Exploring the New Frontiers of ELT for a Better Tomorrow:
Innovative Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Assessment

Thailand TESOL Conference Proceedings 2025

24–25 January 2025

The Association of English Teachers in Thailand (Thailand TESOL)

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

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Notes from the Immediate Past President

As we conclude the 44th Thailand TESOL International Conference 2025, the inspiring presentations, discussions, and workshops — and the dedication of all educators — will long be remembered. 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, advisors, 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 44th Thailand TESOL International Conference 2025, held under the theme "Exploring the New Frontiers of ELT for a Better Tomorrow: Innovative Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Assessment" from January 24th to 25th, 2025. 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 Associate Professor Dr. Athip Thumvichit, Assistant Professor Dr. Denchai Prabjandee, Assistant Professor Dr. Pariwat Imsa-ard, and Ajarn Tatchakrit Matyakhan, 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 - The 45th Thailand TESOL International Conference 2026 will take place in Bangkok from 30 – 31 January 2026.

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

With warm regards,

Thanakorn Thongprayoon, PhD, SFHEA
Immediate Past President, Thailand TESOL

Notes from the Current President

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the 44th Thailand TESOL International Conference 2025 "Exploring the New Frontiers of ELT for a Better Tomorrow: Innovative Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Assessment," held on 24–25 January 2025 at the Swissotel Bangkok Ratchada, Bangkok, Thailand.

This conference marks a pivotal moment in our profession. As English language teaching in Thailand and across the region evolves in response to globalisation, digital disruption, multilingual realities and 21st-century demands, so too must the ways in which we conceptualise curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. Our theme invites us to imagine the "new frontiers" of ELT—not only in terms of tools and technologies, but also in terms of mindset, inclusivity, innovation and educational impact.

Over the years, the Thailand TESOL Association has been committed to strengthening English language education at all levels, furthering research in the teaching of English to speakers of other languages, and promoting professional dialogue and collaboration. This year's proceedings draw together the contributions of teacher-researchers, curriculum designers, assessment specialists and policy makers whose work embodies this commitment.

In these pages you will encounter a rich diversity of studies and reflections—on curriculum redesign aligned with learner-needs and national priorities, on pedagogical practices that harness collaboration, digital media and critical literacies, and on assessment approaches that go beyond the conventional to embrace task-based, formative, and technology-enhanced models. Such work is precisely what the "better tomorrow" in our theme envisions.

As President of the Association, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all the presenters, participants, and reviewers for their dedication, insight and generosity of spirit. I also express deep appreciation to the organising committee and our institutional partners for making this conference possible. Together, you help maintain Thailand TESOL's role as a professional and non-political organisation dedicated to the advancement of English language education in our national and global contexts.

May this collection of papers spark new ideas, foster new collaborations, and ultimately contribute to more effective, meaningful and equitable English language learning for our learners. As we turn the page to the next era of ELT, let us embrace innovation, reflect deeply on our practice, and continuously strive for teaching and assessment that empowers students in Thailand and beyond.

Warmest regards,

Assistant Professor Monthon Kanokpermpoon, PhD
President, Thailand TESOL Association
30 October 2025

Notes from Editors

The Thailand TESOL Conference Proceedings 2025 represents the culmination of scholarly works presented at the 44th Thailand TESOL International Conference 2025, held in Bangkok, Thailand. This volume brings together 16 papers that span diverse areas of English language education, including English linguistics, materials development, intercultural communication, CLIL, online learning, and teacher identity.

Despite their varied focuses, all contributions share a unifying commitment to enhancing the quality of English language education across Asian contexts. The papers feature research and pedagogical innovations from contributors based in Thailand, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and China—reflecting the regional collaboration and cross-contextual applicability that Thailand TESOL has continually championed.

As the editors of this volume, I take pride in witnessing the breadth and depth of scholarship represented in this collection. Each paper extends beyond the ephemeral discussions of the conference, offering enduring insights into English language teaching, learning, and assessment practices. It is my hope that this e-Proceedings will serve as a valuable reference for educators, researchers, administrators, and policymakers who seek to make informed decisions in advancing ELT practices—whether through curriculum design, materials development, pedagogical innovation, or educational policy.

Best wishes,

Pariwat Imsa-ard
Denchai Prabjandee
Tatchakrit Matyakhan

Editors


The 45th
Thailand TESOL
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 2026
SWISSOTEL BANGKOK RATCHADA
30-31 January 2026
SUB THEMES
• BILINGUAL AND MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION
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• GLOBAL ENGLISHES
• INNOVATION, TECHNOLOGY AND AI
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16th October Acceptance Notifications (Within 4 weeks after the submission)
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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.

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Strategies for enhancing positive impacts in online English tutorials: Insights from the Better English Project

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Abstract

Following the recent announcement from the Commission on Higher Education in Thailand, undergraduate students must achieve a minimum English language proficiency level of B2 according to the CEFR framework. The Faculty of Management Science at Silpakorn University is committed to helping students meet this requirement. Beyond standard English classes, we have implemented supportive projects such as the Better English Project, which offers eight free tutorial sessions for first- to third-year students. This initiative enhances basic English skills—grammar, reading, listening, and speaking—and test-taking strategies for relevant assessments. The tutorials, conducted online via Microsoft Teams and Zoom, last an hour and a half, including pre-tests and post-tests. Former students lead each session with bachelor's and master's degrees in English. This study aims to assess the project's impact by examining students' perceptions, progress in English learning, and performance on the Silpakorn Test of English Proficiency (STEP). For the data collection, we employed observations and online questionnaires. Results showed more participation, with over a hundred students attending each session, than any previous online English initiative. More importantly, the feedback was positive, indicating significant improvements in students' English skills. The study highlights the project's effectiveness, contributing valuable insights for enhancing English language learning opportunities for Thai undergraduates, including key characteristics contributing to its positive impact.

Keywords: online tutoring, online English tutorials, English teaching strategies, blended learning, Thai undergraduate students, English language proficiency

INTRODUCTION

English language proficiency is increasingly crucial for university students in Thailand, driven by the Commission on Higher Education's mandate for undergraduates to achieve at least a B2 level under the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. This requirement, coupled with the increasing globalization of education and employment markets, intensifies the need for effective English language instruction and support within Thai higher education institutions. Strong English skills are often a prerequisite for academic advancement, career opportunities, and accessing a broader range of global resources.

While the importance of English proficiency for Thai university students is well-established, and various online language learning platforms exist, research specifically exploring the effectiveness of structured online tutorial programs, particularly within the Thai higher education context, remains limited. Existing studies often focus on broader e-learning approaches or specific technological tools,

without delving into the nuanced pedagogical strategies and support systems essential for successful online language learning in this environment.

This study addresses this gap by examining the Better English Project, a structured online tutorial program implemented by the Faculty of Management Science at Silpakorn University. Designed to enhance fundamental English skills—including grammar, reading, listening, and speaking—and provide test-taking strategies, the project offers eight free, 90-minute online sessions via Microsoft Teams and Zoom, led by experienced alumni. The project's structured approach, featuring pre-and post-tests, has demonstrated significant student engagement, with over one hundred participants per session, surpassing previous initiatives.

By investigating student perceptions, learning progress, and performance on the standardized Silpakorn Test of English Proficiency, this research aims to provide valuable insights into the design and implementation of effective online English language learning programs for Thai undergraduates. The study contributes to the broader discussion on optimizing online English education to meet institutional objectives and students' specific needs.

Research objectives

1. Investigate student perceptions of the Better English Project
2. Assess student progress in English language learning
3. Evaluate student performance on the standardized Silpakorn Test of English Proficiency (STEP). This involves comparing the current standardized Silpakorn Test of English Proficiency (STEP) results of students who participated in the Better English Project with their standardized Silpakorn Test of English Proficiency (STEP) results after participating in the project to identify the impact on standardized test scores.
4. Identify key characteristics contributing to the project's success.

Research questions

1. What are students' opinions on the online tutorials, learning materials, and support systems provided within the project?
2. To what extent does participation in the Better English Project improve students' English language proficiency as measured by pre-and post-tests?
3. Does participation in the Better English Project result in a statistically significant difference in students' scores on the Silpakorn Test of English Proficiency (STEP)?
4. What are the key characteristics of project success?

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review examines the challenges of English language teaching in Thai higher education and the role of online tutorial programs, drawing on studies of e-learning, blended learning, and language acquisition. It highlights key strategies and best practices for optimizing effective online English learning. Finally, the review establishes the rationale and conceptual framework for this research, with a focus on online tutorial programs in the Better English Project.

The challenges in English language teaching in Thai higher education

English proficiency is widely recognized as essential for Thai university students, yet challenges in achieving this goal remain persistent. Traditional pedagogical approaches, limited exposure to authentic

English environments, and heavy reliance on grammar-translation methods hinder communicative competence (Padermprach, 2017). Contributing factors such as large class sizes and insufficient teacher training have resulted in stagnation in proficiency levels despite substantial investments in English education (Fitzpatrick, 2011). As a result, universities face increasing responsibility to prepare graduates with the language skills needed for modern workplaces.

Since 1996, the Ministry of Education has revised English curricula to promote communication, knowledge acquisition, and career readiness. However, low proficiency levels remain a concern. The policy requiring undergraduates to achieve at least a B2 level under the CEFR is particularly challenging, given students' diverse educational backgrounds. This situation underscores the need for tailored support and student-centered approaches (Dunn et al., 2011).

Prior studies indicate that many Thai undergraduates remain at beginner levels despite extensive instruction. Online tutorials offer potential to overcome large class sizes and limited engagement (Suwannoppharat & Chinokul, 2015). However, little research has explored specific pedagogical strategies within structured online tutorials that foster measurable gains in proficiency and learner satisfaction, thus a gap this study seeks to address.

E-learning and blended learning in language acquisition

The integration of e-learning and blended learning has reshaped language pedagogy by offering flexible and accessible opportunities for acquisition. In Thailand, teacher-centered instruction in traditional classrooms often fails to meet diverse learner needs, underscoring the importance of technology-enhanced solutions (Banditvilai, 2016). Globally, e-learning has grown due to its potential for personalization and its ability to overcome geographical barriers. This shift has fostered blended learning, which combines face-to-face teaching with online elements to optimize outcomes and increase engagement (Banditvilai, 2016). While e-learning provides "anytime-anywhere" flexibility and supports autonomy, limited direct interaction can be a drawback (Banditvilai, 2016). Blended approaches address this by merging convenience with interpersonal exchange, reducing learner isolation (Banditvilai, 2016). With the rise of digital technologies providing access to authentic input, it is essential to examine the effectiveness of structured online tutorial programs in Thai higher education.

Previous research focused on online English tutorials in Thai higher education

While e-learning and blended learning have expanded globally and in Thailand, most studies emphasize general applications or discrete skills rather than comprehensive online tutorial programs (Dahlia et al., 2018; Fischer & Yang, 2022). Research highlights digital resources for improving listening and reading, yet a gap persists regarding the influence of structured tutorials on overall proficiency and standardized performance (Banditvilai, 2016). With the rapid adoption of video conferencing and virtual tutoring, systematic evaluation within formal frameworks is essential (Edelhauser et al., 2021). Although e-learning's potential for interactive and individualized learning is acknowledged, few analyses address its integration into structured tutorial systems (Schulz, 2023), especially in Thai higher education. Despite Thailand's ICT Master Plan, evidence on the impact of structured online English tutorials on student proficiency and satisfaction remains limited (Banditvilai, 2016). Drawing on social learning theory, which views language acquisition as shaped by collaboration and cultural context (Phothongsunan, 2014), the Better English Project applied interactive, learner-centered online sessions. Its framework emphasized culturally relevant content, personalized feedback, effective platform use, motivation, and pre-/post-testing, as shown in Figure 1.

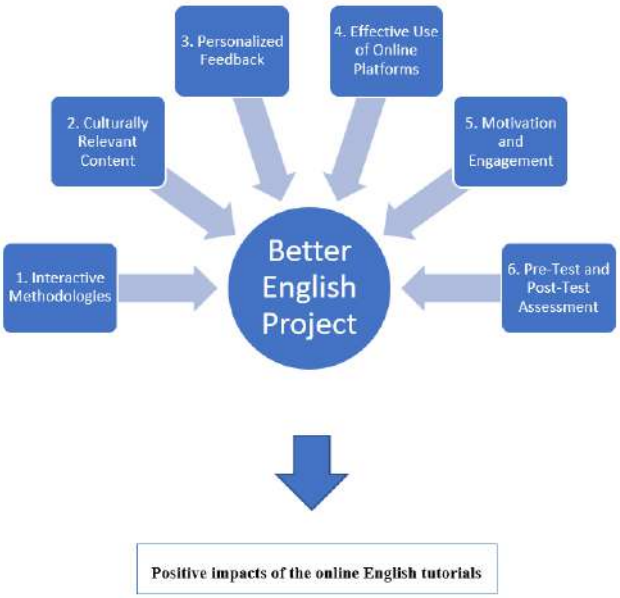

Figure 1. *The conceptual framework of research*

Interactive methodologies

Active participation is central to effective online learning. Collaborative tasks, multimedia resources, and structured questioning help sustain attention and critical thinking (Janssen et al., 2021). Creating a supportive atmosphere where learners feel safe to answer, even incorrectly, encourages confidence and continued engagement (Arlotta, 2025). Thus, interactive teaching was proposed in the Better English project. The teachers were encouraged to maintain interactions with students by inviting students to respond to their opinions, answer any related questions via the chat provided, or even send an emoticon to show their responsiveness. This not only develops communicative competence but also nurtures confidence in using English.

Culturally relevant content

Culturally responsive pedagogy improves comprehension and motivation by validating learners' identities (Arbour et al., 2015; Gay, 2018). In Thai higher education, examples tied to local contexts can bridge global and local perspectives. Tutors with shared cultural backgrounds may also serve as relatable role models. However, cultural relevance extends beyond shared identity—it requires sensitivity to diversity and adaptability in teaching. By embedding cultural resonance, the project also fostered belonging and reduced disengagement.

Personalized feedback

Feedback tailored to individual learner needs is a powerful driver of progress (Caruso et al., 2019). Online platforms enable immediate corrections and private feedback channels. Since Thai learners may hesitate to speak up for fear of mistakes, offering one-on-one feedback options helps protect confidence (Guardado & Shi, 2007). Personalized guidance allows learners to view mistakes as opportunities rather

than failures, enhancing persistence in language study. For this reason, the teacher teaching in the Better English Project also offered students personalized feedback throughout the project period.

Effective Use of Online Platforms

Digital tools such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams offer breakout rooms, interactive whiteboards, chat functions, and recording features. These can replicate classroom dynamics and support varied learning styles when applied intentionally (Janssen et al., 2021). However, technology alone does not guarantee success; strategic design is required to create meaningful interaction (Salmon & Barrera, 2021), thus the teachers teaching in the Better English Project were also encouraged to use the functions available on the platform they preferred to maximize engagement when teaching.

Motivation and engagement

Motivation is sustained through both intrinsic interest and external recognition. Certificates and acknowledgments can boost short-term engagement (Levy et al., 2017; Semenova, 2022), though long-term success requires cultivating genuine interest (Richter et al., 2015). In Thailand, visible achievements often encourage participation, but integrating meaningful activities that foster personal growth will ensure deeper engagement. In this regard, students who actively participated in the Better English Project were offered the official electronic certificate to certify their achievements.

Pre-test and post-test assessment

Diagnostic assessments help tailor instruction, while post-tests measure outcomes and highlight areas for improvement (Malik & Alam, 2019; Semkins & Allen, 2000). For learners, evidence of progress enhances self-confidence and persistence. In the Thai academic context, pre-/post-tests also provide credible measures of program effectiveness while emphasizing improvement over judgment. This practice was employed in the Better English Project in all sessions. This is the way to help students see their progress in each session that they have participated in.

