see the same questions from different students. This is not a group project. The notes you have written in class should help you with this assignment. Also, the tutors can check your questions to see if they are worded correctly.

When and Where

- This assignment is due by Sunday, July 30, at 11 p.m. on your personal channel. If you do not have a personal channel now on your class team, please be patient. You will have one soon.
- Please be sure to put your name (in English) and your student number on your papers and on your Word file.
- Early papers are welcome.
- Late papers will not be accepted.
- If you would like me to correct and comment on your paragraph and questions after you submit them, please tell me this by adding "Please check my work. Thank you!" at the bottom of your Word file.

If you have any questions, ask me! I welcome questions! My office is XXXXXXXX and my email is: XXXXXXXXXX

I look forward to reading your assignments.

Appendix 2

Example the fall semester final assignment for Global Englishes.

Global Englishes Final Exam

There are five sections in this exam: A, B, C, D, and E. Read the instructions for each section carefully.

A. Write short answers to identify the pictures below. What is the name of the food and what country does it come from? **There are <u>two</u> questions for each picture.** (1 point each)

Example: 

Answers: This is **katsudon** from **Japan**.

A. ↑This is 1_____from 2_____. ↑This is 3_____from 4_____.

↑This is 5_____from 6_____. ↑This is 7_____from 8_____.

B. Tell me which of the six countries you studied is described in the statements below?
Some statements describe **more than one country and so have multiple answers.**

You must have all the correct countries to get the answer correct. (2 points each)

Examples:

Statement: The bossa nova comes from this country.
Answer: Brazil

Statement: This country has McDonald's restaurants.
Answer: Brazil, China, Egypt, Thailand

1. People in this country like to go to dacha in summer.
2. Wong Piphat is a classic ensemble that is often used at funerals.
3. The soft berth ticket is more expensive than the hard berth ticket in this country.
4. The musical instrument pipa looks like a guitar.
5. This country shares a border with more countries than the other five countries do.
6. This country has Arabic as the main language.
7. This country's capital is the oldest capital city in the world and often called the "City of Jasmine".
8. The national flag has a star for every state and the capital.
9. Porridge is often eaten in this country.

C. Answer the following questions with a short answer. (5 points each)

1. Identify these Brazilian characters.

2. Who or what is the man?
_____

1. Who is this?
_____

2. How many dialects are there in China?_____

13. It is this decoration called?
_____

14. What country is it from?
_____

15. What festival is it used for?
_____

D. Circle the best answer to each question. **Only one answer is correct.** (1 point each)

1. What school ceremony is unique to Thailand?
   a. *chakri* ceremony b. *wai khru* ceremony c. graduation ceremony d. *wai sirikit* ceremony

2. What countries boarder Syria?
   a. Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, Palestine
   b. Lebanon, Greece, Egypt, Israel
   c. Greece, Turkey, Iraq, Iran
   d. Turkey, Jordan, Iran, Lebanon

3. Which of the six countries has demographics similar to those of Japan? – many more old people than young.
   a. Brazil b. Syria c. Thailand d. Egypt

4. Sam Gler (Three best friends) is the name of Thai basic spices. What are the ingredients of Sam Gler?
   a. *pakchee* root, garlic, pepper
   b. ginger, chili, *kaffir* lime leaves
   c. lemongrass, chili, garlic
   d. garlic, lime, *galangal*

5. Which dance is from Syria?
   a. Ladies Dance b. Samba c. Tango d. Children's Dance

6. When Egyptians greet each other, they say_____.
   a. *shukran* b. *salam* c. *marhaba* d. *ana esmy*

7. What electronic device was NOT popular in China in the 1980s?
   a. refrigerators b. televisions c. microwave ovens d. washing machines

E. Read the following questions and circle **all** answers that are correct. You must have all the correct answers to get the points for these questions. (2 points each)

1. What do people do for Maslenitsa?
   a. Eat bliny. b. Burn straw dolls. c. Swim in a pool.
   d. Play old style games outside. e. Play board games inside.

2. In Brazil, superstitions say that you won't get married if you …
   a. sweep your foot with a broom. b. eat the last slice of pizza. c. point at stars.
   d. open an umbrella indoors. e. drop the peteca.

3. In Egypt, what does a Bawab do?
   a. feeds the camels
   b. run errands for residents
   c. takes care of the building
   d. sells lanterns
   e. protects the building

4. Which of the following superstitions are from Syria?
   a. Coffee spilled accidentally brings good luck.
   b. If someone whistles at night, it will wake up devils.
   c. Having an evil eye will help you see the future.
   d. If you arrive at your friend's house and they are eating a meal, it means that your mother-in-law loves you.
   e. Dropping your falafel is a sign you will find money.

5. Which of the following statements are FALSE for China?
   a. Chinese high school students are permitted to date.
   b. Chopsticks should be standing up straight in the rice bowl.
   c. The bride and bridesmaids pick up the groom on the wedding day.
   d. Younger people eat before older people.
   e. High school students attend the university entrance exams on different days.

Integrating CLIL Principles with a Task-Based Learning Approach

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Abstract

The integration of Task-Based Learning (TBL) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) can introduce a powerful approach to language teaching that combines the benefits of both methodologies. This approach can enable students to learn a foreign language while engaging in meaningful content-related tasks. While TBL focuses primarily on language acquisition through the completion of meaningful tasks and activities, CLIL focuses on the simultaneous acquisition of both content knowledge and language skills with its core principles of content, communication, cognition, and culture. In this research paper, I will outline my attempt to integrate these two techniques in an English communication course focusing on art at a private college in Japan. Through this approach, students not only learn about art in English, but also practice communicating about works of art using English. A short survey was given to the students at the end of the unit, indicating the value of the teaching methodology of integrating CLIL-based principles into a TBL-focused EFL classroom.

Keywords: Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), Task-Based Learning (TBL), Abstract art

INTRODUCTION

As language instructors, we are always searching for the most effective ways to help our students achieve their learning objectives. Task-Based Learning (TBL) is a well-established approach to instruction used worldwide. TBL involves students engaging in tasks to improve their language proficiency. TBL prioritizes meaning over form, in contrast to the traditional Presentation, Practice, Production (PPP) methodology, where students are first shown a model of the target language, and then attempt to emulate it through repeated practice. TBL, on the other hand, emphasizes real-world communication in the classroom, allowing students to apply their English knowledge and skills outside of class (Ellis, 2003). Willis & Willis (2007) provide a task-based framework that serves as a model for a typical TBL lesson. During the Pre-task stage, students are introduced to the topic and task along with key vocabulary. In the Task Cycle stage, students collaborate to plan, practice, and present the task. Finally, in the Focus on Form stage, students reflect on the quality of their communication during the task. The language focus in a TBL lesson is introduced after the task is completed to encourage students to use their own language abilities. This also helps teachers better understand their students' linguistic needs.

What is, and is not, a *task* in TBL is a somewhat contentious question. According to Ellis (2003), a task is a classroom activity that mimics conditions of real-world communication. *Real-world communication* activities refer to actual situations and conversations that typically occur outside of the classroom, such as ordering dinner in a restaurant or booking a hotel room over the phone. However, Willis (1996) offers a broader definition of a task in TBL as "a goal-oriented activity in which learners use language to achieve a real outcome" (p. 2). In this context, a *real outcome* can be interpreted as a clear and definable goal of a language lesson, such as creating a dialogue and performing it in front of the class. The key aspect of TBL is that learners can develop and improve their language proficiency by reflecting on the language used during the task.

The increasing prevalence of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in English language education worldwide is undeniable. Therefore, its growing popularity in Japanese tertiary education deserves serious consideration by language teachers. Historically, second language education has focused on teaching learners how to use correct grammar and vocabulary to effectively communicate in the target language, emphasizing the quality of communication. As language proficiency improves, it becomes essential to reinforce and further develop learned language skills and abilities with deeper content knowledge and critical thinking skills. This dialectic of language and content learning is found at the heart of the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach. As Coyle, Hood, and Marsh (2010) explain, CLIL is "a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language" (p. 1). By learning about content in the target language and using the target language to learn about the content, students can develop both of these skills. While there is no single methodology used in CLIL, there are guiding principles for introducing a CLIL approach to language learning in the classroom. Coyle et al. (2010) outline four foundational principles of CLIL, often referred to as the Four Cs: Content, Communication, Cognition, and Culture. *Content* refers to the subject-specific knowledge that students acquire, such as history or biology, depending on the course focus. *Communication* focuses on how learners use the target language to communicate. *Cognition* refers to the higher-order cognitive or thinking skills that learners use while engaging with the subject of learning. *Culture* is the understanding and appreciation of learners' own culture and other cultures. These four aspects of learning should not be taught independently, but rather simultaneously in the classroom through communicative and cooperative learning exercises and activities. This approach allows students to engage with the subject matter and learn how to communicate about it in a second language.

Both TBL and CLIL hold substantial value for language learners, but choosing the best approach can be challenging due to their respective strengths and weaknesses. TBL has clear goals for learners to achieve based on real-world communication, which may be more useful for unmotivated learners. However, one potential weakness of TBL is that students may only acquire a superficial understanding of a particular subject before moving on to the next task. A CLIL approach can address this issue by prioritizing the development of a deeper understanding of the subject matter through critical thinking and communicative language learning exercises. Despite these benefits, some students may reject the CLIL approach if they are not interested in the subject being taught and may be demotivated by the lack of clear learning objectives and goals. This gap between TBL and CLIL motivated me to research and document my attempt to integrate these two methodologies in my class.

Course and lesson design

This paper focuses on an elective English course offered at the College of Arts at Nihon University in Tokyo, Japan. The course runs for the full academic year, divided into two semesters. All of the students described in this paper completed both semesters of the course. Typically, students who choose to take these elective courses have stronger English abilities than the average student and are motivated to communicate with their classmates in English. With this in mind, I created an English communication course that provides students with ample opportunities to develop their language abilities and communicate effectively about topics relevant to their future careers. At the College of Arts, there are eight distinct departments: photography, film, art, music, literature, theater, broadcasting, and design. I anticipated that students from various departments would enroll in my course, so I chose to focus on the broader topic of art. Therefore, I titled the course *Talking About Art in English*. My aim was to create a communication course that is inclusive of students from any department and allows for flexibility as the course progresses throughout the year.

Although the benefits of a CLIL-based curriculum, with its dual focus on language and content, are clear, I initially selected a TBL pedagogical approach for this course due to my students' educational background and workload. As there were no commercially available English textbooks that focused

solely on art, I designed my curriculum and created my own materials to best suit their learning needs. Additionally, I was aware that my students may have limited time and energy to devote to my class, despite their interest in practicing English, so I aimed to create a curriculum that allows for some flexibility. For this reason, I designed each lesson to be independent from the others, especially at the beginning of the course. This allowed students who missed class to catch up with their classmates easily.

First semester: TBL approach

The TBL curriculum for the first semester primarily focused on English communication skills practice for the students. This was achieved through weekly in-class tasks on various art-related topics that interested them, such as music, movies, and literature. The tasks were first introduced as homework assignment questions, such as "Select your favorite scene from an anime," or "Present your favorite album cover to class." Students communicated about the lesson topic, either anime or album covers, by following the Task-Based Learning Framework as outlined by Willis and Willis (2007), which consists of three stages: Pre-task, Task Cycle, and Focus on Form. Students prepared the task either individually or in small groups, practiced it, and then presented their completed task to the class. Students would then receive feedback on their presentation from their classmates and instructor. The TBL approach implemented in the first semester was effective in achieving learning objectives for students, developing their English communication skills, and gaining their interest through engaging topics. However, for the fall semester, I decided that a different approach might be more appropriate to challenge and build on the successes achieved so far.

Second semester: CLIL-TBL integrated approach

At the start of the second semester, I informed my students that our class structure and style would differ from the first semester. I explained that I would be integrating a CLIL-based methodology into our TBL course. Instead of weekly class topics and smaller tasks, we would divide the semester into two larger units focusing on areas of art that we had not yet studied in the first semester. I explained that the focus of our class would remain on English communication. Additionally, I emphasized the importance of gaining a deeper understanding of the topic itself. For the second semester, I selected two areas related to art that I believed would be both interesting and enjoyable for students to learn about: abstract art and comic books. These topics would also provide ample opportunities for critical thinking on real-world issues. Each unit consisted of seven ninety-minute lessons per week. This research paper will focus on the first of the two unit topics introduced in this course.

Unit topic: Abstract art

Analyzing and evaluating works of art is a fundamental skill that students at a college of arts should possess and feel at ease with. However, doing so in a foreign language can be challenging and even intimidating for some students. To address this issue, I assigned an introductory task at the beginning of the semester that focused on studying fine art paintings. Each student selected a work they were familiar with and presented it to the class. During class, I instructed my students that any painting would be acceptable as long as it depicted at least two living people. I then asked them to analyze the painting with their partner and consider the relationship between the characters and their surroundings. Additionally, I prompted them to answer a series of questions about the painting, including who the people in the painting were, where they were located, what they were doing, and why they might be doing it, and finally, how do you think they arrived in this situation? To illustrate, I used Edward Hopper's renowned painting Nighthawks and demonstrated how I would answer these questions. Then, I requested that the students create brief biographies, complete with names and backgrounds, for each person in their painting. Using these biographies, I instructed them on their task: to compose and perform a short English dialogue between the characters in the painting. In the subsequent lesson,

the students rehearsed and presented the dialogue to the class. The purpose of this initial task was to direct the students' attention towards fine art paintings and to enhance their confidence in communicating in English through an enjoyable and engaging learning activity.

Figure 1 *Nighthawks* (1942) by Edward Hopper

The dialogue performances by the students opened up a discussion of how we look at and perceive artistic works. The example paintings selected by the students contained mostly clear and realistic representations of people. I then asked my students to consider how we might interpret artistic works where no recognizable objects are present. The following section describes the integration of a CLIL-based approach with TBL using the framework of the Four Cs of CLIL. It is important to note that this division into four sections is only for organizational purposes and does not perfectly reflect the week-to-week schedule of the course.

Content

One aim of this unit is to introduce students to the concept of abstract art, as well as some notable abstract artists and their works. Abstract art is a style of artistic expression that uses visual elements such as shape, form, color, and line to create a composition that exists independently from anything found in the real world (Arnheim, 1969). In abstract art, artists have the freedom to express their interpretation of the subject by altering its color and form. The artist's freedom often leads to imagery that can be interpreted and analyzed in various ways by the viewer. I illustrated the concept of abstraction by drawing a continuum with photography, being the most realistic art form, at one end, and abstract art at the other end, containing the most abstract imagery from reality. I then introduced my students to some famous abstract artists and their notable works. Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), Mark Rothko (1903-1970), and Jackson Pollock (1912-1956) are considered masters of abstract art, and their works are dynamic and visually intriguing. Each artist's three to five most famous works were shown, and students were given time to discuss each work with their partner. At this stage, the goal was to introduce students to examples of abstract art and provide a clear definition of the genre.

Here are some examples of the abstract works of art introduced in class.

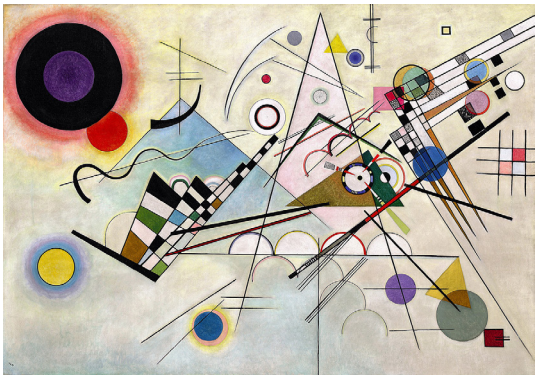

Figure 2 *Composition 8* (1923) by Wassily Kandinsky

Figure 3 *Mural* (1943) by Jackson Pollock

Figure 4 *White Center (Yellow, Pink and Lavender on Rose)* (1950) by Mark Rothko

Communication

As the aim of this unit is for students to talk about these works of art in English, in the following lessons I introduced essential English vocabulary that would enable students to discuss and express their opinions on abstract art in English. I selected the most useful words for discussing abstract art and communicating in English outside of the classroom. Examples of the key vocabulary words included: bold, chaotic, composition, contrast, dynamic, enigmatic, expressive, form, geometric, movement, perspective, rhythmic, subject, and vibrant. In class, students practiced various vocabulary building writing and speaking activities to help them understand the meaning of words and how to appropriately use them when communicating about artistic works of art. Additionally, I created a model dialogue between two individuals in a museum, looking at and discussing an abstract work of art, with each person attempting to analyze and interpret it. Using this model, the students practiced describing and sharing their opinions of various abstract artworks by the previously introduced artists. The students had numerous opportunities to talk with their classmates and reflect on the works of art using the target vocabulary. The aim was not only for students to make clear and thoughtful sentences expressing what they observe in the work of art, but also to improve their speaking fluency and confidence while speaking in English with their classmates.

Cognition

After introducing key concepts and vocabulary related to abstract art, the next stage of this unit focused on developing students' critical thinking skills. Bloom's Taxonomy of educational learning objectives was used as a guide to encourage higher-order thinking skills, such as analyzing and evaluating abstract works of art, through in-class tasks. Multiple tasks were conducted in which students practiced analyzing and interpreting works of abstract art. I reminded the students that abstract art is open to multiple interpretations and that there is no one correct way to interpret an abstract work of art. For this task, I asked the students to select a work of art that interests them, either by the artists already introduced in class or another abstract artist's work. The students were instructed to conduct research on the artwork and its creator, including the title, dimensions, and current exhibition status and location. They were advised to refrain from hasty analysis and instead spend a few weeks observing the artwork at various times of the day to potentially alter their interpretation. To assist with this task, I provided a set of guiding questions.

1. What do I see in the painting?
2. What is the title of the painting and how is this influencing what I see?
3. What are the elements, colors, and textures of the painting?
4. How do these interact with each other?
5. What emotions does this painting evoke?
6. Have I allowed enough time to make a connection with the painting?
7. Am I trying to figure out what it looks like or represents, rather than allowing something to emerge from what I see in front of me?

In this class, students were asked to share their interpretation and analysis of their selected work with a classmate. They were encouraged to think critically about their chosen work and be open to hearing different perspectives from their partner. It was stressed that each student should have their own unique interpretation of the work, rather than assuming there is a "correct" interpretation of its meaning or message conveyed by its creator. This activity was a crucial component of the task cycle leading up to the final group task for this unit.

Culture

For the final task in this unit, I wanted my students to work on a task that would provide opportunities for them to share their ideas and opinions in close collaboration with their classmates. Moving up the pyramid of educational learning objectives in Bloom's Taxonomy, I informed the students of the final task for this unit, which was to create and then role-play an original dialogue of two or more people looking at and attempting to understand and interpret an abstract work of art. In groups of two or three, students would analyze either a completely new work of abstract art, or use one of the works discussed in a previous task. My aim was for students not only to share their interpretations of abstract works but also analyze works that their partners selected, as this more accurately reflects situations that occur in the real-world. The students worked cooperatively in completing this task in class and for homework using a shared digital document in which they could write out a script together. I instructed them to imagine being at the museum where the artwork is currently displayed and to create a dialogue as if they were viewing it for the first time with their partner(s). The students completed the task with the support of their instructor, who was able to monitor their communication via the shared digital document, and offer suggestions and feedback. This portion of the final project took a couple of class periods to complete; after which students practiced their dialogue before performing the final presentations. In the final lesson of the unit, each pair or group role-played their dialogue with an image of the artwork displayed on the digital monitor for the rest of the class to see. After the presentations, students from other groups were encouraged to ask questions and provide oral feedback on the quality and creativity of the group's performance. The instructor evaluated each member of the

presenting group based on their ability to interpret and analyze the abstract work of art clearly and effectively. Finally, the instructor provided feedback on the students' successful completion of the unit and their improved ability to talk about abstract art in English.

Student feedback and reflections

At the conclusion of this unit on abstract art, I sought to gauge my students' response to the integration of a CLIL-based methodology with TBL. Given the lively and energetic classroom atmosphere thus far, I was interested in evaluating the effectiveness of my efforts to challenge the students by emphasizing the content of learning, in addition to the language focus established in the first semester. In class, I asked the students to complete a 6-question questionnaire about the unit using a Google Form questionnaire. The purpose of this questionnaire was to gather feedback on the effectiveness of incorporating the Four Cs in CLIL: Content, Communication, Cognition, and Culture. All eight students who participated in this unit provided their answers to the questions at the end of the final lesson. The format of the questions consisted of an opinion statement that the student could indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with using a 5-point Likert scale (5 = *Strongly Agree*, 4 = *Agree*, 3 = *Neutral*, 2 = *Disagree*, 1 = *Strongly Disagree*).

The initial survey question centered on the unit's content and assessed the students' success in acquiring knowledge about abstract art and artists. The question read, "In this unit, I learned about abstract art, including the names and works of famous artists, and some ways to interpret works of art in English." Five students strongly agreed with the statement, while three students agreed. The feedback indicates that my approach effectively introduced the concept of abstract art, some famous abstract artists, and their most well-known works. Although the question suggests that the students gained some knowledge about abstract art and artists, I wanted to assess their ability to critically analyze abstract art.

The second survey question focused on communication in the course. As this is an English communication course, it is important for students to feel that they have improved their ability to communicate in English. The question asked whether the students were able to express their thoughts and ideas about works of art with their classmates in English during the unit. The results indicate that five students strongly agreed, two students agreed with the statement, while one student remained neutral. Although it was hoped that all students would feel a sense of accomplishment in speaking about the topic of abstract art in English, this task can be challenging and may lead to a lack of confidence when communicating in a foreign language.

The next focus was on cognition, specifically asking students to evaluate their ability to describe, interpret, analyze, and critique abstract works of art. The statement, "In this unit, I learned how to look closely at and think deeply about the possible meanings of abstract artworks," was presented for consideration. Six students strongly agreed with the statement, while two agreed. This feedback indicates that students engaged in deep thinking about the abstract works of art. It could be argued that critical thinking was effectively practiced in this unit.

As abstract art originated in Europe and all the abstract artists introduced in this unit were either European or American, I encouraged my students to consider abstract art from a cultural perspective. To achieve this, I focused on the final CLIL foundational principle of culture and asked them to express their agreement or disagreement with the statement, "In this unit, I could learn about other cultures and reflect on my own culture when discussing abstract works of art." I was surprised to discover that three students strongly agreed, three students agreed, one student remained neutral, and one student disagreed with the statement. One possible explanation for the mixed response to this question is that the students were not specifically asked to consider the cultural background of the artworks they analyzed, nor were they explicitly asked to consider their own cultural background. However, it is possible that they did so subconsciously. It is also possible that the question was poorly written or asked the students to consider something that they were not expected to do.

The final two survey questions asked the students to evaluate their experience with the unit on abstract art in general. All eight students strongly agreed that the unit helped them learn and talk about abstract art, and that they enjoyed learning about the subject matter. Additional comments by students indicated a preference for the pacing of the second semester with its integrated CLIL approach over the first semester's, which allowed for more communication and deeper thinking about the subject matter, as opposed to changing topics each week, as done in the first semester.

CONCLUSION

Finding the best teaching method to meet the needs of students is a common challenge for teachers. This paper introduces my attempt to integrate the four foundational principles of the Content and Integrate Language Learning (CLIL) methodology with a Task-Based Learning (TBL) approach. While the teaching approach presented in this research paper has clear limitations in scope and applicability due to the small number of students in the class, I think language instructors may gain insights and ideas from its explanation here. The advantages of a CLIL-based learning approach include the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the subject matter and develop critical thinking skills while developing second language communication skills. Although these are appealing benefits, some students with limited English proficiency may find a CLIL course too demanding in terms of time and effort. Conversely, a Task-Based Language approach can provide students with valuable opportunities to communicate in the target language through engaging tasks that can prepare them for communication outside of the classroom. However, this approach may result in only superficial learning of the topics being studied with few opportunities for practicing critical thinking skills. For this reason, the English communication course described in this paper implemented an integrated CLIL-TBL approach in an English communication course focused on art. Students learned about a content area relevant to their educational interests, specifically the subject of abstract art, while completing individual and cooperative learning tasks in the classroom. This approach to language learning is highly appropriate as it allows students to complete a variety of tasks that require higher order thinking skills, such as describing, comparing, and analyzing abstract works of art in a foreign language. Because one's interpretation of an abstract work of art is highly subjective, students were free to share a wide range of opinions and explanations for what they perceived, without fear of being wrong in their interpretation. The subject matter presented here can result in fascinating conversations where students can share and react to the interpretations presented by their classmates. It is my hope that other language teachers will find the value in following the teaching approach introduced here.

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Get Them Talking: Employing Translanguaging and Authentic Communication in Co-Teaching Thai and English as Foreign Languages

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Abstract

Chiang Mai, Thailand has a large and diverse expatriate population necessitating numerous options for international schools. Typically, most schools are taught in English, but the Christliche Deutsche Schule Chiang Mai (CDSC) offers an alternative where the school is taught primarily in German. This school follows a German curriculum and is classified as an *Exzellente Deutsche Auslandsschule* (excellent German school abroad), a seal of approval by the German Federal Office of Administration which shows that CDSC has reached the highest standard of quality for German schools abroad. At CDSC, in first grade, all students begin with two foreign languages, English and Thai, which offer several challenges in second language instruction One challenge is the wide range of language proficiency among students, from no prior knowledge to fluency in one or more of the three languages—German, Thai, and English. Generally, students tend to advance more quickly in English, as it is popular among them and frequently used outside of class. However, despite having the same amount of instructional time in Thai during elementary school, most students have not made significant progress in Thai. To raise the level of Thai proficiency, a Dual Foreign Language curriculum was developed and implemented to integrate Thai and English instruction through co-teaching, translanguaging, and the use of shared vocabulary. This paper assesses the curriculum's effectiveness during the first year of implementation juxtaposing the beneficial outcomes against the challenges encountered.

Keywords: Translanguaging, Dual foreign language instruction, Mistake-friendly learning environment, Speech production

BACKGROUND

Christliche Deutsche Schule Chiang Mai (CDSC)

Established in October 1994 through a collaboration between the Marburger Mission Foundation and the German Embassy in Bangkok, CDSC began with 26 students and 11 teachers. Today, the school has grown to accommodate 232 students and 32 colleagues. CDSC stands as a cornerstone of German-speaking education in northern Thailand. Rooted in its affiliation with the Marburger Mission, CDSC's establishment was prompted by an invitation from the Church of Christ Thailand (CCT) to participate in various initiatives, including church planting, theological education, and social services across Thailand. Under Thai law, CDSC operates under the CCT, ensuring organizational responsibility. Supported by the German Foreign Office, CDSC offers education from kindergarten to the German International Abitur (DIA). The CDSC educational program emphasizes personal development based on Christian values.

Thai and English foreign language instruction

Students in grades one to four receive two hours of instruction in both Thai and English languages each week. For students in grades five through eight, the schedule adjusts to include only one period of Thai instruction weekly, while English language instruction expands to four hours per week. An additional program, *Thai Extra*, caters specifically to Thai students in grades one to five, emphasizing reading and writing skills, and is taught two hours weekly. Each educational institution in Thailand is tasked with developing and implementing its curriculum to align with Thailand's core curriculum for international schools. For the Thai language, the main objective is to equip students with comprehensive Thai language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—tailored to grade-specific benchmarks, alongside cultivating an understanding of Thai society and culture applicable to daily life. The government mandates a minimum of five Thai language periods weekly for Thai students and one period for non-Thai students.

Challenges with Thai instruction

The Thai language program at CDSC has faced several hurdles. One challenge includes the lack of resources tailored to teaching non-native Thai speakers at a child's level. This lack of suitable materials makes it difficult for Thai teachers to effectively engage students and facilitate learning. Another obstacle is the complexity of the Thai alphabet and tones, which can be particularly daunting for non-native speakers. Unclear expectations and limited support can compound these challenges and contribute to the student's lack of progress which has caused some frustration among students and parents and can be disheartening for the Thai teachers. Despite these obstacles, CDSC's Thai teachers remain committed to providing the best possible learning experience for the students. Preserving the Thai language and culture within an international school context is highly important and they are eager to learn innovative approaches to enhance this program.

DESIGNING A DUAL-FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAM

Proposal

For the 2023-24 school year, a new initiative was launched that employed a *Dual Foreign Language Method* (DFLM) for which no similar technique has been found. Some aspects of the program were informed by transformative language learning and teaching (TLLT) which includes incorporating transformative learning theory in the foreign language classroom (Leaver et al., 2021). This method employs several key methods from language acquaint including translanguaging, authentic communication, managing emotions within disorienting dilemmas and multicultural settings.

Rather than teaching two hours of their respective languages independently, this year the English and Thai teachers co-taught four hours of combined language study for both third and fourth grades. Class time consisted of Thai and English instruction where translanguaging and translation techniques were used to establish meaningful connections between both foreign languages and when needed, the German language was also spoken. This method included intentionally seating a native Thai speaker (if there were sufficient) with a non-native speaker to give students quick access to a language partner for practice and/or support. 25 vocabulary words within each thematic unit, which included verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs were taught enabling students to immediately construct rudimentary sentences. Additionally, students were introduced weekly to the fundamentals of Thai script, including letters and vowels facilitating their reading skills in Thai. Woven throughout each week, students were also taught short lessons on Thai culture, history, and geography to spark their interest in Thailand. These included tips on respecting Thai customs and what behaviors might be considered inappropriate by Thais but are overlooked by Westerners.

To monitor and support each student's learning journey, ongoing diagnostic assessments were utilized in both written and spoken form. The program's main goal was to reduce the students' hesitation in speaking Thai by teaching them simple, everyday phrases. Given that the program offered only four hours of weekly instruction rather than a full immersion into the language, it concentrated on basic conversational skills, vocabulary building, and boosting students' confidence and enthusiasm for speaking Thai. Multiple resources were created and shared via Google Drive and Google Classroom to ensure students and parents had ongoing access to course materials. This included translated versions of Mo Willems' "Elephant and Piggie" books read in both Thai and English and the vocabulary flashcards with their corresponding videos that included German, English, and Thai languages.

FRAMEWORK FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

The DFLM incorporates translanguaging, authentic communication, cultural humility and culturally responsive teaching, and social-emotional learning (SEL) by employing a constructivist approach that focuses on active student participation and collaboration. By utilizing a translanguaging framework, students draw on their entire linguistic repertoire that expands their comprehension and expression through flexible language use in real-world contexts (García & Wei, 2014). Integrating culturally relevant materials and involving local cultural projects and tasks fosters a community-centered approach that includes students' backgrounds (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Additionally, practicing SEL principles—like emotional check-ins and collaborative learning—supports students' social skills and empathy development (Durlak et al., 2011). Differentiated instruction ensures that diverse learning needs are met through tailored activities and flexible grouping, while ongoing formative assessments, such as oral diagnostic tests, partner work with real-time peer feedback inform instruction and encourage collaboration (Wiliam, 2011). This holistic framework provides a nurturing environment for language acquisition and promotes global citizenship by growing cultural awareness (García & Wei, 2014; Durlak et al., 2011; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Wiliam, 2011).

Translanguaging

One key concept that informed the curriculum and classroom instruction is translanguaging, a dynamic linguistic practice that allows individuals to utilize their entire linguistic repertoire across all known languages for communication, learning, and teaching (Bonacina-Pugh et al., 2021; García & Wei, 2014). This approach has gained prominence in multilingual and foreign language classrooms, with researchers like Wei (2018) arguing for its effectiveness in fostering deeper learning and engagement. As interest in translanguaging has grown, its interpretation has expanded into two categories: fixed and fluid (Bonacina-Pugh et al., 2021). Fixed translanguaging involves planning for both languages in lesson design, while the fluid approach allows flexibility in using all language registers. This practice promotes authentic communication, accelerates language acquisition, and enhances understanding of cultural nuances. By employing translanguaging, educators can create inclusive learning environments that validate linguistic diversity and encourage the practical use of multiple languages in real-life contexts. Research supports the benefits of translanguaging for students and teachers, highlighting its role in legitimizing multilingual practices and aiding comprehension across languages (Bonacina-Pugh et al., 2021; Chicherina & Strelkova, 2023). Ultimately, enabling students to utilize their full linguistic capabilities honors their diverse language backgrounds and cultural experiences.

The following practices illustrate the use of translanguaging in the dual foreign language classroom. First, students receive instruction in both Thai and English from the Thai and the English teacher as scaffolded classroom instruction. If necessary, instructions are also translated into German—the main language of the school (Lin, 2015). Using all three languages ensures that the instructions are accessible for all students. For some partner work, students may choose their preferred language for discussion (Creese & Blackledge, 2010). Often, a stronger Thai speaker assists a stronger English speaker with

mastering tones, while the stronger English speaker helps the Thai speaker improve their grammar (Garcia & Wei, 2014). Students are also called on regularly during class to offer additional explanation in their mother tongue for those struggling to understand a concept in that language.