To address all the research questions outlined in Figure 1, the following section outlines the brief research methodology employed in this study.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

This research used a mixed-methods approach involving quantitative and qualitative elements. The mixed-methods approach was chosen to leverage the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative data enabled the researchers to measure the statistical significance of the learning gains. In contrast, the qualitative data offered more profound insights into the nuances of the learners' experiences and the contextual factors that influenced the effectiveness of the online tutorials. The mixed-method approach applied in this study was introduced by Creswell and Creswell in 2014 (Creswell & Creswell, 2014). A sequential mixed-methods design was utilized, with quantitative data collected first, followed by qualitative data collection to provide a more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2014). Thus, the combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods provided a more comprehensive and robust investigation of the research problem.

The quantitative component in this study consisted of pre- and post-tests to assess the impact of the online tutorials on the English language proficiency of Thai undergraduate students. Pre- and post-

tests allowed for a systematic evaluation of the learning outcomes and the effectiveness of the instructional strategies employed. A quasi-experimental pretest-posttest control group design was specifically employed to assess the impact of integrated movie-based mobile learning instructions on student performance (Chaya & Inpin, 2020). Thus, this design facilitated the isolation of variables and precise measurement of learning gains, thereby enhancing the internal validity of the study

The qualitative component, on the other hand, involved surveys and semi-structured interviews with students and instructors to gather in-depth insights into their perceptions, experiences, and challenges encountered during the online learning process. This comprehensive approach enabled a holistic understanding of the online tutorial program's efficacy, incorporating both measurable proficiency gains and subjective user experiences (Sondakh et al., 2023). This methodological triangulation strengthens the validity of the findings by corroborating quantitative data with rich qualitative narratives. In this research, the qualitative aspect of the study involved collecting feedback and perceptions from students through open-ended questionnaires and observations. The results provided valuable insights into the learners' experiences, preferences, and attitudes towards the online tutorials, complementing the quantitative data and offering a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

Participants

The target population for this study consisted of Thai undergraduate students enrolled in a university-level English language course. The participants in this study were undergraduate students from the Faculty of Management Science at Silpakorn University. These students voluntarily participated in the Better English Project, which offered eight online tutorial sessions to improve English proficiency. Participation in the project was open to first- to third-year students, and the sessions were scheduled in the evening, likely after students' afternoon classes, to accommodate their availability. Each tutorial session attracted over a hundred students, a turnout that exceeded previous online English initiatives, highlighting the students' interest and commitment to improving their English skills.

Students in the third year across various academic majors with the Faculty of Management Science were invited to participate in the project, which was promoted. They agreed to sign the consent form when they registered for the project. However, to analyze the accurate statistical data, a purposive sampling technique was used to select research participants for the quantitative data collection and analysis. In the end, 100 students who participated in all eight English tutorial sessions and responded to all questionnaires provided were selected to participate in this research. As the participation in this research was initially open for students to be volunteers, participants came from diverse academic backgrounds, including business administration, accounting, and marketing, and their English proficiency levels ranged from A1 to C2 based on the CEFR.

Data collection and instruments

The data instruments of this study are divided into two main categories as follows.

The quantitative data collection and instruments for this study included:

Pre-test: An online multiple-choice standardized English language proficiency test aligned with the CEFR framework and topic offered in each session was administered (e.g., grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension, speaking, and listening tests) at the beginning of the study to assess the students' baseline English skills.

Post-test: At the end of the online tutorial sessions, the same standardized English language proficiency test was administered to measure the students' progress and the effectiveness of the online instructional strategies.

Student satisfaction questionnaire: A survey was developed to gather feedback from the participants on their perceptions of the online tutorials, including their level of engagement, perceived usefulness, and overall satisfaction.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the instruments, the researchers consulted with subject matter experts in English language education and online learning to refine the content and structure of the tests and questionnaires. The pre- and post-tests were carefully aligned with the learning objectives and content covered in the online tutorials.

The qualitative data collection methods included:

Classroom observations: The researchers conducted observations during the online tutorial sessions to gather insights into the students' engagement, participation, and interactions with the learning materials and instructors.

Open-ended questionnaires: At the end of the study, students were asked to provide written feedback on their experiences, challenges, and suggestions for improving the online tutorials.

The researchers used quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to triangulate the findings and understand the effectiveness of online English tutorials for Thai undergraduate students.

Procedure

The research was conducted throughout eight sessions within two months. At the beginning of each session, the participants completed an online pre-test to assess their baseline English language proficiency related to the topic. At the end of each session, they completed an online post-test to evaluate their knowledge of the English language and the topic covered. The online English language tutorials were delivered across eight weekly sessions, each lasting one hour. These tutorials were conducted synchronously via a video conferencing platform, enabling real-time interaction between the instructor and the students. The instructional strategies employed in the online tutorials were carefully designed to engage the students and address their specific learning needs.

Online tutorial sessions schedule

The Better English Project consisted of eight tutorial sessions, each lasting 90 minutes. These sessions were held on the following dates and were divided between two instructors:

Tutor 1

Tutor 1, an alumnus of the Business Management and Languages program at Silpakorn University, holds a master's degree in linguistics from a university in the U.K. With 10 years of teaching experience focused on academic English and business communication, he currently works as an English lecturer at a university in Thailand. Tutor 1's online English sessions were conducted via MS Teams from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. on the following days.

1. Session 1 (August 7, 2024): "ไวยากรณ์ภาษาอังกฤษ ใช้ผิดชีวิตเปลี่ยน" (English grammar: Wrong usage can change your life)
2. Session 2 (August 8, 2024): "ข้อสอบไวยากรณ์ง่ายนิดเดียว" (Easy grammar tests)
3. Session 3 (August 14, 2024): "อ่านภาษาอังกฤษยังไงให้ Get ไวสุดๆ" (How to scan English)
4. Session 4 (August 15, 2024): "เทคนิคการทำข้อสอบ Reading แบบตัวท็อป" (Top techniques for reading tests)

Tutor 2

This tutor, an alumna of the Business Management and Languages program at Silpakorn University, holds a master's degree in human resources management from a university in the U.K. She currently works as an officer for a government organization in Thailand and has 8 years of tutoring experience, specializing in academic English and business communication. Her online English sessions were held via the Zoom Meeting platform from 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. on the scheduled days.

1. Session 5 (September 11, 2024): "ภาษาอังกฤษ ฟังปุ๊บ เข้าใจปั๊บ" (Listening skills: Understand immediately)
2. Session 6 (September 12, 2024): "เทคนิคการทำข้อสอบ Listening แบบหูไม่ดับ" (Listening test strategies: Never miss a beat)
3. Session 7 (September 17, 2024): "I can speak English! ฉันพูดภาษาอังกฤษได้จ้า" (I can speak English! Yes, I can!)
4. Session 8 (September 18, 2024): "เทคนิคการทำข้อสอบ Speaking สอบทีไร ได้คะแนนเต็มทุกที" (Speaking test strategies: Always scoring full marks)

Students joined weekly sessions covering grammar, reading, listening, and speaking. Each session began with an online pre-test and concluded with a post-test, enabling immediate assessment of learning. Platforms such as MS Teams and Zoom supported real-time interaction and collaboration between tutors and students. At the end of each session, participants completed satisfaction questionnaires, while researchers conducted classroom observations to capture engagement and interaction. After several weeks, some students took the Silpakorn Test of English Proficiency (STEP). Their new scores were compared with previous ones to evaluate the effectiveness of the tutorials in improving English language proficiency.

Data Analysis

This section presents the quantitative and qualitative data analysis as follows.

Quantitative data analysis

The quantitative data from the pre-test, post-test, and satisfaction questionnaire were analyzed using statistical software, SPSS 30.0.0. The researchers conducted paired t-tests to examine the significance of the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores and the previous and current STEP scores, indicating the effectiveness of the online English tutorials in improving the students' English language proficiency.

Descriptive statistics, such as means and standard deviations, were calculated to analyze the students' perceptions and satisfaction with online tutorials. In addition, multiple regression analysis was performed to investigate the factors that influenced the students' satisfaction with the online tutorials, such as interactive methods, culturally relevant content, personalized feedback, effective use of the online platform, motivation and engagement, the inclusion of pre-tests and post-tests, and the teaching ability of each tutor.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data from the classroom observations and open-ended questionnaires were analyzed using thematic analysis. The researchers reviewed the observation notes and student feedback from questionnaires to identify recurring themes, patterns, and insights that could provide a deeper understanding of the students' experiences and perceptions of the online tutorials. The literature review findings were also used to analyze recurring themes.

The results of qualitative data analysis were then integrated with the quantitative data analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of online English tutorials for Thai undergraduate students. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data analysis allowed the researchers to enrich the findings and draw well-rounded conclusions about the effectiveness of online English tutorials for Thai undergraduate students.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

The research study was conducted based on awareness of ethics in human research, as the researchers have been certified by the Institutional Review Board Association of Legal and Political, Thailand. They participated in the Ethics in Human Research training on February 12, 2024. Thus, all participants were fully informed about the project details, their rights as participants, and the use of the data collected. The participants' anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained, and no personally identifiable information was disclosed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the key findings from the study and discusses their implications for the effectiveness of online English tutorials for Thai undergraduate students based on the following research questions.

Demographic data of participants

The study included 100 Thai undergraduate students from different programs (e.g., Business Management and Languages, Business Innovation Management, Marketing, International Logistics Management, and so on). Most were in their second or third year, and their average age was 20. The majority of the participants had prior experience with online learning, though their level of English proficiency varied, as shown in the tables below.

Table 1 presents the gender distribution of the 100 Thai undergraduate student participants. A majority of the participants (69%) identified as female.

Table 1.
Gender of Participant

Gender	***N***	**%**
Female	69	69.0%
Male	19	19.0%
LGBTQ+	10	10.0%
Prefer not to say	2	2.0%

Table 2 displays the distribution of participants by year of study. Almost half of the participants (47%) were second-year students, followed closely by third-year students (46%). First-year students represented a smaller portion (7%) of the sample. Possible explanations include scheduling conflicts, lack of awareness about the project, or differing English language learning needs among first-year students compared to their upper-year counterparts.

Table 2.
Year of Study

Year	***N***	**%**
Year 1	7	7.0%
Year 2	47	47.0%
Year 3	46	46.0%

Table 3 provides a breakdown of participants by their program of study. Business Innovation Management was the most represented program (37%), followed by International Logistics Management (21%) and Business Management and Languages (20%). This distribution highlights the diverse academic backgrounds of the participants and suggests that the project attracted students from a range of business-related disciplines.

Table 3.
Program of Study

Program	***N***	**%**
Business Innovation Management	37	37.0%
Marketing	7	7.0%
International Logistics Management	21	21.0%
Business Management and Languages	20	20.0%
Accountancy	8	8.0%
Public Administration	3	3.0%
Exhibition and Events Management	2	2.0%
Tourism Management	1	1.0%
Community Management	1	1.0%

What are students' opinions on the online tutorials, learning materials, and support systems provided within the project?

This section presents the results and discussion of the quantitative and qualitative data analysis to address the first research question. The quantitative data from the student perception survey revealed several key findings concerning effective strategies for enhancing the online English tutorials in the Better English Project. The Likert scale items included in the survey were rated by respondents using a five-point scale, with each question ranging from 1 to 5. To analyze the data from these Likert scale items, an interval class formula was used to determine the range of values within each satisfaction level (Huang, 2016). The formula for calculating the interval class is as follows:

$$\text{Interval class} = \frac{\text{Range (Max value – Min value)}}{\text{Number of intervals}} = \frac{(5-1)}{5} = 0.80$$

The categorization of average scores is as follows:

Average scores between 4.22 and 5.00 correspond to 'Extremely Satisfied'
Average scores between 3.43 and 4.21 correspond to 'Very Satisfied'
Average scores between 2.62 and 3.42 correspond to 'Satisfied.'

Average scores between 1.81 and 2.61 correspond to 'Partly Satisfied'
Average scores between 1.00 and 1.80 correspond to 'Not at all Satisfied.'

Table 4 displays the means and standard deviations of Thai undergraduate students' perceptions of online English tutorials. Students rated their satisfaction with the following elements: Interactive methodologies (Mean = 4.40, *SD* = 0.79), Culturally relevant content (Mean = 4.41, *SD* = 0.73), Personalized feedback (Mean = 4.49, *SD* = 0.81), MS Teams (Mean = 4.47, *SD* = 0.81), Zoom Meeting (Mean = 4.47, *SD* = 0.81), Motivation & Engagement (Mean = 4.48, *SD* = 0.81), inclusion of pre-tests and post-tests (Mean = 4.53, *SD* = 0.69), teaching of tutor 1 (Mean = 4.65, *SD* = 0.73), teaching of tutor 2 (Mean = 4.63, *SD* = 0.76), Schedule (Mean = 4.29, *SD* = 0.87), and Overall Satisfaction (Mean = 4.48, *SD* = 0.78). Given the provided scale, these results indicate that students were generally "Extremely Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied" with all aspects. The highest satisfaction levels were with the teaching of both tutors and the inclusion of pre- and post-tests. The lowest satisfaction was with the schedule.

Table 4.
Descriptive Statistics of Students' Perceived Satisfaction with Online English Tutorials

		Interactive methodologies	Culturally relevant content	Personalized feedback	MS Teams	Zoom Meeting	Motivation & Engagement	The inclusion of pre-tests and post-tests	Teaching of tutor 1	Teaching of Tutor 2	Schedule	Overall Satisfaction
N	Valid	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Mean		4.40	4.41	4.49	4.47	4.47	4.48	4.53	4.65	4.63	4.29	4.48
SD		.79	.72	.81	.80	.80	.81	.69	.73	.76	.87	.78

Table 4 demonstrates consistently high satisfaction levels among students across all dimensions of the online English tutorials. Mean scores above four on a 5-point scale indicate that participants were generally "Very Satisfied" or "Extremely Satisfied," reflecting the project's overall effectiveness in addressing critical aspects of online learning. The highest ratings were for Teaching of Tutor 1 (4.65) and Teaching of Tutor 2 (4.63), underscoring the pivotal role of instructor quality in fostering satisfaction and engagement. Similarly, the strong score for Inclusion of pre-tests and post-tests (4.53) highlights students' appreciation of structured learning and assessment. High ratings for Interactive methodologies (4.40) and culturally relevant content (4.41) further emphasize the importance of engaging pedagogy and contextually meaningful materials.

Although satisfaction with platforms (MS Teams and Zoom, both 4.47) and motivation/engagement (4.48) was also strong, the relatively lower score for Schedule (4.29) suggests challenges in timing or flexibility.

Qualitative data reinforced these findings. Thematic analysis revealed four key themes: (1) effective instructional strategies, including multimedia, Q&A, and gamification; (2) personalized feedback and support, fostering motivation; (3) culturally relevant content, making lessons meaningful; and (4) flexibility and accessibility, allowing students to adapt learning to their schedules. Thus, these insights confirm the effectiveness of the strategies employed in the Better English Project.

To what extent does participation in the Better English Project improve students' English language proficiency as measured by pre- and post-tests?

This section aims to answer the second research question. The question was included to assess students' progress through the implementation of pre- and post-tests on the online English tutorials. In this regard, standardized test scores were used to measure changes in student English proficiency.

The results presented in Table 5 were obtained through paired-sample t-tests conducted using SPSS software. These analyses compared the students' pre-test and post-test scores, revealing a statistically significant improvement in English language proficiency across all six tests.

Statistically significant improvement: All six tests showed statistically significant improvements in post-test scores compared to pre-test scores ($p < .001$, one-sided). This confirms that participation in the online tutorials had a measurable positive effect on students' performance. Overall, the findings demonstrate that participation in the Better English Project significantly enhanced students' English proficiency, with the most substantial impact in areas of lower initial performance.

The results presented in Table 5 provide strong evidence of the effectiveness of the Better English Project in enhancing students' English language proficiency. The paired-samples *t*-tests demonstrated statistically significant improvements ($p < .001$, one-sided) across all six test areas following the intervention. These findings suggest that the online tutorials had a positive impact on students' learning outcomes across multiple dimensions of English language development.

Although all tests revealed improvement, the magnitude of the gains varied. Test 1 produced the most substantial improvement (M diff = 1.60), whereas Test 6 showed the smallest increase (M diff = 0.44). This variation may reflect the different skills or knowledge domains targeted by each test. Future analyses should investigate the specific content of each test to understand better why certain language skills appeared to benefit more from the tutorials than others.

Table 5.

Results of Paired Samples Test of Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores

				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	*t*	*df*	One-Sided *p*
Pair 1	Post_Test1 - Pre_Test1	1.60	1.69	.17	1.26	1.93	9.44	99
Pair 2	Post_Test2 - Pre_Test2	.64	1.73	.17	.29	.98	3.69	99
Pair 3	Post_Test3 - Pre_Test3	.61	1.28	.13	.35	.86	4.74	99
Pair 4	Post_Test4 - Pre_Test4	.64	1.50	.15	.34	.93	4.24	99

Pair 5	Post_Test5 - Pre_Test5	.53	1.18	.12	.29	.77	4.50	99
Pair 6	Post_Test6 - Pre_Test6	.44	1.25	.12	.19	.68	3.50	99

Does participation in the Better English Project result in a statistically significant difference in students' scores on the Silpakorn Test of English Proficiency (STEP)?

This section examines the third research question. To examine this question, the research team conducted a paired-samples *t*-test comparing the STEP scores of students before and after their participation in the Better English Project. At this stage, only 40 out of the 60 participants agreed to provide their STEP test data. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 6.

The results in Table 6 indicate that participation in the Better English Project did not produce a statistically significant difference in students' STEP scores. With a two-sided *p*-value of .421, the observed mean difference of 0.05 between pre- and post-STEP scores was not statistically significant, $t(39) = 0.81$, $p = .421$. This finding suggests that although the project was beneficial in other areas of English proficiency, it did not translate into measurable changes on this standardized assessment. Crucially, the analysis is limited by the smaller sample size of 40 students compared to the larger sample used in the internal tutorial tests, potentially impacting the generalizability of these specific results.

Four possible factors may explain this result. *First,* the STEP exam may emphasize formal academic English, advanced reading, or specific grammatical structures that were not the primary focus of the online tutorials. A *second* significant factor could be the relatively short duration of the project, which may have been insufficient to produce measurable changes on a standardized test designed to assess a wide range of language skills developed over a more extended period. *Third*, the specific design of the online tutorials may not have aligned with the psychometric properties and construct validity of the STEP exam, which often measures a broader spectrum of language competencies. *Additionally*, the observed ceiling effects in some of the internal assessments may indicate that the tutorials effectively addressed specific gaps in proficiency but were not robust enough to elevate overall competency as measured by a comprehensive standardized instrument like the STEP. In conclusion, while the analysis did not reveal a statistically significant improvement in students' performance on the Silpakorn Test of English Proficiency, the Better English Project demonstrated notable positive effects on various internal measures of English proficiency and positive perception of students who participated in the project. This is essential to emphasize.

Table 6.
Results of Paired Samples T-Test for STEP Scores

		Paired Differences							Significance	
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					
		Mean	*SD*	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	*t*	*df*	One-Sided *p*	Two-Sided *p*
Pair 1	STEP_After - STEP_Before	.05	.39	.06	-.07	.17	.81	39	.21	.42

What are the key characteristics of project success?

This section presents the results in responding to the fourth research question. As this research combined both quantitative and qualitative analyses, drawing on students' perceptions from questionnaires and

interviews to provide a comprehensive understanding, the results and discussion are discussed as follows.

Quantitative findings on English proficiency gains

The quantitative results presented earlier indicate that the Better English Project contributed to measurable improvements in English proficiency, particularly in listening, speaking, reading, and vocabulary. To further explore the underlying factors contributing to this success, the research team employed multiple regression analysis using SPSS. The aim was to identify which strategies or factors implemented in the project influenced students' progress in English.

Table 7 summarizes the regression results, examining the relationship between project-related factors and the average mean difference between pre- and post-test scores (dependent variable).

- The model's *R* Square value of 0.099 indicates that only 9.9% of the variance in test score improvement is explained by the predictors.
- None of the predictors reached statistical significance at the conventional $p < .05$ level.
- The factor "Culturally Relevant Content" had a *p*-value of 0.070, which, while not significant, suggests a potential positive association with test score improvement that warrants further exploration.

Therefore, the regression analysis did not identify any statistically significant predictors of test score improvement, though culturally relevant content emerged as a promising area for further investigation.

Regarding the stated findings, it is essential to note that, although the current regression model did not yield statistically significant predictors for test score improvement, the observed trend for "Culturally Relevant Content" with a *p*-value of 0.070 suggests its potential influence on objective academic gains. This indicates that pedagogical approaches incorporating culturally relevant materials may foster deeper cognitive engagement, ultimately translating into measurable improvements in language proficiency (Rong & Nair, 2021). Consequently, English lessons incorporating culturally relevant content could be instrumental in enhancing learning outcomes, particularly for diverse student populations where such content resonates with their lived experiences and cultural backgrounds, aligning with research advocating for student-centered approaches and activity-based learning to promote creativity and analytical skills in language acquisition.

Table 7.

The Results of Multiple Regression Analysis between Factors Influencing the Students' Progress in the Better English Project

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.300	.667		.450	.654
	Teaching of Tutor 1	-.217	.174	-.277	-1.250	.214
	Teaching of Tutor 2	-.083	.165	-.110	-.503	.616
	Schedule	.062	.105	.094	.591	.556
	Interactive methodologies	.142	.138	.197	1.028	.307
	Culturally Relevant Content	.197	.107	.250	1.835	.070
	Personalized feedback	.264	.618	.374	.428	.670
	MS Teams	-.031	.075	-.044	-.412	.682
	Zoom Meeting	.015	.105	.021	.142	.888

Motivation & Engagement	-.133	.618	-.188	-.215	.831
The inclusion of pre-tests & and post-tests	-.096	.111	-.116	-.863	.390

Note: Dependent Variable = Average Mean Difference of Pre-Tests and Post-Tests
F=.980, R Square=0.099

Quantitative findings on student satisfaction

In addition to proficiency outcomes, a second regression analysis was conducted to identify factors influencing students' satisfaction with the project (Table 8). The model achieved an R Square of 0.738, indicating that the predictors explained 73.8% of the variance in satisfaction—a relatively strong level of explanatory power.

Four factors emerged as statistically significant:

- Teaching of Tutor 2 ($p < .001$): A strong positive predictor of satisfaction. Higher ratings of Tutor 2's teaching were associated with greater overall satisfaction.
- Schedule ($p = .004$): A positive predictor, suggesting that satisfaction with the timetable contributed meaningfully to overall satisfaction.
- Personalized Feedback ($p = .026$): A negative predictor, indicating that lower satisfaction with feedback was paradoxically associated with higher overall satisfaction. This counterintuitive finding may reflect differences in student expectations or the way feedback was delivered, and it warrants further investigation.
- Motivation and Engagement ($p = .013$): A positive predictor, showing that higher motivation and engagement were linked to greater overall satisfaction.

Although not statistically significant, the "Teaching of Tutor 1" factor ($p = .123$) suggested a possible positive trend that may become significant with a larger sample size. The "Teaching of Tutor 2" and "Schedule" significantly predicted student satisfaction, with "Personalized feedback" showing a negative correlation. "Motivation and Engagement" also boosted satisfaction, aligning with theories on intrinsic drive (Srisermbhok, 2017). These findings suggest that instructor quality and program logistics are more crucial to student satisfaction than direct academic progress. This aligns with research highlighting teacher quality and a supportive environment as crucial for language learning satisfaction (Phothongsunan, 2014). Additionally, "student-centeredness," "campus climate," and "instructional effectiveness" positively impact overall satisfaction in higher education. Ultimately, these insights underscore the multifaceted nature of educational success, where both measurable academic progress and subjective student satisfaction contribute to a holistic evaluation of program effectiveness.

Table 8.

Results of Multiple Regression Analysis on Factors Influencing Students' Satisfaction with the Better English Project

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	*t*	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.563	.493		1.142	.257
	Teaching of Tutor 1	-.200	.128	-.186	-1.556	.123
	Teaching of Tutor 2	.546	.122	.530	4.475	<.001
	Schedule	.227	.078	.252	2.925	.004
	Interactive methodologies	.138	.102	.139	1.345	.182

Culturally Relevant Content	-.083	.079	-.077	-1.046	.298
Personalized feedback	-1.034	.457	-1.067	-2.261	.026
MS Teams	-.042	.055	-.043	-.751	.454
Zoom Meeting	.059	.078	.061	.761	.449
Motivation & Engagement	1.163	.457	1.201	2.545	.013
The inclusion of pre-tests and post-tests	.099	.082	.087	1.207	.231

Note: Dependent variable = Average Mean of Overall Satisfaction of Students
F=25.059, *R* Square=0.738

Comparing the results and discussion in this section with previous studies, it is evident that teacher quality, logistical convenience of the learning schedule, and fostering intrinsic motivation and engagement are crucial determinants of student satisfaction in English language learning initiatives (Harnash-GIezer & Meyer, 1991). These findings highlight the varied impact of different project elements on distinct outcome measures, with factors like perceived teaching quality or schedule convenience significantly influencing overall student satisfaction and continued engagement. As detailed in section 7.5.2, instructor quality (particularly Tutor 2), schedule convenience, and motivation/engagement were found to be significant positive predictors of student satisfaction in the Better English Project. Thus, the results align with established literature emphasizing the importance of pedagogical effectiveness and student-centric logistical planning in enhancing educational experiences.

LIMITATIONS

The study on the Better English Project faced two main limitations. Firstly, the limited sample size and varying session attendance made it difficult to control group dynamics and impacted generalizability, as the small overall sample restricts wider application of findings. Secondly, the limited duration of the intervention, comprising only eight sessions, might have been insufficient for observing substantial, long-term improvements in English proficiency. A longer study would be needed to assess the sustained impact fully. These factors suggest the need for future research with a more robust design and extended duration to confirm the project's efficacy and broader applicability.

CONCLUSION AND RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

The Better English Project demonstrates a successful model for English language education in Thai higher education by balancing academic outcomes with high student satisfaction and engagement. The project highlights six key strategies contributing to its success. Firstly, culturally relevant content shows promise as a driver for academic gains. Though not statistically significant in this study, embedding materials that resonate with students' experiences appears to deepen cognitive engagement and align with student-centered learning approaches. Secondly, instructor quality is paramount for student satisfaction. The teaching of Tutor 2, in particular, was a strong and significant predictor of overall satisfaction, underscoring the crucial role of a tutor's competence, style, and rapport. Thirdly, effective program logistics and structural support, particularly a well-managed schedule, significantly influenced student satisfaction. Accessible and flexible timetabling reduces student stress and enhances the perception of program quality. Fourthly, motivation and engagement emerged as significant contributors to student satisfaction. Fostering interactive and participatory environments where learners feel personally invested is crucial for their continued involvement and positive experience. Fifthly, personalized feedback presented a complex finding, showing a negative correlation with satisfaction. This suggests potential

mismatched expectations or a need to refine feedback delivery to ensure it is perceived as supportive rather than critical.

Finally, the study advocates for a holistic view of success. While direct improvements on standardized external tests were not always statistically significant, the project's overall effectiveness stems from a multifaceted interaction between culturally relevant pedagogy, high-quality instruction, supportive logistics, and strong learner engagement. Student satisfaction is therefore a crucial indicator of impact, complementing measurable academic progress. Future research should thus explore how specific elements, such as culturally relevant content and instructor pedagogical strategies, can be optimized to concurrently enhance both objective proficiency gains and subjective student satisfaction, potentially through longitudinal studies or experimental designs that isolate variables more effectively.

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Identity in the Profiles of Three Thai English Language Tutors on Facebook

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Abstract

Online English language tutoring has become increasingly popular among Thai learners seeking to enhance their language skills. Therefore, it is essential to understand how English language experts construct and present their identities in online settings to establish themselves in a competitive marketplace. This study aims to investigate the online identity of English language tutors in Thailand by analyzing content from three prominent Facebook pages: Perfect English with Teacher Ann, English AfterNoonz, and KruDew English. Using Netnography and the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) as methodological frameworks, the researcher examined 168 posts over a four-week period. In addition to analyzing the content of the posts, online engagement through like counts, share counts and comment counts were observed to understand how followers engage with the content produced by tutors. Findings reveal that English tutors in Thailand construct their online identities not only as language teachers but also as influencers, entrepreneurs, news commentators, and English-language tutors in the digital era. These varied roles reflect a complex approach to digital tutoring that extends beyond traditional teaching practices. This study provides insights into the relationship between online identity construction and digital pedagogical practices, which may contribute to a better understanding of how English language tutoring evolves within digital platforms, particularly in the Thai context.

Keywords: identity, English tutoring, social media, ELT, online tutoring

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decades, language tutoring has greatly expanded. This can reflect the perception of learners and parents that there are problems in formal education and that what has been provided in school does not meet the needs of learners in a highly competitive society. For instance, Bray and Kobakhidze (2014) indicate that the demand for tutoring reflects the forces of broader social competition. However, supplementary tutoring or coaching can also be a perceived need for most of the learners. In other words, learners and their parents may think that supplementary schooling services are necessary even though it may not be their real need (Bray & Kobakhidze, 2014). This might be the result of effective marketing, capitalism, social competition, etc.

Nowadays, language tutoring does not only involve attending onsite classrooms after school, but it is also happening online, particularly on social media, which means that the practices of language tutoring are adapting to the media field. In Thailand, there is an increase in English language teaching on social media in the form of influencers rather than only teachers. This reflects the fact that social media has become an important tool in daily life and has changed the way learners of English acquire their target language as well. Therefore, learners can study language without sitting in a physical classroom, not only from textbooks but also from a variety of other materials. They can acquire language through

videos on social media, video games, blog posts, or any kind of information in English on the Internet that they find suitable and enjoyable for them.

Since the use of the Internet has expanded on a daily basis, we become part of online communities in which we build our identity by the way we post, type, and react. Online identity is a representation of oneself in online spaces that can be created individually according to the digital practices of account owners (Russell & Stutzman, 2007). Like other users of social media, language experts or tutors can also create their online identity while passing knowledge online. They express who they are through choices of profile information, including their experiences, profile pictures, and personal information. In addition, experts can generate their identities through the content they create in the form of videos and/or texts on their pages. English language tutors can therefore represent themselves online not just as teachers but as a combination of several identities, e.g., influencers, entrepreneurs, life coaches, etc.

Given the rapid growth of informal online education and the increasing popularity of using social media as a learning platform, there is a need to investigate how online tutors construct their online identities in social media platforms that blend education, marketing and digital influence. While Thai learners turn to social media platforms for English language support in addition to their formal institutions, online tutors must construct appealing online identities to attract various group of learners. This means that there is a need to investigate how online tutors construct their identities in the digital platforms. Without such research, there would be missed opportunities for improving digital literacy in creating effective online content that is relevant to Thai learners and online contexts in Thailand.

There are several studies investigating the identities of English language teachers (e.g., Koh, 2016; Xiong et al., 2022; Yung & Yuan, 2020). However, there is still a limited number of studies on online identity of English language tutors who position themselves as teachers, and no study has been done in the Thai context. Moreover, most of the studies on online language tutoring focused on the perceptions and outcomes of the learners (e.g., Lee & Lee, 2021; Lee & Sylvén, 2021). Therefore, this study investigates the online identity of Thai English language tutors through their content created on three English tutoring Facebook pages: Perfect English กับครูพี่แอน (Perfect English with Teacher Ann), นุ่น - English AfterNoonz (English AfterNoonz), KruDew English ติวอังกฤษออนไลน์ (KruDew English). These Facebook pages created by popular Thai English language tutors have more than 700,000 followers on Facebook at the time of writing. Based on the aim to gain better understanding about online identity of English-language tutors in the Thai context and the existing gap, I aim to answer the following research question: *How do three Facebook-based online English tutors construct their identity through posts?*

LITERATURE REVIEW

Discourse and Online Identity

According to Varghese et al. (2005), there are two main ways to view language teacher identity: identity-in-practice and identity-in-discourse. This study focuses on identity-in-discourse where identity is shaped through teachers' language and critical reflexivity including the way they talk, think and reflect on themselves and their roles. As can be seen on social media, English language experts represent themselves and construct online identity in several ways though the content created online by using discourse in relevant context. The term Discourse refers to the ways people use languages to make meanings in order to achieve certain purposes in any situations. It includes the way people think, say, or write (Jones et al., 2015, p. 3). Discourse involves using language and other semiotic resources (e.g. images) as a tool to perform social practices. The language people use, or the way people respond to certain situations no matter by texts, can indicate their identity in particular contexts (Bamberg et al.,

2011, p. 178). Identity simply means what and who ones are. The choices of language use and the change of choices over time show people's identity and their search for social roles (LePage & Tabouret-Keller, 1985, p. 14). It is not necessary that one person can only have one identity since identity is socially constructed as we express ourselves differently according to social situations.