Authentic communication in language learning

Within the foreign language classroom, integrating authentic communication and meaningful vocabulary has been critical (Ellis, 2008; Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Vocabulary lists were carefully selected for their relevance to everyday communication, covering topics such as ordering food, family, colors, numbers, and emotions. Students were equipped to begin constructing short sentences and engaging in meaningful dialogue they could use outside of the classroom. Within the first month of class, students could engage in short dialogues in English and in Thai. This first year introduced six themes with 25 words each comprising 150 core words for the year, supplemented by vocabulary related to emotions, numeracy up to 100, colors, as well as days of the week and months. Strategically arranging students based on their existing language strengths created an environment that encouraged mutual learning and consistent practice. This approach was particularly effective since half of the class had some prior knowledge of Thai, enhancing the learning experience by providing immediate opportunities for interaction and speaking practice.

Cultural humility and culturally responsive teaching

Cultural humility was essential in cultivating a relationship of mutual respect and care between the Thai and English teachers. Cultural humility, introduced by Tervalon and Murray-García (1998), emphasizes lifelong self-reflection and critique regarding cultural identity and power dynamics. Unlike cultural competency, which implies a fixed level of cultural knowledge, cultural humility acknowledges that understanding culture is a continuous process of learning (Foronda et al., 2016). Originally from healthcare and social work, this concept is crucial in foreign language teaching, where language learning involves understanding cultural contexts. Teachers and students are encouraged to engage with cultural diversity openly, fostering an inclusive environment. By incorporating cultural humility, both language teachers promoted deeper intercultural understanding, empathy, and global citizenship in the classroom and in their relationship to each other (Kramlich & Gilpin-Jackson, 2022). This helped to create a safe and inclusive setting for the variety of cultures in the classroom.

Building upon cultural humility, the curriculum incorporated key principles from culturally responsive teaching to show value to all cultures in the classroom (Gay, 2010). In addition, Thai cultural elements, history, and geography were explored to enhance students' interest in and understanding of their host country's culture. This integrative approach extended beyond the conventional focus on prominent Thai festivals such as Loy Krathong and Songkran. Emphasis was placed on lesser-known Thai holidays to facilitate discussions around historical figures like Kings Rama V and Rama IX, thereby deepening students' engagement with Thai history. The curriculum also included lessons on Thai provinces, mythology, and etiquette, aiming to equip students with the knowledge necessary to live respectfully in Thai society. Incorporating aspects of a foreign language's culture into instruction can increase learners' motivation and interest in language acquisition (Collentine & Freed, 2004). Integrating cultural content into language education fosters a deeper connection with the language and enhances students' intercultural competence, a critical skill in today’s increasingly globalized world.

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)

Fear of speaking or making mistakes is an ongoing challenge in the foreign language classroom. Krashen (1982) included anxiety as one of the key components of the affective filter. Greater anxiety can impede language acquisition. To address this, a deliberate focus was made on creating a supportive and low-stress learning atmosphere (Kramlich, 2021) by including aspects of social-emotional learning.

Greater attention to social-emotional learning is linked to stronger academic success (Durlak et al., 2011). Social-emotional learning includes five components: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making which have successfully been utilized in the foreign language classroom (Herrera, 2020; Melani et al., 2020).

Key aspects from SEL were incorporated throughout the DFLM. Explaining each principle and its application in detail goes beyond the scope of this paper. Instead, several practices are highlighted below that focus on growing self-awareness and self-management. Daily emotional check-ins, utilizing characters from the movie "Inside Out" (Anger, Joy, Disgust, Sadness, and Fear) as well as additional figures expressing feelings (e.g., Silly, Hungry, Sleepy), facilitated students' expression of their feelings in both English and Thai. This practice allowed the educators and students to hear each student's feelings and respond accordingly. Additionally, gratitude exercises helped to create a nurturing environment focusing the class on positive experiences.

This Dual Foreign Language Method centered instruction around a "mistake-friendly" approach that emphasized constructive and supportive handling of student errors to enhance individual motivation and learning outcomes. This approach, grounded in constructivist learning theories, acknowledges errors as natural and integral parts of the learning process, facilitating a classroom environment where mistakes are viewed as opportunities for correction and improvement in language acquisition (Ellis, 2009). To this end, indirect correction methods were prioritized, such as recasting correct language use in response to errors, which helped to foster a positive learning atmosphere. Sometimes, students were encouraged to repeat what they had said after the recast, but this varied according to what was being taught and the individual student. In addition, both language educators openly acknowledged their learning journey in the counterpart language. Specifically, the English educator is concurrently learning Thai and actively participates alongside students in assimilating new vocabulary and tones. This reciprocal learning dynamic is further enriched by the educator's receptiveness to feedback and corrections from the Thai instructor, exemplifying to students that errors serve as critical learning opportunities. This learning posture destigmatized the process of correction, repositioning it as an essential, constructive part of language improvement rather than a mark of failure. Errors and their appropriate feedback contributed to cultivating an environment where mistakes were used as stepping-stones toward language mastery.

EVALUATION

Results

Since its introduction in August 2024, the students have shown progress with the Dynamic Foreign Language Method (DFLM). Many have acquired approximately 150 vocabulary words from six units, including additional vocabulary for emotions, colors, days of the week, and numeracy from 1 to 100. The curriculum has also covered basic sentence formation in both Thai and English. For example, after studying fruits and vegetables, students could describe them using previously learned colors and adjectives. They can also use numbers to talk about their birthdays, and even give the day of the week they were born, as well as their associated Thai color.

Moreover, students have learned the symbols for 22 Thai consonants and 8 verbs, enabling them to read simple Thai words. They have also learned the numerical symbols from one to ten in Thai. Most students were able to perform these tasks in English as well. Assessment of student progress is multifaceted, including oral exams in both languages, where students respond to questions or identify vocabulary from flashcards. Written evaluations include questions about Thai culture, the Thai alphabet, and translation questions across Thai, English, and German, showcasing the program's comprehensive approach to multilingual education.

Positives

The program's implementation has been met with several positive outcomes. Most importantly, students are not afraid to speak Thai despite challenges with the different Thai tones. They have also been successful in combining various vocabulary words to form brief sentences and are improving in identifying Thai letters and their corresponding pictures. Furthermore, their knowledge of Thailand's geography, history, and culture has expanded significantly, supporting their adaptation to life in Thailand while also motivating them to continue to learn about Thailand. A critical factor in all of this has been the effective collaboration between the English and Thai instructors which has helped to support the program's success. In addition, careful attention to the key practices highlighted above has been instrumental in creating a framework to support language production considering the challenge of a tonal foreign language such as Thai.

Challenges

Developing a new curriculum for two foreign languages has been a time-intensive endeavor. Vocabulary was chosen before the academic year began, but creating, implementing, evaluating, and refining weekly activities and exercises demanded continuous effort and ongoing collaboration and communication between both instructors. The production of bilingual educational content, including producing videos in Thai and English as well as translating some books into Thai (The Elephant and Piggie series by Mo Willems), has added significantly to the preparation workload.

Another challenge has included the students' difficulties with memorizing Thai letters, suggesting a shift from monthly to bi-weekly testing might improve retention. The class also encompasses a wide range of language proficiency levels, with some students excelling in Thai while others are progressing more slowly. To address varying learning speeds, supplementary independent study materials in both languages were created and are available in class for advanced students. Communication with parents is another hurdle; despite making curriculum resources available online. The parents are not using the online material consistently, which is impacting some students' progress due to limited home support and technology access. In response, plans for next year include distributing essential Thai learning materials and flashcards at the beginning of the year for students to have at home. This is part of the ongoing effort to refine and enhance this program.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the prospects for the Dynamic Foreign Language Method (DFLM) appear promising. There has been significant progress in both speaking and learning Thai. Nevertheless, the program's success can be attributed to several key factors that collectively established a supportive framework for success. One important consideration is the presence of proficient Thai-speaking students within each class who have played a crucial role in supporting their peers with less experience in the language. This peer assistance has been instrumental in providing the necessary authentic speaking practice. In addition, the students' proficiency in English is an asset that has facilitated the integration of Thai language instruction. This strong foundation in English has been leveraged effectively to anchor the Thai language lessons, enabling students to learn new vocabulary with the aid of English definitions. Another element includes the classroom environment which was supportive of the learning process by providing a safe and secure place for students to learn. The final key point includes the strong collaborative relationship between the Thai and English instructors who have supported each other and dedicated extra time and effort to ensure that this program had sufficient materials to be successful. This Dual Foreign Language Method approach underscores the importance of leveraging existing language strengths to enhance the acquisition of a new language.

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A Study of Students' Difficulties in Learning Vocabulary: Exploring Students' Needs in Enhancing English Vocabulary Learning

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Abstract

This study investigates the challenges faced by Thai secondary school students in learning English vocabulary and explores effective teaching strategies to address these difficulties. As English becomes increasingly important in the ASEAN region, particularly for educational and career opportunities, understanding and overcoming vocabulary learning obstacles is crucial. The research employed a qualitative approach, conducting in-depth interviews with 39 students and 3 experienced English teachers from Sichonkunatanvittaya School in Nakhon Si Thammarat, Thailand. Through content analysis, the study identified six key areas of difficulty in vocabulary learning: grammatical forms and inflections, language structure understanding, pronunciation challenges, writing and spelling issues, meaning determination, and comprehension of idiomatic expressions. Despite these challenges, students recognized the value of vocabulary acquisition for future prospects in travel and education. The research also uncovered several effective vocabulary teaching strategies, including guessing from context, teaching word parts, using the keyword method, and implementing incidental vocabulary learning alongside intentional instruction. The study emphasises the importance of creating a supportive learning environment and providing tailored guidance to meet students' diverse needs and expectations. The findings contribute to the existing literature on vocabulary acquisition in EFL contexts, particularly within the Thai educational system. They offer valuable insights for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers in developing targeted interventions and improving English language instruction. The study recommends further research into the impact of digital resources and game-based learning on vocabulary acquisition, as well as investigating long-term vocabulary retention and its practical application. By elucidating specific challenges and effective strategies, this research aims to enhance vocabulary instruction and, consequently, improve overall English language proficiency among Thai students, better preparing them for the increasing demands of English in academic and professional spheres within the ASEAN region.

Keywords: Vocabulary acquisition, English language, Difficulty, Strategy, Student

INTRODUCTION

The increasing adoption of English as the working language within Asia and the ASEAN region, coupled with the heightened mobility of people and information, is exerting new and significant pressures on the education systems regarding language and cultural instruction in both English and other regional languages. This shift is leading to a substantial rise in the use of English among speakers for whom it is not a native language, promoting communication in English across diverse cultural backgrounds. The proliferation of English usage highlights numerous challenges, particularly as proficiency levels vary widely across Asia. Consequently, the acquisition of English communication skills is becoming a critical component of twenty-first-century education (Lian & Sussex, 2018; Limna et al., 2022). Vocabulary, recognized as one of the three core elements of language, serves not only as a building block but also as an essential aspect of linguistic competence. The foundational assumption is that effective

communication necessitates a certain repertoire of vocabulary. Given the extensive array of words that learners need to acquire, investigating effective vocabulary learning strategies is imperative (Bai, 2018).

Vocabulary is a pivotal component of foreign language acquisition, essential for effective communication. Without a rich vocabulary, communication becomes nearly impossible, as it underpins the ability to read, speak, write, and listen effectively. Individuals with limited vocabulary may find themselves unable to express their thoughts and ideas adequately, both verbally and in writing. As vocabulary expands, so too does proficiency in speaking, writing, reading, and listening. Furthermore, the relationship between grammar and vocabulary is symbiotic; extensive vocabulary enhances communication, rendering even the most refined grammar ineffective if vocabulary is lacking (Rohmatillah, 2014). Additionally, the English proficiency of students can limit their educational and career prospects. Rural students, in particular, are at a disadvantage, being twice as likely to fail national standardised tests compared to their urban counterparts. Many rural students struggle with basic conversational English and understanding simple texts, which detrimentally impacts their employability and, by extension, the national economy post-graduation (Supian & Asraf, 2019). In the realm of second language (L2) or foreign language (FL) acquisition, vocabulary is universally recognized as a fundamental component essential to mastering the four key language skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. For learners of English as a Second Language (ESL) or a Foreign Language (EFL), vocabulary serves as a critical linguistic element, supporting and enhancing these skills. Despite its importance, vocabulary instruction often receives inadequate emphasis in many Asian educational contexts. Typically, vocabulary instruction is incidental, embedded within other language learning activities such as listening to stories, deducing meanings from context, and participating in information gap exercises. Consequently, learners accumulate vocabulary gradually and in fragmented segments (Boonkongsaen, 2013).

Given the indispensable role of vocabulary in language acquisition, this study seeks to elucidate the specific challenges students face in learning vocabulary, as well as to examine the strategies employed by teachers to address these challenges. The implications of this research are extensive. By identifying and understanding the obstacles to effective vocabulary learning, educational practitioners can develop more targeted teaching methodologies and interventions. Such tailored strategies can significantly enhance students' linguistic competencies. Moreover, this study highlights the necessity for educational institutions to prioritise vocabulary development within their language programs and curricula. By doing so, they ensure that students are equipped with the requisite resources and support to improve their overall language proficiency.

Research question

What are the primary difficulties faced by Thai secondary school students in learning English vocabulary, and what teaching strategies do educators employ to address these challenges effectively?

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the context of EFL education, particularly within the Asian and ASEAN regions, vocabulary acquisition presents distinct challenges for learners. In countries where English is not the native language, such as Thailand, Vietnam, and Indonesia, students often struggle with vocabulary mastery due to significant linguistic and cultural differences between their native languages and English. Within the ASEAN context, where English functions as a lingua franca for communication in business, education, and international relations, the importance of effective vocabulary learning is further heightened (Aclan & Aziz, 2015; Hasanah & Utami, 2019; Kirkpatrick, 2020). Feng (2023) emphasised that vocabulary instruction forms a fundamental part of English language education. However, junior high school students frequently encounter difficulties in expressing themselves clearly and fluently during classroom interactions due to

a limited vocabulary range and a superficial understanding of word meanings. To address these challenges, educators must promote substantial vocabulary accumulation, thereby enhancing students' ability to communicate effectively in English. The requirement for junior high school students to memorise a large volume of words highlights the need for instructional approaches that go beyond traditional rote learning methods. Teachers are encouraged to provide foundational English instruction supported by strategies that promote effective word retention, which is particularly critical in rural areas where tailored support for vocabulary learning and memory enhancement is indispensable. Additionally, Noprianto and Purnawarman (2019) investigated the frequency and effectiveness of vocabulary learning strategies among Indonesian high school students, with a particular focus on their understanding of affixes and the relationship between strategy use and affix knowledge. Their findings indicated that students employed Vocabulary Learning Strategies at a medium frequency, with a preference for the Determination strategy. However, their knowledge of affixes was relatively low, with common acquisition sequences involving prefixes such as *multi-*, *re-*, *inter-*, *dis-*, and suffixes like *-ful* and *-er*. The study revealed that while Vocabulary Learning Strategies significantly impacted affix knowledge, the Memory strategy, in contrast to the Determination strategy, had a more substantial effect on students' understanding of affixes.

Yaacob et al. (2019) conducted research on the vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) utilised by Saudi Arabian learners within an English as a EFL context, noting a distinct gap in the literature concerning Saudi Schools Abroad (SSA) and VLS usage in these settings. The study focused on how students at the Saudi School Malaysia (SSM) engage with VLSs during their learning processes. The findings highlighted the significance of vocabulary learning, showing that students at SSM employed five categories of VLSs with medium to high frequency. In another study, Gorgoz and Tican (2020) investigated the self-regulation skills and vocabulary learning strategies of middle school students learning a foreign language in Mentese, Mugla, Turkey. This study encompassed a sample of 990 students from grades 5 through 8 during the 2018-2019 academic year. Results indicated that these students generally demonstrated above-average self-regulation skills and vocabulary learning strategies, with significant variations based on gender, grade level, parental attitudes, and interest in English courses. Moreover, a positive and significant correlation was found between self-regulation strategies and vocabulary learning strategies. In addition, Zou et al. (2021) conducted a systematic review of digital game-based vocabulary learning, analysing 21 articles from Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) journals based on specific selection criteria. This review provided a comprehensive overview of the prevailing digital games used for vocabulary learning, the theoretical frameworks employed, the research issues addressed, and the findings obtained. The review concluded that digital games are predominantly effective in enhancing both short-term and long-term vocabulary acquisition, improving reading and listening comprehension, boosting motivation and engagement, reducing anxiety, and facilitating learner interactions. By building upon these studies, this research aims to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on vocabulary acquisition in EFL contexts, specifically within the Thai educational system. The findings from these previous studies guide approach to identifying and categorising vocabulary learning difficulties, as well as exploring effective teaching strategies that could address these challenges in the Thai context.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research is a methodology designed to understand the complexities of environments where individuals or groups make decisions and exhibit particular behaviours. Its primary aim is to uncover the underlying motivations and reasons behind observed phenomena. A key tool within this methodology is the in-depth interview, which facilitates direct communication and the collection of rich, detailed data. In-depth interviews provide a more nuanced understanding of topics, enhancing the comprehensiveness of data collection and subsequent analysis (Limna & Kraiwanit, 2022; Namraksa & Kraiwanit, 2023). In this study, purposive sampling was employed to select participants most relevant

to the research questions, a method particularly effective for gaining in-depth insights into specific phenomena or groups (Siripipattanakul et al., 2022; Klayklung et al., 2023; Limna et al., 2024). The sample was drawn from Sichonkunatanvittaya School in Nakhon Si Thammarat, Thailand, consisting of 39 students and 3 English teachers. Student participants were selected from grades 10 to 12 (ages 15–18), all actively engaged in English courses, and representing a diverse range of academic performance levels. This diversity ensured a comprehensive understanding of vocabulary learning challenges across varying proficiency levels. The teachers selected for this study had over 10 years of experience in English language instruction at the secondary level, demonstrated expertise in vocabulary teaching methods, and were actively involved in curriculum development and extracurricular English activities. This carefully chosen sample enabled a rich exploration of vocabulary learning challenges and strategies from both learner and educator perspectives, providing a holistic view of the issue within the context of Thai secondary education.

The interview process was meticulously structured to elicit in-depth insights into participants' vocabulary learning experiences. Individual interviews were conducted, allowing for personalised responses while maintaining consistency through a set of prepared open-ended questions. This approach provided flexibility to explore unique perspectives while focusing on key areas such as attitudes toward vocabulary learning, specific challenges, strategies employed, and the contexts in which vocabulary is used. Additional questions for teachers explored their observations of student difficulties and their pedagogical approaches. Student interviews lasted 25–30 minutes, while teacher interviews extended to 45–60 minutes. These interviews, conducted either in person or via video call over several weeks, allowed for comprehensive data collection without overwhelming participants. Each session was audio-recorded with participants' consent and supplemented by researcher notes, capturing both verbal responses and non-verbal cues. This rigorous methodology facilitated a detailed exploration of vocabulary learning experiences, yielding valuable qualitative data for subsequent analysis. For data analysis, content analysis was employed to systematically and objectively identify and quantify key themes and patterns. This method allows researchers to draw valid conclusions from verbal, visual, or written data (Jangjarat et al., 2023; Phuangsuwan et al., 2024). In this study, content analysis was used to thoroughly examine the interview data, following the guidelines recommended by Kraiwanit et al. (2023) and Limna (2023). This approach ensured that the analysis remained rigorous and reflective of the rich, qualitative insights gathered from both students and teachers.

RESULTS

The interview data underwent analysis through content analysis to ensure a thorough examination of the gathered information. According to the interviews, the students' vocabulary learning difficulties were categorised into six key aspects: grammatical forms and inflections, language structure understanding, pronunciation challenges, writing and spelling issues, meaning determination, and comprehension of idiomatic expressions. Regarding grammatical forms and inflections, students struggled with recognizing and applying different word forms correctly. For instance, one student commented, "I often confuse 'go', 'goes', 'went', and 'gone'. It's hard to remember when to use each one." In terms of language structure understanding, some students lacked knowledge about parts of speech and word components. One participant noted, "I don't always know if a word is a noun, verb, or adjective. This makes it hard to use it correctly in a sentence." Pronunciation challenges also posed significant difficulties, with many students finding it hard to pronounce unfamiliar words accurately. A student explained, "Words like 'thought' and 'through' are really hard for me to say. The 'th' sound is not in my native language." Concerning writing and spelling issues, students often found English spelling rules confusing and inconsistent. One student shared, "English spelling seems illogical to me. Words like 'receive' and 'achieve' confuse me because of the 'i' and 'e' placement." For meaning determination, students frequently struggled to identify the correct meaning of words, particularly those with multiple meanings. One participant expressed, "Words like 'set' have so many meanings. I never know which

one to use in different contexts." Finally, idiomatic expressions comprehension proved especially challenging, as idiomatic phrases were difficult to interpret literally. A student highlighted this issue by saying, "When I hear phrases like 'It's raining cats and dogs', I get very confused. These expressions don't make sense when translated literally." Despite these challenges, students recognized the value of vocabulary learning, particularly for opportunities in travel and education. As one student noted, "Learning English vocabulary is hard, but I know it will help me when I travel or apply for international programs."

The interview results highlighted several effective vocabulary teaching strategies that can be implemented in the classroom. It is vital for English teachers to develop appropriate strategies to meet students' needs and expectations when learning new vocabulary. In addition, it is essential that the teachers create a pleasant learning environment and provide fruitful guidance to support students' vocabulary learning. Guessing from context is a well-known strategy for incidental vocabulary learning. Helping students guess from context and use clues in the text can help them learn vocabulary in relation to the related contexts while also increasing their reading speed. Furthermore, teaching students word parts is critical. Learning word parts like affixes, prefixes, infixes, circumfixes, and roots is an important strategy that students can use to quickly guess word meanings. Students who learn the word parts can analyse unknown words and not only guess the meaning more quickly, but they can also speed up their reading or any other task that includes new vocabulary items for them. Language teachers should therefore strongly encourage their students to learn word parts in order to rapidly expand their vocabulary knowledge base. Furthermore, one of the most influential vocabulary learning strategies is the keyword method. Students must use a keyword to find a part of the word that is similar to something in their mind or language in terms of sound, shape, or meaning. They must then conjure up a mental image that connects both the word and the keyword. Incidental vocabulary learning is another method of teaching vocabulary that, when combined with intentional or instructed vocabulary learning, produces very positive results.

DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study illuminate the intricate dynamics of vocabulary acquisition within the context of Thai secondary education, highlighting both the challenges students face and the potential strategies for enhancing vocabulary instruction. The complex difficulties students encounter underscore the necessity for a comprehensive and tailored approach to vocabulary teaching. The significant impact of learning environments on vocabulary mastery, as identified by Boonkongsaen (2012), is evident in these findings. Both formal classroom settings and informal learning contexts play essential roles in shaping students' vocabulary development. This underscores the importance of cultivating a holistic learning ecosystem that extends beyond traditional classroom boundaries. Teachers, as confirmed in this study, are not merely instructors but key facilitators of a supportive learning environment. The strategy of guessing from context, emphasised by Teng (2023), emerges as particularly valuable. This approach not only aids in immediate comprehension but also enhances students' ability to navigate unfamiliar texts independently. By incorporating this strategy into regular instruction, educators can foster a more autonomous and confident approach to vocabulary learning among students. The results align with Boutahra and Chaira's (2022) emphasis on teaching word parts. The difficulties students reported with grammatical forms and inflections highlight the need for a structured approach to morphological awareness. By equipping students with the skills to analyse word structures, educators can provide them with a critical tool for independently expanding their vocabulary. The keyword method, identified by Nie and Zhou (2017) and Ghalebi et al. (2020) as highly effective, offers a mnemonic technique that addresses the challenges of meaning determination and retention reported by students. This method’s strength lies in creating meaningful associations, which is especially beneficial for Thai learners grappling with the often arbitrary nature of English vocabulary. The combination of incidental and intentional vocabulary learning strategies, as suggested by these findings, presents

a balanced approach to vocabulary acquisition. This reflects current research trends that acknowledge the complementary nature of these methods. By deliberately integrating both approaches, teachers can accommodate diverse learning styles and enhance vocabulary retention. The potential of game-based learning and gamification, highlighted by Siripipatthanakul et al. (2023), offers an innovative avenue for addressing the motivational aspects of vocabulary learning. Given the difficulties reported by students, particularly with idiomatic expressions and pronunciation, gamified methods could provide engaging and effective ways to practise these challenging areas of language. Crucially, the study underscores the importance of differentiated instruction. The diverse range of difficulties reported by students suggests that a uniform approach to vocabulary teaching is insufficient. Teachers must be equipped with a repertoire of strategies to address their students' specific needs, taking into account factors such as proficiency levels, learning styles, and individual challenges.

CONCLUSIONS

Vocabulary learning encompasses not only mastering a specific number of words or phrases, but also the ability to use vocabulary correctly. As a result, effective vocabulary learning strategies are critical for students. Although English vocabulary learning strategies can help improve vocabulary learning efficiency, not all strategies are appropriate for each individual. Teachers should select teaching strategies based on different learner situations in order to train students to select effective learning strategies on their own, meet students' learning needs based on their various levels and needs, and begin with the weak links, focus on them, and drive the improvement of other abilities.

The study's findings may assist English programme executives, directors, and teachers, as well as other stakeholders, to develop and implement a strategy to meet the needs and expectations of students to learn and improve their English skills, especially vocabulary. Furthermore, this study added to the existing literature on the students' vocabulary learning difficulties and teachers' strategies. This study's findings may aid academics in broadening their research by incorporating more potential elements. The measurements could be used to guide future research on the students' vocabulary learning difficulties and teachers' strategies.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

This study, while providing valuable insights into vocabulary acquisition and teaching strategies, is not without its limitations. The use of purposive sampling and the focus on a single educational institution may limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts or regions. Additionally, the qualitative nature of the study, primarily relying on interviews, may introduce biases linked to the subjective interpretations of both participants and researchers. These factors suggest caution when extending these findings to broader populations. For future research, it is recommended to expand the study to include a larger and more diverse sample of schools across different geographical areas to enhance the generalizability of the results. Implementing a mixed-methods approach could also provide a more comprehensive understanding of vocabulary acquisition by integrating quantitative measures of vocabulary knowledge and retention. Moreover, future studies might explore the impact of digital and multimedia resources, as well as game-based learning and gamification, on vocabulary learning, which could offer insights into modern, technologically driven pedagogical strategies. Lastly, investigating the long-term retention of vocabulary post-instruction and its practical application in real-world settings would be beneficial for developing more effective and enduring language education methodologies.

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H5P Interactive Materials for Flipped Learning: Engagement, Effectiveness and Challenges

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Abstract

This study investigates the use of H5P interactive digital materials for flipped learning, measuring student engagement and effectiveness. Language learners on an intercultural communication course at a Chinese university were provided with flipped H5P materials in the form of an interactive workbook and video. Quantitative data from the virtual learning environment was then analysed alongside both quantitative and qualitative data from an anonymous survey. The objective was to measure student engagement through behavioural and emotional dimensions, and explore the instructional effectiveness of the materials. Findings reveal high levels of student engagement, the majority finding H5P materials more engaging than traditional pre-class assignments. The study also highlights the effectiveness of these materials in enhancing students' comprehension of concepts, as evidenced by positive survey responses and high scores on activities. Challenges identified length of reading texts and issues of usability, with students suggesting increased gamification and multimedia elements to further improve design and engagement. This research contributes to the understanding of flipped learning's potential in ELT, offering insights for optimising H5P material design and implementation.

Keywords: H5P interactive materials, Flipped learning, English Language Teaching (ELT), Student engagement, Instructional design

INTRODUCTION

Content-based instruction (CBI) has grown extensively in higher education English language teaching (ELT) over the past three decades (Sibulkin, 2018). This growth is particularly notable in transnational contexts where English is used as a medium of instruction, such as the university in China where this study was conducted. CBI focusses on teaching authentic subject content (Brown, 2007; Spada & Lightbown, 2008) while simultaneously promoting language acquisition (Richards & Rogers, 2001). However, students and faculty often report concerns about sufficient time being dedicated to both elements (Pavanelli, 2018), instructors observe student disengagement due to teacher-centred classes (Walsh, 2002), time for student-centred activities and language instruction is limited (Pessoa et al., 2007), and mixed-ability language students feel overwhelmed with the content, experiencing cognitive overload and reduced engagement with materials (Clark et al., 2005).

In recent years, flipped learning (FL) has emerged as an innovative strand of blended learning (BL), utilising technology to promote student engagement and foster student-centred learning. While BL combines face-to-face (F2F) teaching with online resources, FL goes further by inverting the traditional classroom model, switching homework and instruction so the majority of initial learning occurs outside the classroom, freeing up class time for collaborative, student-centred activities (Bicen & Beheshti, 2022). The approach saw a rise in popularity during the pandemic particularly due

to the ubiquitousness of online teaching, but also the accessibility and ease of use of design tools to create digital materials (Almutairi & White, 2018; Islam, Sarker, & Islam, 2022; AdvanceHe, 2023). The present research aims to explore the design and implementation of this approach using educational technology solutions to combat the aforementioned challenges of the CBI context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Flipped and blended learning

The integration of technology and mixed-media modes of instruction to traditional teaching (blended learning) dates back as far as the 1960s (AdvanceHe, 2023), but the term 'flipped learning' (FL) is thought to have been coined around the early 2000's (Abeysekera & Dawson, 2015). The latter refers more specifically to the pairing of pre-class activities which deliver educational content through online platforms, with accompanying in-class activities. A range of studies have shown that FL frees up time for increased student interaction and higher-order skills development, such as application and analysis, in the classroom (Villegas, 2022), allows more flexibility for student schedules, and shifts both in-and out-of-class learning towards a more student-centred model which fosters autonomy (O'Flaherty, & Phillips, 2015; Pavanelli, 2018). Robust data shows that students are more engaged by, and spend more time on, blended and flipped learning than purely face-to-face or online learning (Pavanelli, 2018; AdvanceHe, 2023). FL allows students to learn at their own pace (Evseeva & Solozhenko, 2015), further increasing engagement (Amiryousefi, 2017; Chen Hsieh et al., 2017), decreasing learners' cognitive load, and contributing in some cases to academic achievement (Abeysekera, & Dawson, 2015; Turan & Goktas, 2016).

Research on language learning demonstrates noted improvements in students' linguistic self-confidence (Leis, 2018) and positive student perceptions of FL (Butt, 2014; Oki, 2016; Santikarn & Wichadee, 2018; Bicen, & Beheshti, 2022), further exemplified in studies on English as a Second Language (ESL) FL classes (Soliman, 2016; Pavanelli, 2018), with Alkhalidi (2020) reporting increased engagement, motivation and academic achievement through the use of technology enhanced FL. More specifically in the Chinese context, Ho (2020) found that students' behavioural, cognitive, and motivational engagement could be enhanced through a gamified ESL flipped classroom, while Wang et al. (2021) reported FL was positively perceived as an efficient learning environment.

The approach is not without challenges, however. Teachers often perceive a technical and pedagogical barrier of entry for creating and implementing these types of materials, a perception which may be justified (Reyna et al., 2020). Indeed, Villegas (2022) warns that to be valid, FL must involve both the transmission of direct learning to the students' own individual space, and the dedication of the extra time thus created in class to interactive and creative follow-up activities promoting higher order thinking skills (Abeysekera & Dawson, 2015; Villegas, 2022). This could seem daunting for teachers without the correct tools and training. But perhaps the most important concern for educators is betting the success of the in-class lesson on the fact that students will actually do the assigned pre-class work (Abeysekera & Dawson, 2015). Hence, designing materials which are engaging, and ensuring that students are motivated and self-regulating to guarantee completion of the activities, become a priority.

The problem identified in the context of this study is a common one: Teachers feel pressed for time when trying to impart the course content, and classes can consequently become teacher-focused and content-heavy, all of which negatively impacts the student learning experience (Wehling et al., 2021). Teachers meanwhile lack confidence that the students will actually complete the assigned work. The hoped-for solution would lighten the load in the face-to-face classroom by shifting some content to pre-class, stimulate and assist in-class learning, and engage the students enough to ensure completion.

Student engagement

The findings of the UK Engagement Survey (UKES) (AdvanceHE, 2022) provide strong evidence of increased student engagement in BL environments, especially in those students who study material outside of class, spending more time studying independently.

Definitions of engagement are much debated and problematic, and this paper draws on multiple meta-analysis to focus on two key aspects; behavioural engagement, measurable by the amount of time spent on a task or percentage of task completed; and emotional engagement, reflecting students' emotional reactions concerning their attitudes, values, interests, and satisfaction with their learning experience (Fredricks et al., 2004; Almutairi & White, 2018; Venn et.al, 2023). These are some of the more commonly presented and easily measured aspects of a complex concept. Engagement is also dependant on students' perceptions of the effectiveness of an activity (Fredricks et al., 2004), which can be measured by the perceived likelihood of the materials to promote comprehension, memorization, engagement, self-evaluation and motivation (Tomlinson, 2023).