In this study, however, the main focus is on online identity. Since the Internet has expanded on our daily basis, there are online communities in which we build our identity by the way we post, type, react in those digital communities whether they are Facebook, X (formerly known as Twitter), Instagram or other social networking sites. English language experts also use social media as a way to express themselves and to pass English language knowledge to their online communities in several ways. They express who they are by putting profile information including their experiences, profile pictures, personal information. In addition, the experts can generate their identity through online contents they created in forms of videos and/or texts through their pages. Discourse is related to identity due to the fact that the identity we try to create affects the way we communicate (Georgalou, 2017). Therefore, the researcher adapted Netnography and Discourse-Historical Approach to gain a better understanding of identities in online tutoring on the three Facebook pages.

Netnography

Netnography is a research approach like traditional ethnography adapted to the computer-mediated environment where researchers get themselves into a particular community and observe and study cultures in the selected online community in today's social worlds (Kozinets, 2010). However, Netnography is different in a way that it takes place in digital spaces. The focus is to study cyberculture in particular online platforms. Netnography requires a certain amount of time to do a systematic observation and field notes to help systemize the collected data. It involves questionnaires or interviews to collect some insightful information from the individual's perspective of participants (Kozinets, 2010; DelliPaoli & D'Auria, 2021). In short, Netnography focuses on culture and what is going on in digital spaces in general.

Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) to Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a way of looking closely at how the language is used in contexts to shape our thoughts, beliefs, actions and how it reflects norms and values of the society. In this study, it was combined with Netnography to get a full picture of the online discourse around particular English tutors and the interactions on the three Facebook pages between the tutors and thier followers.

According to Wodak and Reisigl (2016), the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) is an approach to CDA. It is a way of studying how language is used in society to understand and shape social, cultural, and historical contexts. It looks at both written and spoken communication, exploring how different groups use language to express ideas, influence others, and maintain or challenge power dynamics. DHA involves considering the historical development of discourses over time and analyzing them in relation to social structures and ideologies. It aims to uncover how language contributes to shaping the way people think and how societies function.

Previous studies

Chao (2022) investigated how two language teachers construct their professional identities on YouTube. Narratives and video works on YouTube channels were analyzed. In-depth interviews with both online teachers were conducted. Findings reveal that one of the teachers positions themself as a knowledgeable peer and another one as a teacher. Visibility and participatory culture are considered as the core features

of YouTube language teaching. Ho (2023) also explored how YouTube teachers construct their identities within language ideologies. The researcher analyzed 70 banner images, 70 biographies from 70 YouTube channels, and interviews of five online teachers from four different channels in order to answer these two research questions: (1) How do online teachers discursively construct their online identities? (2) How do the portrayed online teacher identities interact with the ideologies of English language learning? It drew upon concepts such as language teacher professional identity, social media micro-celebrity persona, linguistic entrepreneurship, and raciolinguistic ideologies. The research put emphasis on how technology both enables and challenges these ideologies, emphasizing the importance of acknowledging the identity work that online teachers undertake to establish their teaching identity. Findings revealed that online teachers strategically position themselves in different identity positions such as professional English language teachers, social media micro-celebrities, and entrepreneurs. The researcher finally emphasized that "online teacher identity is multi-layered and complex, and researchers cannot adopt a 'divide-and-analyse' position".

Due to the affordances of social media that can make online tutors become brands, microcelebrity persona and self-branding discourses have also been studied. Aslan (2024) studied how Turkish micro-celebrity English teachers apply different modes and communicative resources to created English language content on 10 Instagram accounts with at least 100,000 followers. The researcher analyzed data sources including Instagram reels from teacher's public accounts and Netnographic fieldwork notes. The findings showed that the teachers created English language teaching content by using creative relationships between words, contexts, and situations. The teachers offered followers chances to engage in basic conversations, acquire vocabulary within specific situations, and recognize subtle differences in pronouncing difficult words. The findings showed how useful social media can facilitate in learning and teaching English with multimodal communication including texts, gestures, speaking, pictures, etc. Curran and Jenks (2022) used self-branding theories to understand how English tutors market themselves in online tutoring platforms. The researchers analyzed 50 profiles of native speaking teachers and another 50 profiles of non-native speaking teachers. Findings reveal that teacher profiles sell their brands by using 4 self-branding discourses: 1) the professional teacher, 2) the cosmopolitan teacher, 3) the authentic teacher and (4) the multilingual teacher.

METHODOLOGY

Data collection

In order to answer the research question mentioned earlier, this study adopted Netnography and Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA). The data from the Facebook pages was collected online by using Netnographic observation in order to study cultures and interactions in the selected online communities. Content posted on the three Facebook pages over a period of 30 days, including like, share and comment counts, was saved as a file containing links to each post. The researcher used the tool called 'Facebook Page Scrapers' to extract all the posts during the period of time mentioned.

Data sources

(1) *Perfect English with Teacher Ann* is an online English tutoring Facebook page generally created to be a platform where English language content can be posted. At the time of writing, there are 1.5 million followers and 1 million likes on the page. It was created by Warinthorn Uavasinthorn (Ann), a founder of Learnovate online language institute. The page proclaims to represent English language content in simplified ways that emphasize how to apply the language in daily life.

(2) *English AfterNoonz* is a Facebook page created by Natchanan Liengaroonwong (Noon), a professional Thai stage host who also provides a number of online English courses on her website, englishafternoonz.com. The page proclaims to be an "English Space" from several situations in Noon's daily life. There are 1 million followers on the page at the time of writing.

(3) *KruDew English* is a Facebook page that claims to create English language content related to TOEIC test and basic grammar. There are 930,000 followers and 538,000 likes on the Facebook page at the time of writing. It was created by Chaitawat Manochaicharoenkul (Dew), one of the main English language tutors from OpenDurian, a Thai EdTech startup.

Data analysis

The data was analyzed by the Discourse-Historical Analysis suggested by Wodak and Reisigl (2016) in two out of three levels as follows:

1. Macro-level Analysis: contents or topics of a specific discourse was identified based on different functions of discourse that are used on the Facebook pages.
2. Meso-level Analysis: Five discourse strategies were used to investigate how each content and topic is mentioned in specific ways, such as nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivization, and intensification (Wodak & Reisigl, 2016).
3. Micro-level Analysis: Linguistic realizations were examined by the use of specific words, phrases, structures, etc.

All 168 posts during the four-week period were extracted from the Facebook Page Scrapers and exported to excel sheets. The data extracted from each post includes captions, reactions, share counts, like counts, comment counts and a URL link to the post. Adapting from the DHA as an analysis approach, this study conducted two levels of analysis which are macro-level analysis and micro-level analysis. The focus was on analysing topics/themes (macro-level analysis) and the use of language/linguistics realization (micro-level analysis). The categorized data was analyzed in order to find the relation between how the tutors represent themselves as their online identity and how the followers perceive the identity created through the pages by observing online engagements extracted by Facebook Page Scraper. To ensure the validity of research findings, the research continuously discussed and redefined the data analysis with an academic advisor. This process allows the researcher to receive critical feedback and insightful analysis of interpretations. Multiple data sources including the analysis of tutors' identities through their online posts and audience engagement as shown in the excel sheets were used to enable cross-verification of emerging themes and to provide more comprehensive understanding of how online English tutors' identities were conducted and perceived.

FINDINGS

Findings reveal that each tutor construct their identities in similar ways even though with different use of techniques in content creation (Table 1). The hybridization of identities also occurs as the tutors still keep their identity as an English teacher in order to pass the language knowledge by adopting creativity in several contexts in their teaching.

Table 1.
Online Identity of the Three English-Language Tutors

Identity		English AfterNoonz	Perfect English	KruDew English
Influencers	Product Reviews	✓	×	×
	Personal Perception	✓	✓	✓
Entrepreneurs		✓	✓	✓
News commentators		✓	✓	✓
English teachers in the digital era	Live tutoring	×	✓	✓
	Infographic	✓	✓	✓
	Short videos	✓	✓	✓

English tutors as influencers

One of the main findings emerging from Netnographic observation was that the English tutors extend their roles beyond being simply English tutors. There are several posts where the tutors post product reviews (Figure 1) or focus on their personal perceptions about particular topics that are not quite common in a traditional classroom setting.

Figure 1. *A Post of Product Review (English AfterNoonz)*

[Translation]:
Today, I got to try out the real vivo V30 Pro 5G. I have to say that no matter how many shots I take, it's amazing. No matter how you take them, they'll look like a pro! ✨I like how great ZEISS's portrait lens is. No matter what angle you think it won't work, no matter how bad the light is, it can handle it. After taking a photo, you can post it right away without editing. It really adds a professional touch to the photo. Play Life Like a Pro. I'm really impressed.#GQTalkxvivoV30Series5G #PLAYLifeLikeaPRO #PortraitSoPro#GQThailand"

In addition, there is also the expression of the tutors' points of view toward certain issues in Thailand or related to Thai people. The expression of insightful perspective can keep the followers engaged with the tutors and help followers to get to know more about the tutors' ways of thinking. The tutors use their Facebook pages as a platform to express their beliefs. For example, there is a post on Perfect English with Teacher Ann where the tutor emphasizes the importance of language learning in many aspects, including education, career and social interaction (Figure 2).

Figure 2. *A Post of Personal Belief (Perfect English with Teacher Ann)*

[Translation]:
Nowadays, English is not a special ability but a skill that everyone should have. I can confirm that language really does have an impact on life. If we don't count entrance exams, studying in universities, and then moving on to work, most people who can speak the language are always in demand first. So, I really want to remind all students to practice a little bit each day to improve yourself every day. At least when the opportunity comes, we will be able to grab it. We don't have to let it slip away, which would be a pity. #TeacherAnn

English tutors as language entrepreneurs

As all three tutors have their own products being sold online, there is the use of promotional and advertising language in their posts. The products include online courses and English language books. The examples are presented below in Figures 3, 4, 5.

Figure 3. *Book Advertisement (KruDew English)*

[Translation]: 🎉*6.6 TikTok Birthday Sale* 🎉
📌*https://snssdk1180.onelink.me/BAuo/exa2xo8i*
Great discount code up to 30%. Don't forget to go shopping.
🛒*Have fun shopping with Teacher Dew!*
- New book 'Read N' Joy: American Life'
- Learn English while enjoying bilingual novels!
A reliable companion for those who love reading and want to be good at English! With five short stories full of fun and a unique learning experience
Come enhance your English skills through engaging stories and beautiful illustrations! TikTok Shop: https://snssdk1180.onelink.me/BAuo/exa2xo8i
From today - 9 June 2024 only. #KruDew #TikTok #TikTokShop #TikTokShop

Figure 4. *Book Advertisement (Perfect English with Teacher Ann)*

Figure 5. *Course Advertisement (English AfterNoonz)*

The three examples of advertisements above (Figures 3,4,5) show the use of clear and concise language in promotional posts. The language used in the posts is not too formal and the tutors strategically use hashtags in order to gain more visibility of the posts in public. The use of exclamation marks and colourful emojis, as can be seen above, is supposed to attract and excite followers. There is also the use of keywords and numbers such as 6.6 (the sixth of June), a sign of one of the shopping days in Thailand. As can be seen in many online shopping platforms (e.g., Shopee, Lazada), online sellers always use keywords like 11.11, 12.12, and 10.10 to indicate that these are the shopping days and there are a number of discount coupons and vouchers to buy their products on the dates mentioned. This means that the strategy aligns the tutors with online sales. However, this type of post does not receive as many share counts, like counts and comment counts as other types of posts. While other types of posts receive like counts up to 66,000 likes, this type of advertising posts receive like counts on average less than 20 likes and share counts are less than 10. Compared with the number of followers on each page, followers' engagement with the advertising posts is considered quite low. Since the affordances of Facebook and other online platforms make tutors become brands, online tutors need adopt entrepreneurial strategies to sustain their career as online tutors. They have to consider the financial factors for running their online platforms (Ho, 2023). This means that producing sales-driven posts is not an option but a crucial thing to do in order to become successful language entrepreneurs even though their followers might not like this type of content.

English tutors as news commentators

Due to the fact that the data collection was conducted in June also known as a 'Pride Month', it was also the time that Thai government passed the Marriage Equality Act, also known as the same-sex marriage law. All the three Facebook pages posted about the situation at the moment and expressed their gratitude towards the change in Thai society (Figure 6).

Figure 6. *A Reel Commenting on Thailand Legalizing Same-Sex Marriage (English AfterNoonz)*

[Translation]:
"I'm so glad! Thailand officially becomes the first country in Southeast Asia to legalize same-sex marriage. Today, I would like to let everyone celebrate the first step of the same-sex marriage law. I'm very happy to be a part of it. Today, congratulations to everyone. Love wins!"

The posts can sometimes go beyond simply reporting and expressing opinions about the news. For example, on the page Perfect English with Teacher Ann, a number of English words that can be used to congratulate in the context of legalizing same-sex marriage are mentioned on the post with pronunciation (each English word spelt in Thai) and meanings in the Thai language. This means that the tutor is hybridizing the roles of a teacher and a news commentator.

English-language tutors in the digital era

Another identity that is constructed on the three Facebook pages is English-language tutors in the digital era. By saying this, the researcher found the use of live tutoring, infographics and short videos, which are teaching techniques that can be done online. The learners can access to the language knowledge from anywhere at any time. Findings reveal that two out of three pages use live tutoring to teach followers how to do English-language exams, while also advertise their books during the live tutoring. The live tutoring usually lasts up to 1 hour on average. Followers can study, buy books, answer questions, and ask the tutors in the comment section in real-time (Figure 7).

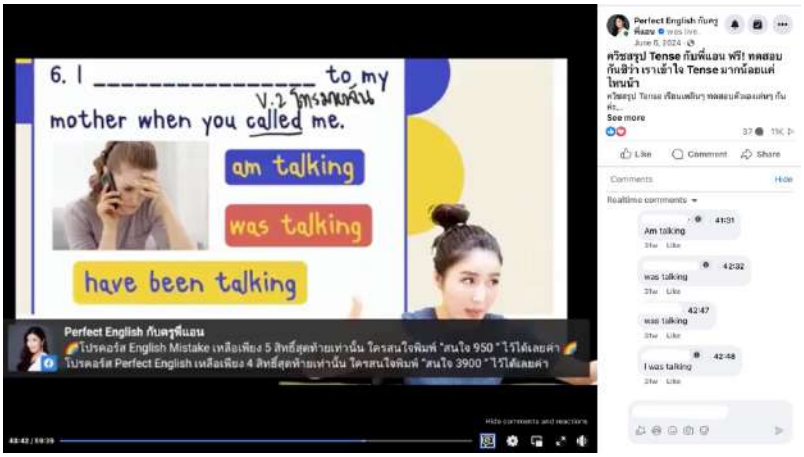

Figure 7. *Live Tutoring (Perfect English with Teacher Ann)*

In addition, all three tutors use infographics and short videos to teach vocabulary and grammar points. For example, a tutor lists 10 words that have the same meaning 'Thank you' in English, such as Thank you so much, Thanks a million, I'm truly grateful, I really appreciate it and introduces all those words in a short video with different forms of a wai (a Thai greeting posture) to show how different level of appreciation each word conveys (Figure 8). The tutors also use infographics to conclude the knowledge of English grammar and useful words in one picture, which is easy to save onto electronic devices and share with others on social media (Figure 9).