H5P materials design

Technology further enhances the aforementioned benefits of FL (Davies et al., 2013; Han, 2018; Santikarn & Wichadee, 2018; Reyna et al, 2020), with students responding better to, (Croxton, 2014) and even expecting, some level of interactivity, particularly when they are digital natives (O'Flaherty, & Phillips, 2015). H5P (HTML5 Package), a content collaboration framework based on JavaScript, has become a popular tool to enhance the interactivity of FL materials, thanks to free, open-source software making it more accessible for teachers to use. Importantly, H5P is integrated into the Moodle platform which the students in this study are already familiar with, as ease of use and clarity of instructions for both teachers and students are essential for successful FL (Reyna et al., 2020). H5P activities can take on a number of formats (workbooks, videos) and integrate up to 60 interaction types (including drag and drop, multiple choice, and audio response).

Multimedia materials have been a focal point in educational research on FL (Woottipong, 2014; O'Flaherty & Phillips, 2015; Pavanelli, 2018). However, few of these studies involved advanced interactive materials. The nature of H5P imparts several benefits over more basic materials. The input via text or video pauses at several points and only proceeds once students have completed an activity, encouraging a more active-learning stance (Wehling et al., 2021) and students receive immediate feedback on tasks (Wood & Shirazi, 2020). Giving students more control over pace and encouraging active learning have been found to be an important benefit of technology-enhanced FL (O'Flaherty & Phillips, 2015; Pavanelli, 2018). In addition, the clarity and simplicity of the H5P format contributes to reducing cognitive load (Wilkie et al., 2018). These factors have contributed to improvements in students' English language proficiency, retention of information, attention, interactivity, and quality of learning when using H5P-type activities in FL (Homanová & Havlásková, 2019; Wicaksono et al., 2020).

For optimum student engagement, the H5P platform's technology requires mastery to create content effectively, but also requires that visual design and aesthetics principles be applied (Wilkie et al., 2018). Teachers can increase engagement by personalising content with their own voice and image (Wehling et al., 2021) and with design elements such as image, colour, fonts and layout. All of this can affect the way students perceive and interact with materials, and may assist in connecting theory to practice, provoking certain emotions, and promoting engagement and recall (Mayer, 2008; Reyna et al., 2020).

Research gap

Despite the wealth of recent research using the FL approach in the field of ELT, none of the current studies in these areas focus on the flipped use of H5P activities in a CBI context. This provides a research gap pertinent to the overall issues stated in the introduction.

The research aims to collect valuable data on student perceptions and usage of H5P interactive activities, hoping both to validate the intervention and also to inform the future design and implementation of this new and under-researched technology:

- **RQ1:** How engaging and effective do students perceive H5P materials to be for flipped learning?

- **RQ2:** What are the challenges that students face when engaging with H5P materials for flipped learning, and how can their feedback be used to improve the design and implementation of such materials?

METHODOLOGY

Sample and materials

Students (*n* = 71) from two groups in a first year, second semester CBI course entitled *Introduction to Intercultural Communication* were provided with flipped H5P materials. One group (*n* = 40) was given an interactive workbook (Appendix 1) in week 11 of a 14-week course, while the other (*n* = 31) used an interactive video lecture (Appendix 2) in week 12, both on the subject of theoretical models for intercultural communication concepts such as high versus low context culture, and proxemics. The materials were intended to partially replace the weekly academic reading texts and PowerPoints usually covered in class (Hung, 2015).

The H5P workbook and video format were specifically selected as they allow the inclusion of multiple H5P content types and activities (see Tables 1 and 2) designed to align with the course's learning outcomes and assessments.

Table 1
Interactive workbook activity types

Workbook Page	H5P Activity Type
1	Drag the words Gap fill Multiple Choice Questions
2	Drag and Drop (categorisation)
3	Drag and Drop (ranking)
4	Image Hotspots

The video ran for 8:34 minutes and would pause until students responded. In the case of a correct answer the video would continue, if incorrect students would be told which parts were incorrect and asked to rectify these before the video continued. In this video the skipping option was disabled (although H5P allows either) meaning that students could neither skip back nor forwards.

Table 2
Interactive video activity types

Amount	H5P Activity Type
5	Multiple choice questions
5	Choose the correct statement questions (2 options given for each)
4	True or false questions
1	Drag and drop (drag the correct label to the correct area)
1	Cloze text (drag the correct word to fill in the blanks in short summary text)

The layout and design elements were chosen drawing upon Mayer's (2008) thorough, well-established multimedia framework, together with the principles of design discussed in Reyna et al. (2020). The materials were created using the free Lumi Education application, as the university's Learning

Management System (LMS) seamlessly connects Lumi's H5P to the gradebook, allowing tracking of student interaction for analysis.

At the end of week 12, mixed language ability students from both groups completed the same anonymous survey consisting of 9 questions (Appendix 3) to assess their perceptions of engagement and effectiveness of the materials (n=71). The question types and options given in the survey were developed partially from the UKES skills development categories and the National Survey of Student Engagement indicators regarding higher-order learning (Tomlinson, 2023; Almutairi & White, 2018), together with the principles of emotional and behavioural engagement (Fredericks et al., 2014). Furthermore, questions were designed to view how the materials prepare students with lower order thinking skills like memorising, understanding and applying (Bloom, 1984; Bergmann & Sams, 2012).

Data collection & analysis

Data analysis employed a mixed methods approach, prevalent in educational research (Creswell, 2014). Quantitative data consisted of the LMS gradebook analytics on factors such as number of tasks completed and time spent engaging with the materials, in addition to the responses to the closed questions from the student survey. A simple statistical analysis was carried out using Excel to calculate the mean, median and standard deviation where appropriate. Participants' responses to the open-ended questions in the survey formed the qualitative data, which was analysed using thematic coding to identify common themes and patterns (Creswell et al., 2012) (Appendix 3).

RESULTS

RQ1. How engaging and effective do students perceive H5P materials to be for flipped learning?

Engagement

The primary aim was to analyse student engagement with the materials. According to the results of Q3 ranking level of engagement (Figure 1), answers were overwhelmingly positive, with all but one student rating the materials as moderately to extremely engaging. Moreover, 76% (*n* = 71) found the materials 'very' to 'extremely' engaging, which was supported by qualitative data ("at least the pictures or pages look interesting and interactive; The workbook which is interactive shows teacher's attention and effort").

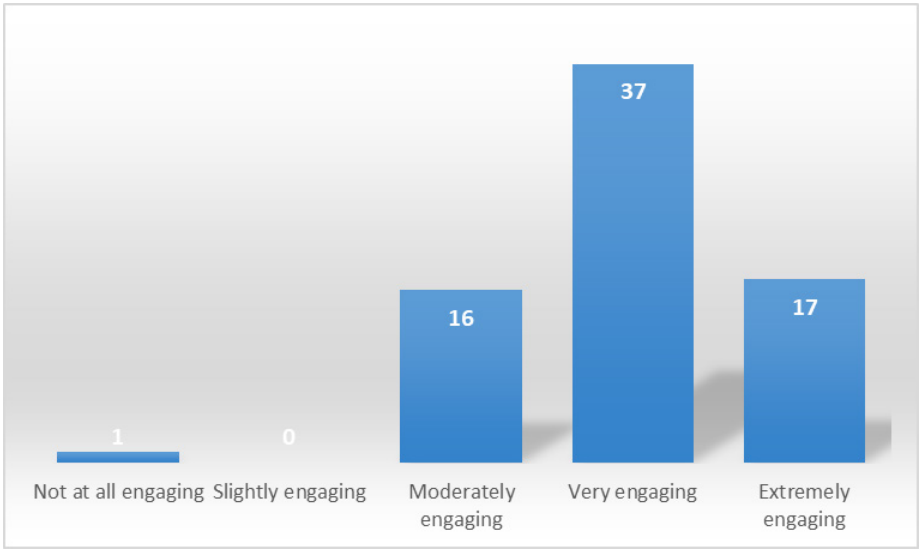

Figure 1 Student ranking of their engagement with the materials (Q3)

Furthermore, 86% of students stated they would like to be assigned more of these types of activities over regular pre-class assignments, also indicating students are more engaged with H5P materials (Figure 2).

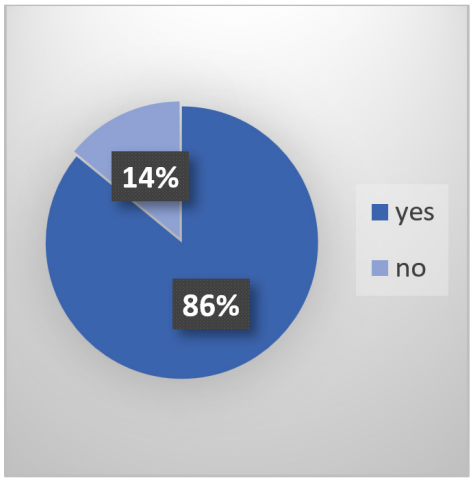

Figure 2 Student preference for further H5P materials (Q8)

To bolster the reliability of our findings, analytics from the LMS showing the time spent on the H5P activities was compared to the time students estimated they spend on regular pre-class activities. Table 3 shows that overall students spent an average of four and a half more minutes on the H5P workbook than they usually would on pre-class assignments, and an engagement time averaging just under 13 minutes for the video. Whilst this may seem low, the video run-time was only 8:46 seconds, and it is still higher than the students estimate of the time they usually spent on pre-class activities (12 minutes 45 seconds vs. 12 minutes 54 seconds). This shows at least an above-average level of behavioural engagement for the H5P materials. Another interesting analysis result is the range and standard deviations of these times, revealing that some required significantly more (or less) time than the group. It should be noted that engagement times were not significantly higher for the H5P activities, with more data and elaborate statistical analysis being required to measure this further.

Additionally, behavioural engagement can also be measured in terms of the percentage of tasks completed. Analytical data collected from the LMS showed all participants having at least attempted all the questions in the video and workbook activities.

Table 3
Time spent on H5P activities compared to time students estimated they spend on regular pre-class activities

Interactive video	**Mean (seconds)**	**Median**	**SD**	**Mean (minutes)**	***n***
Time usually spent on pre-class activities	765	600	687	12.45	31
Time spent on interactive video	774	710	327	12.54	31
Interactive workbook					
Time usually spent on pre-class activities	450	450	212	7.5	40
Time spent on interactive workbook	729	1301	406	12.15	40

The open questions in the survey, whilst mainly aimed at gathering opinions on the specifics of the task, also offered an opportunity for supporting measures of academic and emotional engagement: a majority of responses (36) indicated that students found the activities either fun, interesting, “not boring” (Q4) or had no suggestions for improvement. There were also multiple mentions of the word “good” throughout the responses to all of the open questions including Q5 and Q9 (See Appendix 3).

Regarding interactivity, responses were mixed with some students finding the H5P interactive element "interesting", while others felt that activities requiring questions to be answered were "boring" and did not provide enough gamification, with one student specifically saying, “Maybe put some game aspect into it”.

This first part of the analysis can conclude overall that there was a strongly positive general response to the use of these materials with high levels of behavioural and emotional engagement.

Effectiveness

Effectiveness was primarily analysed through responses to the survey question asking how the workbook prepared students for the upcoming class (Figure 3).

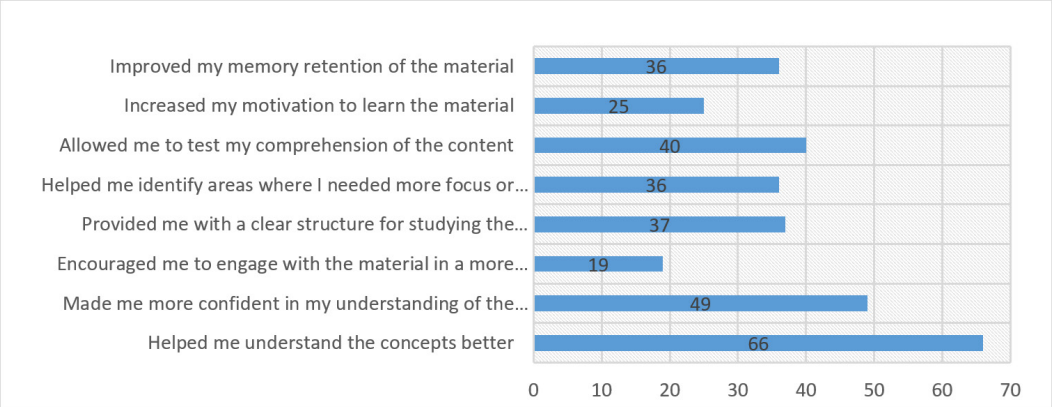

Figure 3 Q6 In what ways did the materials prepare for your class?

The vast majority of students (90%) felt the materials were effective in facilitating their understanding of the concepts better. This data is supported by the LMS analytics on high student scores for the workbook activities, (*mean and median = 79 out of 100; SD = 19; n = 40*) and for correct answers on the first attempt at the video activity 92.39 % (*Median = 100, SD = 19, n = 31*) suggesting a relatively consistent, high scoring performance across the sample.

Moreover, statements from students in the qualitative data support this assertion (“contents in activity make me have a good understanding of knowledge of new topic”; “It is not so difficult for me to understand the meanings of high context culture and low context culture”).

At least half of all students perceived the activities to provide a clear structure for their study, (“Clear structure; good experience for me to learn a new study method; I think it is a pretty easy and effective way to learn; it help me learn how to make mind map”) test their comprehension to identify weaknesses, and improve their memory retention (“it got me to remember the point of the material”; the interactive video help me to remember things as well”). Despite these findings, only around a third of students felt that the materials increased their motivation to study them.

Finally, whilst conducted informally, the follow-up plenary in class showed a good level of student understanding of the key concepts and a general level of enthusiasm for the topic. This could be followed up in more detail in future research.

RQ2. What are the challenges that students face when engaging with H5P materials for flipped learning, and how can their feedback be used to improve the design and implementation of such materials?

Challenges

The responses to questions eliciting student feedback on design and content were processed together (Q4, Q5 and Q9, Appendix 2). Unclear or incoherent responses were weeded out and the remainder coded and organised thematically, then amalgamated into categories to provide feedback on the design and content of the activities.

Workbook (n = 40)

Although many students (16) reported having no difficulty or specific challenges with the workbook, the remainder of the qualitative data was categorised into 6 sections showing the main challenges students did face (Table 4). As this was a multi-level language ability class, some students (5) found the level of language and activities too difficult and complex, but the majority of utterances (14) mentioned the overall length of the workbook and text being too long making the activities less enjoyable and contributing towards boredom.

The need for more explanation or clarification may have contributed to this ("instructions for the drag and drop activities may be unclear for some; Please explain the questions more clearly"), as did a lack of feedback on some answers in the workbook ("The answer isn't clear so that if I save the wrong answer the workbook will only tell me that I am wrong, but I have no idea what's wrong; Maybe add some explanations for the answers"). Moreover, technical issues were encountered by students in some activities and these points were restated when students were asked for suggestions for improvement.

Regarding such recommendations for improvement, overwhelmingly, students expressed a desire for less textual information and more in terms of visual and multimedia enhancement like images, videos, animations and audio to be implemented into the workbook ("less words, more pictures; Add some videos; Have more fun elements like animations" and "Maybe put some game aspect into it".

Table 4
Feedback on the design and content of the workbook

Category	Opinions	Counts
Amount of Text/Reading	Boring due to excessive or complex text and lengthy paragraphs	14
Need for Explanations/Clarification	Insufficient explanation or support, needs more interesting examples	5
Technical Issues	Submission errors, scoring discrepancies	4
Vocabulary and Language Skills	Academic words, unfamiliar terms, language proficiency issues	5
Visual Enhancement Multimedia and Engagement	Prefer more visual content and engaging multimedia	14
Clarity and Instructions	Requests for clearer content and instructions	12
Technical Fixes	Suggestions for correcting technical issues	4

Video (n = 31)

The responses regarding the video were thematically coded and organised into 6 categories (Table 5). The disabled skipping function and inability to review parts of the video were a common concern, as were the length and aesthetics of the video. Speech was described as too fast and formal, while content and activities were found by some to be too theoretical, difficult, and lacking practical examples.

Table 5
Feedback on the design and content of the video

Category	Opinions	counts
Visual design and layout	**Make the visuals more attractive, cuter, perhaps using cartoons**	**3**
	Add subtitles	2
Audio design	Speech is too fast and formal	**3**
	Speech is too slow	1
Material content	**Content too theoretical, lacking examples**	**4**
	Content not interesting enough	2
	Content too difficult	2
Activities	**Questions too difficult or confusing**	**4**
	Questions too easy	2
	Question types not varied enough	2
	Teacher feedback after each activity	1
Usability and functionality	**Lack of control of progress bar**	**11**
	Lack of retry option for questions	1
	Technical incompatibility with device	1
Timing and length	**Video too long**	**4**
	Task takes up free time	2
	Time to answer questions too short	1

DISCUSSION

Engagement

Most students rated the materials as engaging and something they would like to see more of, aligning with previous studies (Amiryousefi, 2017; Pavenelli, 2018; Ho, 2020). As discussed above, student engagement definitions vary even amongst educators (Bowen, 2005; Barkley & Major, 2020), and given their mixed language ability, it is difficult to know or measure what students understand as engagement. Nevertheless, qualitative data here suggests students may associate engagement with lack of boredom, since many comments described the materials as “not boring”, “fun”, “interesting” and “engaging” with two-thirds of the sample rating the materials as very or extremely engaging (Q3, Figure 2).

Analytics data further supported this, showing increased time spent on the H5P materials compared to regular pre-class activities, in addition to high average success-rates in the tasks (over 90 %) these being key indicators of both emotional and behavioural engagement (Fredricks et al., 2004; Almutairi & White, 2018).

Moreover, this data is consistent with the UKES (2022) report on self-study in BL. These findings would therefore suggest that overall students do find the H5P FL materials to be engaging despite some issues which will be discussed below.

Effectiveness

As noted above, both the analytics and questionnaire data support the materials being effective in facilitating content knowledge, and 90% of students perceived increased concept comprehension, supporting previous studies (Sinnayah et al., 2021; Jacob & Centofanti, 2023). While no data is available to reliably compare the scores with regular activities, the findings suggest a very good performance overall. Additionally, the student responses and comments support previous research on increased student confidence (Oki, 2016), and providing study structure and improved memory retention (Homanová & Havlásková, 2019), which contribute to more effective learning outcomes (Han, 2018; Pavanelli, 2018; Alkhalidi, 2020).

Given Homanová and Havlásková's (2019) findings that students' motivation to study increased when they perceived H5P activities assisted in their comprehension of the content, it is surprising to find only around a third of students felt that the materials increased their motivation to study them, and this contradicts somewhat the analytical data on task completion in the study.

Challenges

As is often the case, the materials were not to the liking of some students despite the overall positive results. Aesthetical improvements were suggested ("cuter" was mentioned several times) supporting the importance of design choices (Bader & Lowenthal, 2018; Reyna et al., 2020). Also important is the academic content, which a small but significant minority found either too difficult, too theoretical or too confusing. Although the FL materials were intended to alleviate the need for lower-level students reading long academic style articles, it appears text and video length and difficulty were still a problem. The finding was unexpected given the level of language used was significantly simplified and learners could complete the workbook materials in their own time and at their own pace (Evseeva & Solozhenko, 2015; UKES, 2022). Adding subtitles and slowing the teacher's speech on the video were also suggested in comments, as were more real-life examples (Table 4). Another way to reduce confusion and increase engagement could be to include more instruction as to the goal and modality of the activities, and more clearly link the out-of-class and in-class learning activities (Reyna et al., 2020).

Secondly, technical issues were reported which may have been due to the design of activities (Wilkie et al., 2018). The single most reported complaint from the comments on the video activity was the inability to control the skip forward and skip back control on the video during the activity. Developing student autonomy is an important aspect of FL, and an opportunity to do so might have been missed here (O'Flaherty & Phillips, 2015; Pavanelli, 2018). Despite this lack of control over the video, students' response times to questions varied with a small majority in the class requiring significantly more or less time than the others (Table 2). This is encouraging for differentiation as students needing more time to process the concepts can do so without pressure. Moreover, there are many technical settings on both activities which might require more time to master for the teacher and may improve student experience.

Improvements

The reported challenges above provide several suggestions to improve the materials in future activities. The biggest requested change is enhancement of the visual and multimedia content, which is unsurprising given the principles of design discussed above (Wilkie et al., 2018; Reyna et al., 2020). Since a primary aim was to reduce cognitive load, by increasing H5P image hotspot activities, text can be inserted into smaller chunks within hotspots, which would reduce the need for the "chunks of paragraphs" and "too much reading" that students perceived to be less engaging and challenging.

Additionally, Lumi's workbook can incorporate 60 types of H5P activity, and resultingly could include some elements of audio and video into the workbook as suggested by students. Despite the intention of the FL materials being used to partially replace the academic reading articles, by integrating small sections of interactive audio and video into the workbook between text segments, together with more use of the image hotspots as described above, the overall amount and length of text can be reduced and dispersed to promote engagement and effectiveness. In fact, it could be said that the overall feedback shows that a combination of the two types of activity tested here might appeal more to the students and avoid some of the criticism cited.

LIMITATIONS

The most important limitation of this study is that it does not objectively measure effectiveness of the instruction, something which could be done through a pre- and post-activity quiz. A further improvement could also measure whether the flipped classroom led to more student collaboration and higher-order learning in the in-class setting. These options were rejected in the present study due to time and space constraints.

The collection and analysis of data could also be improved. While small scale studies of this type can yield useful advice for practitioners (Bond, 2020), a larger sample would extend the relevance and possibilities of the statistical analysis of quantitative data. The results of all parts of the data should have been anonymized and numbered so that more comparisons could be made between the survey and LMS data. More extensive piloting of the survey might have brought increased coherence in the question themes and therefore greater criterion validity, again allowing a more robust analysis of both open and closed question responses. A final improvement would be to adjust the LMS settings to allow only single group access to the survey, making the data collection less time-consuming.

CONCLUSION

This intervention has clearly justified the use of H5P materials for FL in this ELT context in terms of student engagement and effectiveness. In addition, some valuable insights have been gained into how their design and implementation could be improved.

Primarily, students' preference for less text and increased gamification through more integration of attractive multimedia content highlights a need for further investigation and development. The functionality of the digital materials warrants improvements, as do the clarity and difficulty of the content and instructions.

A larger sample would be beneficial for a more accurate statistical analysis. Furthermore, self-reported student data is subjective and prone to protentional response bias. Thus, qualitative data could be improved by using focus groups. Effectiveness could have been better measured through a more objective approach, with students being tested on the FL content in class and having a control group to compare with traditional teaching methods. Future research could also include teacher perceptions on the effectiveness of this approach.

Nonetheless, these findings are extremely encouraging for this form of FL and can hopefully be extrapolated to similar ELT contexts both within and beyond the institution. A second loop of study is already being implemented using improved materials and research design but based on students in a very similar learning context.

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Appendix 1

H5P activities

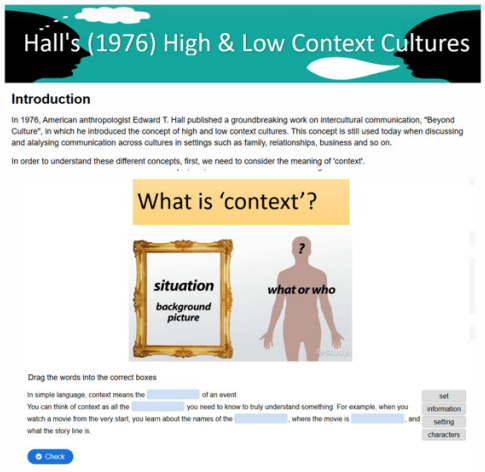
Week 12 FL H5P Video

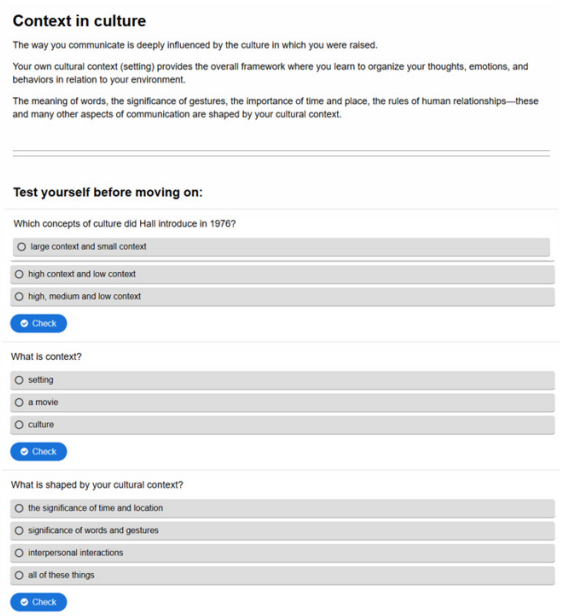
https://app.Lumi.education/run/32REJa

Week 11 FL H5P Workbook

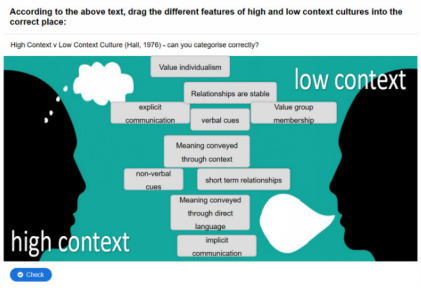
https://app.Lumi.education/run/sGA_H9

Page 1





Page 2



Page 3

Hall's (1976) High & Low Context Cultures

Summary of high and low context features

Study the summary of high and low context features in the table below:

Low Context	High Context
• Emphasis on explicit communication, verbal cues, and individual expression of thoughts and feelings • Meaning is conveyed through direct language • Value individualism • Relationships may be short term	• Emphasis on nonverbal cues, implicit communication, and shared cultural norms • Meaning is conveyed through context and relationships • Value group membership • Relationships are stable

Classifying Countries from Higher to Lower Context

As we learnt on the previous page, not only did Hall (1976) describe the features of high and low context cultures, he also suggested examples of countries which belong to each category.

Even today, almost 40 years since the theory began, certain places around the world are considered to be more high or low context and are ranked this way.

Practice

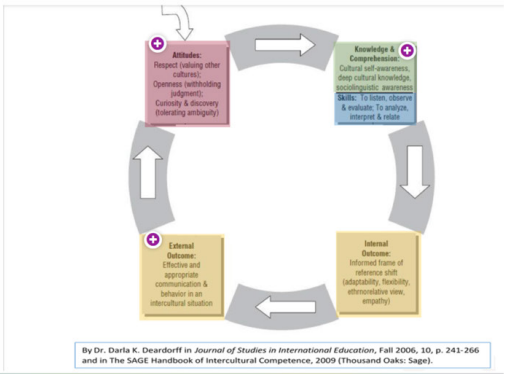
Can you arrange the countries from lowest context to highest context, according to Hall's (1976) theory?

Arrange the countries from low to high

Check

Page 4

Activity: Click on the plus icon for each stage of the model to learn more about it.



By Dr. Darla K. Deardorff in *Journal of Studies in International Education*, Fall 2006, 10, p. 241-266 and in The SAGE Handbook of Intercultural Competence, 2009 (Thousand Oaks: Sage).

Summarising Hall's (1976) Context Theory

The image below shows a summary of the countries and features of high and low context cultures.

- What do you think of this theory?
- Do you agree that China is a high context country?
- Why/why not?

Consider these questions and make some notes in preparation for week 12.

Appendix 2

Questionnaire

Question #1
1 Response is required*
I confirm that I have read the LMO data consent form, the anonymous survey consent form, and the participant information sheet.
☐ Yes

Question #2
2 Response is required*
On average, how many minutes do you usually spend on pre-class assigned tasks for each LAN010 class?

_____

Question #3
3 Response is required*
On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1= not at all engaging and 5= Extremely engaging, how engaging did you find the interactive video?

1	2	3	4	5
option 1 Choice 1 for row	option 2 Choice 2 for row	option 3 Choice 3 for row	option 4 Choice 4 for row	option 5 Choice 5 for row

Question #4
4 Response is required*
What did you find boring about the activities in the interactive video, why? (Please answer in up to 200 words)

Question #5
5 Response is required*
What did you find confusing or difficult about the activities in the interactive video, why? (Please answer in up to 200 words)

Question #6
6 Response is required*
In what ways do you feel that this interactive video prepared you for the following lesson? (you may choose more than one answer)

☐ a. Helped me understand the concepts better
☐ b. Made me more confident in my understanding of the material
☐ c. Encouraged me to engage with the material in a more active way
☐ d. Provided me with a clear structure for studying the material
☐ e. Helped me identify areas where I needed more focus or review
☐ f. Allowed me to test my comprehension of the content
☐ g. Increased my motivation to learn the material
☐ h. Improved my memory retention of the material
☐ i. Other

Question #7
7 If you answered "other" to the above question, please give more details here:

Question #8
8 Response is required*
In future, would you like to be assigned interactive videos like this as future pre-class activities instead of normal pre-class activities?
O Yes O No

Question #9
9 Response is required*
What suggestions do you have for improving the H5P interactive activities? (Please answer in up to 200 words)

Appendix 3

Qualitative data coding

Interactive workbook:

QUESTION 4: What did you find boring about the activities in the workbook, why? (Please answer in up to 200 words)

Themes	Codes	Responses
Amount of Text/Reading	Lengthy paragraphs Limited amount of reading Reluctance to read sentences or too many words Too much text Distraction due to excessive text Negative comments on reading articles	" I personally feel that reading is boring to me compared to doing the interactive video Tasks are simple, although they do give some knowledge on the topic. However, I feel just reading and answering questions is a bit boring. There are always chunks of paragraphs that pack the pages." "Perhaps I don't want to read the sentences." "May be too many words to read." "Too much words." "The reading section of most parts of the workbook, but that is understandable as they were necessary to provide the context of the activity." "Too many words for reading, easy to be distracted." "Reading articles are boring."
Positive Perception/Interest	Positive comments or lack of boredom Interesting and useful aspects Positive comments on interesting classes and teachers	"It's good." "I think IAN is pretty interesting." "Nothing boring." "Interesting, not boring to me." "Nothing is boring." "I think they are very interesting and useful." "No. I think it is better than just reading the complex article." "It taught me a lot of things about high-context culture and low-context culture. Furthermore, it helped me learn how to make a mind map." "I don't think it is boring." "Not that boring, still attractive." "Not much boring, at least the pictures or pages look interesting and interactive." "I think most of them are interesting, especially the card game. But sometimes the explanation of concepts is not enough." "From my perspective, contents in the activity make me have a good understanding of knowledge of a new topic, helping me a lot. Thus, I think nothing boring about the activity." "I don't think it is boring, because I can learn a lot from this course." "There's nothing boring at all." "No." "All the classes are very interesting. And I like my teacher very much." "The activities are perfect. I do not find anything boring." "Clear structure."

Themes	Codes	Responses
Need for Explanations/Clarification	Insufficient explanation or support Need for more interesting examples Need for additional explanations	But sometimes the explanation of concepts is not enough "We have to try a lot of times. Maybe add some explanations for the answers." "I think most of them are interesting, especially the card game. But sometimes the explanation of concepts is not enough." "Keep making mistakes on one question that scales countries of low and high context. So tired to get it right." "Something in the workbook is difficult to answer."
		"It is really, really **boring**. I do not **enjoy** it."

QUESTION 5: What did you find confusing or difficult about the activities in the workbook, why? (Please answer in up to 200 words)

Theme	Code	Responses
Understanding and Clarity	Difficult questions Lack of clear instructions Unclear concepts Lack of feedback on incorrect answers Difficulty understanding meanings of concepts	"the questions maybe difficult to understand and I don't know how to do it" "The answer isn't clear so that if I save the wrong answer the workbook will only tell me that I am wrong, but I have no idea what's wrong." "sometimes when I answer the questions, I still not understand the mean of the concepts clearly" "Difficult sometimes to organize different words or pictures into different categories, because it's kind of subjective to your own opinion."
Technical Issues	Missing answers Submission errors Scoring discrepancies Task not updating correctly	"Some questions does not show answers. After submitting it, when refreshed, all answers are gone. This made it inconvenient for references in class." "Sometimes I retry the task, even it is correct, it still show I do it wrong." The scoring system in the arranging flags activity seemed a little finicky, might be counting scores wrong. For example, USA was not the lowest contest but still showed a green checkmark when put in as the lowest. And, the number of incorrect don't appear to match. On my first attempt I got two wrong but the score was 5/9, and on my last attempt I only got one wrong but scorer was 7/9. Overall, no serious issues, just little technical quirks.
Vocabulary and Language Skills	Academic words Unfamiliar words Difficulty understanding word meanings Language proficiency limitations	"There are some academic words in it." "Some words are not learnt that I cannot understand." "Some difficult words I cannot get the meaning at the beginning which may make me confused during activities." "sometimes those questions are beyond my knowledge, for example what other countries are like" "Some vocabulary and my English listening and speaking are not good."

Theme	Code	Responses
Complexity and Length	Time-consuming activities Lengthy workbook Complex content or instructions Challenging articles	"It is a little difficult because it needs me to spend too much time to understand it. Besides, the workbook is too long and complex." "sometimes the article is too long" "Some activities are hard to conduct in real practice due to time limits." "The flag linking section in wk12's workbook is certainly most cheeky, but most activities have a good variety to them and are very fun, may I suggest to lower the complexity for several of them?"
No Difficulties	No confusion or challenges experienced Clear instructions and content Easy understanding of concepts	"I did not find anything confusing or difficult" There's no difficulty since the settings are excellent and well understand. Especially, I don't have this type of workbook which is a good experience for me to learn a new study method. "No more difficulties." "Activity was pretty clear in my opinion. Instructions were straightforward and easy to understand." "No difficulty. Actually I think that it can be more difficult" "No it is easy to understand" "I think the activity is ok for me." "It is not so difficult for me to understand the meanings of high context culture and low context culture." "It is a pretty easy and effective way to learn." "There are nothing make me confused in the workbook."
		"I do not know why we need to do this activities. To be honest, this is really boring."

QUESTION 9: What suggestions do you have for improving the H5P interactive activities? (Please answer in up to 200 words)

Theme	Codes	Responses
Visual Enhancement, Multimedia, and Engagement	More pictures/images Multimedia elements Engaging examples	1. Contents can be more visualized (less words, more pictures). 12. It is interesting to add some pictures. 13. More pictures. 15. Listen to students' opinions, do some activities they like to do. 18. Add some videos to help me understand more. 23. Have some short videos for the activities. 39. Could you please put more interesting pictures and videos on it? I like watching interesting things. 5. I think they are pretty good on their own for now, but could maybe use more critical thinking questions. 11. Have more fun elements like animations and music. 21. Increase the communication with classmates and pay more attention to attendance. 28. Try to use more engaging examples, maybe combine current big events, to grab students' attention. Use more easy and understandable words.

Theme	Codes	Responses
Clarity and Instructions	Unclear content or instructions Further information requested Engagement	7. While I did not have any issues with understanding the tasks, instructions for the drag and drop activities may be unclear for some. 16. Please offer more information about the concepts. 17. Please do not make the questions so difficult. Please explain the questions more clearly. 28. Try to use more engaging examples, maybe combine current big events, to grab students' attention. Use more easy and understandable words
Technical	Answers incorrect Bug fixes	8. Make sure every question will show correct answers after students answering them. Let the correct answers stay there after refreshing the website. Sometimes I retry the task, even it is correct, it still show I do it wrong Recommend bug fixes for tile arranging activities, detailed problem description written in question number 5. Some questions does not show answers. After submitting it, when refreshed, all answers are gone. This made it inconvenient for references in class
No change	Nothing	2. I don't think there's anything to change. 3. Nothing. 4. Nothing. 6. NO more perfect. 22. None. 29. Nothing. 30. Good already. 31. No. 34. I think the pre-class activity is interesting enough, maybe I just aren't willing to do preparation before class. 35. It's good enough. 40. The activities are perfect. 32. No. The workbook, which is interactive, shows the teacher's attention and effort to the classroom. The activity is pretty novel that I haven't seen it in traditional Chinese classroom.

Interactive video:

Q4: What did you find boring about the activities in the interactive video and why?

1. My personal opinion, I think doing interactive video takes some time because you have to listen to long information. I like where the video is short. (Maybe 5-7 minute video)
2. I don't think interactive videos are boring, the fun of interactive videos depends on the content.
3. I don’t think it is boring exactly.But if I must say one, maybe it should be more forms of questions.
4. I think it's not too boring because it helps me to stay awake while playing the video and answering the questions. However, I think it depends on the person interest. If I'm not interested in the video then I would think it's boring to watch the video. Back again, the interactive video help me to remember things as well.
5. i feel all is intersting
6. I think it’s fine. It is interesting.
7. Speaking too slow, sometimes repeat one answer for several times.
8. I think it is interesting.
9. too much theoritical statements, maybe more examples is a good option.
10. If the vedio is too long, for example, more than 20 min, I will lose interest to watch it.
11. No, it is interactive and full of engagement I think.

12. The sound of the speaker is too formal and maybe it can be more cute.
13. Maybe there are too much questions.
14. I think the questions along with the video is a bit boring because some of them are too easy to answer.
15. I don't think the video is boring, actually I really like this idea about interactive video, The only thing you guys can improve is maybe if you can make the video more attractive for us so that people this age (student's ages) can be more attracted
16. I do not think it is boring.It is better than just listening to what the teachers say.
17. I can learn a lot about intercultural communication from this video. In addition, I think this activity is not boring because I can learn a lot of new knowledge about how to communicate or interact with people who have different cultural backgrounds compared to me. I also learned that the same gesture may have different meaning in different culture so I have to pay attention when I come to a new country to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings.
18. I only find group discussions a tad bit boring due to having shy groupmates, which is not a serious problem. In the end, few weeks socialising helped engaging the conversation better. So there aren't any issues with the activities.
19. I think it is a little bit boring dut to too many theories knowledge and definations. Maybe we can add more interesting examles.
20. No, I think it good and interesting.But when I meet some questions which too academic to answer, I can not understand well.
21. it's interesting
22. Too much theoretical stuff, giving some examples can be more interesting and easier to understand
23. No. Because the vedio is not long, I can keep focus on the content of the vedio. Also the contents and questions are fun.
24. The time of the interactive video can be shorter
25. Nothing boring. But If the video is too long, and teacher take the score as serious, it may cause pressure. But if it is just used for learning, it is good
26. Some questions are shown in different pages and maybe it could just be shown in one page.
27. it is fun,
28. When there is a long article to read, it’s a little boring
29. not boring
30. Not boring at all.
31. The activities are interesting, I donot find anything boring.

Q5: What did you find confusing or difficult about the activities in the interactive video, why?

32. I don't think there is any confusing thing from the interactive video
33. Sometimes there may be system incompatibilities, and the options cannot be displayed completely. Sometimes there may be loopholes that make it impossible to continue answering questions. Due to the insufficient frequency of using interactive videos, the system is not perfect enough, which reduces our user experience.
34. Nothing confusing or difficult.
35. I think the most confusing and difficult part is I can't playback the video. So, sometimes I do think it's annoying but at the same time I also think it's a good point for students to pay attention to the video.
36. 理解这个概念将很困难
37. the progress Bar cannot be operated. So if I miss something, I cannot stroll it back unless I start it from the very beginning. That’s a little bit inconvenient.
38. Some of the explaining words I don’t know.
39. No.
40. sometimes the questions are not really clear, and sometimes I choose the correct one the video also says I am wrong.

41. 1.I can't go back when I didn't catch the information 2.I don't really agree with some answers about quizes
42. No,it usaully explains the question that will be met with in the first place.
43. Sometimes it asked me to guess an answer but not tell me why.
44. The explanation of the word is hard to understand.
45. I don’t find anything difficult in the video.
46. the only difficulty is that we can not rewind the video (backward)
47. No.If the questions is not so difficult,.I think it is OK for me.
48. I think the information in the interactive video is quietly different from what I have learned before. So it may be difficult for me to receive the new concept in the interactive video.
49. Due to my English proficiency, the interactive videos are not too big of a hurdle. But on occasion I would like to have the ability to rewind to understand the video better.
50. Sometimes the talking speed is too fast for me resulting that I can't catch all the key points.
51. The questions are supposed to answer more than once so that we can know the correct answer. Sometimes I can not guess the answer in context.We should spend time to understand but the video plays fast that can not be stopped so that people would fall behind others.
52. none
53. some answers to the questions in the video is confusing
54. Can't control the progress. 英文不太确定怎么说就是不能调进度。
55. Sometimes l cannot understand well without English subtitles
56. It Can not change the timeline of the video, if I want to rewatch a part of the video. I have to restart it and wait until the part that I want to see showing up again If the video material is too academic, it may hard for student to catch all infos. If they want to adjust the timeline to relisten, they have to listen from the beginning.
57. Some theoretical knowledge is difficult to understand.
58. For this one, it is quite easy. But if it gets harder, not being able to go back and double check the information would be confusing.
59. We can not adjust the progress as we wanna go back to check something, we can only watch the video again.
60. no
61. No problem.
62. The activities does not present when I first watching the video.

Q9: What suggestions do you have for improving the H5P interactive activities?

63. I believe that the only thing needs to be improved is shorten the length of Interactive activity where it is not very time consuming
64. I hope to have more forms of interaction, making it more interesting. Alternatively, there can be more question choices to make the knowledge easier to understand.
65. Maybe it can be divided into more small parts. When a part finishes ,teachers can say something about it. I think it may let me concentrate more.
66. please set the video where it can playback.
67. 更多有趣的问答活动
68. Let the progress bar being movable.
69. Not repeating one answer for several times.More interesting quizzes.
70. No.
71. maybe try to make this activities more intersting.
72. 1.allow to go back to review2.in some questions that involve openness, emphasize that it maybe not 100% true
73. Add and show more real examples in life instead of simple theories.
74. cuter cartoon and more explanation of each country's background.
75. use some cartoon

76. I think more time can be left when a question is asked for students to answer. Also, the interactive questions can be more interesting.
77. maybe this video become more useless if students must do it before class, because we all know that students don't like homework but this can be useful just take 5 minute at the start of the class and it can be very useful and effective
78. Do not give us questions which are very difficult.
79. I think it can add more interesting things.
80. Give students the ability to rewind the video, nothing more
81. 1.set more difficult and challenging question instead of simple theory question
82. Students are supposed to adjust watch time easily that they can see previous choice and the following words.It can save time when students repeat reading.
83. don't take up my after class time
84. maybe can make it more interesting
85. Generally, it's all good. But I think we can do it ten minutes before class, referring to Japanese class. I don't want more homework.
86. The video can have more subtitles
87. Have Written above.
88. It is good already. Burt some questions are shown in different pages and maybe it could just be shown in one page.
89. If students are allowed to answer questions as many times as they want, until they got the answers all right, this would help them understand the concepts more thoroughly.
90. Hope we can adjust the process whenever we can go back to the previous scene.
91. good good good
92. Good job.
93. think the interactive activities are perfect, i donnot have any suggestions about it.

EFL Learners' Use of Formulaic Sequences in Written Discourse: A Comparison Between Higher- and Lower-Level Learners

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Abstract

Studies to date have shown that the ability to use formulaic sequences (FSs) appropriately is necessary in academic writing. The present study looks at how FSs are used by Japanese university EFL learners at lower (n = 27) and higher (n = 27) proficiency levels. The students' paragraphs were collected and analyzed to examine how their use of FSs differed in terms of frequency (i.e., the total number of FSs used regardless of their repetition) and of occurrence (i.e., the total number of FSs used in each paragraph in that each type is counted once). The results showed that students in the higher level were superior to their counterparts in terms of both frequency and occurrence. There were four salient points that differentiated the students between the two levels: (1) The higher-level students used a wider range of discourse organizers which contributed to establishing a smooth transition between different points and, thus, constructing coherent and cohesive texts. (2) It was more common for higher-level students to end a paragraph by using a summarizer (e.g., *in sum*). (3) Many of the lower-level students had a tendency to start a paragraph by constructing a topic sentence by repeating the prompt. (4) Almost all lower-level students used stance markers to express their own opinion (i.e., *I think*), which was not the case for higher-level students. The results suggest that EFL learners at lower proficiency levels can improve their writing skills through using: a variety of discourse organizers to improve coherence; paragraph organization, such as how to start and end a paragraph; and expressions to introduce general opinions and facts to increase objectivity.

Keywords: EFL, Formulaic sequences, Lexical phrases, Written discourse

INTRODUCTION

The use of formulaic multi-word sequences, generally referred to as formulaic sequences (FSs), in written discourse has been gaining attention in SLA research (e.g., AlHassan & Wood, 2015; Coxhead & Byrd, 2007; Hyland, 2008; Li & Schmitt, 2009; Shin et al., 2019). FSs can be defined as:

> A sequence, continuous or discontinuous, of words or other elements, which is, or appears to be, prefabricated: that is, stored and retrieved whole from memory at the time of use, rather than being subject to generation or analysis by the language grammar. (Wray, 2002, p. 9)

Research suggests that around half of native speakers' written language is composed of some kind of FSs (Erman & Warren, 2000). When it comes to L2 learners, however, studies have reported that unlike their counterparts, non-native speakers' use of such language is not only less frequent but its variation is also less diverse (De Cock et al., 1998; Foster, 2001; Howarth, 1998), and as such, they tend to overuse the same FSs they know well (Granger, 1998). The limited use of FSs can therefore be said to be an indicator of low proficiency (Li & Schmitt, 2008). While we already have a general idea of how FSs are used by non-native speakers in writing, it is important to collect data from EFL learners with the same L1, as the use of FSs is said to be dependent on their L1 and their proficiency in the target

language (Hyland & Milton, 1997; Milton, 1999). By focusing on Japanese EFL learners, the present study aims to find out what types of FSs are generally used by Japanese university students and whether the types of FSs differ depending on proficiency levels. The findings will help us pinpoint which FSs are missing in Japanese EFL learners' repertoire in order to understand which ones need to be taught in writing classes.

Defining formulaic sequences

When conducting any studies which deal with FSs, it is important to first provide an explanation of what is meant by FSs, as individual researchers have developed their own methods for identifying multiword sequences, and these have varied depending on how the sequences are operationalized. Furthermore, various terms have also been used to label different types of FSs such as lexical bundles (e.g., Biber et al, 1999) and formulas (e.g., Simpson-Vlack & Ellis, 2010). For an operational definition of FSs used in this study, the present study narrowed the scope of FSs to those that fit the definition of a specialized subset of FSs called lexical phrases, defined by Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) below:

> We might describe lexical phrases as "chunks" of language of varying length, phrases like as *it were, on the other hand, as X would have us believe*, and so on. As such, they are multi-word lexical phenomena that exist somewhere between the traditional poles of lexicon and syntax, conventionalized form/function composites that occur more frequently and have more idiomatically determined meaning than language that is put together each time. (p. 1)

By focusing on FSs which fit the operationalization of lexical phrases in particular, rather than the much broader category of FSs in general which includes all types of multi-word expressions such as proverbs (e.g., *let's make hay while the sun shines*), binomials (e.g., *cuts and bruises; research development*), standardized similes (e.g., *clear as crystal*), phrasal verbs (e.g., *run into; come across*) and idioms (e.g., r*aining cats and dogs; back to square one*), it allows a more manageable and systematic approach to identifying and analyzing formulaic language.

For a FS to be considered a lexical phrase, it must perform certain pragmatic functions. Table 1 explains the three types of functions and provides some examples of lexical phrases that fall into each of the functions. The examples and definitions are taken from Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992, pp. 60–66).

Table 1
Functions and examples of lexical phrases

Category	Function	Examples
Social interaction	Markers that describe social relations. They can be either (a) categories of conversational maintenance or (b) categories of functional meaning relating to conversational purpose.	How are you (doing)? What I'm trying to say is X. See you later. Of course (not).
Necessary topics	Topics about which learners are often asked, or ones that are necessary in daily conversations.	My name is How do you say/spell…? How far is…? Lots of
Discourse devices	Markers that connect the meaning and structure of the discourse.	In spite of X To give you an example I'm absolutely certain that To make a long story short

In the context of academic written discourse, the type of lexical phrases that predominate are those that fall in the category of discourse devices and they are precisely the type of phrases that I wish to examine in this study. Discourse devices include logical connectors (e.g., *as a result*), temporal connectors (e.g., *and then*); exemplifiers (e.g., *in other words*), evaluators (e.g., *there's no doubt that*), summarizers (e.g., *to summarize*) and other expressions which help signal the overall direction and organization of the discourse. Li and Schmitt (2009) stress the importance of FSs that function as discourse devices:

> Formulaic sequences like *as a result* and *it should be noted that* are central to the creation of academic texts . . . As important building blocks of the characteristic features of academic texts, the absence of such formulaic sequences may indicate the lack of mastery of novice writers in a specific disciplinary community" (p. 86).

It would, therefore, be pedagogically important to examine how these phrases are used (or not used) by Japanese EFL writers.

L2 learners' use of FSs in relation to proficiency

The selection of native speakers' (NS) and non-native speakers' (NNS) FSs in written discourse is said to differ; furthermore, the types of FSs used by NNSs differ depending on proficiency (e.g., Biber et al., 2004; Chen & Baker, 2016; Foster, 2001). Biber et al. (2004) categorized FSs (operationalized as lexical bundles in their study, i.e., frequently recurring word sequences) into three main categories based on their discoursal functions: (a) referential expressions (i.e., expressions to introduce prepositions), (b) discourse organizers (i.e., expressions to establish textual relations), and (c) stance expressions (i.e., expressions to show writers' (un)certainty and attitudes towards propositions). Their study showed that in published academic writing in English written by NSs, referential expressions were the most common, followed by stance expressions, and discourse organizers being the least common.

L2 writers, on the other hand, showed a different trend depending on their proficiency levels. As for how FSs are used by NNSs, Chen and Baker's (2016) study revealed that low-level writers relied on discourse organizers more than high-level writers, and high-level writers used referential expressions and stance expressions more frequently than low-level writers. Estaji and Hashemi's (2022) study looking at IELTS test-takers' use of FSs (operationalized as phraseological units in their study, i.e., combinations of words with fully or partially figurative meaning) showed that simple formulae, including discourse markers like *on the other hand, that is to say*, and *for instance*, were used by all test-takers across band scores, but were overused by those receiving lower band scores (below band 5). These studies show that while L2 learners do use FSs to some extent in their writing, some types of FSs seem to be used more often than others depending on proficiency level.

In terms of studies that have looked into Japanese EFL learners' use of FSs, Okuwaki (2015) collected data from 71 students at three different proficiency levels (beginner intermediate, and advanced) and examined whether the types of FSs and their frequency differed between the three levels. The results showed that there was no difference in the way FSs were used. The most frequent type of FSs used by all three levels were collocation, followed by personal markers, and transition. This does not corroborate aforementioned studies which indicated that the distribution of FSs differ depending on proficiency levels. On the other hand, Allen's (2010) study which examined the use of lexical bundles arising in research papers written by STEM undergraduate students in Japan, revealed that the students used a variety of lexical bundles appropriately and accurately. In fact, when the students' lexical bundles were compared with native speaker corpora and published academic writing, there was considerable convergence between the two. Given that the data were collected from Japanese EFL students who are at a very advanced level, it may be the case that there is a threshold to when EFL learners can use a wide range of FSs in their writing. With studies reporting differing outcomes, it is necessary to conduct

more studies focusing on students' use of FS where the students are of different proficiency levels and share the same L1.

Research Objectives

The aims of the present study are to examine how often and what kinds of FSs are used by Japanese EFL learners in written discourse and how the selection of FSs may differ depending on proficiency level. These aspects will be examined both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Research questions

This study purports to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there a difference in the way FSs are used by higher-level and lower-level students in terms of frequency and occurrence?

2. What types of FSs are used by higher-level and lower-level students?

The first research question investigates the quantitative angle while the second research question explores the qualitative angle. The operational definition of frequency refers to the total number of FSs used regardless of their repetition. The operational definition of occurrences in the study refers to the total number of FSs used in each paragraph, with each type counted only once.

METHOD

Participants

The participants were 54 Japanese university students (ages 18-20) majoring in economics, commerce, or management. The students were, at the time of the data collection, all enrolled in the researchers' academic writing classes which was held once a week. Based on the placement test using the TOEIC IP test scores, students were placed in either a lower or higher class. There were 27 students in the lower level (TOEIC IP test scores between 350 and 450 points) and 27 in the higher level (TOEIC IP test scores between 500 and 600 points).

Procedure

The students were asked to write a short paragraph responding to the following prompt:

> There are many reasons for attending a university or college. What is the most important reason to go to a university or college? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

Using a laptop, they were given 60 minutes to type up their response and submit their paragraph via Moodle during the class time. There was no minimum or maximum word requirement. It is important to note here that they were allowed to use their dictionaries (paper, digital, or online) and to look for any information on the internet. However, any use of translation software or generative AI tools were not permitted, nor were they allowed to use any tool to check the accuracy of their language use, aside from the use of dictionaries, before submitting their paragraph. The teacher monitored the class while the students worked on this task.

Formulaic sequences

The detection of FSs was done by the researcher following Nattinger and DeCarrico's (1992) taxonomy of lexical phrases. As mentioned previously, the key point that differentiates lexical phrases from other types of multi-word expressions is that they must realize a pragmatic function. It is also important to note here that they can come in many structures. They can be in the form of: (a) polywords, which operate as single words, allowing no variability or lexical insertions (e.g. *for that matter*); (b) institutionalized expressions, which are sentence-length, invariable, and mostly continuous (e.g. *that's all*); (c) phrasal constraints, which allow variations of lexical and phrase categories, and are mostly continuous (e.g. *__as well as__*; *the__er the__er*); (d) sentence builders, which allow construction of full sentences with fillable slots (e.g. *studies to date have shown that*). For more detailed information on these categories, refer to Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992, pp. 38-47). Table 2 lists some FSs which were found in this study.

Table 2
Examples of FSs

Logical connectors	this is because; on top of that; A as well as B; in addition
Temporal connectors	in the future; in recent years
Exemplifiers	for instance; for example
Summarizers	to sum up; in summary; in short; for these ___ reasons
Evaluator	I think that; in my opinion; this suggests that
Topic marker	we will focus on; there are ___ reasons why

RESULTS

The number of words produced by the lower and higher-level students were first calculated. The mean number of words produced by the lower-level students was about 159 words and those by the higher-level students was about 180 words. This difference was not statistically significant as indicated by a Mann-Whitney U test (p = .075), meaning that the length of the paragraphs was rather similar. This allows for a fair comparison of the usage of FSs appearing in paragraphs written by the students in the two proficiency levels. The descriptive statistics and the results of the Mann-Whitney U test are provided in Table 3.

Table 3
Mean number of words by students

Levels	Mean	SD	95% CI		Mann-Whitney U test			
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	*u*	*p*
Lower (n = 27)	159.04	47.69	140.17	177.9	26.39	639.5	261.5	0.075
Higher (n = 27)	180.48	34.84	166.7	194.26	31.31	845.5		

Frequency and occurrence of FSs

This section presents the use of FSs by students of the two proficiency levels in regard to frequency and occurrence to respond to RQ1: *Is there a difference in the way FSs are used by higher-level and lower-level students in terms of frequency and occurrence?* Erroneous FSs (e.g., *in the other hand*) were excluded from the data.

As for frequency, the mean number of FSs appearing in both the lower- and higher-level groups' paragraphs were not significantly different as indicated by a Mann-Whiteny U test (p = .889), with both groups producing about seven FSs in their paragraph.

As for occurrence, while the students in the higher-level group produced slightly more types of FSs than their counterparts (six types and five types, respectively) this difference was also not significant (p = .235). The results are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4
Frequency and occurrence of FSs

	Levels	Mean	SD	95% CI		Mann-Whitney U test			
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	*u*	*p*
Frequency	Lower (n = 27)	7.04	3.56	5.63	8.44	27.8	750.5	356.5	.889
	Higher (n = 27)	6.63	2.86	5.5	7.76	27.2	734.5		
Occurrence	Lower (n = 27)	5.48	2.39	4.54	6.43	24.98	674.5	296.5	.235
	Higher (n = 27)	6.37	2.8	5.26	7.48	30.02	810.5		

To summarize, the findings showed that neither frequency nor occurrence significantly differed across proficiency levels.

Types of FSs

This section reports the findings from the qualitative analysis to respond to RQ2: *What types of FSs are used by higher-level and lower-level students?*

Indeed, a closer look at the students' paragraphs showed a clear difference in the types of FSs that were used frequently by the students in the two levels. This section will focus on the most obvious differences.

The most frequent FSs arising in the paragraphs by the lower-level students were those expressing their own opinion like *I think* (*that*), *I believe* (*that*), and *I feel* (*that*). While 25 lower-level students used one of these phrases, they were used only by three higher-level students. Rather than expressing personal opinions, the higher-level students referred to other people's ideas by using expressions such as *according* to (n = 8) and *(some) people believe/think* (*that*) (n = 4). Table 5 shows the phrases which appeared in the paragraphs and the number of occurrences for each phrase.

Table 5
FSs to express opinions

	FSs	Higher	Lower
Own opinion	I think/believe/feel (that)	3	25
	in my opinion	0	1
	Total	3	26
Others' opinion	According to…	8	0
	(some) people think/believe (that)	4	0
	Total	12	0

In contrast, a type of FS which was most commonly used by students in the higher-level group was discourse devices which signpost contrasting ideas such as *however*, *on the other hand*, and *in contrast*. While there were 15 occurrences of these phrases in the higher-level students' data, only nine cases were found in the lower-level students' data. Another device which was used by higher-level students but were not used by many lower-level students were FSs which can be used to add information such as in *addition* and *moreover*. This is summarized in Table 6.

Table 6
FSs to express contrasting and additional ideas

	FSs	Higher	Lower
Contrasting ideas	however	6	6
	on the other hand	5	0
	otherwise	2	0
	in contrast	2	0
	even if	2	3
	regardless of	1	0
	Total	15	9
Additional ideas	in addition	7	4
	moreover	3	0
	in addition to noun	2	0
	furthermore	1	0
	not only/just A but also B	1	2
	as well as	0	1
	Total	14	7

The next most frequently used FSs by the lower-level students were topic markers. Sixteen students started their paragraph with either a sentence beginning with *the (most)(important) reason to is that/ to or there are two/three reasons for/why*. In other words, lower-level students have a tendency to repeat the expressions used in the prompt. This was not the case for higher-level students, where only 11 students used the aforementioned formula at the beginning of the paragraph. On the other hand, what many of the higher-level students did that their counterparts did not do was to end their paragraph with a sentence containing some kind of summarizer. The types of summarizers found in the students' paragraphs are listed in Table 7 with its occurrences.

Table 7
FSs to summarize

	FSs	Higher	Lower
Summary or conclusion	in short	8	0
	in conclusion	4	0
	to sum up	3	0
	these examples show that	1	0
	for these (two) reasons	0	2
	in summary	0	1
	Total	16	3

Although, at first glance, the use of FSs does not seem to differ depending on the proficiency levels when looking at just the occurrence and frequency, a closer examination shows that the selection of FSs differ depending on the proficiency level.

DISCUSSION

While the quantitative analysis revealed no significant difference between higher-level students and lower-level students, they used different kinds of FSs. The following were the main differences that were found:

(1) Higher-level students use discourse devices which signal to readers that they are going to add information (e.g., *moreover*) or provide contrasting ideas (e.g., *however*) more frequently than their counterparts.

(2) It was more common for higher-level students to end a paragraph by using a summarizer (e.g., *in sum*).

(3) Almost all lower-level students used stance markers to express their own opinion (i.e., *I think*), whereas this was not the case for higher-level students.

To get a sense of the type of paragraphs written by the students, provided below are paragraphs written by a student in the lower level (Example 1) and one in the higher level (Example 2). The FSs are underlined.

Example 1: Lower-level student

> I think the most important reason to attend college is for finding employment in the future. Because when we look for work in Japan, compared with those who graduated from high school, there are many career choices because the number of companies recruited will surely increase. I don't have a job that I want to do in the future, so it is helpful that there are various choices by attending university. Also, there are jobs such as doctors and pharmacists that we can only graduate from a specific faculty at the university. If you have a job that you want to do in the future, it is important to attend college and specialized knowledge. Even if those who graduated from college and those who graduated from high school work the same job at the same company after finding employment, the salary varies depending on the educational background. Of course, high school graduates can get a job four or six years earlier than college graduates, so they can earn more during that time. But, when we look at the results of the lifelong annual income survey, university graduates can make more money. I think the most important reason to attend college is to find employment in the future.

Example 2: Higher-level student

> Many young people believe that they should go to college because it has positive impacts on their future. The idea will be right. According to a survey in 2019 by Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, people who went to college are more paid than those who did not go. Of course, if you work without going to college, you can make money. However, if you go to college, you will be able to make more money for a lifetime. In this way, considering the amount of money you can earn in a lifetime, it is better to go to college. In addition, people who went to college have a wider range of jobs. Depending on the company, it is a condition for employment to graduate from university. It is because there are many jobs that you cannot do without the knowledge you learned at university. "Studying" in high school and "studying" at university are very different, and the ability required to work is not enough to study until high school. Therefore, in order to be more active in the company, it is necessary to study at university. In short, you should go to college and learn a lot for your future.

As shown in Example 2, the student uses discourse devices to add information (i.e., *in addition*) and present contrasting ideas (i.e., *however*). These two types of discourse devices were ones that were used frequently by students in the higher-level group but not so much by those in the lower-level group. In fact, higher-level students, such as the one in Example 2, used different kinds of discourse devices, such as *in this way* and *it is because*, throughout the paragraph which make the writing come across as more organized and coherent. Such markers are called macro-organizers (Flowerdew & Miller, 1997; Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992) and they can help indicate the overall direction and organization of the information content of the discourse, making it easier for readers to follow. The student in Example 2 begins his paragraph with a topic sentence. He supports his claim by citing a source (i.e., *according to*). As his paragraph is written in an argumentative style, he immediately presents a possible opposing argument by using the expression *of course*. He next rebuts that statement by using the FS *however*. He goes on to provide another reason for going to university or college by using the phrase *in addition*. He supports his second point by giving reasons using the phrase *it is because*. He sums up this point by using the FS *therefore*. Finally, he finishes his paragraph with a summarizer in *short*. The paragraph flows fluently due to the use of macro-organizers.

As mentioned, one difference between the students in the lower level and those in the higher level was the use of stance expressions in the first person such as *I think*, *I feel*, and *I believe that.* These phrases were used by the majority of the lower-level students (25 out of 27 students). Japanese EFL students' tendency to use, and at times even overuse, the phrase *I think* has been reported in studies such as Ishikawa (2008) and Natsukari (2012). In fact, Natsukari found that in her data, *I think* was the most frequent word to collocate with *I* in Japanese essays. While it is not grammatically wrong to use such phrases in writing, it does however risk sounding too subjective and indecisive, as well as repetitive. Natsukari (2012) comments that Japanese students' use of the phrase *I think* may be a reflection of the Japanese people's tendency to avoid expressing opinions too assertively. It may also be the case that the phrase *I think* is used in the same way the Japanese word *omou* (= I think) is used as a softening device (Kamimura & Oi, 1998), which reflects the indecisive manner of writing in the Japanese language and culture. However, it must be noted that only three students in the higher level used *I think* throughout their paragraph. The reason for this may be that the students in the higher level have more experience doing academic writing and understand that when writing an argumentative paragraph/essay, it is at times better to avoid the use of *I think* so as to avoid sounding overly indecisive or personal. Rather, higher level students seem to understand that it is important to express their opinions in relation to other sources and opinions. Thus, the reason why expressions such as *according to and some people believe that* were found in the writings of the higher-level students.

The third apparent difference between the students in the two groups were the way they ended the paragraph. As shown in Example 2, students in the higher level ended the paragraph with a concluding sentence which included a summarizing FS (e.g., *in sum* and *in short*). It may be the case that students at this level are usually aware of the importance of a concluding sentence as an essential component of academic writing in English as they had been taught so in their previous language classes. If it is the case that their counterparts have never been explicitly taught how to use summarizers in the concluding sentence, this is something that needs to be taught to learners even at an early stage of L2 learning, as studies have shown that explicitly teaching discourse devices to EFL students can increase their usage significantly (e.g., AlHassan & Wood, 2015; Boers et al., 2006; McGuire & Larson-Hall, 2017).

To conclude, there are a few points that EFL teachers teaching academic writing should take into account especially when giving instruction to lower proficiency learners. Firstly, to maintain coherence in writing, they should be instructed in a wide range of logical connectors such as those to present additional ideas (e.g., *moreover; furthermore*) and contrasting ideas (e.g., *on the other hand; in contrast*). Secondly, students should be given instruction which helps them develop writing skills and techniques such as paragraph and essay organization. This instruction would include teaching expressions which are useful in ending a paragraph such as *in summary and all in al*. Finally, it would be helpful for

students to learn ways to express others' ideas by using expressions such as *according to or some would say that*, in addition to stating their own ideas and opinions, as well as being able to discuss the relationships between similar or contrasting ideas.

CONCLUSION

While the small sample size in terms of participants makes it hard to come to clear conclusions, the findings of the present study provide insights into how FSs are used by learners at different proficiency levels. There is, however, the need to collect data from a wider range of writers at different proficiency levels. This study found that simple FSs which act as logical connectors (e.g., *in addition*, *to summarize*) were used frequently by higher-level learners. However, if data from much more advanced learners were collected, it might be possible that they would not use such devices as much, and instead other types of FSs would be found. For example, more impersonal stance expressions (e.g., *it is necessary to*) and referential (e.g., *as stated in X*) FSs which did not appear in the data here, would probably be used by advanced EFL learners. Ultimately, while researchers, teachers, and learners in general, appreciate the importance of formulaic or 'chunk'-like language in using and learning language, there remains room for details on exactly which particular kinds of FSs should be focused on in academic writing classes.