Figure 8. *A Short Video Teaching Words Meaning 'Thank You' (English AfterNoonz)*

Figure 9. *An Infographic Teaching English Words (KruDew English)*

DISCUSSION

Based on the above findings, it can be observed that English language teaching is changing based on the affordances of technology and the fact that online tutors adopt multiple roles. They are not only online educators but also influencers and language entrepreneurs. This change shows that success now does not only depend on traditional teaching methods but also depends on online engagement, follower growth and financial sustainability. Tutors must create a variety of content to appeal to different audiences and maintain their online brands, even though core learners may still place the most value on educational posts. In contrast to traditional teachers, online educators must balance instructional quality with personal branding and business strategies. This means blending teaching with influence and entrepreneurship in this digital age.

In a broader sense, the findings also show an ongoing change in teacher professional identity. Online tutors may feel like teachers because of their role as educators who constantly deliver teaching content through social media. They also socially recognized as language teachers by their followers, despite the fact that they do not perform this role in a traditional way (e.g. at school). The tutors' sense of identity as a teacher can be understood by the concept of institutional and networked models (Lee & Li, 2025). In contrast to the institutional model where trust is derived from formal institutional credentials, and where a teacher is someone who acquires formal training and works at an official educational institution, the networked model of TESOL allow tutors to assume a self-professed identity as teachers through their ability to gain social recognition and online engagement. Therefore, online tutors can represent themselves as educators by their self-claimed expertise validated by likes, shares and subscriptions rather than degree or certifications.

The use of personal insights and non-academic content can gain more relatability, making tutors more appealing to a broad audience. The identity of tutors as influencers aligns with Ho (2023), who found the use of micro-celebrity in order to increase engagement in a digital platform. Another important aspect is that the low engagement rates on entrepreneurial activity posts, such as promoting online courses, books, tutoring services, and discount promotions, suggest that learners have the least preference for direct advertisement posts. This suggests that effective online tutoring should prioritize the creation of content that can create meaningful reaction rather than promotional activity. This study also found that the engagement in societal issues and discussions as news commentators can position the tutors as socially aware educators which can also attracts several kinds of audiences. Moreover, this study emphasizes the utilization of live sessions, infographics and short-form videos to enhance learning experiences. This finding is consistent with Lee and Sylven (2021) who found that an informal digital learning environment can help learners gain accessibility to language knowledge. Live tutoring sessions can help student engage with the learning environment by providing learners with real-time interaction as if they are in the classroom. Therefore, live tutoring can be considered as a method that can facilitate flexible and student-centered learning experience. Lastly, infographics on the pages are created not only to teach linguistic knowledge (e.g., grammar and vocabulary) but also contain some non-academic content that help learners relate themselves to the topics while practicing the language.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study investigated how Facebook-based online English tutors construct their identities through posts on their Facebook pages. The findings revealed that the tutors have constructed their identities as influencers, entrepreneurs, news commentators, and English-language teachers in the digital era. These varied roles reflect a multifaceted approach to digital tutoring that extends beyond traditional pedagogical practices. The types of language use and posts, revealed in the findings, could help online English teachers gain more engagement. They could also provide some techniques to the teachers to

create teaching materials or online content that would facilitate the learners of the English language. However, this study is limited to three Facebook pages. Several more Facebook pages still need further analysis in order to find some shared identities that Thai online tutors construct through online content to gain more followers and engagement in the English language learning journey. Moving forward, further research should explore tutors' activities on another online platform. The investigation of types of language used in creating online content can also be done in order to find out the types of language that are able to gain most of followers' engagement and most effective in online English language teaching.

Implications

To effectively engage in the digital era, educators are encouraged to value digital literacy in their teaching. For instance, integrating video editing skills in their pedagogical practices help educators create informative yet attractive teaching content for learners. TESOL teacher education programs should equip educators with digital literacy especially content creation tools. While the demands of online learning are high, creative videos and visual contents are crucial not only for online educators but also traditional teachers in schools and universities. The importance of digital literacy can be seen from the COVID-19 pandemic situation where school staffs needed to adjust themselves to teach online. Teachers with strong foundation in digital literacy are likely to experience smoother transition from onsite to online teaching. Therefore, digital literacy is crucial to both onsite and online educators to create effective teaching materials for their learners. Additionally, self-branding strategies play an important role in language tutoring. While the affordances of social media allow online tutors to represent themselves through different types of media i.e. texts, infographics, pictures and videos, English tutors should make the most out of them to reach various groups of audience with authentic, creative and informative online content to gain trust and interest from learners (followers).

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Story-Listening and the Pure Optimal Input Approach: Investigating the Strong Version of the Input Hypothesis

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Abstract

This study investigates the effects of Story-Listening (SL) on vocabulary acquisition among Thai university students, examining whether carefully designed input alone—referred to as Pure Optimal Input (POI)—can support measurable language learning. Twenty first-year non-English majors participated in a SL session, followed by immediate and delayed post-tests three weeks later. Vocabulary acquisition rates averaged 0.25 words per minute, aligning with prior studies of Japanese learners, and forgetting rates indicated a 38% loss over three weeks, highlighting the importance of regular exposure. While the small sample does not allow definitive verification of the strong version of the Input Hypothesis, these findings demonstrate that SL and POI principles can be applied successfully in Thai classrooms and support further investigation with larger, more diverse populations. Results also suggest practical implications for scheduling SL sessions to maximize retention, emphasizing both efficiency and fairness in language instruction.

Keywords: story-listening, vocabulary acquisition, Thai EFL learners, optimal input hypothesis, acquisition/forgetting rates

INTRODUCTION

Two Different Approaches to Vocabulary Development

Vocabulary development is a fundamental part of language acquisition. Many students rely on traditional techniques such as rote memorization, writing words down, or using mnemonic devices (Mason, Ae, & Krashen, 2022). These methods are often inefficient and time-consuming, and learners frequently forget much of what they study. For instance, McQuillan (2019) found that even with 10–20 minutes of daily academic vocabulary instruction over a 180-day school year, students learned only about 10 words per year, with an efficiency of just 0.005 words per minute. Most classrooms devote even less time to vocabulary, making traditional methods insufficient for meaningful growth.

In contrast, Story-Listening (SL) provides a far more efficient alternative. Vocabulary acquisition through SL ranges from 0.18 to 0.25 words per minute after five weeks of input—more than 30 times faster than traditional methods. This efficiency comes from input that meets four key characteristics—comprehensible, compelling, rich, and abundant—delivered without any forced learning activities. This is referred to as pure optimal input (POI). “Pure” indicates that instruction excludes conscious learning activities before, during, or after the SL session.

Some educators may doubt that fairy tales used in Story-Listening can teach academic vocabulary. However, Walter (2020) found that students who listened to 50 Grimm’s fairy tales and read the rewritten

texts encountered 7.5 times more words than peers using a standard textbook (27,410 vs. 3,622 words), including many low-frequency words. Similarly, Hsieh, Wang, & Lee (2011) reported that children in Taiwan exposed to 65 picture books over four years encountered two to three times more unique content words than children using textbooks. By the fifth year, these children became independent English readers. These findings suggest that extensive, coherent, and engaging story-based input better prepares learners for higher stages of English learning, such as junior high school.

The Story-Listening approach is based on the Pure Optimal Input (POI) framework (Krashen, 1982; Krashen & Mason, 2020), which posits that language acquisition occurs when learners receive input that is not only comprehensible and engaging but also rich, abundant, and devoid of supplemental output activities.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Language acquisition differs fundamentally from conscious language learning (Krashen, 1981) and occurs primarily through comprehensible input (Krashen, 1982, 1985, 2003). However, "not all comprehensible input is of equal value" (Krashen, 2020; Krashen & Mason, 2020). Research shows that optimal input—input that is comprehensible, compelling, rich, and abundant—promotes faster and deeper acquisition. Input should also avoid activities that increase cognitive load or require students to compensate for classroom lessons at home.

Story-Listening (SL) operationalizes these principles by providing POI through Comprehension-Aiding Supplementation (CAS), which includes both linguistic and non-linguistic techniques to support comprehension (Krashen, Mason, & Smith, 2018). Occasional translation may be used for beginners, but delivering SL entirely in the target language is generally more effective. SL facilitates natural vocabulary acquisition through contextual understanding (Mason, 2014; Mason & Krashen, 2020, 2022; Krashen & Mason, 2022; Krashen, 2024).

Unlike traditional storytelling in language classrooms, SL avoids pre-, mid-, and post-activities. It excludes immature forced output and comprehension questions (Krashen & Mason, 2019a, 2019b), creating a pure input-only framework. SL was operationalized to test the strong version of the Input Hypothesis, evaluating the effectiveness of non-targeted input compared to eclectic methods that incorporate output activities or grammatical syllabi (Krashen, 2013).

Although POI asserts that input alone is sufficient for acquisition, alternative perspectives exist. The Output Hypothesis(Swain, 1985) emphasizes language production; the Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1996) highlights negotiation of meaning during communication; and Task-Based Learning (Ellis, 2003) centers on completing meaningful tasks. These perspectives are acknowledged to situate POI within the broader literature, but they are not the focus of this study. Research shows that carefully designed, optimal input alone can lead to measurable acquisition, even without forced output, interaction, or explicit tasks (Krashen, 2011; Mason, 2013, 2018).

The broader Pure Optimal Unified Input (POUI) framework unifies SL with reading (Guided Self-Selected Reading, GSSR) to create a complete input-only approach. While this study focuses only on SL (POI), it contributes to the ongoing investigation of POUI's generalizability across languages and learner populations.

Empirical Support for Input-Only Approaches

Decades of research on POI and POUI provide strong evidence that carefully designed input accelerates language acquisition. While much of this research comes from our studies, there are no other published investigations that systematically evaluate methods based specifically on pure optimal input principles.

Prior Evidence Across Learner Groups

Previous studies have shown that vocabulary acquisition rates range from 0.10 to 0.25 words per minute across diverse populations when a delayed posttest was administered one to seven weeks later. These include:

- American high school students learning Japanese (Mason & Krashen, 2018)
- Japanese university students learning German (Mason, Vanata, Jander, Borsch, & Krashen, 2009)
- Japanese university students (Mason & Krashen, 2004)
- Junior college English majors (Clarke, 2019, 2020)
- Beginning-level Japanese junior high students (Mason & Ae, 2021, 2023, 2024)
- Students from five Asian countries (Mason, Smith, & Krashen, 2020)

In comparison, traditional textbook-based vocabulary learning only produces about 0.005 words per minute (McQuillan, 2019). These results demonstrate that learners whose first language is not closely related to English—such as Japanese and other Asian learners—can acquire vocabulary efficiently through attentive listening alone.

Extension to Thai Learners

While most prior studies focused on Japanese learners, the current study examines Thai students. Like Japanese, Thai is not closely related to English. Demonstrating the effectiveness of SL for Thai learners could support its adaptability for students in neighboring Asian countries and further validate the broader applicability of Pure Optimal Input principles.

Key Empirical Findings

1. General language competence, writing fluency, and accuracy develop more effectively through reading than traditional methods (Mason & Krashen, 1997; Mason, 2004).
2. Motivation to read in English can be fostered by engaging with comprehensible and interesting books (Krashen & Mason, 1997).
3. TOEFL and TOEIC scores increase significantly with input alone (Constantino, 1995; Mason, 2006, 2011, 2013a, 2013b).
4. Daily pure optimal unified input accelerates language progress compared to weekly or intermittent input (Mason, Smith, & Krashen, 2020; Smith, Mason, & Krashen, 2021).
5. Form-focused vocabulary instruction does not produce worthwhile gains (Mason & Krashen, 2004; Clarke, 2019, 2020).
6. Story-Listening is more efficient than memorization-based approaches for increasing vocabulary size among junior high students; advanced learners continue to benefit more from SL/GSSR than output-based approaches (Mason & Ae, 2024; Mason, 2011, 2021).
7. Eliminating traditional practices—such as forced output, grammar drills, comprehension questions, memorization, testing, and homework—enhances learning efficiency (Mason & Ae, 2023).
8. Self-Selected Reading (SSR) produces consistent gains; readers improve ~0.6 points on the TOEIC per hour. Over three years (~1,095 hours) of relaxed, self-selected reading, learners can progress from Elementary to near-International proficiency. Pleasure reading alone also leads to proficiency without formal test preparation (Krashen & Mason, 2017; Mason, 2017).

9. Story-Listening produces stronger vocabulary retention than list-learning methods (Mason & Ae, 2025).
10. Input-based methods create independent readers who continue reading long-term (Mason, 2017, 2025).
11. Immersion-based approaches may not be as effective as the POUI approach (Mason & Krashen, 2019, 2020).

Why Ask Whether the Strong Version of the Input Hypothesis is Correct

In scientific theorizing, a hypothesis can often be framed in either a strong or weak form. The Input Hypothesis—the claim that language acquisition occurs only when learners receive comprehensible input—cannot accommodate a weak form without contradicting its foundation. Some scholars claim to support the Input Hypothesis while also asserting that other factors, such as interaction, negotiation of meaning, or output, are necessary for acquisition. These modifications, however, abandon the Input Hypothesis. The original claim is that comprehensible input is both necessary and sufficient for acquisition. If acquisition depends on anything other than input, the theory ceases to be the Input Hypothesis and becomes something else. Accepting a "weak" version—suggesting that input is important but not sufficient—would therefore undermine the hypothesis itself.

Investigating whether the Input Hypothesis is correct is necessary to determine reality. Scientific inquiry is not about loyalty to a theory; it is about discovering reality, even when that reality challenges long-standing practices. If the strong version of the Input Hypothesis is correct, it demonstrates that much of traditional language teaching—emphasizing conscious learning, output, error correction, and eclectic methods—has been misguided. Acknowledging this error is the first step toward creating better conditions for language acquisition, designing more effective learning experiences, and improving educational systems. Verifying the strong version of the Input Hypothesis is an act of intellectual responsibility and of fairness toward learners, ensuring that educational practices respect their time, cognitive load, and potential for language acquisition.

Krashen emphasized that scientific progress depends on clarity in theoretical foundations. Accepting eclectic approaches, which blend incompatible ideas, makes it impossible to accurately test or apply the theory. Combining practices based on opposing assumptions does not allow us to study language acquisition itself; it merely compares different amounts of input under traditional methods.
With this theoretical and empirical background, we now turn to the specifics of the study, beginning with its purpose.

Purpose of the Study

This study investigates the vocabulary acquisition rate of Thai university students using the Story-Listening (SL) method. It also examines the forgetting rate associated with SL and aims to explore the optimal frequency of SL sessions for efficient vocabulary acquisition in formal education.

The study replicates prior research conducted with different learner groups and in different countries to determine whether the success of SL—observed in earlier studies—can be generalized to Thai university students. Previous research in Indonesia demonstrated that SL was effective for Asian students at an intermediate level of English proficiency (Mason, Smith, & Krashen, 2020), suggesting similar outcomes might be expected for Thai learners. Investigating the forgetting rate provides additional insight into how long the interval between SL sessions can be before effects begin to diminish, informing practical recommendations for classroom scheduling.

The key research questions guiding this study are:

1. Does the evidence from this study support the strong version of the Input Hypothesis?

2. What is the vocabulary acquisition rate through SL after three weeks?
3. What is the forgetting rate following SL after three weeks?

Note: This study involves a small sample of 20 participants and cannot conclusively verify the strong version of the Input Hypothesis on its own. However, it serves as a replication and extension of prior research, providing valuable data to examine whether the effects of SL can be observed in a new learner population. This approach contributes to the broader empirical evidence supporting the hypothesis.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants in this study were 20 first-year university students (aged 18–19) from Walailak University in Thailand. They were non-English majors enrolled in the Schools of Pharmacy, Medicine, Nursing, and Medical Technology. According to the department head (the second author), although the students had received 12 years of English education prior to university, their proficiency remained at the CEFR A2 level. At the time of the experiment, they had completed 35 hours of university-level English instruction.

While this study involves a small sample, it is designed as a replication and extension of prior research. The strong version of the Input Hypothesis has been investigated extensively over the past 35 years through studies of Story-Listening, Guided Self-Selected Reading, and Extensive Reading across multiple age groups, proficiency levels, and contexts (Krashen, 2003, 2004, 2011, 2024). The current study contributes additional evidence to this larger body of research, illustrating that carefully designed input alone can support measurable acquisition, even in learners whose first language is not closely related to English. By situating this investigation within the broader empirical context, the findings help explore the generalizability of the strong version of the Input Hypothesis to Thai university students.