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Abstract

As a good testing quality reflects teaching and learning standard of the institution, recently the University Language Center has designed and developed a local test of English proficiency. All undergraduate and graduate students are required to take this English proficiency test prior to their graduation. Utilizing the quantitative research design, this study aims to analyze the quality of this exit examination test in aspects of difficulty index and discrimination power. In the study, 120 test items were purposively collected from 30 English major students and 30 non-English major students and were statistically analyzed. Through item analysis, the statistical results revealed that the overall difficulty index was at medium level (p = 0.40). In addition, the statistical results indicated that the overall discrimination power was at excellent level (r = 0.79). The research results, therefore, indicates that the test items are generally of good quality and suitable for the research's local context. However, some test items should be re-written and revised concerning the issue of dysfunctional distractors affecting the value of difficulty index and discrimination power. The findings of this study can be beneficial for test designers in terms of designing effective English proficiency test and for instructors in terms of providing washback feedback.

Keywords: Quality analysis, Item analysis, Test of English proficiency, Difficulty index, Discrimination power

INTRODUCTION

In education, it can be said that assessment plays a very significant role in providing feedback to all involved sectors. This systematic process generates valuable results on how well the program operates and on quality assurance (Patton, 1987). In classroom settings, one assessment technique that educators tend to use in order to measure their learners' abilities is by administering tests (Hughes, 2003). According to Brown (2003), test is considered as a basic instrument used to measure students' knowledge, abilities or how well they perform particular constructs. Considering test benefits in classrooms, Bachman and Palmer (1996) stated that by administering tests, educators can get useful information for program evaluation on a wide variety of language teaching and learning aspects. These two scholars also mentioned that tests may provide various classroom benefits such as evidence of teaching and learning outcomes as tests directly show improvement progress. As a consequence, tests function as feedback providers, providing the teaching program ways to improve teaching and learning. As for administrative aspect, tests can provide useful information in terms of decision making as the results indicate appropriate teaching and learning materials or activities that those who are in administrative positions can use for making decisions. Additionally, educators can diagnose learners' problems, strengths and weaknesses using test results. From this, they will be able to decide appropriate teaching methods to leaners with multiple intelligences. Also, educators can decide whether the whole class can move to higher level or they should spend extra time for some learners. In terms of grading, test

results can be used in assigning grades for learners, providing them detailed descriptions on how well they perform along the whole course (Bachman & Palmer, 1996).

In the realm of English language teaching, test of English proficiency has become one of the most discussed topics in almost all educational institutions as it reflects the overall quality of the curriculum. In this research context, as it is one of Thailand's top community colleges, the university has set an agenda to implement its own language testing standard, called University Test of English Proficiency to ensure the quality of its English teaching curriculum. Therefore, the Administration Office has mandated that the university Language Center be in charge of leading the effort to design and implement this university test of English proficiency which will then become part of the graduation requirements for all students.

However, designing the university test of English proficiency to comply with international language standard like the Common European Framework of Reference or CEFR is a challenging task. One possible way to ensure that the designing test is in good quality is to conduct test item analysis. Brown and Hudson (2002), stated that by conducting test item analysis, test designers will be able to control the quality of the test as the process results in useful feedback on the remain of test items and the revision of test items. Although this quality assurance is usually implemented worldwide, in this research context, the university test of English proficiency has never been implemented test item analysis. As a result, it is imperative to find out the overall quality of this university test of English proficiency in terms of its difficulty index and discrimination power.

This brings to the formulation of these following research questions:

1. What is the level of difficulty index of the university test of English proficiency?
2. What is the level of discrimination power of the university test of English proficiency?

It is believed that this research study would be beneficial for test designers in terms of designing effective English proficiency test as the research results demonstrate characteristics of test items that are acceptable or should be revised or rejected. In addition, the research results may provide useful information for instructors in terms of providing beneficial washback as the results help guide instructors to decide what teaching remedy should be catered to learners so that they can improve their English proficiencies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Test item analysis

In order to ensure that the developed test is in good quality, the analysis of test item is the required process. This on-going process is considered as one useful method to assure that all test items appear to be well-constructed. By doing so, test designers are able to gain insights into test reconstruction so that the test is developed to meet its highest standard. At this point, test designers can use results from test item analysis to revise or cut-off problematic test items. Therefore, the whole test appears to be in good quality and suitable for all test takers (Boopathiraj & Chellamani, 2013). The justification of conducting this on-going process is to ensure that the developed test aligns with acceptable principles of test development. Additionally, the whole process of test item analysis also benefits test designers in terms of helping them to be more competent in developing tests as they have learned from the analysis of test items. As a consequence, they have more awareness of factors contributing to test quality when they design tests in the future (Maharani & Putro, 2020).

According to Brown (2004), it is suggested that test designers consider at least two aspects of test item analysis; difficulty index and discrimination power. These two aspects are very crucial in predicting the overall quality of the developed test. The process is conducted by analyzing all test items gained from test takers. There are two theoretical statistics involved when conducting test item analysis. Test designers may follow the classical test theory (CTT) or item response theory (IRT) (Haladyna, 2004). For classical test theory, all test items are catered to test takers regardless of their different abilities or performances. Item response theory, on the other hand, test designers take into account of test takers' differences; test takers' abilities or test item difficulty. These two theoretical statistics have both advantages and limitations (Flucher & Davidson, 2007). In this present study, the test item analysis follows classical test theory since this method is more practical and appropriate to the research context.

Difficulty index

As mentioned by Brown (2004) that the difficulty index is considered as one important factor contributing to the overall quality of the developed test, this statistical index is usually the first aspect that test designers pay attention to. As the name difficulty itself implies, this value shows how difficult each test item is (Heaton, 1988). To put it simply, the difficulty index shows that each particular test item is easy, medium or difficult. The results are drawn from the ratio or percentage of test takers who answer the item correctly. It is said that a good test should have various difficulty index consisting of easy, medium and difficult. In real practice, this process helps test designers to manage the design of test items in terms of determining the appropriate portions of easy, medium and difficult items. As proposed by Hughes (2003) a good test should conform to a 1: 2: 1 ratio of easy, medium and difficult items. This can be interpreted that in a test, it should have 25% of easy items, 50% for medium items and 25% of difficult items. In this study, the researchers adopt Heaton's (1988) formula to measure the difficulty index. The results are obtained by taking numbers of test takers from high achiever group and low achiever group who answer an item correctly divided by the total number of all test takers. Generally, the difficulty index value ranges from 0.00 – 1.00. In terms of interpretation, the difficulty index values between 0.00 – 0.30 mean that test items are difficult. Those fall between 0.31 – 0.70 can be interpreted as medium. The test items of 0.71 – 1.00 are easy items.

Discrimination power

Another key indicator that determines the quality of the test is discrimination power. As the word discrimination itself implies, this value discriminates higher achievers from low achievers (Zajda, 2006). In developing test, it is necessary that each test item can classify test takers of various ability levels. The justification lies upon the fact that each test taker has to know his competency level so that he can use the information obtained to manage his own learning afterwards. For test designers, they can use results of discrimination power to plan their teaching to fit with all learners' levels. According to Heaton (1988), the discrimination power indicates whether outperforming test takers tend to do well in each test item or not. Through his viewpoint, good test item possesses the characteristic that high achievers tend to answer it correctly and low achievers tend to answer it incorrectly. Also, this should be in the same vein as the total test score. In this study, the researchers adopt Heaton's (1988) formula of discrimination power. Basically, the discrimination power value ranges from minus value to one. For interpretation, the discrimination index in negative means that test items cannot distinguish high achievers from low achievers. The values between 0.00 – 0.20 mean that the discrimination power is poor. Those fall between 0.21 – 0.40 can be interpreted as satisfactory. The test items of 0.41 – 0.70 are good at distinguishing different test takers. The test items have highest discrimination power if they are in between 0.71 – 1.00. Through analyzing and interpreting the gained scores of the discrimination power, it allows test designers to decide whether each item should be accepted, revised or rejected (Hartati & Yogi, 2019).

METHODOLOGY

This research adopted the quantitative research design as the researchers focused only on the use of numerical data and descriptive statistics. In terms of the research setting, this study was conducted in the university campus, having all students as the research population. However, only 30 English major students and 30 non-English major students were purposively collected as the research participants. As for the research instrument, it was the university test of English proficiency, consisting of 120 test items. This multiple-choice test measured test takers' four English skills; listening, speaking (indirect), reading and writing (indirect). The test was validated by internal experts in English language teaching before using for data collection. For data collection procedures, there were three phases; tests collection, test items analysis and test quality discussion. All the data obtained were analyzed through document analysis using descriptive statistics.

RESULTS

To answer the two research questions, the results of this study are divided into three parts. The first part describes the research results in regards to difficulty index. The discrimination power is elaborated in detail in the second part. In addition, the overall statistical data is presented in the last part for a more well-rounded understanding of the research results.

Table 1
Difficulty index

Index Value	Interpretation	Frequency	Percentage
0.00 – 0.30	Difficult	19	15.83%
0.31 – 0.70	Medium	34	28.33%
0.71 – 1.00	Easy	67	55.83%
Total		120	100%

Through test item analysis, 120 multiple choice items were analyzed for its difficulty level. Generally, the difficulty index value ranges from 0.00 – 1.00. In terms of interpretation, the difficulty index values between 0.00 – 0.30 mean that test items are difficult. Those fall between 0.31 – 0.70 can be interpreted as medium. The test items of 0.71 – 1.00 are easy items. As presented in table one, it appeared that most test items in this university test of English proficiency were easy items (55.83%). There were 34 test items that fell into medium difficulty (28.33%) with 19 difficult test items as the smallest percentage (15.83%).

Table 2
Discrimination power

Index Value	Interpretation	Frequency	Percentage
Negative	Bad	0	0%
0.00 – 0.20	Poor	0	0%
0.21 – 0.40	Satisfactory	1	0.83%
0.41 – 0.70	Good	7	5.83%
0.71 – 1.00	Excellent	112	93.33%
Total		120	100%

In the similar process, 120 multiple choice items were also analyzed for its discrimination power. Basically, the discrimination power value ranges from minus value to one. For interpretation, the discrimination index in negative means that test items cannot distinguish high achievers from low achievers. The values between 0.00 – 0.20 mean that the discrimination power is poor. Those fall

between 0.21 – 0.40 can be interpreted as satisfactory. The test items of 0.41 – 0.70 are good at distinguishing different test takers. The test items have highest discrimination power if they are in between 0.71 – 1.00. As presented in table two, it appeared that most test items in this university test of English proficiency were excellent in separating high achievers from low achievers (93.33%). There were seven test items that fell into goof discrimination power (5.83%) with only one satisfactory test item (0.83%).

Table 3
Overall difficulty index and discrimination power

Difficulty Index (p)	Interpretation	Discrimination Power (r)	Interpretation
0.40	Medium	0.79	Excellent

In general, the difficulty index ranges between 0.00 - 1.00. However, the acceptable difficulty index should be around 0.20 - 0.80. For the discrimination power, it ranges from -1.00 - 1.00, having 0.20 and higher as acceptable rates. In this present study, the overall difficulty index of the test was at 0.40, meaning that it was at medium level or the test difficulty was appropriate to the test takers' abilities. In terms of the discrimination power, it was at 0.79, which could be interpreted as excellent level, meaning the test can discriminate high achievers from low achievers. It could be said that the test was in good quality and suitable for the research local context.

DISCUSSION

The reasons why this university test of English proficiency appeared to be in good quality and suitable for the research context might probably be because of these two aspects, the test takers and the test developers. Regarding the test takers' aspect, as they are inhomogeneous and mixed-abilities, students with high English proficiency tended to do better than those who are at intermediate or below intermediate level. It could also be considered as students' cognitive factor as it related to students' learning content abilities. This directly affected in the discrimination power of the test. This correlates with the statement of Heaton (1988), as he mentions that the discrimination power indicates whether outperforming test takers tend to do well in each test item or not. By stating so, good test item possesses the characteristic that high achievers tend to answer it correctly and low achievers tend to answer it incorrectly.

For test developers' aspect, as the test developers are quite experienced and competent in testing, the test was developed by taking test usefulness, compiling indicators and standard as its top priority. In real practice, all test designers managed the design of test items in terms of determining the appropriate portions of easy, medium and difficult items. As a consequence, the test has both content and construct validity, resulting in its high level of difficulty index and discrimination power (Hughes, 2013). This aligns with the statement of Heaton (1988) stating that a good test should have various difficulty index consisting of easy, medium and difficult. Also, the test should be able to discriminate higher achievers from low achievers. It was also found that some test items should be re-written and revised concerning the issue of dysfunctional distractors. This might have been caused by the fact that there was no pilot or trail session of the first version of the test. Therefore, some test items were poorly-constructed and did not conform to good test item characteristics. In addition, there was no moderating items process that at least two developers examine each item together (Hughes, 2013). These also affected the value of difficulty index and discrimination power as a whole. Regarding these issues, it is suggested that the Language Center organize the pilot testing and employ moderating items process in the next test version.

CONCLUSION

It can be said that a good test directly reflects the quality of teaching and learning of the program or curriculum. One way to ensure that the test is in good quality is through test item analysis of difficulty index and discrimination power. Currently, the university in this research setting has created its own English proficiency test with the aim of assuring the program quality. However, the test has never been investigated for its overall quality. From the test item analysis, it was evident that this university test of English proficiency was in good quality and appropriate for use. The researchers hope that the findings might be beneficial for test developers in terms of developing effective English proficiency test and for instructors and test takers in terms of providing beneficial washback. Additionally, the researchers would like to recommend that educational administrative staff of all institutions organize professional development programs, workshops or trainings for all educators so that they become more competent in test item analysis. Through these trainings, each educator can share knowledge and discuss ways to analyze test items effectively. For future study, it is suggested that researchers study the qualitative side of the phenomenon so that they can triangulate all data for more well-rounded pictures. Moreover, future researchers may investigate other aspects of test usefulness such as authenticity or practicality. It is also interesting to examine the difficulty index and the discrimination power of other kinds of test such as the written test.

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Exploring CEFR-CLIL-Based Learner Autonomy: A Survey Analysis of Digital Technology's Influence on Thai EFL Learners' Receptive Skills

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Abstract

This study explores the Thai EFL context of English language learning, highlighting the expanding role of technology and its impacts on Thai EFL learners' receptive skills, which include reading and listening skills. The purpose of this study is to demonstrate how the use of technology aids or hinders the learning journey, emphasizing the improvement of receptive skills within the CEFR-CLIL framework. The research problem addressed focuses on the autonomous use of technology for English receptive skill development by Thai EFL learners. A quantitative research approach is employed, which includes an extensive questionnaire of 230 Thai EFL learners in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The survey questions are divided into two main sections, with an emphasis on the learners' involvement with technology to improve their receptive skills, as well as their experiences and perceptions of various language learning apps and online tools. This comprehensive study offers a detailed exploration of how technology integration affects learner autonomy and receptive skills development. It further investigates the learners' ability to efficiently utilize these digital tools for optimal language learning experiences and outcomes. The study's findings are expected to be useful in future ELT course development, contributing to the effective integration of technology for increased autonomy in learners and improved English receptive skills in global ELT scenarios. The implications of this research are significant for educators, policymakers, and instructional designers aiming to enhance language learning experiences through technology.

Keywords: CEFR-CLIL Framework, Learner autonomy, Technology integration, Receptive skills, Thai EFL learners

INTRODUCTION

The English Language Teaching (ELT) context of Thailand is presently experiencing a significant transition, moving away from traditional teaching approaches towards modern educational paradigms of the 21st century. This movement signifies an adjustment from previous practices in the domain of ELT in Thailand, which predominantly depended on traditional instructional approaches. Traditionally, these traditional approaches, which are firmly established in the education system, have been acknowledged as inadequate in providing learners with the needed skills for effective communication in a globalized world. Moving towards a more comprehensive educational approach is a significant transformation in the field of language education, highlighting the significance of not only proficiency in a language but also the ability to navigate and understand different cultures.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) was formally released in 2001 (Council of Europe [CoE], 2001) following a thorough preparation process. In 2014, Thailand's English language education system experienced a substantial change by adopting the CEFR. Hence, the introduction of the CEFR in 2014 had played an essential part in pushing the paradigm shift in Thailand's English language education. The implementation of the CEFR, along with the incorporation of

the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) method, as emphasized in Prasongporn's (2009) preliminary investigation, signifies a significant change within the ELT system in Thailand. These techniques advocate for a holistic approach to language instruction, emphasizing language proficiency, cognitive development, and cultural awareness. The method corresponds to the Ministry of Education's (MoE) emphasis on English as an international language (EIL) and the CEFR as a global standard. As a result, the MoE in Thailand has recommended that kindergarten students start learning English in order to enhance their readiness and connect them with the language at a more advanced level (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2014). In short, the MoE has intended to provide learners with the necessary skills to actively engage in a globally connected society.

This study explores the integration of modern educational methodologies with the evolving field of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the context of Thai EFL education. As technology shifts from a supplementary to a central role in educational settings, it significantly enhances learning experiences, especially in developing receptive skills like reading and listening. The research focuses on how technology, within the CEFR-CLIL framework, affects the development of these skills while emphasizing learner autonomy. It investigates technology's influence on autonomously enhancing reading and listening abilities among Thai EFL learners, offering insights to better tailor educational experiences for improved language competency in a digitalized environment. The study is driven by two primary research questions to fulfill these objectives:

RQ 1: How does the use of digital technology influence learner autonomy in English receptive skills among Thai EFL learners?

RQ 2: To what extent do digital platforms impact the enhancement of English receptive skills among Thai EFL learners?

LITERATURE REVIEW

CEFR and CLIL implementation in Thailand

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which was established by the Council of Europe in 2001, is a globally recognized standard for language education that covers instruction, learning, and assessment. The language competency is categorized into six categories in a systematic manner: A1 and A2 for those who are at a beginning level, B1 and B2 for those who are at an intermediate level, and C1 and C2 for those who are at an advanced level. This classification method helps to create a consistent approach to language learning across different educational environments (CoE, 2001). The Thai government recognized the increasing significance of the English language within a globally interconnected paradigm in 2014. As a result, Thailand implemented the CEFR with the intention of improving the standard of English instruction across all educational levels, including primary schools and universities. This development was officially acknowledged by the Ministry of Education of Thailand (MoE, 2014).

The implementation of the CEFR in Thailand's current English language policy has had a substantial influence on English teachers in two primary domains. Firstly, it serves as a framework for developing educational activities, encompassing both teaching and learning components, as well as assessment. Furthermore, it has motivated educators to enhance their proficiency in the English language according to the Global Scale, resulting in increased self-awareness and professional development (Charttrakul & Damnet, 2021). In essence, the CEFR has become indispensable to the country's present English language policy.

The CEFR's introduction to Thailand marked a significant step in aligning local language education standards with international benchmarks. Transitioning to the instructional strategies that support these standards, Coyle et al. (2010) define CLIL as Content and Language Integrated Learning, an instructional technique that combines the teaching of subject matter and language skills. CLIL refers to a variety of educational methods where a language other than the learner's native language is utilized as the primary means of instruction for content-based learning. The 4Cs Framework, developed by Coyle et al. in 2010, aims to combine four essential contextual components of CLIL into a comprehensive framework. The 4Cs, namely Content, Communication, Cognition, and Culture, constitute the fundamental components that underpin the CLIL methodology. Implementing the 4Cs framework within the CLIL approach in Thailand is challenging due to the necessity of extensive preparation time and the lack of thorough training for Thai English educators. In order to achieve the strategic goals set for 2025, there is an urgent need to make significant improvements in the training and continuous education of teachers, especially focusing on the challenges faced by both educators and students who are non-native English speakers (Charunsri, 2020; Suwannoppharat & Chinokul, 2015).

It is crucial to have a thorough understanding of the main objectives of CLIL. According to Marsh and Wolff (2007), CLIL aspires to serve two basic purposes: teaching a foreign language and teaching a specific subject. Practically, teachers have the freedom to implement both soft CLIL and hard CLIL, also referred to as weak CLIL and strong CLIL, to different degrees in the classroom to assist students in gaining both language and subject knowledge (Ball et al., 2015). As illustrated in Table 1, from soft CLIL to hard CLIL, it incorporates a diverse range of techniques aimed at effectively combining language instruction with topic or subject matter. In Thailand, where language instruction is essential for global integration and communication, the CLIL model could boost students' learning and critical thinking. Namsaeng (2022) claimed that this methodology encourages autonomous English learning and knowledge construction, making it popular.

Table 1
The three possible CLIL models and the continuum of CLIL models
(Adapted from Bentley (2010) and Ball (2009))

Soft CLIL	◄———		———►	**Hard CLIL**
Type of CLIL	Language-led		Subject-led (modular)	Subject-led (partial immersion)
Time	45 minutes once a week		15 hours during one term	about 50% of the curriculum
Context	Some curricular topics are taught during a language course.		Schools or teachers choose parts of the subject syllabus which they teach in the target language.	About half of the curriculum is taught in the target language. The content can reflect what is taught in the L1 curriculum or can be new content.
Language Driven/ Weak CLIL/ Less Exposure	◄———		———	**Content Driven/ Strong CLIL/ More Exposure**
Language classes with greater use of content	Language classes based on thematic units	Subject Courses	Partial Immersion	Total Immersion

Contextualizing CEFR-CLIL-based learner autonomy

CEFR-CLIL-Based Learner Autonomy refers to the integration of the CEFR and CLIL frameworks to promote learner autonomy, specifically focusing on how these frameworks can be utilized to enhance the self-directed learning capabilities of Thai EFL learners. Learner autonomy in this context means the

ability of learners to take charge of their own learning processes, facilitated by a structured framework (CEFR) and an integrated learning approach (CLIL). The CEFR provides a clear pathway for language proficiency goals, while CLIL offers a methodology for achieving these goals through integrated instruction of content and language.

The integration of CEFR, CLIL, TBLT (Task-Based Language Teaching), and LOA (Learning Oriented Assessment) forms a comprehensive approach to language education. This approach involves four pedagogical phases: 'Framing,' 'Teaching,' 'Learning,' and 'Assessing,' ensuring a cyclical process for continuous improvement. CEFR ensures standardized language proficiency, TBLT emphasizes real-world application, CLIL integrates academic content with language learning, and LOA promotes individualized assessment for meaningful feedback. These methodologies collectively emphasize learner autonomy. CLIL encourages content exploration and communication, TBLT focuses on real-world language use, and CEFR promotes self-assessment and a sense of accomplishment. LOA supports personalized instruction, enhancing learner autonomy (Kunschak, 2020).

Integrating these frameworks promotes autonomous learning, tailored to the local context to ensure consistency across educational levels. Specifically, the CEFR-CLIL framework helps enhance learner autonomy in Thai EFL learners by providing a structured approach to language proficiency and promoting active engagement in the learning process. This approach encourages students to take control of their learning journey, engage deeply with the material, and develop critical thinking skills. Furthermore, technology harmonizes these strategies by facilitating access to diverse learning materials and providing platforms for real-world practice and personalized feedback. Consequently, the integration of the CEFR-CLIL framework significantly enhances learner autonomy in English language learning among Thai EFL learners.

Learner autonomy integrating digital technology in language education

To effectively enhance the learning process, integrating modern technology into English instruction is crucial. Leveraging technological tools enables English teachers to foster learner autonomy in online classrooms, promoting active learning and instilling a sense of responsibility in students (Martha et al., 2021). This approach not only deepens language comprehension but also boosts student motivation, leading to a more engaging and dynamic educational experience. The effective use of technology in English instruction plays a direct role in enhancing learner autonomy, a concept that refers to learners' ability to manage their own learning process. This includes their readiness and capability to operate both autonomously and collaboratively, as well as their skill in transforming environmental challenges into opportunities (Benson, 2011; Dam, 2003; Holec, 1981). Emphasizing learners' control over their educational path, this approach facilitates independent action, maximizing their learning potential and contributing to a holistic development of language skills.

The relationship between technology and autonomy is collaborative and mutually beneficial, with autonomy influencing learners' perspectives and use of technology in learning a language, while technology, in turn, impacts the practice and development of learner autonomy. Technology improves the accessibility of the language learning environments and provides learners with the independence and alternatives they require for autonomous learning (Hamilton, 2013).

In Thailand, the integration of technology in language education is increasingly seen as a means to enhance learner autonomy. Thai educators are leveraging online tools and platforms like Facebook to provide students with greater control over their English language learning, as highlighted in the research of Inpeng and Nomnian (2022). This approach has proven beneficial even during global challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, Jitpaisarnwattana (2018) found that digital storytelling in a technological environment bolsters autonomy in language learning, blending individual and collaborative learning to boost motivation and language proficiency. Additionally, Howlett and

Waemusa (2019) discovered that high school EFL students in Southern Thailand view mobile devices as tools that enhance learning satisfaction, readying them for autonomous learning with 21st-century skills. Thus, technology plays a crucial role in advancing language teaching in Thailand, going beyond simply modernization. It represents a big step towards promoting autonomy in education in the digital age. In short, integrating digital technology within the CEFR-CLIL framework significantly enhances learner autonomy for Thai EFL learners. This combined approach provides a structured and engaging pathway to language proficiency, fostering independent learning and critical thinking skills crucial for the digital age.

METHODOLOGY

Research aims

The primary goal of this study is to investigate the impact of digital technology on the development of English receptive skills among Thai EFL learners to promote autonomy. Specifically, the objective of this investigation is to: (1) evaluate the impact of digital technology usage on Thai EFL learners' autonomy in acquiring English listening and reading skills. This includes evaluating the relationship between autonomous learning behaviors and attitudes toward English language education and autonomous use of digital platforms; (2) assess the extent to which different digital platforms facilitate Thai EFL learners in improving their English receptive skills. This research seeks to assess the effectiveness of these platforms in enhancing the reading and listening skills of students, as well as determine which digital resources are considered most advantageous.

Participants

This study was conducted in Chiang Mai, Thailand, an area selected for its accessibility to the researcher and the convenience of participant recruitment. Utilizing a convenience sampling method, the research engaged 230 Thai EFL learners from a variety of educational settings. These participants encompassed a broad spectrum of English language proficiency and had diverse experiences with English language learning specific to the Chiang Mai region. The selection process was informed by the Yamane formula to ensure a representative sample that captures a wide array of perspectives and educational contexts.

Instruments

The questionnaire, as the main tool of this research, was designed to explore Thai EFL learners' perceptions and experiences on how digital technology affects their ability to learn English autonomously. It was divided into three parts: the first gathered basic information about the respondents, the second assessed how digital technology is used in enhancing English receptive skills (reading and listening), and the third section sought opinions on the effectiveness and enjoyment of various digital tools in improving these receptive skills. To ensure the questionnaire's reliability and validity, a pilot survey was conducted with 30 Thai EFL learners. It achieved a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of $\alpha = .778$, indicating good internal consistency. The questionnaire was also rigorously reviewed and refined with feedback from two language education experts and two experienced EFL instructors, ensuring it met the standards for a valid and reliable research tool.

Note: George and Mallery (2003) provide the following rules of thumb: $\alpha > 0.9$ (Excellent), > 0.8 (Good), > 0.7 (Acceptable), > 0.6 (Questionable), > 0.5 (Poor), and < 0.5 (Unacceptable).

Data Collection

Microsoft Forms were chosen for their effectiveness in preparing, creating, and collecting participant responses to guarantee efficient data gathering during the COVID-19 pandemic challenges. In addition,

a QR code was distributed to facilitate the process and allow simple access to the questionnaire. This method simplified the data collection process. The data was collected in September 2023, allowing for an efficient and thorough gathering of data approach in a short time frame. Furthermore, the highest levels of confidentiality and data privacy were maintained throughout the study, establishing trust in participants, and protecting their sensitive information.

Data analysis

Following the data collection, the survey results were subjected to quantitative analysis. The primary emphasis was placed on the patterns that were observed regarding the closed-ended questions. In conducting this study, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was employed to systematically evaluate the data. The statistical methodologies that were employed encompassed the following:

1. The Cronbach alpha coefficient was used to evaluate the reliability of the questionnaire.
2. The respondents' background information was classified as frequency (f) and percentage (%).
3. The 5-point Likert scale was applied to evaluate the level of agreement among students' perceptions of digital technology influencing learner autonomy in English receptive skills. Descriptive statistics, including the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD), were implemented to determine the average level of agreement.

Scale	Mean Range	Level of Agreement
5	4.50 – 5.00	Strongly Agree
4	3.50 – 4.49	Agree
3	2.50 – 3.49	Neutral
2	1.50 – 2.49	Disagree
1	1.00 – 1.49	Strongly Disagree

4. The utilization and perception of digital technology in English receptive skills are represented using a bar chart in the presented visual representation. Each section within the chart corresponds to a certain technology the students employ. The percentages (%) represented by the bars indicate the proportional adoption of each technology, collectively summing up to 100% to provide a comprehensive comprehension of technology in English receptive skills.

RESULTS

Based on the analysis of the answers from the questionnaires, the results were as follows:

Table 2
General information about respondents (N = 230)

Demographic Variables		Frequency (f)	%
Gender	Male	103	44.78
	Female	101	43.91
	LGBTQI+	21	9.13
	Prefer Not to Answer	5	2.17
Age	16 years	1	0.43
	17 years	159	69.13
	18 years	70	30.43
English Language Learning Duration	6-10 years	50	21.74
	11-15 years	126	54.78
	16 years and over	54	23.48

Demographic Variables		Frequency (f)	%
The Use of Technology in Language Learning	Always	101	43.91
	Often	89	38.70
	Sometimes	37	16.09
	Rarely	3	1.30
	Never	0	0.00
Using Smartphones and Tablets for Language Learning	Yes	227	98.70
	No	3	1.30
English Proficiency Levels	Beginner (A1-A2)	42	18.26
	Intermediate (B1-B2)	164	71.30
	Advanced (C1-C2)	24	10.43

Table 2 shows the demographics and language learning characteristics of 230 respondents. With 44.78% male and 43.91% female participants, the gender distribution is nearly even, with a small percentage identifying as LGBTQI+ (9.13%) or deciding not to answer (2.17%). The vast majority of respondents (69.13%) are 17 years old, with 30.43% being 18 years old and one individual (0.43%) being 16 years old. In terms of English language learning duration, the majority (54.78%) have been studying for 11-15 years, followed by 6-10 years (21.74%), and 16 years or more (23.48%). Technology is widely used in language learning, with 43.91% always using it and 38.70% using it often. The great majority (98.70%) use smartphones and tablets for language learning. Finally, the majority of respondents (71.30%) have intermediate English proficiency, with fewer at beginner (18.26%) and advanced (10.43%).

Results related to the first research question:

Table 3
Autonomy in English language learning with technology in reading skills (n = 230)

Items	Statements	Mean	SD	Level of Agreement
1	To improve my language skills, I choose topics that interest me when studying English reading materials, including online articles and resources.	4.22	.774	Agree
2	When I do English reading assignments, I set practical objectives and use digital tools like online dictionaries or reading apps to track how well I'm doing and how much I understand.	4.13	.808	Agree
3	*It is difficult for me to successfully use online tools such as language learning apps or websites to improve my understanding in my English reading classes.*	2.19	1.370	Disagree
4	I summarize what I've read in English lessons using digital note-taking tools, such as note-taking apps on my smartphone or tablet, to help me remember and learn better.	4.01	.960	Agree
5	I use technology, such as language learning apps and online resources, to find extra reading materials that deepen my understanding in my English class.	4.11	.902	Agree

The analysis of data from Table 3, which involved a sample of 230 students, provides valuable insights into how technology fosters autonomy in English reading skills. The results demonstrate strong student agreement in several key areas: Students reported a robust capability to select topics of interest for language studies using online resources (Mean = 4.22). Additionally, the practice of setting specific objectives and employing digital tools like online dictionaries or reading apps to track progress in reading assignments was highly rated (Mean = 4.13). Digital note-taking tools used for summarizing

English classes were also well-received (Mean = 4.01), as was the use of technology to find supplementary reading materials that enhance English comprehension (Mean = 4.11). Conversely, the challenges associated with using online tools such as language learning apps or websites were perceived as minimal, evidenced by a lower mean score (Mean = 2.19), suggesting that students generally find these technologies easy to use.

It is evident that digital technology plays a crucial role in enhancing student autonomy in the development of English reading skills. A variety of positive scores across multiple important domains indicates that students are actively involved and possess an optimistic attitude toward utilizing digital technologies for language acquisition. The ease of using digital technology, as indicated by the low score for the negatively worded statement, reinforces the notion that technology is an accessible and effective aid in the learning process. These findings are significant within the context of the CEFR-CLIL framework, as the integration of digital technology supports the improvement of reading skills by providing engaging and interactive materials aligned with CEFR standards and CLIL methodologies. The data indicates that students use technology to access a wide range of reading materials, enhancing their comprehension and fluency, and promoting a more effective approach to language learning. Collectively, these results underscore a trend towards a technology-integrated approach in language education, highlighting the potential for digital tools within the CEFR-CLIL framework to enhance learner autonomy and improve reading proficiency in a structured and meaningful way.

Table 4
Autonomy in English language learning with technology in listening skills (n = 230)

Items	Statements	Mean	SD	Level of Agreement
1	When engaging with English listening materials, I select content from various online sources that align with my interests to enhance my language skills.	4.28	.755	Agree
2	I use technology to access various audio resources, set specific goals for my English listening exercises, and this boosts my confidence and learning outcomes.	4.18	.882	Agree
3	*I have trouble using online audio resources and technology to improve my English listening skills for my English studies.*	2.12	1.348	Disagree
4	Outside class, I enjoy listening to English conversations and stories through online resources.	4.01	1.002	Agree
5	I look for different audio resources, like online podcasts and language learning apps, to improve my English listening skills.	3.92	1.003	Agree

The data from Table 4 provides valuable insights into the role of technology in enhancing English listening skills among students. The results indicate strong student agreement on several key aspects: the highest score was recorded for the ability to select relevant content from various online sources to enhance language skills (Mean = 4.28), followed by the effective use of technology to access a variety of audio resources and set specific learning goals (Mean = 4.18). Students also reported high levels of enjoyment from listening to English conversations and stories through online resources (Mean = 4.01). Additionally, they actively seek out different audio tools, like podcasts and language apps, to improve their listening skills (Mean = 3.92). In contrast, the concern about challenges using online audio resources was minimal, as indicated by a lower mean score (Mean = 2.12), suggesting that students generally find these technologies user-friendly and helpful.

It is evident that technology plays a crucial role in enhancing learner autonomy in the field of English language education, particularly in listening skills. Within the CEFR-CLIL framework, the integration of

digital technology supports the improvement of listening skills by providing engaging and interactive audio materials aligned with CEFR standards and CLIL methodologies. The positive responses across four key areas highlight the students' proactive engagement and comfort with using technology as a tool for language learning. The ease of using digital resources, as indicated by the low score for the negative statement, further supports the idea that technology is not a barrier but a facilitator in the learning process. These findings suggest that incorporating digital platforms within the CEFR-CLIL framework enhances learner autonomy and improves listening proficiency in a structured and meaningful way, promoting a more interactive, self-directed, and effective language learning experience.

Results related to the second research question

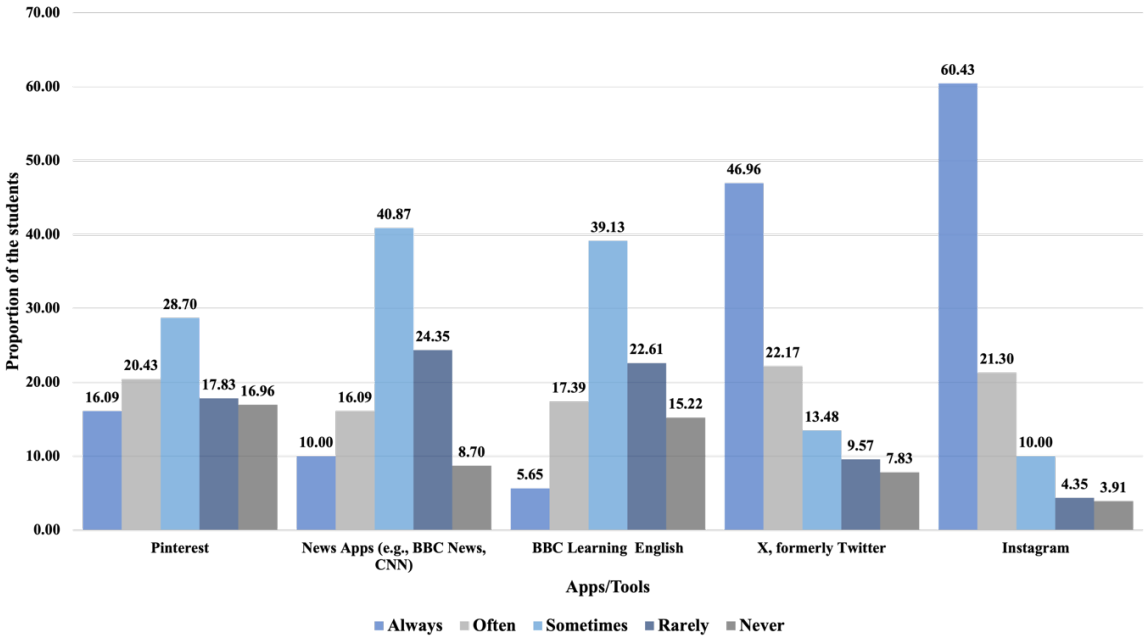

Figure 1 Usage frequency of apps/tools for enhancing English reading proficiency

Figure 1 provides a comparative analysis of the frequency with which various apps and tools are used to enhance English reading proficiency among learners. Instagram is the most popular, with 60.43% of users regularly engaging with it for reading, highlighting its effectiveness in language learning. X, formerly Twitter, is also frequently used, with 46.96% of participants indicating regular use, suggesting social media platforms are favored for their interactive and dynamic nature in developing reading skills. Pinterest displays a more variable usage pattern; the largest group of users (28.70%) engages with it sometimes, while 20.43% use it often and 17.83% rarely, showing less consistent engagement. News apps like BBC News and CNN are mostly used sometimes by 40.87% of users, with 24.35% using them rarely, which may reflect a preference for in-depth material or current affairs. BBC Learning English sees a fairly even distribution of usage but is primarily used intermittently (39.13%), likely for structured learning sessions rather than continuous use. Overall, the data indicates a strong preference for accessible social media tools like Instagram and X for regular reading activities, while platforms like Pinterest and specific news and learning apps are used more selectively for targeted educational purposes or to diversify reading sources.

The analysis of Figure 1 reveals a clear preference among learners for social media platforms, with Instagram and X being the most regularly used tools for improving English reading skills. These platforms' real-time, interactive content may explain their popularity. Conversely, Pinterest, news apps, and BBC Learning English are used less frequently, indicating their role as complementary resources for specific learning objectives or diversification of reading material. This pattern emphasizes

the shift towards integrating social media into language learning strategies to engage learners effectively while maintaining the educational value of traditional reading platforms. Within the context of the CEFR-CLIL framework, these findings highlight the potential of using diverse digital tools to support reading proficiency. Social media platforms, with their engaging and accessible content, align with the CLIL approach of integrating content and language learning. This approach fosters learner autonomy by allowing learners to choose platforms and materials that suit their interests and learning styles, promoting a more self-directed and effective learning experience.

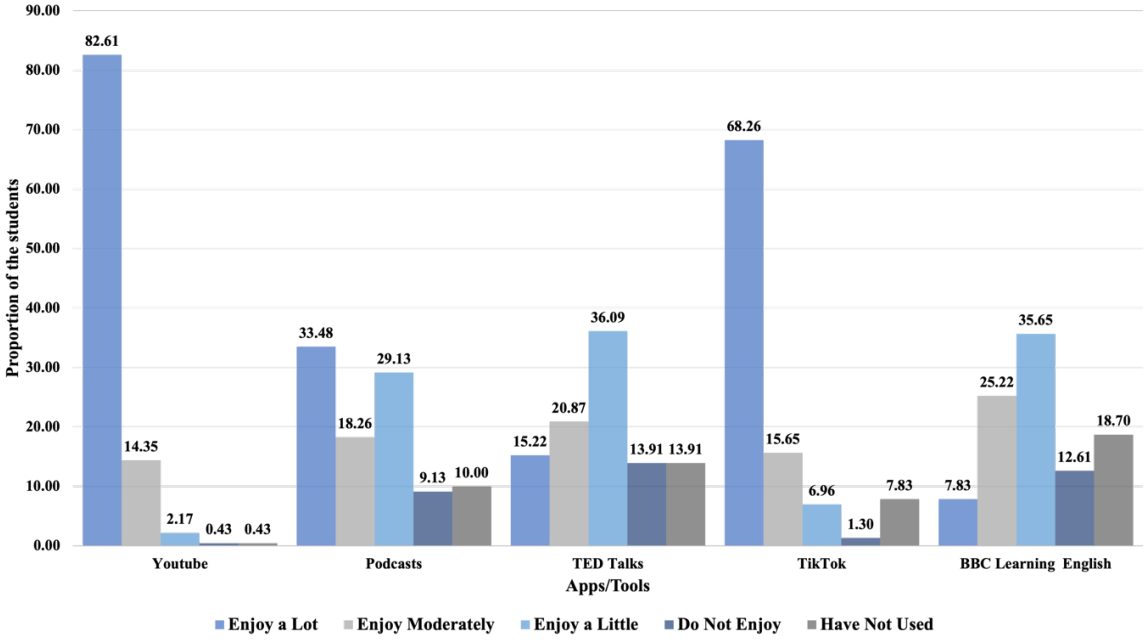

Figure 2 Enjoyment level using the apps/tools for English listening enhancement

Figure 2 illustrates the enjoyment levels associated with different digital platforms used by learners to enhance their English listening skills. YouTube is the most utilized platform, with 82.61% of users frequently engaging with it, highlighting its prominence and effectiveness for auditory language learning. TikTok is also heavily used, with 68.26% of its users regularly accessing it for listening practice, reflecting a strong preference for social media platforms offering interactive and concise content. Podcasts, with 33.48% of participants valuing their content, are appreciated for their depth and focus on specific subjects. TED Talks, known for informative content, have mixed engagement, with 36.09% of users finding them somewhat enjoyable, suggesting a varied preference that depends on the content or style of presentation. BBC Learning English, while a dedicated resource, sees less frequent use compared to YouTube and TikTok, indicating its more occasional, targeted use.

The data from Figure 2 highlights the diverse preferences of English language learners in utilizing digital platforms for listening skills development. The pronounced preference for YouTube and TikTok points to the effectiveness of engaging, diverse, and accessible content in attracting users for regular listening activities. Conversely, podcasts, TED Talks, and BBC Learning English serve as supplementary resources, preferred for their educational value and targeted listening opportunities. This indicates a broader trend of blending entertainment with education in language learning strategies to maximize learner engagement and skill development. These findings underscore the potential of integrating digital platforms within the CEFR-CLIL framework to enhance learner autonomy. By using diverse, engaging, and accessible materials, learners can support both language proficiency and content mastery, aligning with the goals of the CEFR-CLIL approach. This integration fosters a more self-directed, effective, and enjoyable language learning experience for learners.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal a significant transformation in English language education in Thailand, driven by the integration of digital technology and the adoption of the CEFR and CLIL frameworks. Digital technology, particularly in developing receptive skills, has shown a marked influence on learner autonomy among Thai EFL learners. As shown by the high engagement with digital tools for reading and listening, this shift towards autonomous learning aligns with the broader educational trends noted by Martha et al. (2021), who emphasize the importance of technology in promoting active learning and fostering learner autonomy in online classrooms. Additionally, technology assists teachers in identifying appropriate teaching methods and enables students to select specific topics of interest, further personalizing and enhancing the learning experience.

Learner autonomy, as conceptualized by Benson (2011), Dam (2003), and Holec (1981), encompasses the ability to manage one's own learning process, which has been significantly enhanced by digital platforms. The positive response towards using technology for selecting reading materials and engaging with interactive platforms like YouTube and TikTok for listening skills reflects a proactive approach in utilizing technology for educational enhancement. This trend is further supported by the research of Inpeng and Nomnian (2022), and Jitpaisarnwattana (2018), who highlight the effectiveness of online tools in fostering autonomous learning in Thai EFL contexts.

The implementation of the CEFR in Thailand, as discussed by Charttrakul and Damnet (2021), has brought about a substantial change in the English language education policy, focusing on enhancing language proficiency and professional development of educators. Similarly, the adoption of the CLIL approach, with its emphasis on the 4Cs Framework (Content, Communication, Cognition, Culture), as outlined by Coyle et al. (2010), presents both challenges and opportunities in the Thai context. The need for extensive training and adaptation, particularly for non-native English-speaking educators and students, is crucial, as indicated by Charunsri (2020), and Suwannoppharat and Chinokul (2015).

The integration of digital technology within the CEFR-CLIL framework specifically aids the improvement of receptive skills—reading and listening—by providing diverse and interactive materials that promote learner engagement and autonomy. This framework supports a structured yet flexible learning environment, where technology facilitates the practical application of CEFR standards and CLIL methodologies. As learners engage with digital tools, they are able to practice and refine their receptive skills autonomously, aligning with the structured goals of CEFR and the immersive, content-focused approach of CLIL. However, the reliance on technology also presents challenges, such as ensuring equal access to digital resources and the need for teacher training in effectively integrating these tools within the CEFR-CLIL framework.

All in all, the integration of digital technology in English language education, combined with the strategic implementation of the CEFR and CLIL, is reshaping the landscape of language learning in Thailand. This transformation not only aligns with international standards but also enhances learner autonomy, indicating a significant step towards a more dynamic, technology-driven, and autonomous language learning environment. The enthusiastic adoption of digital tools and the challenges presented by the new frameworks highlight the need for continuous adaptation and development in language teaching methodologies in Thailand.

IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Relying on widely used digital tools for enhancing reading and listening competencies, this research provides crucial insights into the impact of technology on English language learning among Thai EFL students. Nevertheless, it is not without limitations. The primary focus of the research is on widely

recognized technological platforms, which may result in the neglect of less popular yet impactful tools that certain learners employ. The comprehensiveness of the findings may be affected due to this limitation. Additionally, insufficient analysis is also given to the viewpoints of educators, who possess a crucial position within the EFL learning context. An alternative perspective on the impact of digital tools in the classroom could be drawn from their knowledge of the technologies' functionality and accessibility. In addition, speaking and writing are overlooked over the importance of reading and listening competencies. A comprehensive understanding of the role that technology plays in language acquisition necessitates an awareness of how it facilitates these specific capabilities. Further research should consider a wider range of digital tools, teacher perspectives, and the effects on writing and speaking competencies to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the role of technology in EFL learning in Thailand.

CONCLUSION

This study thoroughly investigates the influence of technology integration on learner autonomy and the development of receptive skills in the field of ELT. The findings emphasize the effective implementation of technological tools by learners to enhance their language learning experiences, resulting in increased autonomy and English competency in receptive skills. This research is highly relevant for the design of future ELT courses, as it highlights the vital role of technology in promoting autonomous learning and improving English listening and reading skills in a global context. For educators, policymakers, and instructional designers determined on utilizing technology in language education, the implications of this study are extensive. The insight acquired offers significant recommendations for incorporating technology in a way that not only enhances English language competence but also fosters learner autonomy. Furthermore, integrating the CEFR-CLIL framework has proven to be instrumental in structuring these technological interventions, ensuring that learners achieve language proficiency while engaging deeply with content. This dual focus not only supports the development of receptive skills but also aligns with global educational standards, making it easier for learners to transition between different educational contexts. Ultimately, this study contributes to the design of ELT courses that are effective, engaging, and adaptable to the evolving needs of learners in an increasingly digital world. By incorporating the CEFR-CLIL framework alongside technological tools, educators can create learning environments that are not only conducive to language acquisition but also foster a high degree of learner autonomy, preparing students for future academic and professional success.

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Investigating Crosslinguistic Transfers and Writing Acquisition Strategies Among Thai EFL Learners

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Abstract

Crosslinguistic transfers are commonly found among a language repertoire of foreign/second language learners in the process of language acquisition and language production. In the context of Thai English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, where Thai serves as a source language and English as a target language, the transfer phenomena highlight learners' intriguing aspects of linguistic competence and performance. This study aimed to 1) investigate the characteristics of crosslinguistic transfer of Thai EFL learners and 2) explore the transfer strategies employed by Thai EFL learners in the context of writing acquisition, particularly in the production of sentences derived from paragraph writing tasks. The research methodology in this study employed a text analysis based on qualitative research principles, then consolidated by a semi-structured interview of learners for their writing strategies. The findings reveal that lexical, syntactic, phonological and word choice transfers are the prevalent crosslinguistic units commonly found in writing of Thai EFL learners, and the strategy these learners utilized in the process of writing acquisition primarily involves the first language transfer (L1 transfer) – where "copying and restructuring" of mother tongue predominates learner's cognitive intuition in the writing process.

Keywords: Crosslinguistic influence, Language transfer, Cross-language studies, Writing acquisition, EFL writing

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In the context of Thailand's education system, English is designated as a second language (L2) of learners, and it is incorporated into the curriculum for all students from an early stage of their education. Despite a long journey of English instruction, ranging from kindergarten through tertiary education, it is anticipated that students will achieve a high level of English proficiency by the time they complete their degrees. However, this expectation often surpasses the bound of reality. According to a scientific report conducted by Education First (Education First, 2023), Thai EFL learners were ranked at the lowest level (very low proficiency) in terms of overall English language performance on a global scale. This was attributed to the fact that native Thai language, their first language (L1), has been mainly used as a medium of instruction in class among Thai teachers of English in general Thai schools (Noom-ura, 2013). In addition, the limited opportunity for students to engage in English-speaking environment and the scarcity of native/foreign teachers were also significant factors contributing to such issue.

Considering the details of language proficiency among Thai EFL learners, they were generally struggling and have encountered challenges in writing (Wongsothorn et al., 2002). Since EFL writing is the process of transforming writer's ideas into another language, writing in non-native language seems to be the challenging area for both L2 learners and teachers. Once learners express their written form, their cognitive inputs are all processed in their native language (NL) or L1. They engage in their target language (TL)'s productivity with a unique language structure and usage. Nevertheless, those awkward linguistic contexts are legible and comprehensible in communication.

Based on the claim of Lado (1957), learner's L1 are likely to trigger errors or to face learning difficulty in the TL (English, in this study). With its formality-led orientation of writing, learners are inclined to produce linguistic errors and mistakes since spoken language may play a crucial role in this formal style of communication. In addition, when TL is linguistically distinct to learners' NL, e.g. varied grammatical rules and lexical structure, this might cause some unique linguistic repertoires in learner's language productivity. According to Lado's statement, Thai EFL learners are prone to produce such cross-language structures, to some extents, especially in writing.

Most of previous studies on Thai EFL writing primarily employed the error analysis (EA) approach as a unit of analysis. Some of those recent studies on EA approach, for instance, were from these EFL scholars. According to Kiatkheeree (2024), she indicated that errors found among Thai EFL writing were word choice, verb tense, preposition and pronoun, which could infer to grammatical errors. Arihasta (2023) investigated the writing of Thai EFL learners, primarily those of non-English major. She found that while content, organization and mechanics were underdeveloped, there were notable errors in grammar and vocabulary. Both studies also pointed out that most learners lack understanding of the writing process.

Moreover, Chuenchaichon (2022) found similar errors in writing from non-English major learners with a discussion on writing coherence. He further asserted that problems of L1 interference and literal translation in EFL writing should be taken into account when teaching writing. Phoocharoensil et al. (2016) have made a significant contribution in the field of EFL writing by providing a comprehensive analysis and detailed discussion of grammatical and lexical errors among Thai EFL learners. The research pinpointed that the principal causes of these errors were from L1 interference leading to confusion on TL. Unfortunately, none of these literatures explored the input process of EFL learners, particularly in the cognitive system.

Cook (2016) further pointed out that contemporary language learners, referred to as multi-competence learners, were often exposed to multiple languages simultaneously. Their language uses tended to transfer across languages, indicating an interrelationship between their linguistic competences. Consequently, the surface structure analyses, such as EA, are insufficient to investigate their language phenomena.

In the same vein, Ringbom (2016) highlighted the fact that there has not been sufficient attention given to a comprehension in the analysis of learner's language output, as most EA studies focused on language production. According to Ringbom (2016), comprehension was the pre-requisite of learning, and thus, the emphasis should not be relied only on language accuracy and precision. Ringbom (2016) and Cook (2016) contended that L2 comprehension among language users and learners involved numerous instances of transfer, notably when crosslinguistic similarities and differences between two languages were examined and familiar patterns were exploited. Both scholars' arguments proclaimed that learners' language use should be viewed from a broader perspective, not only grammar but also a multifaceted cognitive system.

According to theoretical developments, approaches on crosslinguistic influences or transfers should align with previous studies, such as EA, for a broad range of cognitive analysis. Recent studies on EFL writing should consider second language acquisition (SLA) from the perspectives of learners and users, rather than assuming a native speaker's point of reference. This shift in framework of analysis could reveal some more intriguing results and findings on EFL writing in Thai context.

This paper sought to apply the approach of crosslinguistic influence/transfer into the analysis of Thai EFL writing context. Since the application of crosslinguistic transfer in the study of Thai EFL writing has been practically understudied, and there were little research focused on transfer phenomena, this study was designed to examine EFL writing with a broader perspective. This pioneering work aimed to

identify the characteristics of crosslinguistic transfer from paragraph writing tasks by EFL learners and present the results in learners' perspectives. Additionally, it aimed to study what transfer strategies these EFL learners adopted to produce their language production in writing. The ultimate goal of the study were to find out a potential pedagogical implication for Thai EFL writing class, effective teaching techniques, and methods for providing constructive feedback to learners. Moreover, it was anticipated that this study would contribute to the field of L2 writing with a broader perspective.

Research objectives

The objectives of this study were twofold, which included the following aims:

1. To investigate the crosslinguistic transfers derived from EFL learners' paragraph writing and,
2. To study transfer strategies in the process of writing acquisition

REVIEW OF RELATED THEORITICAL BACKGROUND

Development of theoretical background

One of the most challenging areas in foreign and second language acquisition is the study of transfer, particularly in writing. For decades, the arena of L2 writing has been examined through the framework of contrastive analysis (CA), error analysis (EA) and interlanguage (IL) (Mahmood & Murad, 2018; Odlin, 1989, 2016, 2022; Perkins & Zhang, 2024).

CA has been defined as a way of comparing languages in order to determine potential errors in a second language learning situation (Mahmood & Murad, 2018). It posited that transfer from the learner's L1 could result in errors, with a greater disparity between L2 and L1 increasing the probability of errors and learning difficulties (Odlin, 1989, 2016). However, by the 1970s, L2 researchers began to observe that CA lacked predictive validity. This realization has led to the decline in the popularity of CA in second language studies. To date, CA is still one of the core ideas in the L2 study.

EA has evolved from methods derived from CA. It served as a model to assess and account for the errors of L2 learners by identifying their causes and applying linguistic principles and procedures for evaluation and correction. EA was particularly beneficial to language teachers, as it allowed them to monitor the proficiency levels their students have achieved in L2 learning. However, according to Mahmood and Murad (2018), Cook (2016), and Ringbom (2016), EA has lost popularity due to several drawbacks, such as its inconsistent focus solely on language accuracy and its limited scope in addressing learners' language comprehension. Additionally, EA has been criticized for its inability to detect learners' cognitive strategies and for failing to provide a comprehensive account of L2 learners' achievements.

IL, proposed as a theory by Selinker (1972), has benefited from both CA and EA. IL was viewed as a distinct linguistic system, different from both the learner's NL and the TL being learned. The two languages were connected through interlingual identifications primarily perceived by the learners. According to Selinker, the consideration of the cognitive dimension in the process of L2 acquisition was a significant merit of IL, enhancing its practicality in the study of transfer.

These three approaches have undergone significant evolution and have been central to the concept of crosslinguistic transfer proposed by Odlin (1989) over the past decade. Despite facing criticism and certain limitations, these earlier frameworks have made substantial contributions to the study of second language acquisition, as well as to contemporary research in foreign language studies and multilingualism (Mahmood & Murad, 2018; Perkins & Zhang, 2024).

To date, crosslinguistic influences, also known as crosslinguistic transfer, as described by Odlin (1989, 2022), referred to the linguistic phenomena wherein a learner's L1 significantly impacts the acquisition, comprehension, and production of additional languages, including L2 and third language (L3). He further explained that the term encompassed "the influence resulting from the similarities and differences between the target language and any other languages that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired" (Odlin, 1989, p. 27).

However, there were some controversies regarding the terminology used in crosslinguistic influence. Terms such as "transfer," "language transfer," "cross-linguistic transfer," and "interlanguage" were sometimes used interchangeably by scholars (Forbes, 2020; Gass et al., 2008; McManus, 2021; Odlin, 1989, 2022; Selinker, 1972). Despite the terminological variations, these concepts were all rooted in theoretical frameworks and studies that illuminated the complexities and intricacies of linguistic similarities and differences between two or more languages and their impacts. Odlin (1989) highlighted that crosslinguistic transfer could manifest in various linguistic aspects, including vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and language usage patterns. Learners might rely on their L1 structures, leading to positive transfer when the structures are similar in both languages. Conversely, negative transfer may occur when learners apply L1 patterns that differed from those in L2, resulting in errors and challenges in language acquisition. These phenomena were critical for foreign and second language teachers to consider in real-time language classrooms. The application of crosslinguistic transfer could untie the embedded aspects in the cognitive system of language learners.

Understanding strategies in language learning

Key strategies in language learning encompassed various approaches that EFL learners employed when acquiring a new language. These strategies significantly influenced language development and acquisition outcomes. It was clear that the selection of learning and instructional strategies could lead to distinctive language outputs. In this context, the mixed use of strategies was evident in the learning processes employed by learners at specific stages of their language learning journey. These approaches enabled learners to articulate their thoughts and ideas in the target language using limited linguistic resources, often resulting in unconventional language structures during certain phases of learning.

Researchers in second language acquisition (SLA) have proposed various taxonomies for language learning strategies, each comprising different components. Within the framework of interlanguage transfer, Selinker (1972) identified five cognitive processes or strategies involved in second language learning. He delineated these processes as follows: 1) first language transfer, which referred to the interference from the native language in the acquisition of the new language; 2) transfer-of-training, which involved transfers resulting from the characteristics of the language learning materials or instructional approaches; 3) strategies of second language learning, which pertained to transfers based on the learner's individual approach; 4) strategies of second language communication, which reflected transfers occurring during interactions with native speakers in authentic language-use contexts; and 5) overgeneralization of target language rules, which described transfers stemming from the learner's restructuring and reorganization of their own linguistic units

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) categorized learning strategies into three main types: the first one, cognitive strategies, involved cognitive processing techniques such as inferencing, guessing, and relating new information to existing knowledge. The second type, metacognitive strategies, encompassed the management and regulation of one's own efforts during the learning process. The final category, socio-affective strategies, pertained to how learners interacted with others and managed their emotions throughout the learning experience.

Oxford (1990) provided a comprehensive classification of language learning strategies, delineating six distinct types. These include: 1) cognitive strategies, which pertained to how learners engage with and conceptualize their learning processes; 2) metacognitive strategies, which involved the management and regulation of one's own learning; 3) memory strategies, which focused on techniques learners use to remember and retain language; 4) compensation strategies, which encompassed the methods learners employ to communicate effectively despite limited language proficiency; 5) social strategies, which involved learning through social interaction; and 6) affective strategies, which addressed how learners managed their emotional factors during the learning process.

According to Selinker (1972), O'Malley and Chamot (1990), and Oxford (1990), the language learning frameworks highlighted the multifaceted nature of language learning strategies, emphasizing the interplay between cognitive processes, learner autonomy, and social interaction. This comprehensive approach enabled learners to navigate the complexities of language acquisition, thereby achieving more effective and nuanced language use. Moreover, a significant focus of the aforementioned approaches was on the learner's cognitive processes which played a crucial role in language development and acquisition. It was evident that learning strategies could yield distinctive language outcomes. Within the cognitive perspective of second language acquisition, these strategies enabled learners to express their thoughts and ideas in the target language using limited linguistic resources, often resulting in unconventional language structures at certain stages of learning.

Since crosslinguistic transfer served as the primary framework of analysis in this study, the writing acquisition strategies of EFL learners would be examined through a cognitive lens. Crosslinguistic transfer primarily addressed language comprehension and the cognitive systems of learners. According to the above literature, it is understood that crosslinguistic transfer frameworks originally developed from CA, EA and IL, and analyzing writing acquisition strategies within the context of transfer and cognitive process is deemed most effective.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research methods employed in this study combined a text analysis based on qualitative research principles, then consolidated by a semi-structured interview of EFL learners.

Participants

The participants in this study comprised of 26 Thai EFL learners from various academic disciplines, including Psychology, Information Science, Sociology and Anthropology, and Mass Communication at Chiang Mai University (CMU). They were enrolled in the course English 001311 (Reading and Writing I) at the Department of English, Faculty of Humanities as one of the compulsory requirements of the degree fulfillment. These participants were in their 3rd – 4th year of their undergraduate study, and they were chosen by non-random method as intact samplings. All participants has been studying English for over ten years since primary school and came from diverse English language learning backgrounds in Thai schools nationwide prior to their admission to CMU.

Data collection

The study collected data from paragraph writing samples written by 26 EFL learners. As part of the course evaluation, these learners were required to produce three types of paragraphs: descriptive, narrative, and cause–effect. Each paragraph writing required them to write 250–300 words. The course was designed to instruct learners to be able to write in various genres using a class material, complied by an Assistant Professor of English at CMU.

The course employed cognitive and metacognitive approaches to enable students to write on various topic for each genre. All participants were instructed on the steps of effective writing in the class period. Additionally, they were assigned pre-task writing practice on similar topics (as in Table 1). Then, in-person feedback was given to each student for 5–10 minutes, including suggestions on grammar, comment on the paragraph content and coherence, further advice, and interview to discuss how and why they produced each specific sentence structures and idea.

Consequently, the students undertook a test on the similar writing topic (as in Table 1), which offered 10% of overall score – referred to as "an evaluation." After an evaluation, feedback and in-person consultation were repeatedly conducted with the participants. The test duration was set for an hour and a quarter (one class period) with permission to use paper dictionary. This means each student was given a chance to write twice on parallel tasks, but on different topics.

Instrument

The first instrument used to find out the characteristics of crosslinguistic transfer was a test paper. The data for this part focused only on the descriptive paragraph. In total, 26 pieces of writing were analyzed in a descriptive manner. Students were asked to choose one of the two topics given in the test paper and composed a paragraph on the selected topic. The writing task and sample topics were as follows.

Table 1
Types of writing task and sample of topics given

Writing Task	Sample topics for writing practice	Sample topics on the test
Descriptive paragraph	- Characteristics of a true friend - Difficulties of college life at CMU	- Characteristics of a good speaker - Benefits of travelling in Thailand

The second instrument used to identify writing strategies in semi-structured interviews was discussion-based questions. Most questions were designed in a flexible format and in an open-ended form to encourage discussion based on participants' responses. The questions primarily focused on language production, specifically the meaning in L1 and the structure of L2 produced. The samples of questions were as follows.

- What did this sentence mean? What was its original meaning in Thai?
- Why did you produce such sentence instances? What was the original idea?
- How did you practice your writing assignment?
- What was your process of writing? How did you write?

Data analysis

The data were analyzed by a text analysis approach under qualitative methodology. It then aimed to describe the findings, based on crosslinguistic transfer. With the crosslinguistic transfer identification, the data was firstly analyzed under a transfer framework proposed by Odlin (1989) and Jarvis and Pavlenko (2008). Then the findings were presented through a descriptive manner from EFL learner's perspectives. Following the identification of crosslinguistic transfer, writing strategies based on language learning transfer were accounted for and their causes examined. These writing strategies were further validated through interviews to confirm the transfer process of writing ideas.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of the findings were divided into two descriptive parts according to the main objectives. They were summarized and discussed as follows.

An investigation of crosslinguistic transfers among Thai EFL writing

First, the primary finding indicated phonological transfer. The below instances in (1), yet ungrammatically correct sample, indicated the incorrect spelling as a result of phonological misconceptions.

(1) (a) Thailand has a lot of beautiful sea in south and west of Thailand and moutain in north of Thailand.*
(b) If speaker have a reliable and good energy the litsener to respect and they will comeback to listen again.*
(c) Speaker have to choose topic that it isn't serious and diffecult to understand.*
(d) In concludtion, if you want to be a good speaker,… *

After being interviewed and discussed individually, EFL learners pinpointed some interesting information on their cognitive process. They explained that once they tried to write a word, they pronounced it in their mind and spelled it in script letter. At this stage, it was their knowledge of sound system of Thai native language that affected the perception and production of speech sound in English. It ranged from the sound they perceived and produced to the way they categorized, structured and organized these sounds. In crosslinguistic transfer approach, this is called overgeneralization.

Taking a close look at (1a) the word "*mountain*" (/maʊntən/) was written "moutain", the information from the interview was briefly discussed that some of them had a problem with the phoneme /aʊ/. This was to say that in standard Thai sound system, especially a vowel system, it was common to pronounce /aʊ/ as a single short one with no final consonant. From the instance, the perception of learners was that short vowel /aʊ/ had the sound quality as /aʊn/. This led to an error in spelling and affected writing system onwards. In Thai, it is uncommon to pronounce /aʊn/ (with final consonant), and that is why misspelling is the product of phonological misconception in cross language analysis.