Methods

Story-Listening (SL) is a Pure Optimal Input (POI) method developed specifically to test the strong version of the Input Hypothesis. It is designed to provide learners with optimal input: language that is comprehensible, compelling, rich, and abundant, while excluding conscious learning activities such as pre-teaching vocabulary or comprehension questions (Krashen & Mason, 2019a, 2019b).

In an SL session, the storyteller presents a carefully selected narrative and supports comprehension through both linguistic and non-linguistic supplementation. This creates conditions that closely mirror the natural process of first language acquisition, maximizing opportunities for subconscious language growth.

For this experiment, the storyteller (the first author), who had no prior contact with the students, presented *The Wonder Tree* using the SL method. Although the first author did not know the students' individual proficiency levels in detail, information from the department head allowed her to adjust Story-Listening strategies and select test items appropriate for learners at the CEFR A2 level, consistent with students in previous SL studies.

To ensure the story was both engaging and comprehensible, the storyteller selected a narrative likely to capture the students' interest and prepared a **"**Prompter**,"** a teaching aid designed to support clear and fluent delivery. For the vocabulary test, 20 words from the story were chosen: 10 words that the storyteller anticipated the students would already know, and 10 words expected to be unfamiliar. Including both familiar and unfamiliar words helped avoid discouragement from testing only unknown

items. Additionally, because students' exact "i" level could not be known in advance, some words presumed to be familiar might turn out to be new for certain learners.

Measurement and Procedure

A **pre-test** was administered before students heard the story, followed by an immediate post-test after the Story-Listening (SL) session. A delayed post-test was conducted three weeks later to assess vocabulary retention. In each test, students were asked to provide Thai translations for each English word.

The students' regular instructor was a native English speaker from England. While students were accustomed to hearing English through story-based conversational activities, they had not previously experienced extended storytelling using complete sentences and structured narratives with comprehension-aiding supplementation.

To minimize cognitive load for students encountering SL for the very first time by a stranger, the Story-Listening session was kept under 20 minutes, and the vocabulary test included only 20 items. The session length was verified using a recorded video of the SL session. The regular instructor was instructed not to use any of the target vocabulary words during the three-week interval until the delayed post-test.

To ensure reliability, two Thai teachers independently graded the students' responses. Any discrepancies were resolved through discussion until a consensus was reached, and consistent word-scoring methods were applied across all tests by both raters.

Research Compliance and Study Ethics

Written consent was obtained from all participants to include their performance in oral and written reports. The study adhered to established ethical standards, ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of all participants' personal information throughout the research process. The research protocol was reviewed and approved by the Walailak University Ethics Committee prior to the commencement of the study.

FINDINGS

The results revealed a vocabulary acquisition rate of 0.25 words per minute (wpm) after three weeks. This rate aligns closely with acquisition rates observed in previous studies involving Japanese learners (Tables 1 and 2), confirming that Thai students can also benefit from listening to stories for vocabulary acquisition.

Table 1.
Remembering Rate by A2-Level Thai College Students

Dates of the test	**8/21**	**8/21**	**9/11**
	Pre-test	Post-test	Delayed
Mean (SD)	10.1 (3.35)	18.05 (1.39)	15.01 (2.81)
Gain	-	7.95	4.91
Remembering rate	-	0.40wpm	0.25 wpm
***t*-test (p-level)**			9.02 (0.0001)

Note: k=20; time spent telling the story 20 min; delayed post-test=3 weeks later

Despite being their first experience with Story-Listening (SL), participants achieved a rate of 0.25 wpm. Based on this rate, it can be projected that students might acquire approximately 1,000 words with just 4,000 minutes (about 67 hours) of SL sessions.

However, forgetting must also be considered. In previous studies, delayed post-tests were conducted at intervals ranging from one to seven weeks after the initial post-test. Acquisition rates naturally slow as the delay increases. To contextualize the current results, forgetting rates from prior experiments were calculated. Table 2 presents the relevant data, including the forgetting rates, with the most recent data highlighted in bold.

Forgetting Rates

As Ebbinghaus demonstrated with "nonsense words," vocabulary knowledge decays over time unless reinforced. For learners whose first language (e.g., Thai or Japanese) is typologically distant from English, many new English words may feel like "nonsense words" and therefore may be more prone to forgetting. Consequently, any estimate of long-term vocabulary growth must consider both the acquisition rate and the retention of newly learned words.

We calculated forgetting rates for each study using Thalheimer's formula and compared them with the current findings (see Table 2). The data show that Story-Listening (SL) can maintain relatively high retention rates over several weeks, though forgetting still occurs. Specifically, the forgetting rate reaches about 40% by the three-week mark.

Table 2 demonstrates that SL consistently produces high retention rates, even after five weeks. For example, after one week, only 6% of newly learned vocabulary was forgotten, but after three weeks, the loss increased to nearly 40%. Awareness of these forgetting rates is crucial for maximizing the benefits of SL. Except for two studies involving junior high students, all participants in studies investigating SL for vocabulary acquisition were college or university students.

- Lowest Forgetting Rate (6%): Observed in The Juniper Tree study, with a delayed post-test conducted after one week.
- Highest Forgetting Rates (58–79%): Found in studies with extended intervals between instruction and delayed post-tests (4–7 weeks), demonstrating that less frequent SL sessions lead to greater vocabulary loss over time.

Regular SL sessions, conducted at least weekly, significantly reduce vocabulary loss. For instance, The Juniper Tree showed only a 6% loss, while sessions spaced three weeks apart, as in The Wonder Tree, resulted in a 38% forgetting rate.

- After two weeks, forgetting triples (6% → 19%)
- After three weeks, forgetting increases sixfold (6% → 38%)
- After four weeks, forgetting rises tenfold (6% → 61%)

Frequency Impact

Table 2.
Forgetting Rates of all the SL Studies

Story Title	N	Students Level	Remembering Rate (wpm)	Number of Words on test	Forgetting Rate (%)
1) The Juniper Tree (Mason, et al. 2020)	11	Asian College Students	0.24	31	6% (after 1 wk)
2) Lazy Jack (Mason & Ae, 2022)	30	7th graders	0.20	35	19% (after 2 wks)

3) The Wonder Tree (Current Study)	**20**	**Walailak University**	**0.25**	**20**	**38% (after 3 wks)**
4) Carpenter and the Cat (Mason & Krashen, 2018)	21	American High school students learning Japanese	0.17	38	68% (after 4 wks)
5) The Three Little Pigs (Mason & Ae, 2022)	36	7th graders	0.21	35	61% (after 4 wks)
6) The Three Little Pigs (Mason & Krashen, 2004)	27	University 1st year	0.25	20	58% (after 5 wks)
7) The Frog Prince (Clarke, 2019)	8	Junior college	0.19	26	68% (after 5 wks)
8) The Frog Prince (Clarke, 2020)	15	Junior College	0.18	30	68% (after 5 wks)
9) A long German story in three sections (Mason, et al, 2009)	7	University German as a second foreign language	0.10	103	66% (after 7 wks)
10) 3 short German Stories (Mason, et al, 2009)	7	University German as a second foreign language	0.10	60	79% (after 7 wks)

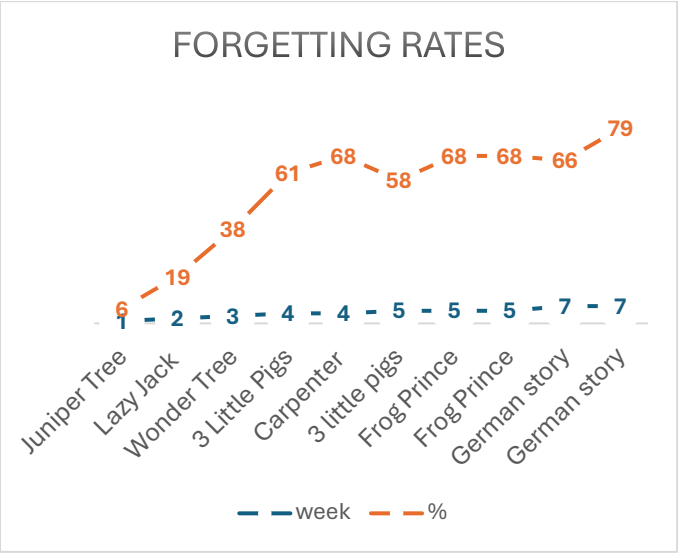

Figure 1. illustrates the forgetting rates (%) across ten SL studies conducted with different stories and student groups

Forgetting rates were calculated as the proportion of newly learned words no longer recalled at delayed post-test (see Appendices A and B for a worked example and detailed tables).

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Previous research (e.g., Mason & Ae, 2024) showed that conscious memorization can produce vocabulary gains, but it requires sustained effort and extra time for students to retain new words. Story-Listening (SL), in contrast, reduces this burden. By presenting engaging stories with universal themes regularly — even daily—SL lowers cognitive load, supports comprehension, and encourages long-term engagement in English acquisition.

While even occasional SL sessions produce measurable vocabulary growth, the natural recycling of words across stories indicates that daily or near-daily sessions would maximize long-term retention. Frequent exposure reinforces previously encountered words before they are forgotten and provides opportunities to acquire new words at each student's "i+1" level.

The benefits of SL are observed even when sessions are not daily: weekly sessions can still significantly minimize forgetting. Importantly, SL does not depend on high levels of motivation or self-discipline; it supports all students, including both highly motivated learners and those who are more reluctant. The results from Thai learners suggest that SL could also be effective in neighboring Asian countries with similar linguistic contexts.

Finally, while providing daily SL sessions may present challenges for teachers in sourcing and delivering materials, the approach's demonstrated impact on student proficiency provides a strong rationale for its adoption in formal education settings.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the effects of Story-Listening (SL) and Pure Optimal Input (POI) on vocabulary acquisition among a small sample of Thai university students. Here, POI refers to the theoretical framework that underpins SL, describing input that is comprehensible, compelling, rich in quality, abundant in quantity, and free from instructional interference. In practice, Story-Listening (SL) is a primary method for delivering POI in the classroom. Consistent with prior research, the findings suggest that such input can support measurable language acquisition, even for learners whose first language is not closely related to English.

While the current study is limited by its small sample size and focus on a single university program, these results align with decades of research across multiple contexts, age groups, and proficiency levels. Previous studies have shown that input-only instruction through SL and Guided Self-Selected Reading can improve grammatical accuracy without correction, raise standardized test scores, accelerate progress through daily input, enhance retention compared to traditional list-learning, and foster lifelong reading habits.

Although this study cannot conclusively confirm the strong version of the Input Hypothesis, it provides evidence on the vocabulary acquisition rate and forgetting patterns through SL, demonstrating the applicability of SL and POUI principles in Thai classrooms and supporting further investigation with larger, more diverse samples. The forgetting rate data suggest that SL sessions should ideally be provided at least weekly to maintain vocabulary retention, with more frequent exposure likely further enhancing learning.

Moreover, investigating POI/SL emphasizes fairness and equitable learning, showing that carefully designed input can provide all learners a practical, accessible, and efficient path to meaningful language acquisition.

Notes:

- Note on the Story: The Wonder Tree is an Indonesian folktale from Asian-Pacific Folktales and Legends (ed. Jeanette Faurot). Due to copyright restrictions, the full text is not provided here. Readers are encouraged to consult the original publication
- The 20 words on the test were orphan, parents, field, harvest, December, cage, lay, frequently, steaming hot, daily, uncooked rice, uncle, borrow, lend, whisper, bone, bury, silk, and jewel.
- Forgetting Rate: In this report, the percentage of forgetting was calculated following Thalheimer's method: (% Correct on Initial Test minus % Correct on Subsequent Test) divided by % Correct on Initial Test. More succinctly, if A = % Correct on the Initial Test and B = % Correct on the Subsequent Test, then Forgetting = (A – B) / A.
- Story-Listening Webpage: https://www.story-listening.net

Acknowledgement

We extend our heartfelt thanks to Vice President Associate Professor Dr. Surin Maisrikrod for his unwavering support and for promoting input-based methods in the language department at Walailak University. We also thank Ms. Pavirasa Praditsorn and Assistant Professor Dr. Kannika Thongkhao for their meticulous efforts in grading the tests and Mr. Andrew Lush for generously allowing us to utilize his class time for this experiment. We are further indebted to the SOLGEN Officers for their assistance in documenting the experiment. Lastly, we sincerely thank the staff of the School of Languages and General Education at Walailak University for their warm welcome and hospitality during my (the first author) visit. Thanks to Dr. John Truscott (2024) for his invaluable feedback and comments on this paper.

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Appendix A
Example of Forgetting Rate Calculation (Thalheimer's Method)

For clarity, the forgetting rate was calculated following Thalheimer's method:

- Forgetting Rate = %Correct on Initial Test− %Correct on Subsequent Test %Correct on Initial Test × 100
- Forgetting Rate = =%Correct on Initial Test %Correct on Initial Test − %Correct on Subsequent Test×100

Worked Example using A2-Level Thai College Students Data:

- **Pretest (Prior Knowledge):** 10.1 words
- **Posttest (Initial Test):** 18.05 words
  - **Gain:** 18.05 – 10.1 = 7.95 words
- **Delayed Post-test (3 weeks later):** 15.01 words
  - **Retained Gain:** 15.01 – 10.1 = 4.91 words

Forgetting Rate=7.95−4.917.95×100≈38.2%
Forgetting Rate=7.957.95−4.91×100≈38.2%

Interpretation: Students retained approximately **61.8%** of the newly acquired vocabulary over the 3-week interval.

Additional Notes:

- Time spent telling the story: 20 minutes
- Number of participants: 20
- Delayed post-test administered 3 weeks after the post-test

Appendix B
Worked Example Table – Forgetting Rate for Thai A2-Level Students

Test Date	Pretest (words)	Posttest (words)	Delayed (words)	Gain (Posttest – Pretest)	Retained Gain (Delayed – Pretest)	Forgetting Rate (%)
8/21 (Initial)	10.1	18.05	–	7.95	–	–
9/11 (3 weeks later)	–	–	15.01	–	4.91	38.2

Notes:

1. Gain = number of newly learned words at posttest relative to pretest.
2. Retained Gain = number of words still remembered at delayed post-test relative to pretest.
3. Forgetting Rate = (Gain – Retained Gain) ÷ Gain × 100 (Thalheimer, 2006).
4. N = 20 participants; Time spent telling the story = 20 minutes.

Six Principles for Facilitating Successful EFL Academic Writing

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Abstract

Writing academic texts in a second language (L2) is a complex, dynamic process that requires attention not only to linguistic features, but cognitive, socio-cultural, and genre-related factors during the writing process (Han & Hiver, 2018; Huang & Zhang, 2022; Sárdi, 2023). Learning to generate L2 academic texts requires significant time on task and repeated practice of the recursive stages of writing. As such, it can be a difficult subject to teach (Amalia et al., 2021; Hidayati, 2018; Muamaroh et al., 2020) and is often neglected due to the perceived time and effort necessary for instruction and assessment (Bulqiyah et al., 2021; Hirose & Harwood, 2019; Pham & Bui, 2021). However, proficient writing skills are vital for students' academic careers, and as such, this paper will introduce six pedagogical principles for facilitating the development of proficient L2 English writers based on the findings of Author (2024). The study focused on categorizing errors of advanced EFL academic writers in English-centered university programs, suggesting ways to support their development. From these findings, in conjunction with recent writing research and pedagogy, six principles for supporting and facilitating EFL academic writing development are introduced. The principles include: factoring in the influence of the L1; supplementing sample text reading with explicit instruction; practicing the recursive steps of writing; utilizing instruction techniques from process- and genre-based approaches; incorporating peer feedback in the writing classroom; and focusing on different types of linguistic and structural errors at specific phases of the writing process when providing teacher feedback.

Keywords: academic writing, EFL writing, L2 writing instruction

INTRODUCTION

Writing academic texts in a foreign language is cognitively-demanding process that requires simultaneous focus on cognitive, linguistic, and socio-cultural factors while generating written output in a second language (L2) (Han & Hiver, 2018; Huang & Zhang, 2022; Sárdi, 2023). A writer's experience is also impacted by their cultural background, proficiency in the L2, and their previous experiences with writing (Sárdi, 2023).