Sample (1b) indicated that learners spell the word "*listen*" (/ˈlɪsən/) as "*litsen*". The "*t*" null phoneme was produced and being generalized in a wrong "*litsen*". It could be presumably stated that both "*s*" and "*t*" were equivalent to the final consonant "/*d*/" in Thai, and they categorized these sounds based on their perception of Thai sound system and switched both letters vice versa in spelling system. Also, in (1d), "*concludtion*" was overgeneralized /*d*/ in the spelling. This was because the word stem "*to conclude*" included /*d*/ as a final consonant phoneme. Learners spelled it with a word stem form Thai final consonant with noun suffix "-tion". In (1c), "*diffecult*" was a product of the misconception between short vowel /*I*/ and long vowel /i:/, as in "difficult". Based on the interview, learners expressed that letter "e" stands for the sound "/i:/", as in the similar instance of "he—/hi:/." Then they constructed a word in spelling form with the phonemes they perceived in Thai sound system.

In short, it was evident that all the samples presented here resulted from the misconceptions in phonological systems between the two languages. Such transfer has often led to misspellings, which could subsequently distort their L2 written communication. It could be presumed that phonological transfer, in form of overgeneralization, was prevalent among Thai EFL learners when they struggled to pronounce accurate sounds in English. Instead, the phonological system of their first language significantly influenced their spelling in writing. Additionally, phonological transfer could be observed in both the perception and production of TL among Thai EFL learners.

Second, lexical transfer was prevalent among Thai EFL learners' writing. The below sample of ungrammatically correct written statements in (2) indicated the incorrect use of preposition as a result of literal translation of first language into English.

(2) (a) speaker should tell the funny moment for make comfortable asmosphear. *
(b) you have to trust in yourself. *
(c) In the other hand, if speaker get stuck while they are speaking, it can kills the mood of the most of the audiences. *

The example in (2a) presented a misuse of preposition "for". It was common in Thai language structure explaining something on purpose with "for". In Thai, "for" was a purposive connotation of doing something. (2b) also represented a Thai structure of English writing. In English, "trust yourself" was more common, but in Thai "trust in yourself" was widely used. (2c) also supported the evidence of lexical transfer that Thai language had an influence on L2 writing. The connector "on the other hand" was more precise in standard English. However, "in" was a common preposition in Thai language structure. However, these three sentences were grammatically correct in standard Thai. According to the result of interview, Thai EFL learners relied on their first language in their cognitive process, and they did a literal translation from Thai into English.

To sum up, it was able to presumably summarize at this stage that lexical transfer, particularly in preposition, was the result of literal translation. It was due to the influence of vocabulary knowledge in Thai language (or L1) on learners' language use of words in English. Mostly in English writing, Thai EFL learners relied their cognitive process on first language.

Third, syntactic transfer was also detected in grammatical aspect and null subject. Syntactic transfer encompassed not only in word order, but also an entire set of well-formed constraints. What has been commonly found in the grammatical unit was the subject-verb agreement.

(3) (a) if your friend do a wrong thing, you should caution them.*
(b) Thailand have several culture such as, food, costume, culture are difference.*
(c) good speaker get dressed suitable don't take in slipper, but should take in boots.*

From the above instance of (3a and 3b) the use of verb "do" and "have" did not follow the grammatical rule of singular subject. This was quite problematic for Thai EFL learners who learned English since Thai did not have an inflectional morpheme added to the word, and tense was not common in Thai.

Another syntactic feature that was common among Thai EFL learners was null subject. As in (3c), subject was omitted and the serial structure of sentences with no subject was prevalent. However, based on the interview, these learners relied heavily on their first language. They thought and transmitted the idea through a literal translation. Considering those instances in Thai, they were all grammatically correct and were used in communicative situation in Thai spoken language. For syntactic transfer, it could be substantially summarized that transfer in grammar and null subject were common in the production of English sentence. This was due to the differences between L1 and TL that differed in syntactic properties.

Fourth, word choice transfer appeared as one of the crosslinguistic aspects in this study. It related to the ways in which learners' knowledge of first language could affect that person's choice of words when using another language. Considering the sample sentences in (4) below, they exemplified the interesting word choice transfer evidence among EFL learners.

(4) (a) if your friend do a wrong thing, you should caution them.*
(b) Travel in Thailand can urge economy.*

In (4a), it was obvious that Thai EFL learners came up with the use of word in non-standard way. Grammatically, spoken Thai used those structures as a basic communication. However, "caution" which was similar to " to warn or to advise" was used instead in English. Also, (4b) highlighted the identical

case. “To urge”– meaning “to stimulate/ to boost”– was the influence of native language on the use of English. According to the interview session, learners expressed the literal translation as the way to produce such sentences.

In short, word choice transfer clearly showed that word choice preferences often did transfer from Thai into English. They affected the types of words and specific words that language users tended to express in specific contexts.

Writing acquisition strategies in language learning of Thai EFL learners

According to semi-structured interviews and questions regarding L2 writing strategies, all participants demonstrated L1 transfer strategy in their writing as a major language learning strategy. Some EFL learners shared ideas and discussed their writing procedures in the interview results as follows:

1) *“To express sentences in English and to write in a limited test period, I wrote in a hurry. I did not think about a beautiful sentence (a correct/standard English). I thought in Thai and quickly wrote it down in my own words and understanding.”*

2) *“I thought in Thai first, then translated into English, and wrote it down straightaway. What came into my mind, I wrote it down quickly.”*

These statements indicated that Thai EFL learners engaged in cognitive processes rooted in their first language. When writing, they typically expressed their thoughts and ideas in their native language, which could be directly transferred into English. The dominant language, Thai, influenced and governed their English language production, leading to direct translation into English. Additionally, it should be noted that writing under time-pressured conditions may prompt the use of transfer strategies in language learning. This observation supported the assumption of crosslinguistic transfer, suggesting that L1 played a crucial role in the cognitive processes involved in writing.

3) *“When I did not know how to spell the word, I tried to pronounce with the sound in Thai and then write it down with my understanding… but it was mostly wrong when I wrote”*

Based on the statements interviewed, spelling errors were common among EFL learners as they attempted to imitate the sound system in their first language. Their understanding and perception of a second language often outweighed their proficiency in their mother tongue, leading to phonological transfer that affects orthographic and spelling accuracy. This observation supported the concept of phonological transfer, which primarily relied on the sound system of the mother tongue.

4) *“I mostly thought in Thai and the Thai words were difficult one (high level vocabulary). I could not find it in English, even though I used dictionary”*

The aforementioned statement highlighted the challenges arising from language differences and varying levels of language proficiency. Word choice transfer was another prevalent characteristic among writing strategies. It frequently involved complex words that learners initially conceived in their native language, which were not easily translatable into English. Although some learners resorted to dictionaries to find suitable words, they often struggled to incorporate these words seamlessly into English sentences. This observation substantiated the presence of transfer strategies in language learning, arising from first language transfer.

In other words, according to an interview, it can be substantially inferred that Thai EFL learners incorporated L1 into the cognitive stage while brainstorming ideas. They tended to apply a literal

translation method from Thai spoken and colloquial structures, subsequently translating these into English according to their understanding and limited knowledge of English. From the transfer approach perspective, this process involved copying and restructuring of L1. Additionally, EFL learners brainstormed their ideas in their native language, making it challenging for non-native learners to produce a complete and perfect structure of standard English.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Some limitation on the group of participants were another factor to be considered. The participants in this study were all low-proficiency level EFL learners; some of them repeatedly enrolled in the class due to a drop out in the previous semester. According to an interview, 25 out of 26 students did not have a strong intention to enroll in the class unless it was a part of their degree fulfillment. It was important to be noted that they were also non-language major learners.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

A proper English teaching methods in an early stage of schooling should be implemented to avoid crosslinguistic transfers. This includes several applied linguistic methods to understand the occurrence of possible transfers in sound, word, and structure. Also, proper teaching methods to avoid phonological lexical, syntactic, and word choice transfer should be done accordingly such as phonic methods and the use of dictionary to avoid collocational errors and word choice. If possible, teachers' training in fundamental linguistics should be made available since Thai teachers of English in Thai school system, especially in the early-stage schooling, have insufficient background to teach foreign language, particularly in English.

CONCLUSION

In this study, the prevalent crosslinguistic transfers among EFL students are phonological transfer, lexical transfer, syntactic transfer, and word choice transfer. They are all the transfers that learners' first language have an influence on the target language, which derives from the literal translation methods of first language in cognitive stage when writing. The majority of participants accept that they rely on the first language by copying and restructuring the structure of Thai language into English. Although they have been trained to write effectively in class, their cognitive processes of L1 input lead to the inevitable crosslinguistic transfer.

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Teaching on a Soft CLIL Programme. Language Teachers' Choices and Professional Development

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Abstract

Soft CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) is a teaching approach gaining in popularity in Japanese universities due to its presumed benefits for students' language development and as preparation for English-medium instruction (EMI) courses. Soft CLIL courses are primarily language-focused, with the additional benefit of helping students develop understanding of an area of academic content. This dual-focused approach is expressed through the syllabus, materials, activities, and assessment procedures. Often, the teachers of these courses are also the course designers and choose the content component themselves. To date, little is currently known about what content is chosen for such courses and what factors influence these choices. This paper attempts to address this gap by presenting the results of a study conducted with eleven teachers on a Soft CLIL program at a Japanese university. Quantitative data was collected through an online survey and qualitative data from semi-structured interviews which followed up on survey responses. The results show that teachers chose content for CLIL for multiple reasons, but particularly the perceived level of student interest in the topic, as well as teachers' own knowledge and interest. Even in Soft CLIL, there is diversity in the "hardness" of content chosen: from academic topics in which teachers see themselves as experts, to very broad topics to be explored collaboratively with the students. Additionally, the results show that teachers felt a strong sense of engagement in teaching CLIL, and that it was very beneficial for their professional development.

Keywords: Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), Soft CLIL, Teacher engagement in CLIL, Teacher development in CLIL

INTRODUCTION

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has been a well-known term in education and in English language teaching for a significant amount of time now. In its most recognised definition, CLIL is a "dual focussed educational approach" (Coyle et al., 2010, p1.), in which students learn an additional language while simultaneously learning content. CLIL has long been established in Europe and is probably mostly associated with primary and secondary education, in part at least due to European multilingual policy (Council of Europe, 2007), and with particular settings such as the Netherlands or Finland, where multilingual education has been taken up enthusiastically (Hanesová, 2015). In outer circle settings, CLIL is newer and less established, and in Japan specifically it only has a history of approximately 12 years (Ikeda & Pinner, 2022). Moreover, CLIL in Japan, and perhaps most Asian countries where it has been implemented, may tend to be "lighter" or "softer" in that curriculum design and lessons may be more "language-led" rather than "content-led" (Ikeda & Pinner, 2022), at least compared to European settings. Accordingly, those teachers who teach CLIL in Japan in universities may tend to have a language teaching background. The purpose of this study is to understand more about language teachers' approaches to CLIL in Japan in the setting of a CLIL programme for undergraduate students at a private university in Tokyo. In particular, the research sought to understand

more about the content that teachers chose for CLIL, the factors behind those decisions, and the degree to which teachers felt engaged in teaching CLIL.

Defining soft and hard CLIL

It should be noted firstly that CLIL is seen by scholars, and presumably many of its practitioners, as more than simply teaching academic content in an additional target language. Underpinning CLIL is Vyogotskian sociocultural theory, in which learning is said to occur through collaboration, and the teacher's role involves encouraging "student learning through interactions amongst student peers", as well as interaction between teachers and students (Hemmi & Banegas, 2021, p3). Also central to CLIL are cognitive and critical thinking skills, with an emphasis on learners engaging in "higher order" thinking skills such as analysing and creating as well as "lower order" thinking skills such as remembering (Coyle et al., 2010). A further essential feature of CLIL is the concept of the 4Cs, (Coyle et al., 2010), which calls for CLIL course and lesson creators to consider and give equal weight to communication, culture, and cognition when engaged in teaching content (Hemmi & Banegas, 2021).

The above features of CLIL should ideally be present in all its forms, be it "Hard CLIL", or "Soft CLIL". Hard CLIL, or content-led CLIL, is essentially how CLIL originated, in that it largely involved subject teachers teaching content in the target language, while Soft CLIL has emerged to become something rather different, in that it is largely associated with ELT programmes and is mostly taught by teachers with a language teaching background (Ball et al., 2015). Also, Soft CLIL is more associated with "outer circle" settings, where there are lower English abilities and less opportunities to use the language outside of the classroom, meaning that a Hard CLIL approach may be unrealistic (Ikeda & Pinner, 2022). Ikeda provides the following conceptualisation of Soft CLIL as a methodology.

> "Soft CLIL is a language teaching approach with heavy reliance on content where students develop their language proficiency, subject matter understanding, and transferable multi-purpose skills while they are engaged in verbally interactive, cognitively demanding, and culturally enriched activities with their peers in the target language" (Ikeda, 2022, p16).

Finally, as Soft CLIL often asks teachers to integrate content by themselves, rather than having a set content curriculum, teachers have to make choices on what kind of content and topics to include in their courses

Teacher engagement and development in CLIL

Despite there having been a great amount of research produced on CLIL in the past 20 years (Hemmi & Banegas, 2021), there is surprisingly little work that has been done that investigates CLIL teachers themselves, particularly on their engagement with CLIL or with their professional development as CLIL teachers. There has been more research which has emerged recently on teacher development in CLIL (e.g. Cammarata & Ó Ceallaigh, 2020; Lo, 2020), but the focus of much of that work tends to be on teachers who teach Hard CLIL and is often concerned with issues around linguistic proficiency of teachers. More relevant to a Soft CLIL context is Banegas' (2020) study on language driven CLIL in secondary school in Latin America, the findings of which showed that authenticity was something that teachers were very concerned with, rather than the integration of content and language itself. Interestingly, the study also suggested that when Soft CLIL teachers receive support in terms of professional development, they reflect more on their practice and may see themselves more as teachers who can develop materials and do not solely rely on more mechanical teaching methods (Banegas, 2020). Closer to the context of this study, Sasajima (2019) explores teacher development in CLIL from the perspective of English language teachers in Japan. As CLIL is still in its infancy in the country and no CLIL teacher qualifications exist as such, he argues that it is up to teachers themselves to form communities and reflect on practice collaboratively (Sasajima, 2019).

As CLIL is so diverse in its "hardness", student populations and abilities, and teacher experiences, it may be difficult to draw much from existing literature that might be particularly relevant for the context of this research. Therefore, it is hoped that this study, although small in scale and rather limited, might make a contribution to understanding more about how teachers from a language teaching background feel about teaching CLIL in a Japanese tertiary education context, and the choices that they make regarding the content of their courses.

The study and educational context

This study was conducted at a private university in Tokyo, Japan. As is nearly always the case in the country, there is compulsory learning of English for first year undergraduates who do not major in English itself or who are enrolled in English-taught programmes. In this particular programme, the students take an integrated four-skills English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course in their first semester, before going on to take a CLIL course in the second. The students are split into classes by level after a diagnostic test at the beginning of the academic year, with the levels ranging from the equivalent of CEFR A2 to C1. These courses are provided by a language department within the university, and teachers recruited to teach on them have a language teaching background, so the courses could be said to be Soft CLIL or language-led CLIL fundamentally. Teachers are given the freedom to choose the subject or topic that is to be taught as the content element of CLIL, and may choose to use a textbook or produce their own material. For the EAP course there is a designated textbook for each level which teachers are encouraged to use to some extent.

Of the 15 full-time teachers teaching CLIL courses in the department, 11 responded to an online survey of twelve items (10 closed, 2 open) on their approach to CLIL, in particular: which topics they choose for CLIL and why, their sense of engagement with CLIL, and how they felt about their professional development as a result of teaching CLIL courses. Six of the participants were male, five were female, and there was a mix of nationalities with the largest proportion being Japanese, and others being from the UK, the US, Canada, Taiwan and New Zealand. Participants had varied levels of experience teaching on these courses, ranging from two to fifteen years. The survey was designed to be anonymous, but an option was included for participants to reveal their identity if they were willing to discuss their responses more fully in the form of an interview. In the end, all participants agreed to this, and interviews were conducted either online or face to face. The interviews were semi-structured in nature, and explored the survey responses which interviewers felt were most worthy of discussion. After the interviews were transcribed, thematic analysis was conducted to identify passages and quotes which illustrated or illuminated survey responses.

RESULTS

Topic choices

The table below shows a list of the topics that were chosen for CLIL by the participants. It should be noted that there are more topics than participants, as teachers may teach a range of levels and choose different CLIL topics accordingly. Also, it can be seen that for one CLIL course, although most teachers chose one main topic or theme, T6 and T10 used multiple topics in one course over the semester.

Table 1
Topics chosen for CLIL

Participants	Topics chosen
T1 (teacher 1)	Pragmatics, SDGs, Intercultural Communication
T2	SDGs (focusing on food-related issues)
T3	Language and diversity, Japanese Business culture, Japanese Pop-culture
T4	Psychology of learning
T5	English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and World Englishes (WE)
T6	Health and welfare; media; UK culture; technology; law and order; sport and society; work
T7	Second language acquisition, World Englishes, social problems, environmental problems, universal design
T8	English literature
T9	News literacy, online information literacy
T10	Introduction to global issues, e.g. gender (in)equality, environmental issues, climate justice, Japanese identities, migration, ethnic minorities in Japan, diversity & discrimination, NGOs and social change organisations, what does active global citizenship mean, SDGs
T11	Psychology

In Table 2 below we can see participants' responses on why they chose the topics that they did. In the survey they had the option to select more than one response, and it is clear that participants felt that they choose topics for multiple reasons.

Table 2
Factors behind topic choices

Factor	# of responses
Presumed level of interest of students in the topic	10
Your knowledge of the topic	10
Your interest in the topic	9
Appropriate difficulty level for students	7
Availability of teaching materials	6
Usefulness of content to students in their studies and future careers	1
Potential to generate discussion and debate	1
Practicality of the content knowledge in the students' life	1
Largely student-generated topics	1

Participants were also asked what they subjectively felt their level of knowledge of the chosen topic was and were given three options: "expert", "amateur", or "novice". In the survey question, "expert" was defined as "studied to a high degree; taught multiple times", "amateur" as "some experience; self-taught; hobby-like interest", and "novice" as "very little experience with the topic". Again, participants could choose more than one response if their chosen topics varied depending on level. The results showed that there was an even split between responses where teachers saw themselves as "expert" (9 responses), and "amateur" (9 responses), with only one teacher selecting "novice". Although the split between expert and amateur was even, it is apparent that some teachers felt that unless they had some kind of expert knowledge of the content, they would be uncomfortable teaching it, as can be seen from the interview quotes below from three different teachers.

> **T5.** *The topic I selected (ELF and WE) is the only one that I can teach because I have the knowledge of the topic. I believe that teachers cannot teach what they do not know in a deep level - that is why I will not change the topic depending on students' level.*

> **T3.** *I chose language and diversity. It's because I was very conscious that I'm much more a language teacher than a content teacher. I finished my dissertation for my EdD in 2003, and that was about language and diversity. So, because I wanted to talk about things that I was very familiar with, that's how I chose that topic.*

> **T1.** *Teaching SDGs was really stressful, difficult and hard for me because it's not my field of study – intercultural communication is very close (to my area of expertise) so I feel I can handle it.*

All three teachers quoted above reported that topic choice was motivated by their close degree of familiarity with it. T5. goes further by expressing the belief that CLIL teachers all must be able to teach their topic "at a deep level", rejecting the notion of teaching topics that may be seen as easier or more general for students of a lower level. In contrast, T1 chose their "expert" topic for higher level students while choosing SDGs for lower levels, as they felt the content would be more accessible. As a result though, T1 felt stress and difficulty in teaching it as an amateur.

However, other teachers were more comfortable with teaching subjects that they felt they had amateur status in (defined in the survey as "some experience in teaching the topic / self-taught / hobby-like interest). One category of topic that seems to emerge in the amateur category is that of what could be called "global or social issues", including SDGs (taught by T1, T2, T7, and T10). One reason teachers chose such topics was their generality or accessibility, both in terms of student understanding and the availability of resources such as textbooks or internet pages. T7 and T10 remarked that having a wide focus on global issues or SDGs allowed them to ask the students to choose particular sub-topics they were interested in doing research on, creating a collaborative sense of exploring the topics together, with the teacher not necessarily in the role of an expert.

> **T10.** *I just think global issues, social issues are a great way to bring content and the students own you know – they bring their identities, communities, experiences into the classroom, and then they use English to get the job done.*

For T6, who selected multiple topics on one course, the presumed interest of the students in the topics was the most important thing to consider, rather than the level of expertise of the teacher.

> **T6.** *It's really just thinking about them and what they will be able to talk about and at least a little bit interested in, which I think is hard. You can be too ambitious with a topic that just flops and they are not interested in it.*

Nevertheless, as has been noted, most teachers indicated that they felt they were both experts and amateurs on topics, presumably depending on the topics that they were teaching. T8, however, felt that this distinction was more blurred, stating that they were a "kind of" expert in English literature, having studied this to Masters level. For T8, the most important consideration was the interest of the teacher, rather than teacher knowledge.

> **T8.** *I don't think there is a big difference (on whether a teacher is an expert or amateur). As teachers we still bring something of our own passion and excitement, and the goal is to draw that out of the students.*

To summarise on teacher topic choices, looking at the numerical data of nine responses for both "expert" and "amateur" would indicate that teachers were comfortable in either role, depending on the content being used. However, while most teachers were comfortable being in the role of an amateur who saw their role to stimulate student interest and/or imbue their own passion for the subject, it is clear from the interview data that some teachers were not comfortable teaching a subject or topic they felt they were not an expert in.

Teacher engagement and teacher preferences: EAP or CLIL

This section deals with the extent to which teachers enjoyed teaching CLIL, and what they felt they gained professionally from their experiences. To the simple question of which course they preferred teaching, EAP or CLIL, eight out of eleven teachers expressed a preference for teaching CLIL (72.7%), two had no preference (18.2%), and one teacher expressed a preference for teaching the EAP course (9.1%). It is clear then, that the majority of teachers preferred teaching on the CLIL course, and when reasons for this were explored in the interviews two main themes emerged.

Firstly, as previously mentioned, T7 and T10 both expressed a sense of enjoying exploring topics together with students and learning from what they come up with in their research or presentations.

> **T7.** *It's fun you know. I feel like I'm learning the content together with the students. Traditionally, Japanese students tend to see teachers as someone who knows better. But actually, I don't know. Some students know a lot about one topic.*

Also, teachers reported experiencing more of a sense of autonomy and creativity in CLIL, as can be seen from the two quotes below.

> **T4.** *because I get more freedom - and when something doesn't work, it's on me 100% because I developed the whole curriculum. So there's no one else - I can't blame the textbook - and so when it does work, it really energises me.*

> **T8.** *it's just like there's a little bit less space for creativity which I enjoy* (in EAP).

Nevertheless, this sense of autonomy may be a double-edged sword in that during interviews, three teachers mentioned that they felt there was more preparation required for CLIL, although only one teacher (T5) indicated in the survey that they preferred teaching EAP because of this.

> **T5.** *As for CLIL, I have to design everything. And I can teach content because I know ELF and World Englishes, but it's very hard to integrate language. I have to decide what vocabulary to teach - grammar, pronunciation, things like that. I have to choose everything – for EAP there is a textbook so…*

Teacher professional development in CLIL

Participants were also asked if they felt teaching CLIL courses had been beneficial for their professional development as teachers, with the results as follows:

- No: 0
- Yes, as a language teacher: 1 (9.1%)
- Yes, as a content teacher: 0
- Yes, as a content and language teacher: 10 (90.9%)

Clearly then, all participants felt a sense of development as a teacher through teaching CLIL, and when this was explored in interviews the themes of autonomy, of a sense of challenge, and a sense of becoming a content teacher emerged.

Above we saw that a sense of autonomy was one reason why teachers enjoyed teaching CLIL courses, and participants also shared that they felt this aspect of teaching CLIL was beneficial for their development as teachers, in the sense that given more of a blank slate in terms of topics and teaching materials they are forced to become more creative, creating in turn a sense of ownership, as can be

seen from the quotes below.

> **T6.** *I mean, because it's 100% my own stuff. And I've had to make that stuff. And if it hasn't worked, I've had to improve it, and if it has worked, I can make it better the next time I use it.*

> **T4.** *I think it's always opened me up to experiment more. And if I'm tired, or things don't work out that day, I can't just rely on the textbook, so it really makes me be prepared.*

Secondly, it seems to be the case that although teachers may feel a sense of difficulty or added burden in teaching CLIL, largely they respond positively to this sense of challenge and see it as significant in their development as teachers.

> **T10.** *That's a huge challenge for me, because I am all about language and using content to draw out language, and I feel competent as a language teacher and facilitator of that with the students. But yeah, it has, I mean, I've embraced it.*

> **T1.** *I have never thought teaching CLIL is easy. At the same time, it is interesting and it can develop my teaching professionally.*

Thirdly, as the survey data showed that teachers felt they had developed as content teachers as well as language teachers, the question of the extent to which teachers felt they had become content teachers was discussed in interviews. For some, this depended on the content they were teaching:

> **T1.** *Well, when I teach my field of study, I also feel I'm a content teacher, not only a language teacher, but for SDGs, I felt I'm just a language teacher.*

> **T7.** *Yeah, so when I taught World Englishes and SLA – I was half. Yeah, I feel like I'm a content teacher. I knew about the topic, of course, but you know, they needed a lot of language support. So I felt like I was still a half language teacher.*

On the whole, teachers reported that they felt comfortable with this kind of dual identity that had developed through teaching CLIL, as in the following.

> **T5.** *I think my identity is a bit of both. So when it meets in the middle, I feel very comfortable. I think that's why I enjoy it. Because it pulls on both sides of my training and background and interests.*

Finally, but no less significantly, some teachers who have been teaching CLIL have become researchers either on CLIL methodology itself, or in the case of T10 one of the topics they teach as content in CLIL, although this was not an "expert" topic for them. In total, five of the eleven participants have published papers or presented at conferences about CLIL, in areas including assessment in CLIL, critical thinking in CLIL, and co-construction of knowledge through dialogic interaction in CLIL classes.

DISCUSSION

Overall, we can see that the study paints a positive picture of the level of teacher engagement in the CLIL programme. Teachers preferred teaching CLIL courses more than EAP, it seems due to a sense of collaboration with students in exploring and researching topics, as well as a feeling of enjoyment of greater creativity and autonomy. This is positive news in terms of teachers' well-being and job satisfaction, but it may also be positive for students. As Banegas (2012) argues, "meaning and relevant learning" (p44) can occur in language driven CLIL when teachers are given the freedom to choose

course content and to involve students in the negotiation of this and of sources of knowledge or input. However, it may be the case that the possible extra burden for teachers in choosing, devising and possibly adapting course content in CLIL may cause some teachers to view teaching a CLIL course more negatively.

Teachers also felt that teaching CLIL was beneficial for their professional development, with the reasons that emerged for this being a sense of taking on something challenging that was perhaps out of their comfort zone at first, with greater autonomy being required to create courses and materials, which may have in turn led to a greater sense of ownership. This echoes the findings of Banegas` study which suggested that materials creation in CLIL led to teachers developing a sense of themselves more as materials creators and creative teachers in general (Banegas, 2012).

On the content chosen by teachers, it seems that teachers consider multiple factors, particularly student interest along with their own interest and knowledge. Teachers chose a wide variety of content, ranging from "expert" topics related to TESOL to much more general and open topics and themes such as global issues or SDGs, which allowed for some student input into what more specific topics they did research on. The implication here is that even on a programme which would seem to have the characteristics of Soft CLIL, some teachers may choose topics which are "harder" in that they are rather academic, or on quite a specific topic such as SLA. There was certainly a sense of unease for several teachers regarding teaching content they may not be an expert in. This is not necessarily a problem in itself, but it may be something that programme coordinators who are concerned about standardisation should be aware of if teachers are given free reign to choose topics.

CONCLUSION

This study is clearly limited in size, and is set in quite a specific context that it may be difficult to generalise from, as indeed many CLIL contexts are. It can be said though that despite some possible concerns, this study suggests that as a whole the benefits of allowing teachers on a "Soft" CLIL programme to choose content may outweigh any negatives, due to the overall sense of teacher engagement that is engendered by a sense of challenge, creativity, collaboration with students, and autonomy.

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TikTok and Intercultural Competence in EFL Settings: Exploring Students' Perceptions and Teachers' Teaching Strategies

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Abstract

In our interconnected world, enhancing intercultural competence among EFL students is crucial (Safa & Tofighi, 2022). This study investigated TikTok's role in this context, focusing on two key questions. First, it examined TikTok's impact on students' perceptions and attitudes towards diverse cultures. Students' visual journals offered unique data for a nuanced exploration of their experiences. Second, it explored how teachers used TikTok as a teaching tool to foster intercultural competence. Semi-structured interviews with EFL teachers provided valuable insights into their strategies. This research involved multiple phases, including selecting EFL teachers who incorporate TikTok into their methods and senior university students aged 21-22 with intermediate English proficiency. Twenty TikTok videos were selected according to the Cultural Iceberg Model (Hall, 1976), allowing for a comprehensive analysis of surface-level and deep cultural aspects. The findings showed that students were open-minded to other cultures and opinions about their own through empathy and sharing perspectives, promoting exposure to diverse viewpoints. TikTok videos with controversial content, like utopian/dystopian literature, provoked debate, with students defending their views, often showing a pro-Vietnam attitude, while locals may become defensive about their culture (Uddin, 2017). Moreover, in EFL settings, TikTok videos were seen as an engaging and authentic tool for introducing cultural topics and teaching English materials, despite being time-consuming. These videos could spark debates on controversial cultural practices, helping teachers foster critical thinking skills in students, though they must ensure guided reflection due to the presence of uncensored content.

Keywords: TikTok, Intercultural Competence, EFL settings, Cultural Iceberg Model

INTRODUCTION

In today's world, it is imperative to possess the capacity to comprehend and cross different cultural environments in order to facilitate efficient communication and cooperation. An increased understanding of the necessity of intercultural competence among graduates has resulted from internationalization in a globalized environment (Moodian, 2009). Intercultural competency not only cultivates mutual respect and admiration for diverse viewpoints, but also encourages empathy and cultural awareness. For example, in a classroom with students from multiple cultural origins, engaging in discussions about cultural differences and similarities encourages mutual tolerance and appreciation for varied perspectives. By promoting the active participation of students in sharing their own cultural practices and viewpoints, educators create a conducive atmosphere that builds a sense of worth and comprehension for every student, resulting in deep empathy and admiration for cultural diversity.

In the digital era with rapid change in the way teachers teach and deliver knowledge to students, social media is a crucial component of human life in general and TikTok has become a widely popular and

widely used social media tool among university students. Presently, there is a growing trend of educational and knowledge-sharing video providers gaining popularity on TikTok (Liu, 2023). TikTok has emerged as a popular platform for educational content, appealing to a broad audience and particularly resonating with the younger generation due to its captivating structure. Xiuwen & Razali (2021) suggested that TikTok could improve students' speech communication since it allows them to create short videos to improve their speaking skills. Additionally, according to Yang (2020), students' viewpoints demonstrated favorable attitudes towards using TikTok as a medium for learning English. They held the belief that TikTok had the potential to be utilized as a means to broaden their English learning approach and boost their enthusiasm to learn. In terms of teaching intercultural communication, as English language educators, authors of this article found the impressive growth of TikTok as an amazing yet challenging opportunity to not only explore the potential of this platform for students but also study the influence of TikTok in various viewpoints from both teachers and learners.

Also, it cannot be denied that while TikTok is highly popular among users, especially younger demographics, there is a lack of scientific study investigating its potential as an instructional tool. It is essential to fill this gap in the existing research in order to comprehend the significance of TikTok in education and effectively utilize its capacity to engage learners in a meaningful manner in the global times. Furthermore, due to the fact that there were few articles focusing on utilizing TikTok as an educational tool in language teaching and learning, research that focused on intercultural communication in reference with TikTok assistance had not been implemented. Therefore, researchers desire to analyze the effects of TikTok in building intercultural competence in EFL settings with a view to offering insights into the potential of TikTok for educators who intend to utilize social media platforms such as TikTok for teaching and learning purposes. This study examines the role of TikTok in an EFL setting, with a specific focus on two fundamental inquiries. Initially, it analyzes the influence of TikTok on students' perspectives on various cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, it examines the utilization of TikTok by educators as an instructional instrument to cultivate intercultural proficiency.