Since producing academic texts is a complex process, it can be considered a difficult subject to teach and evaluate (Amalia et al., 2021; Hidayati, 2018; Muamaroh et al., 2020) and is often neglected in favor of other skills development in an English as a foreign language (EFL) context (Abas & Aziz, 2018; Bulqiyah et al., 2021; Hirose & Harwood, 2019; Pham & Bui, 2021). The rising availability of AI-supported writing tools has also called into question the necessity for practicing and developing academic writing skills, as students are growing increasingly dependent on external tools to perform their assignments (Sweeney, 2023; Tris & Yuan, 2025). However, the ability to express individual opinions, organize arguments, and deliver ideas effectively through writing remains an important skill, validating the "critical role of traditional academic writing courses" (Aljuaid, 2024, p. 39). Given the continued importance of

effective writing skills in EFL contexts and the perceived difficulties of promoting these skills in language classrooms, this paper aims to propose six principles for facilitating the development of proficient L2 English writers based on the findings of Author (2024).

The study focused on categorizing the error types of advanced EFL academic writers in English-centered undergraduate and graduate-level university programs, determining ways to support remaining areas of difficulty. Based on the analysis of student-researcher conferencing, interviews, the joint editing and analyzing of texts, and researcher feedback, the following list of factors for supporting EFL writing development was generated: consider the influence that the L1 can have on student writer output; consider that reading sample texts does not guarantee understanding and salience of text elements; practice the recursive stages of writing, including planning, drafting, editing and revising; utilize instructional elements from both process- and genre-based approaches to writing pedagogy; include peer feedback for linguistic development; and focus on different types of grammatical, linguistic, and structural errors at specific phases of the writing process when providing teacher feedback.

Consider the influence of the L1

The first principle which is paramount to writing instruction is the awareness of the influence that EFL student writers' L1s can have on their understanding of what and how they write in English. A writer's ability to produce texts in an L2 is heavily shaped by their L1, which provides their framework of the objectives and purposes for writing, as well as their knowledge of genre and literary conventions (Munoz-Luna, 2015). Different languages utilize various structural, linguistic and narrative constructs that influence how EFL writers organize and deliver their ideas in English (Kuntjara, 2005). As such, different L1s can have unique impacts on L2 production, especially in writing – for example, influencing the type and likelihood of certain grammatical, structural and linguistic errors (Kazazoglu, 2020). When language learners have limited proficiency in writing in their L2, they use their knowledge of writing in their L1 and adhere to the literary conventions and parameters of that language to complete their written tasks – which can lead to lexical, grammatical, or structural errors in the text (Malip & Aziz, 2022). In addition, rhetoric shaped by L1 parameters can disorient, frustrate, or confuse readers of L2 texts when they do not adhere to L2 genre conventions or literary expectations (Bradley, 2012).

Contrastive rhetoric, or the "view that the rhetorical features of L2 texts may reflect different writing conventions learned in the L1 culture and the cross-cultural study of these differences" (Hyland, 2006) purports the importance of the L1's influence on L2 writing output. Recent studies have demonstrated how an increased awareness of L1 and L2 linguistic and literary differences can lead to improved writing proficiency, metacognition and writing confidence in EFL students (Author, 2024; Negretti & Kuteeva, 2011; Wei & Zhang, 2020). In these studies, critical awareness of genre and linguistic differences between similar texts in their respective L1s (Japanese, Swedish, and Chinese) and English were shown to positively correlate with stronger, more effective writing.

Contrastive rhetoric has faced criticism for over-simplifying intertextual differences between languages and cultures, presenting overly-generalized and limited representations of differing literary styles and structures across languages (Ismail, 2025; McKinley, 2013; Noor, 2001). However, Aberi (2024) argues that having an awareness of potential differing literary expectations and contrastive rhetoric across languages can be a tool for writing educators and learners alike. This knowledge can serve as a starting point for addressing linguistic and rhetorical challenges that writers face when trying to write texts in the L2 within the framework of their L1's linguistic parameters.

Fostering an awareness of the linguistic, literary, and structural differences between EFL students' L1s and English is a fundamental element of promoting competent academic writing skills, and should be encouraged and reinforced in the writing classroom (Author, 2024; Malip & Aziz, 2022). Knowledge of the similarities and disparities between the L1s and English, paired with repeated practice generating texts

that comply with reader expectations, can help student writers develop competence and confidence in their abilities.

Reading is not enough for learning to occur

As reading and writing are reciprocal skills, encouraging the reading of sample texts in a writing course is widely acknowledged to benefit learners (Anaktototy, 2023; Bai & Wang, 2020; Habibi et al., 2015). Reading sample texts is helpful for writer development, as these texts can serve as models for EFL writers to emulate themselves and provide comprehensible input. Studies have demonstrated that increased reading opportunities can lead to greater grammatical accuracy and overall performance in writing as well (Alqadi & Alkadi, 2013; Chuenchaichon, 2011).

However, reading without supplemental study of text elements and features is not enough to bring salience to the linguistic and structural features of academic writing, even for advanced learners (Author, 2024). Instead, time and attention need to be paid to deliberately analyze and study the different elements of academic texts in order to make the features salient for learners, who can then apply that awareness to their own compositions.

Even advanced EFL learners can be unaware of the structures and purposes of different components of texts like academic research papers or expository essays, and focused study and attention is necessary to make those elements salient for learners (Author, 2024; Pham & Bui, 2021). Tseng (2019) similarly notes that explicit writing instruction better facilitates student writers' understanding of text objectives and the process of writing, and argues that features should be deliberately taught and explained. As such, reading sample texts needs to be supported with analysis and practice, so that student writers are able to apply that growing awareness to their own work (Author, 2024).

One classroom task which can help center learner attention on the structure and purpose of each element in an academic text is a graphic organizer-style activity called a "mind map." Mind mapping is often used to help learners brainstorm and outline their own ideas before writing their own essays, serving as a creative visual tool to aid in the generating and organizing of ideas through color coding, lines, symbols, and unique patterns of design (Bukhari, 2016; Buzan, 2002). Mind mapping has been shown to be a facilitative pre-writing task that helps organization, leads to stronger, more connected ideas, and benefits overall writing (Bukhari, 2016).

In addition to being a helpful pre-writing activity, however, mind maps can also serve as a useful tool to help students decode and understand academic texts. Analytical mind maps challenge students to sift through texts, find the main arguments, and decode the structure, then asks them to re-produce the content in whatever unique style that helps them visualize the work. Working in pairs or small groups, students can collaborate to find the most important points of each section of an academic text and present the information using unique graphics, symbols, colors, and structures, thereby creating a visual representation of the text to better process its content, style, and structure. If time allows, having groups share their work with other teams can also be advantageous, as they can compare and critique their respective representations of the text.

Practice the recursive steps of planning, drafting, and editing

As mentioned previously, writing is a complex and cognitively taxing process that requires simultaneous focus on different skill sets as well as linguistic, narrative, and structural features in order to produce written output (Huang & Zhang, 2022; Sárdi, 2023). In an L2, the difficulty is compounded, with the additional factors of grammatical and linguistic differences, as well as genre conventions and reader expectations (Malip & Aziz, 2022). One way to scaffold the process and support learners as they navigate

these dynamic challenges is to separate the writing experience across the different recursive stages of planning, drafting, editing, and rewriting.

Munoz-Luna (2015) purports that planning and organizing ideas before writing, and editing and revising after writing, are critical steps for writers at any level, but particularly for L2 academic writers. Successful strategy use, including brainstorming and planning, writing drafts, rereading for mistakes and revising, have been shown to increase writing competence, and are all behaviors demonstrated by proficient academic writers (Author, 2024; Munoz-Luna, 2015).

Working through these stages lightens the cognitive burden that writing in an L2 can induce by allowing students to focus on fewer elements at a time (Abas & Aziz, 2018; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014). Research has demonstrated that using writing strategies is positively correlated with an increase in writing performance (Zhang & Zhang, 2024) as well as students' abilities to self-regulate, positively impacting the quality of their overall compositions (Gong & Pang, 2025).

One potential concern about practicing the recursive stages of writing in the classroom are the limitations on time available during the course. Providing adequate time to help students plan, organize, draft, edit and revise during class time, when many other assignments and course objectives also need to be considered, can be difficult for instructors to balance. However, helping students learn these steps and practicing them with teacher support in class during the beginning of a term, and, as the term progresses, shifting the responsibility to the learners to complete the steps on their own outside of class, time can significantly improve their autonomous writing skills and abilities. Practicing the recursive stages of writing can train EFL writers in the process of producing successful compositions, which reinforces good writing habits which they can then draw on in the future, as their writing projects become longer and more complex during their academic career (Sárdi, 2023; Gong & Pang, 2025; Zhang & Zhang, 2024).

Combine process- and genre-based approaches to writing instruction

Following in the tradition of teaching L1 English writing, L2 EFL writing instruction has utilized several pedagogical approaches, including process and genre-based approaches (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014). The process approach emphasizes the importance of practicing the different stages of writing, receiving feedback from peers and their teacher, and presents writing as a tool for the expression of individuality and one's own ideas (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014; Williams, 2003). The genre-based approach to teaching writing emphasizes the distinct features of various text types, drawing focus to differences in literary conventions and discourse features among varying types of compositions in English (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014). Student writers analyze elements of different types of writing, and then attempt to incorporate these features in their own writing based on the expected structures, language, and objectives of each text type (Paltridge, 2013).

Each approach offers potential benefits for student development, but also comes with several limitations. Recent studies (Author, 2024) have found that even advanced EFL academic writers struggle with errors that are addressed by either the process- or genre-based approaches to writing instruction, and that learners' writing abilities are positively affected by instruction that includes both process and genre-focused study (Behdani & Moghaddam, 2024; Galegane & Ntereke, 2022). A recent trend in writing instruction, therefore, has been to combine both pedagogies, leading to the process-genre approach (Babalola, 2012; Peungcharoenkun & Waluyo, 2023).

With the process-genre approach, students practice the recursive stages of writing, including brainstorming, drafting, editing, and revising, while also learning about the context and objectives of the text type they are creating (Nordin, 2017; Peungcharoenkun & Waluyo, 2023). By integrating beneficial elements of both approaches, learners are better able to identify and apply appropriate language, structural features, social contexts, and the purpose of the type of composition they are generating, and

are better able to self-regulate the stages of the writing process (Behdani & Moghaddam, 2024; Peungcharoenkun & Waluyo, 2023; Truong, 2022; Zhang & Zhang, 2024).

Utilizing a process-genre approach has been shown to positively impact the quality of EFL writers' compositions when compared with those who only learned through process or genre-focused studies only (Galegane & Ntereke, 2022). Students who learn via a process-genre approach demonstrate a higher awareness of the organization and individual components of academic essays, as well as improved sentence structures, vocabulary usage, and overall performance and accuracy (Behdani & Moghaddam, 2024; Galegane & Ntereke, 2022; Kitajroonchai et al., 2022). The explicit instruction of the stages of writing through the process-genre approach has been shown to increase strategy usage, metacognition, and writer confidence as well (Galegane & Ntereke, 2022; Truong, 2022). The opportunity to collaborate with peers to evaluate, discuss and edit their written work as promoted by the process aspect of process-genre learning has also been shown to positively impact students, leading to higher metacognition and improved written output (Galegane & Ntereke, 2022).

By engaging the advantageous features of both the genre-based and process-based writing pedagogies, the areas of difficulty that EFL student writers face can be mediated and addressed. Through the process approach's benefits, students can practice the recursive stages of writing, have the cognitive burden of writing lessened as they work through each step, develop their analytical skills, and collaborate with peers to evaluate and edit their drafts, leading to better metacognition, strategy use, and overall success in writing. Through the benefits of the genre-based approach, student writers can have their attention brought to the unique linguistic and structural elements of each type of text they work on, allowing them to then know when and how to employ which type of writing to suit their objectives and complete the assignment.

Include peer feedback

Peer feedback, which involves students collaborating to analyze, critique and offer ideas for revision on their fellow writers' compositions (Liu & Edwards, 2018), is widely seen as an essential element to writing education (Cao et al., 2022; Nguyen, 2016).

In some contexts, peer feedback is disregarded in favor of teacher feedback, with some purporting that student writers lack the language proficiency, task training, or willingness to engage in critiquing and giving adequate feedback (Wakabayashi, 2008). As such, some argue that students may offer each other detrimental feedback, thereby compounding grammatical, content-based, or spelling errors in their texts.

However, when used in conjunction with teacher feedback, implementing opportunities for peer review has been shown to result in significant improvement in writing ability, critical reading and thinking skills, and learners' individual ability to edit their own output (Cao et al., 2022; Choi, 2013; Wakabayashi, 2008; Wu et al., 2022). By analyzing each others' texts, writers gain more feedback than they would from the teacher alone, are able to develop awareness of the audience they are writing for, as well as critical and analytical skills that they can then apply to their own work in the future (Nguyen, 2016; Wakabayashi, 2008).

The process of noticing and articulating errors during peer review also promotes metacognition regarding the stages of writing, what one writes, and why and how one writes it, all while providing comprehensible input and different models for content, organization and writing structure (Galegane & Ntereke, 2022; Nguyen, 2016). Collaboration between peers to evaluate, discuss and edit written work during revisions can facilitate social and affective strategies and facilitate cooperation for greater understanding of text structures and objectives, which in turn can promote more effective use of writing strategies, self-regulation, and overall writing success (Choi, 2013; Galegane & Ntereke, 2022).

For these reasons, including peer feedback opportunities in the writing classroom is an important feature for supporting student writers. However, in order to ensure the quality of the feedback is noteworthy, training students in how to give effective feedback to their peers is recommended (Min, 2005; Wakabayashi, 2008). Min (2005; 2016) demonstrates that guiding student writers through a four-step training procedure (clarifying writers' intentions, identifying problems, explaining the nature of problems, and making specific suggestions) over a three-week span facilitated significant progress in learners' abilities to provide specific and effective feedback that improved their peers' compositions.
Different types of peer feedback have also been noted to be more beneficial than others, and bringing learner attention to these methods can strengthen the quality of their comments. These include feedback with clear, concrete recommendations (van der Pol et al., 2008) feedback that indicates errors in the text (Gao et al., 2019) and feedback that is related to improving the text (Wu and Schunn, 2020). With proper training and guidance in how to notice errors and discuss revisions with their peers, student writers can improve a variety of skill sets and their overall writing abilities through practicing peer feedback.

Provide teacher feedback strategically

Along with peer feedback, teacher feedback is of incredible importance for developing L2 writing proficiency. In addition to the fact that students find teacher feedback desireable and valuable (Pan, 2010; Straub, 1997), studies have shown that error correction and other forms of teacher feedback to be valuable for improving writing quality and self regulation (Yang et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2022).

However, providing students with extensive feedback that contains all of the errors present in the early stages of their compositions can be overwhelming, confusing and possibly demotivating (Azizi & Nemati, 2018). In this case, students often ignore or disregard teacher feedback, continuing to make the same mistakes in future iterations (Azizi & Nemati, 2018; Latif, 2019).

One way to avoid overwhelming and demotivating students with too many corections could be to focus on different types of errors at different stages in the writing process. For instance, in early stages of planning and writing first drafts, more attention could be paid to giving feedback regarding structural or content-based errors before much time or effort has been spent writing in depth. Further along in the writing process, towards the revising and editing stages, providing more feedback about local, sentence-specific grammatical or spelling errors might be more helpful. By focusing feedback and error correction at different stages of writing as students develop their compositions, teachers can avoid providing students with too many critiques about mistakes at one time, which could in turn overwhelm, discourage, and demotivate them.

Providing this feedback orally through student-teacher conferencing can benefit student writers in a variety of ways (Alfalagg, 2020; Yang, 2022). During conferences, teachers have time to focus on each individual students' particular needs, giving more focused feedback on their writing styles, processes, specific errors, and areas of difficulty, as well as discussing their experiences in the class (Alfalagg, 2020; Yang, 2022). Conferencing also provides an opportunity for students to ask questions, get clarification on teachers' written comments, and receive support on revisions (Yang, 2022).