LITERATURE REVIEW

TikTok platform and its influence

TikTok, a rapidly expanding social media platform boasting over 3 billion downloads and 1 billion monthly active users (Saleem et al., 2023), is characterized by its algorithm-driven video curation, fostering a culture of self-expression and creativity (Bhandari & Bimo, 2022). The platform's impact spans both positive and negative realms, as evidenced by extant literature.

On the positive side, TikTok emerges as a unique tool with profound psychological effects on EFL and ESL learners, enhancing motivation and interest through authentic, real-life content intertwined with entertainment (Rasyid et al., 2023; Simaremare et al., 2023; Yang, 2020). Moreover, it serves as a gateway for easy access to English language materials, enriching users' vocabulary and ESL skills while offering insights into cultural nuances (Wulandari & Mandasari, 2023). Additionally, TikTok provides a space for marginalized groups to challenge societal norms, promoting inclusivity and agency (Kaur-Gill, 2023; Soto-Vásquez, 2022).

However, the platform is not devoid of drawbacks. Content often lacks context, potentially leading to misinterpretation (Bhandari & Bimo, 2022). Furthermore, TikTok's pervasive nature as a source of distraction and disseminator of fake news, alongside concerns regarding cyberbullying and privacy infringements, underscores its darker side (Yang, 2020; Rasyid et al., 2023). Additionally, the platform's format limitations render complex topics susceptible to oversimplification or distortion, raising questions about its suitability for nuanced discussions (Fernando et al., 2023; Saleem et al., 2023).

Lastly, there is a looming threat of neo-colonialism, with TikTok potentially homogenizing local cultures under the influence of Western ideals (Kurniawan, 2018; Soto-Vásquez, 2022).

Intercultural competence and its role in EFL

The contemporary globalized society enables and compels people to interact and forge relationships with people from diverse cultural backgrounds, which prompts the need for individuals to possess the ability to be interculturally sensitive (Atay et. al., 2009), to prevent conflict and misinterpretation. Byram (1997) coined a term to briefly describe this capacity, which is "intercultural competence." He proposed a quite exhaustive definition of intercultural competence by suggesting five pillars for its development, namely Attitudes (i.e., one's curiosity, openness, and willingness to challenge beliefs about other and one's own), Knowledge (i.e., one's learning about practices, values, and processes of social groups), Interpreting and relating (i.e., one's ability to identify, explain, and behave appropriately in face with cultural perspectives), Discovery and interaction (i.e., one's ability to acquire knowledge and interact in real-time encounters), and ultimately Education (i.e., one's rigorous engagement in critical cultural awareness). To put it another way, an intercultural speaker is someone who possesses knowledge of both cultural commonalities and distinctions, and is capable of serving as an intermediary between multiple cultures, encompassing diverse systems of beliefs, values, and behaviors (Byram, 2009).

Nowadays, regarding the significance of "culture" and "intercultural competence" in EFL settings, these concepts have recently been recognised as an additional essential element in foreign language instruction. In EFL settings, intercultural themes are commonly integrated into academic subjects like foreign languages or social studies to facilitate the development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC). It is acknowledged that language is not impartial, and teaching foreign languages can include exposing students to different texts and depictions of a culture to enhance their critical comprehension of the cultural elements of language and cultural portrayals (Ware & Kramsch, 2005). Fundamentally, without studying the associated culture, teaching a foreign language is incomplete. Byram et al. (2002) also highlight the need for foreign language teachers to be ready to foster an atmosphere of inquiry and curiosity in order to help students develop their intercultural competency because culture is a dynamic force. In the context of EFL classrooms, various activities are proposed using Byram's framework, such as using factual materials, stimulation activities, role-plays, case studies of critical incidents, or comparative texts (Vo, 2017). Moeller and Nugent (2014) also analysed various projects in which students were engaged in self-exploration and identity transformation through a process of inquiring. Blog exchange, OSEE tool, artifact exploration, and proverb analysis are some of the cases discussed. In ESL/EFL settings, intercultural themes are commonly integrated into academic subjects like foreign languages or social studies to facilitate the development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC). It is acknowledged that language is not impartial, and teaching foreign languages can include exposing students to different texts and depictions of a culture to enhance their critical comprehension of the cultural elements of language and cultural portrayals (Ware & Kramsch, 2005). In sum, intercultural competence has increasingly been recognized as a critical competence for one's future social engagements (Bennett & Bennett, 2004; Byram, 2009).

Much as this term is prevalent in current literature about its importance in classroom settings (Moeller & Nugent, 2014; Vo, 2017), scholars have engaged in the discussion about its complexity and frequent confusing interchanging use with "trans-cultural", "multi-cultural", or "cultural" and the myths associated with the term, which convolutes the assessment of this competence in EFL settings (Dervin, 2010). Dervin (2010) attempted to demystify some of the misconceptions surrounding the prefix -inter and Byram's lack of attention to reliability when his framework comes into play in the assessment of intercultural competence. First of all, he argues that the word -inter might infer the singularity of cultures prior to encounters, which employs a cultural differentialism perspective rather than a cultural

mixing view. Secondly, he questions the match between students' acts and discourse when questioned by others and when enacted by themselves. Dervin's (2010) latter view expands on Byram's framework, proposing a three-component model that assists the acquisition of intercultural competence, which includes identification detection, attention to discourse, and regulation and control of one's emotions and behaviors.

In sum, although intercultural competence has been acknowledged as fruitful in language learning, the development and assessment of intercultural competence in learning remain an area of scholarly research and discussion. Various tools and activities have been developed alongside the understanding of intercultural competence, among which the Cultural Iceberg model by Hall (1976) has seen relevance in contemporary contexts.

Cultural iceberg model in language teaching

According to Frank (2013), an effective resource for EFL students to understand many aspects of culture is Hall (1976)'s "cultural iceberg" analogy. Hall devised the comparison to demonstrate the disparities between the visible parts of a new culture that we observe upon entering (the visible tip of the iceberg) and the concealed elements of the culture that are not immediately apparent (the submerged part of the iceberg). The tangible manifestations of a culture are its products, which represent the visible aspects of the culture. On the other hand, the cultural practices and social ideas that form the foundation of a particular culture, known as the deep culture, are not easily observable. To be more specific, surface culture, often known as "visible culture," refers to the easily viewable and unchangeable characteristics that are indicative of a country. These include celebrations, tourist destinations, geographical landmarks, national symbols, cuisine, and prominent individuals. About deep culture, it denotes the fundamental and less apparent components of a culture that have a profound influence on individuals' beliefs, values, standards, and perspectives. These components are frequently internalized during childhood and become so firmly rooted in a society that individuals may not be consciously aware of them. Examples of deep culture elements are cultural values and norms, communication styles, et cetera.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in the fall semester of the academic year 2023 at a university in Hanoi. Participants were 25 senior students, including 8 male and 17 female students from the same class in the "Intercultural Communication" course taught by one of the authors. Four English teachers who had relevant work experience at both high school and tertiary level were invited to shed light on the second research question. The students were chosen based on their willingness to participate in the project. They all come from the English department and belong to the Gen Z generation, were digital natives, and were easily recognizable by their ease with social media and technology. Each student had a unique set of experiences and perspectives that contributed to the study. For instance, when it comes to family backgrounds, some students identify themselves as older brothers or younger sisters, and when it comes to home identity, several students expressed that their ideal home is places that they desire for traveling, studying, and working besides their true hometown in Vietnam.

Data collection involved a multifaceted approach. First of all, researchers required participants to watch 20 viral videos on TikTok, which garnered over 1 million views. These videos were selected based on their content's relevance to intercultural communication and the number of views on TikTok. Half of them originated from Vietnamese TikTok creators and the other half from foreign TikTok creators. The videos must be relevant to Vietnam's context to harness students' interpretation. The authors also used the Cultural Iceberg model (Hall, 1976) to select videos including content that distinguishes between deep and surface cultural elements. These videos provided a glimpse into the similarities

and differences between the two countries, as well as offering insight into the customs and culture of Vietnam. The methodology for selecting the videos involved a thorough review process where researchers identified TikTok videos that not only had high view counts but also rich content illustrating cultural nuances. Videos without scripts were omitted. Authors categorized videos based on surface cultural elements, such as bedding and food, and deep cultural elements, like values, family relationships and beliefs. For example, in terms of videos about Vietnamese lifestyle and culture, some videos showed cultural differences between Vietnam and Germany from the perspective of a Vietnamese with specific examples such as pedestrian crossing road markings, wet and dry bathrooms, et cetera while some highlighted the Vietnamese lifestyle from an expat's viewpoint who currently resided in Vietnam. This approach ensured a comprehensive representation of intercultural communication phenomena. They also provided an opportunity for viewers to gain a better understanding of the country and its people, in this case about living in Germany from a Vietnamese's perspective and living in Vietnam through different foreigners' lenses. This intercultural encounter promoted cross-cultural dialogue and can lead to greater mutual respect and understanding among people from different backgrounds.

Having watched the videos, students were required to write and visualize their thoughts and reflections using some guiding questions (refer to Table 1). There were 10 submissions out of a total of 25 students. In the meantime, semi-structured interviews were carried out with the teachers, aiming to gather their insights and perspectives on the educational potential of TikTok content in intercultural communication teaching. Table 1 below showcases the questions for students and teachers.

Table 1
Questions for students and interview questions for teachers

Questions for students	Questions for teachers
1. In your opinion, what is the message of the video? 2. What culture/ culture aspects are they talking about? 3. What are your perceptions and attitudes towards those cultures? 4. How does it relate to you? 5. Is there anything else you want to share?	1. Please evaluate the importance of teaching cultural awareness and intercultural communication competence (ICC) in EFL classes 2. Please assess the appropriateness of these short TikTok videos in developing ICC ● Do you see any intercultural factors that are addressed in these videos? ● Do you have any considerations to be aware of when using these videos for ICC development? 3. How can these videos be utilized in EFL classrooms? For what purposes? 4. Do you intend to incorporate these short TikTok videos into your classroom instruction?

Data collected from both students and teachers were analyzed based on thematic analysis in order to answer 2 research questions: "To what extent does exposure to content from different cultures on TikTok influence users' perceptions and attitudes towards those cultures?" and "In what ways can students explore multiple cultures through the intercultural lens via TikTok?. Regarding the first question, Byram's (1997) framework was used as the basis for analysis. Themes arose across five components, which were enriched with evidence from the participants' reflection. The second question was analysed more inductively. Additionally, this research is grounded on relativist ontology, which consists of numerous realities, each shaped by a unique set of viewpoints and circumstances. Therefore, in the data analysis process, the authors understand that the backgrounds, experiences, and viewpoints of both participants and researchers have an impact on the research process and findings.

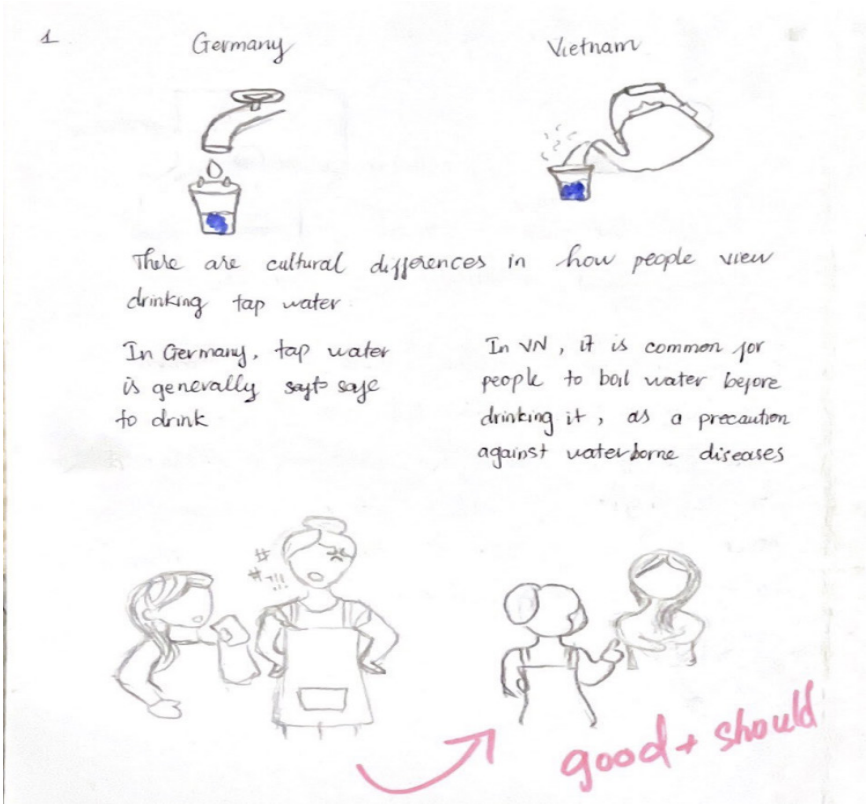
FINDINGS

Students' perceptions and attitudes

Students' perceptions

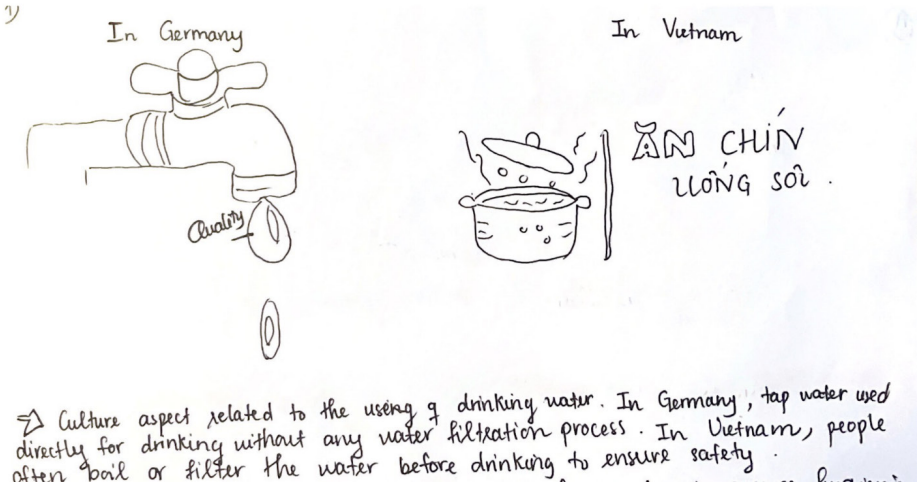
Overall, results suggest that students become more open-minded and tolerant towards different cultures and their own culture after being exposed to content on TikTok. Exposure to diverse cultural practices broadened understanding and reduced preconceived notions. The content on TikTok videos prompted students to recognize and understand cultural differences, but overexposure to certain practices could lead to misunderstandings and stereotypes. Also, comparing local culture with other cultures helped students evaluate perspectives and understand underlying beliefs and as a result, empathy was found to be a significant factor in engagement with cultural differences.

First of all, ***the content of the videos triggered students' critical intercultural awareness of cultural differences***. When faced with a dual presentation of local and other cultural experiences, most of the students could immediately perceive the message of cultural differences that were shown through practices. This exposure led to a heightened cultural awareness among students. They became more open-minded and empathetic with diverse cultural practices, including their own. For example, about the way people drink water in Vietnam and Germany (picture 1), Student 4 expressed thoughts on the prejudice on asian moms, in this case, a Vietnamese mom who worries too much and is overprotective about her daughter's health: "Some people may perceive the Vietnamese mothers as being overprotective or paranoid. However, it is important to understand that her concerns are based on her cultural background. In Vietnam, there is greater awareness of the risks from waterborne diseases."



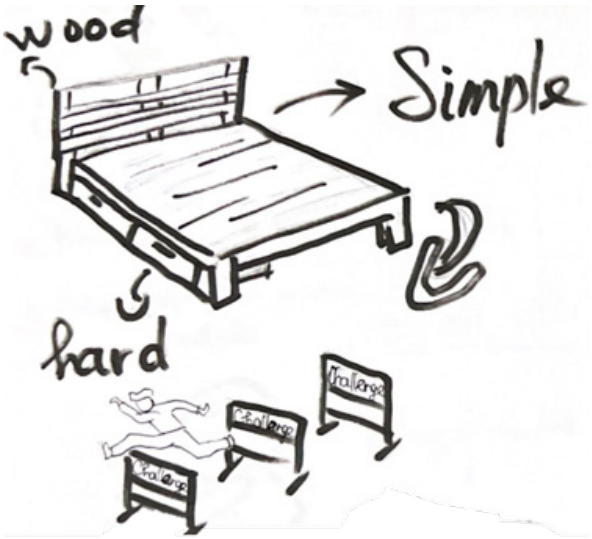
Picture 1 A cultural difference about drinking water habit between Vietnam and Germany - Student 4's reflection

Additionally, it helped them develop a more global perspective and understanding across different cultural backgrounds. Regarding the same TikTok content on the water drinking habits, Student 10 reflected that she could see "the culture aspect" related to the use of drinking water (picture 2). In Germany, tap water is used directly for drinking without any water filtration process. In Vietnam, people often boil to filter the water before drinking to ensure safety. She came up with the message that we should adapt to the lifestyle in each country.



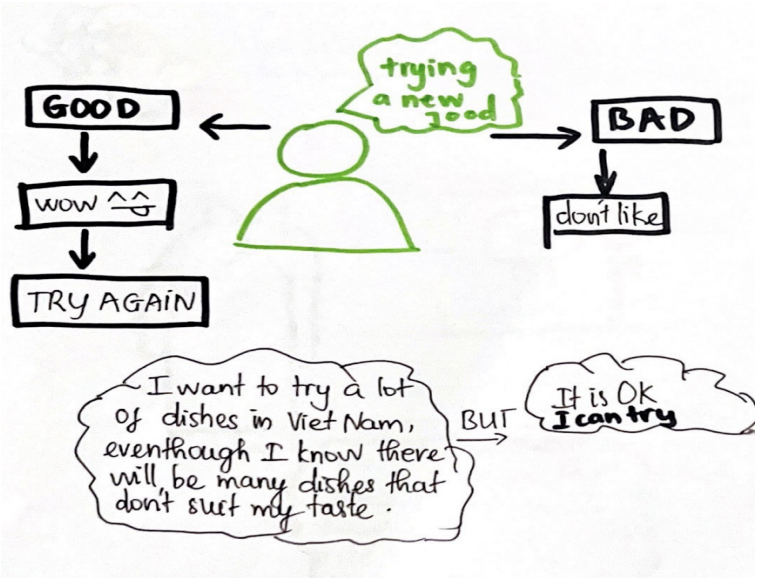
Picture 2 A cultural difference about drinking water habit between Vietnam and Germany - Student 10's reflection (ăn chín uống sôi = eat cooked drink boiled)

Nonetheless, there are practices that students are more likely to be oblivious to. Students displayed a keen ability to decode the reasons behind cultural practices, considering factors at personal, national, and socio-cultural levels. For instance, some associated the preference for hard wooden beds in Vietnam with historical hardships, reflecting a perception of simplicity and frugality that is deemed beneficial for health (picture 3). Additionally, students acknowledged that their perceptions of cultural practices might be influenced by their patriotism or love for their homeland, shaping their habits and preferences.



Picture 3 A cultural artifact for simplicity and frugality - Student 9's reflection

Secondly, exposure ***also made students interpret and relate to universal concerns***. As much as some of the videos aimed to convey a new experience of the subjects when encountering or re-encountering a culture, some experiences of surprise were perceived as universal concerns. Data analysis shows that the ubiquitous agitation caused when watching such videos about bed preferences and price conversion further highlighted the concern. The problem of converting prices after migration was believed to be universal that could cause distress for migrants in general, regardless of races or cultures. Students moved past the receiving phase to critically analyzing the information. When juxtaposing the local culture with other cultures, students had the chance to evaluate multiple perspectives and perceive their local culture's practices under a new lens. In our research findings, students exhibited a multifaceted approach to understanding local culture when compared with other cultural contexts. When watching the content about "4 things that I've learnt in Vietnam" from an expat's perspective, Student 2 shared an interesting quote about Vietnam "In Vietnam, every street tells a story, every alleyway a mystery waiting to be explored." From the reflection (picture 4), Student 2 learnt to be open to possibilities and embrace the concept of "trying":



Picture 4 A cultural difference about dining between Vietnam and Germany - Student 2's reflection

Attitudes

In response to the video contents, students showed diverging attitudes towards their local culture (i.e. ones shown in Vietnam) and other cultures. Almost all of the students expressed an appreciation and respect for other cultures after being exposed to the diverse content on TikTok. They reported feeling more open-minded and curious about traditions and lifestyles different from their own.

Regarding the local culture, they demonstrated two tendencies, including a sense of national pride (i.e. patriotism) and criticism of some practices. When the videos were positively illustrated, students responded with pride and communicated in ways that demonstrated a commonality with the researchers, who are also Vietnamese. For example, Student 2 stated the happiness when foreigners tried and showed excitement about the affordability of tourism as well as their quick takeup of chopsticks (picture 5).

Picture 5 Bun Cha in Vietnam - Student 2's reflection

In contrast, when the videos presented neutral or controversial practices, the attitudes students showed diverge. Their responses are protective with the content shown on the video while some students showed similar viewpoints. For example, regarding sellers on the sidewalk approaching customers to sell their products, Student 3 thought that it is inconvenient for customers but she also believes that this practice is kind of a part of local culture where people are friendly and enthusiastic to foreigners.

> *"In Viet Nam, it is not difficult to see sellers offering goods right on the side walk. They are willing to let their customers experience trying on their items and say "buy it". That also causes some discomfort for buyers, but it is a unique cultural feature of Vietnamese people, showing hospitality and enthusiasm for foreigners when visiting tourist destinations in Viet Nam." (Student 3)*

When other cultures are co-existent in the videos, students started to converse as if they were addressing foreign readership and empathy emerged as a significant factor influencing students' engagement with cultural differences. The first behavior they suggested was to respect one another's culture due to its contextuality. The second reaction was to comply with the local culture, regardless of where one comes from.

Besides, after learning about TikTok bloggers' challenges in integrating into a new culture, many students expressed empathy by acknowledging the possible hardships. For instance, adjusting to traffic situations in Vietnam emerged as a recurring theme that Vietnamese students empathized with. Despite perceiving and acknowledging these issues, students varied in their responses. Some crafted local guidelines to overcome these challenges and suggested ways for foreigners to adapt, while others perceived these challenges as insurmountable.

Teaching strategies

Several strategies arose from the interviews, including the use of TikTok videos to enhance teaching objective, vary teaching techniques, and promote critical thinking.

Enhancing teaching objective

Interviewed teachers believed that contextualizing the lessons using videos on TikTok could serve as an effective lead-in strategy ***for exploring multiple cultures through an intercultural lens, fostering the objective of boosting student awareness and appreciation***. Teachers who provided a contextual introduction using the TikTok content found that students were more engaged and receptive. This lead-in part involved discussing the cultural context of the TikTok videos, establishing learning objectives, and encouraging students to reflect on their own cultural perspectives, according to Teacher 1. Teacher 4 shared the same view with Teacher 1, stating that "I have a tendency to show these videos as a fact to open another door of knowledge as an additional source for students, aiming at introducing the concepts and differences afterward." Moreover, "they are also the tools for students to reflect on their own cultural perspectives. For instance, the characters in these videos are grown-ups and share the lives of overseas students, which could create a sense of sympathy and relevance for university students to reflect on their own context." she added.

Varying teaching techniques

TikTok videos offer teachers the opportunities to vary their teaching techniques by exposing students to authentic materials where real-life situations are presented with less socio-cognitive burden. Teachers can view TikTok videos as a source of authentic materials for teaching listening skills (Teacher 2). Although the videos may lack in repetition and representation of certain linguistic features, these materials may also serve as a pedagogical method in text-centric instruction, including grammar or functional language education if teachers utilize them in further practice sessions. For instance, videos featuring dialogues or monologues can highlight specific grammar points, such as past tense verbs, which can be paused and discussed for students to identify and practice the rules. Additionally, TikTok videos often depict everyday scenarios, making them ideal for teaching functional language. For example, a video showing a shopping experience can be utilized to teach relevant phrases and vocabulary related to buying and selling. This approach not only makes learning more engaging but also contextualizes language use in real-life situations. In spite of these applications, using authentic materials from TikTok has drawbacks, such as being time-consuming and requiring significant effort in editing and task creation. To address these challenges, teachers suggested a collective effort from both educators and students to find engaging content that aligns with lesson objectives or to use these materials in review sessions. They suggested that there should be a collective effort, either from teachers or students, to find engaging content that caters to the objective of the lessons or use them in review sessions. Furthermore, in accordance with Teacher 3, when instructors incorporated TikTok videos that showcased real-life cultural practices, language usage, and diverse perspectives, this authentic content not only improved students' grammar and functional language skills but also exposed them to colloquial expressions, slang, and cultural nuances. Teacher 2 found that selecting TikTok videos with a mix of formal and informal language usage helped students develop a well-rounded understanding of the target cultures, fostering a more authentic language learning experience.

Promoting critical thinking

Last but not least, TikTok can be utilized as ***a tool for teaching critical thinking skills***, encouraging students to analyze, evaluate, and discuss various viewpoints critically, thereby enhancing a more engaging and thought-provoking learning environment. According to all teachers, ***TikTok was a dynamic source that opened up a great diversity of opinions***, which had the potential to trigger debate

among students, especially when exposed to content where controversial perspectives about their local cultural practices were presented. Teacher 2 said that "It is sometimes necessary to expose students to controversy to gauge their honest reaction and reflection for growth and change." Teachers could take advantage of this feature to teach students critical thinking skills like: distinguishing facts and opinions, showing sympathy and respecting different perspectives, avoiding generalizations. For example, a TikTok video discussing the cultural practice of street food might present both supporters and critics of the tradition, sparking a lively debate among students. Similarly, a video showcasing different perspectives on gender roles or religious practices could also generate discussion and encourage critical thinking. However, teachers ought to be aware of the possible threats associated with uncensored content, which requires students to reflect critically with guidance and discussion. *One strategy for teaching critical thinking skills using TikTok* could be to have students analyze and evaluate the content they come across, as stated by teacher 2: "Teachers may consider TikTok videos for discussions in EFL classrooms, which let all students exchange their personal ideas together to understand the nature of differences, originating from different factors like contexts, mindsets, lifestyles, to guide them to value the cultural differences." They could also encourage students to question the sources of information, examine the evidence presented, and consider alternative viewpoints. By engaging in thoughtful discussions and reflection, students could develop their ability to think critically and discern reliable and accurate information from the vast array of TikTok content. Additionally, students should be guided to critically evaluate the cultural representations depicted in the videos, considering potential biases and stereotypes. As a result of the critical thinking approach, students not only were able to enhance their intercultural competence but they were also able to develop valuable skills for evaluating information in today's digital world.

Overall, the findings suggested that purposeful integration of TikTok in the classroom, guided by effective lead-in strategies, authentic materials, and a focus on critical thinking, could significantly contribute to the exploration of multiple cultures through an intercultural lens. Teachers played a pivotal role in facilitating meaningful learning experiences that went beyond language acquisition, promoting a deeper understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures.

DISCUSSION

Enriching the intercultural competence of EFL students is crucial in our global society (Safa & Tofighi, 2022). Intercultural competence fosters respect, empathy, and cultural awareness, vital for effective communication. In the digital era, platforms like TikTok, popular among university students, offer opportunities for educational content (Liu, 2023), and are ideal for teaching intercultural communication. However, research on its instructional potential is limited. This study explores students' cultural perspectives through short TikTok videos and how educators use them to enhance intercultural competence in EFL settings.

Regarding students' perception and attitude changes after watching the selected TikTok videos, it should be noted that the research had not been able to demonstrate the changes in students' perceptions and attitudes due to the research design; yet it had showcased students' accumulative exposure and reflection when the study was carried out. Nonetheless, we must argue that such encounters with intercultural contents in platforms like TikTok still harbor meaningful meaning-making moments for the development of intercultural competence. As students of a course about interculturalism, they were aware of the elements of intercultural competence to varying degrees. Nonetheless, it is noted that students robustly expressed their openness and curiosity towards cultures as well as others' opinions of their local cultures by being empathetic and/or contributing to the dialogue. This demonstrated students' intercultural attitude, knowledge, and skills of interpreting and relating (Byram, 1997). It was noticeable that a video might initiate different responses due to the viewers' (i.e., students) differences, which implies a fruitful implication of controversial videos like ones on TikTok in fostering identification

detection (Dervin, 2010). The research discovered that students expressed their perspectives and attitudes more rigorously with evidence, counterarguments, and refutations when they responded to videos with others showing negative positions to cultures, with their local culture included. This inclination is rationalized by Dervin's (2010) study discussing the interculturality models "cultural differentialism" and "cultural mélange," where cultures can be argued as independent or mixed entities. Through such encounters, students are thus exposed to the questions of "what preconceptions do I have?" "why otherize?" and "how are cultures actually represented?".

Pedagogically speaking, teachers considered TikTok to be an entertaining, relatable, and rather authentic channel for English materials. It was no surprise teachers mentioned the "fun" effect as the first benefit of TikTok videos that could warm students up and stimulate curiosity (Byram, 1997). Its nature of being relatively shorter than content on other social channels managed to capture students' interests and pique their curiosity. The materials could be used as a pedagogic strategy in text-based teaching, such as teaching grammar or functional language. Teachers, however, acknowledged the amount of time that might be involved in searching and curating suitable videos for their lessons. While selecting the videos and reflecting upon participants' contribution, the researchers came up with a list of guiding criteria that might be of help for EFL teachers who aim to foster both linguistic and intercultural competences (Table 2).

Table 2
How to select suitable TikTok videos for use in EFL classrooms

Video's specification	● length/number of speaking turns: this informs teachers of the available resources for analysis and the likelihood of hooking students' attention; ● types of talk: whether it is a monologue or dialogue informs its suitability for developing intercultural competence or language competence; ● languages used: English as the main medium and other languages (if any) provide contextual and linguistic clues for teachers and students alike; ● social outreach: this is likely to suggest whether students will be hooked by the content, creating a ground for attitude and awareness discussion; ● safety check: this is a step necessary to be carried out to avoid age-inappropriate content; ● surface and deep message: the content suggests who would be engaged in the discussion.

From such specifications, EFL teachers could consider their objectives in class to balance between the achievement of linguistic skills and intercultural competence.

- Intercultural purpose: which components do you wish to promote in class?
  > Attitude, Knowledge, and Awareness
  > Skills of interpreting and relating (internal outcomes)
  > Skills of discovery and interacting (external outcomes)

- Linguistic purpose: What language aspect do you aim to explore in your EFL classrooms?
  > Language for/ through/ of learning

This asks for a collective effort, either from teachers or students, to find engaging content that caters to the objective of the lessons. The videos appear to be easy to use in review sessions when a wide range of language points are discussed again. Teachers could encourage students to take the initiative in searching for a short video to which they analyze or design activities for their peers. Regarding the intercultural aspect, the videos are believed to contain cultural aspects that require further discussion than the sole messages conveyed through the videos, which could be seen as superficial and abridged

since they demonstrate only a small part of a culture. They, nonetheless, have the potential to trigger debate, especially when exposed to content where controversial perspectives about their local cultural practices are presented. They could be put into a position to discuss their assumptions and long-held beliefs. However, teachers were aware of the potential threats associated with uncensored content, which required students to reflect critically with guidance and discussion. This is in line with prior research that warned against the negative impact of TikTok and similar media channels (Yang, 2020; Rasyid et al., 2023). As researchers, therefore, we feel a need to raise the importance of teachers' facilitation, and a collective effort to avoid cultural dichotomies, biases, and ethnocentrism altogether. Such aspects are fertile ground for discussion when it comes to uncensored videos like ones on TikTok. Similar to what an interviewed teacher said, it is sometimes necessary to expose students to controversy to gauge their honest reaction and reflection for growth and change.

The study was able to gather a group of 14 participants, representative of EFL teachers and students. However, it is quite a humble number to generalize the findings. It is recommended that later research takes this into account. Moreover, as we discussed, the changes in students' perceptions and attitudes were marginally measured in this qualitative description. It would be interesting to see them quantified by itemized surveys in future studies.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research sheds light on the impact of TikTok videos on students' perceptions and attitudes towards different cultures, as well as the pedagogical implications for English language teaching. The findings suggest that TikTok serves as an engaging and authentic resource for language learning, fostering intercultural awareness and promoting dialogue among students. While the study did not demonstrate significant changes in perceptions and attitudes, it highlighted the importance of exposure and reflection in shaping students' perspectives. Teachers recognize TikTok's potential in language instruction but acknowledge the challenges in curating suitable content and addressing cultural nuances. It is essential for educators to facilitate discussions and promote critical thinking to mitigate biases and ethnocentrism. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the need for larger sample sizes and quantitative measures to generalize findings accurately. Moving forward, future research should explore the quantifiable impact of TikTok on students' perceptions and attitudes, while also addressing the potential benefits and drawbacks of the platform's personalizing algorithm. Ultimately, fostering media literacy and promoting inclusive discourse are essential in harnessing the educational potential of platforms like TikTok.

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