Despite these benefits, conferencing can require a significant amount of time to prepare for and conduct, and may not be possible for all writing teachers. In cases where time is not available to schedule individual student-teacher conferencing, providing specific coded feedback may be a beneficial alternative. Coded corrective feedback, where the teacher writes a symbol to indicate a certain type of error but does not explicitly state how the writer should correct it, has been shown to be more effective for student writers (Sampson, 2012; Saukah et al., 2017). It can increase cognitive engagement (through the use of codes, colors, or metalinguistic explanations), challenging the learner to be active in the editing and leading to more successful self-corrections (Ferris et al., 2013; Makino, 1993; Sampson, 2012).

Regardless of the delivery, be it in person or through written feedback on drafts and assignments, providing students with timely and constructive teacher feedback is a cornerstone for learner development. Helping student writers begin to notice their mistakes, guiding them through their journey of learning how to be autonomous writers, and providing a safe space to receive helpful critiques and suggestions is an important aspect of being a writing instructor's.

CONCLUSION

This paper introduced six principles for supporting and facilitating successful academic writing in an EFL context. Learning to write in an L2 is a challenging and dynamic process, which requires significant time on task, explicit instruction, and repeated practice. While it can be a difficult skillset to foster in a language educational context, supporting students on their journey to becoming strong L2 academic writers should be a goal of English education.

There is no perfect pedagogy for teaching EFL writing. The best classroom practices, instructional styles, and ways to provide feedback will depend on several factors, including learners' ages and proficiencies, the time available, the amount of students in a class, and the overall course objectives. Future research is still necessary to determine the extent to which certain types of feedback and instruction styles best support different course objectives and learners of different levels. However, the aforementioned six principles can serve as tools in an L2 writing instructors' tool belts, which they can utilize when applicable to respond to student needs, teaching contexts, course objectives, and time frames. These principles can support writing instructors in effective ways for helping student academic writers increase their linguistic awawreness, gain confidence and awareness of genre and the recursive steps of writing, and improve the overall quality of their compositions.

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Exploring the Initial Impact of 3x3 Table Language Training (3x3 TLT): A Preliminary Study in Japanese and Thai Universities

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Abstract

This study explores the impact of the 3×3 Table Language Training (3×3 TLT) method among undergraduate students in Japan and Thailand. Across three sets of instruments, a maximum of 242 Japanese students (learners of English) and 40 Thai students (learners of Japanese) participated, with slightly fewer completing all measures. The results showed that while both groups initially lacked confidence in their language abilities, the training effectively strengthened key communication skills. Japanese students increased their spoken word count by 41.1%, while Thai students showed a 24.1% increase after the 3×3 TLT training. However, significant group differences emerged: Thai students scored higher in incorporating feedback and intercultural communication while Japanese students showed stronger confidence in improvised speaking. These findings suggest that Thai learners prioritize interactive competence, while Japanese learners emphasize quick and structured delivery. Future challenges will include developing teaching methods that account for cultural differences and emphases. Additionally, addressing differences in teaching approaches and identifying optimal language proficiency levels will be crucial in future research to ensure the method's adaptability and effectiveness.

Keywords: speaking, fluency, 3x3 table language training, communication skills, intercultural communication

INTRODUCTION

Building English fluency has long been a critical challenge in Japan, particularly in business and educational contexts where global communication is essential. Surveys of Japanese business professionals (Koike et al., 2010; Terauchi et al., 2015) reveal that many experience considerable difficulty in speaking English in workplace settings, despite being able to manage their job responsibilities. Recent findings suggest that this situation remains largely unchanged (Naito & Terauchi et al., 2024). This highlights a persistent issue: Japanese users of English often struggle to express their intended messages smoothly and effortlessly.

To understand fluency, it is important to examine the speech production process. Levelt (1989) proposed a model of L1 speech production consisting of three main stages: conceptualizing the message, formulating a pre-verbal message, and articulating speech. L2 research has adapted this model and

addressed the major difference that L2 speech typically lacks the automaticity and parallel processing evident in L1. For example, L2 speakers tend to pause more frequently and for longer durations than L1 speakers (de Jong, 2016). At lower levels of proficiency, learners often struggle to access their resources and proceed through the stages in a linear, step-by-step manner, resulting in frequent pauses and, in the worst case, halting communication and eroding confidence. This often results in silence or the avoidance of further interaction. However, verbal interactive communication is dependent on the speaker's output, and it matters how L2 learners attain higher fluency. There is little doubt that classroom treatment has a crucial and significant role in EFL contexts.

To address these challenges, Naito (2022) developed the "3x3 Table Language Training (3x3 TLT)," which draws on Levelt's speech production model, particularly emphasizing strengthening the formulation stage. The 3×3 TLT is a pair-work activity in which a learner describes a slide shown with simple objects or images as quickly as possible while the other reconstructs it by drawing or writing, with roles alternating as learners ask for clarification and elaborate on details. The contents of 3x3 table grids vary from simple to more complex objects, ensuring repeated practice with increasing challenge. It is aimed that learners easily work on formulation routines, reduce cognitive load, and enhance spontaneity in using a target language. Previous studies among Japanese university students reported positive outcomes, including increased output, greater confidence, and reduced anxiety (Naito et al., 2018; Naito et al., 2019; Yamada et al., 2019; Yamada et al., 2021; Ishikawa et al., 2021). More recently, the 3x3 TLT was applied to Thai university students studying Japanese for the first time, suggesting its potential across different contexts.

While these results are encouraging, little is known about how the 3x3 TLT may enhance fluency across diverse cultural and linguistic environments. To bridge this gap, this study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: How effective is the '3x3 TLT' method in enhancing students' verbal output, psychological readiness, and communication skills across different cultural contexts?

RQ2: What specific skills are developed through its application?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Based on Levelt's model, Segalowitz (2010) proposed three types of fluency: cognitive, utterance, and perceived. Cognitive fluency refers to "the speed and manner of the underlying mechanics of speech production" (Tavakoli & Hunter, 2018, p. 334), reflecting the efficiency of mental processes during language use. Utterance fluency concerns the observable features of speech, including rate, pauses, hesitations, repetitions, and repairs. Perceived fluency, by contrast, relates to listeners' judgments of how fluent an utterance sounds.

Research on utterance fluency has attracted considerable attention. Lennon (1990) emphasized the need for objective and systematic measures of fluency, leading to a framework with three categories: speed, breakdown, and repair measures (Skehan, 2003; Tavakoli & Skehan, 2005). In this line of research, tasks such as storytelling and discussion have been commonly used to elicit extended stretches of speech and to analyze disfluency features such as pauses and hesitations. However, this emphasis has left comparatively little research focusing on beginner or low-proficiency learners.

Findings from L2 fluency research have offered valuable pedagogical insights. However, Rossiter et al. (2010) observed that ESL classrooms often emphasize free communication activities, despite limited evidence that such activities directly promote fluency. Free-flowing interaction assumes that learners already possess sufficient linguistic resources and can effectively employ communication strategies. In EFL contexts, where opportunities to use the target language outside the classroom are scarce, pedagogical tasks become even more crucial. This emphasizes the need for carefully designed classroom activities that explicitly foster fluency development. In particular, many EFL learners have limited

exposure to English beyond the classroom and often lack confidence in spontaneous speaking. For such learners, fluency-oriented tasks can provide structured opportunities to practice extended speech, gradually bridging the gap between classroom learning and communicative use (DeKeyser, 2007).

In EFL contexts such as Japan, even frequent English users often rely on preparation-based strategies (Nakatani, 2017) that are less effective for spontaneous communication. Naito (2022) introduces the 3×3 TLT in classroom practice, intending to promote fluency, because the flow of interaction depends more on overall dynamics, requiring speakers to draw on utterance fluency.

Yamada et al. (2021) investigated the influences of 3x3 TLT across four universities in Sapporo, Japan, between 2018 and 2021. The results of one-minute speaking tests before and after the 3x3 TLT training showed a statistically significant increase in the number of words among participants, confirming the method's positive impact on spontaneous English speech. Qualitative results further indicated improving learner confidence and greater willingness to engage in tasks and speak English.

In contrast, Ishikawa et al. (2022) employed the GTEC[1] English proficiency test—a standardized assessment with human evaluators for production skills—to measure broader communicative competence gains following the 3×3 TLT. Their findings revealed no significant differences in overall speaking scores between pre- and post-training. This discrepancy may have been caused by differences in scoring measures among instruments, which standardize testing measures global, objective proficiency. However, the differences in learners' performances in a short period of time are more likely to be subtle and specific, such as immediacy and confidence. Thus, this study suggests that measurements in L2 research are more suitable.

At the ABC International Conference in 2019, the potential of applying the 3×3 TLT to languages other than English was raised as a comment from the audience. Building on this suggestion, the present study implemented the training with Thai university students learning Japanese, who face similar challenges in developing speaking fluency as Japanese learners of English. This cross-linguistic application enables investigation of how the method functions in different learning contexts. Cross-cultural studies are crucial for identifying whether context-specific factors, such as learner beliefs, influence its effectiveness.

In sum, while existing studies have demonstrated the 3×3 TLT's potential to enhance spontaneous speech, further research is needed to specify which sub-skills (e.g., rapid lexical retrieval, syntactic chunking, discourse management) are principally influenced and to determine the extent to which effects can be generalized across cultural-linguistic contexts. To address these questions, the present study employed (1) a one-minute speaking task to measure the overall utterance fluency, (2) a questionnaire on attitudes and motivations related to 3x3 TLT, (3) a business-skill survey, and conducted a cross-cultural comparison between Thailand and Japan.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Participants in this study were 268 undergraduate students from three universities in Japan and 41 Thai students from a university in Thailand. For Japanese students, four teachers, including the authors, offered instructions to them in independent EFL classes at three universities in Japan. For Thai students, two teachers, including the authors, taught two Japanese classes in Thailand. All participants were enrolled in English (in Japan) or Japanese (in Thailand) language courses. However, participation in this

[1] GTEC is a proficiency test that was developed by Benesse Corporation, a company in Japan, and the test has been widely administered among secondary and tertiary institutions in Japan.
https://www.benesse.co.jp/gtec/en/

study was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained in all cases. During the course of data collection, missing data from either the pre- or post-tests were eliminated, resulting in discrepancies in participant numbers across the three components of the study. The number of participants analyzed for each task is shown in the results.

Measures

To evaluate the effects of the 3x3 Table Language Training (3x3 TLT) method, three different datasets were collected for each participant before and after the training, allowing for both within-group and cross-cultural comparisons. The details of the three tasks were explained to participants in each classroom, and all tasks were the same as the ones used in the previous studies (Naito et al., 2018; Naito et al., 2019; Yamada et al., 2019; Ishikawa et al., 2021; Yamada et al., 2021; Yamada et al., 2024) to compare with the Thai group.

The sequence of data collection and classroom intervention was as follows: (1) pre-intervention: 1. description task, 2. psychological state survey, (2) 3x3 TLT (10 times per 15-week semester), (3) post-intervention: 1. description task, 2. psychological state survey, 3. communication skill assessment. To be more precise, in addition to a speaking task, the two surveys were conducted in Japanese for Japanese students and in Thai for Thai students to avoid misunderstandings. The questions had already been prepared in English and Japanese, and, for this study, they were translated into Thai by a native Thai speaker who was also fluent in Japanese and English, and then checked for consistency among authors before being given to participants.

1. Description Task

This task was conducted to collect the participants' actual speaking data. For a description task, participants were shown a picture slide containing three different objects and asked to describe them verbally for one minute. The data were taken twice—before and after the 3x3 TLT exercise. To avoid the learning effect of repetition for collecting data, the pictures used in pre- and post-tests were differentiated. They were requested to suppose they explained the information to someone who was not looking at the slide. Audio recordings were transcribed, and the total number of words for each participant was calculated. The increase in word count served as the primary indicator of improvement in immediate verbal output. However, the other elements of fluency were not addressed in this study due to limitations in terms of learners' proficiency as well as quantity and nature of utterance (e.g., words or phrases rather than sentences).

2. Psychological State Questionnaire Survey

A 25-item questionnaire was administered before and after the 3x3 TLT session to measure changes in students' psychological readiness for spontaneous communication. The survey items, rated on a six-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree), assessed constructs such as motivation, anxiety, and self-efficacy in speaking. The items were developed based on the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) by Horwitz et al. (1986). To focus on speaking-related content, several items were eliminated, including those that inquired about overall language classes. The wording of the remaining items has also been adapted for EFL contexts. Additionally, to assess language proficiency, items related to current and target language proficiency were added. Language proficiency items used descriptors based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (cf. Ishikawa et al., 2021). Therefore, the scales ranged from 1=A0 to 7=C2. Minor modifications were made for both contexts (e.g., converting English proficiency to Japanese proficiency for Thai students). Pre- and post-survey mean scores were compared to determine shifts in psychological state.

3. Communication Skill Self-Assessment: The Use of Business and Professional Communication Skills (BPCS)

After completing the TLT session, participants completed a self-assessment survey adapted from Business and Professional Communication Skills (BPCS) (Coffelt et al., 2022). BPCS is an inventory of skills required in business settings. The 3x3 TLT was originally developed to build speaking fluency in business settings rather than for classroom practice, so this survey was included to examine the areas of business and professional skill development. A total of 39 items were selected out of 186 items for their relevance to verbal communication. The seven-point Likert-scale questionnaire assessed participants' perceptions of specific skills gained through the 3x3 TLT exercise, including quick lexical retrieval, discourse organization, and intercultural interaction strategies.

Data analysis

Quantitative data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 27 with two-tailed $\alpha = .05$. For the description task, paired-samples t-tests were performed separately for Thai and Japanese groups to assess the statistical significance of word count increases. Psychological state data were analyzed via paired-samples t-tests to compare pre- and post-intervention survey scores within each cultural group. Self-assessment responses were analyzed using independent-samples t-tests to compare mean skill ratings between the two groups.

Ethical Considerations

All procedures were conformed to the ethical standards of the participating institutions. Participants' anonymity was preserved by assigning numerical codes to recordings and survey data, and all data were stored on password-protected servers accessible only to the research team.

FINDINGS

1. Description Task

The results in Table 1 indicate that both Thai and Japanese participants increased the number of words after engaging in the 3×3 TLT exercises. Japanese students exhibited a larger percentage increase (41.1%) compared to Thai students (24.1%), possibly reflecting that Japanese students may have become faster at going through their overall speech production process than Thai students. Another possibility is that students' proficiency level may have influenced the difference: Japanese students have studied English for at least six years before entering university, whereas Thai students' experience of learning Japanese varies from beginners to highly proficient, self-taught learners.

Table 1.

Description Task Word Counts Before and After 3×3 TLT Exercise

Group	Number of students	Pre-task (*M* words)	Post-task (*M* words)	Increase
Thai	34	13.8	18.2	24.1%
Japan	210	20.6	35.3	41.1%

Note. *M* = mean.

2. Psychological State Questionnaire Survey

In this study, 19 out of 25 items were presented in the analysis and discussion. Originally, there were 25 items for a pre-training survey; 30 for a post-training survey. Excluded items were related to demographic information and open-ended questions as they were not directly relevant to the research focus (e.g., interests and difficulties on 3x3TLT). (cf. Ishikawa et al., 2021) The scores shown in Table 2 indicate the mean of each group.

Table 2

Psychological State Questionnaire Survey Before and After 3×3 TLT Exercise (Thai: N=40, Japan: N=242)

Statements	TH Pre	TH Post	JP Pre	JP Post
Q1. I like communicating with people.	4.44	4.35	4.19	4.39
Q2. I enjoy learning English/Japanese.	5.49	5.33	4.04	4.48
Q3. I can speak English/Japanese with confidence.	3.73	3.68	2.27	2.85
Q4. I don't mind if I make a mistake in English/Japanese.	4.10	4.25	3.29	3.64
Q5. I have feelings of resistance toward studying English/Japanese.	1.49	1.80	2.51	2.69
Q6. I am trying to learn new English/Japanese words/phrases.	4.88	4.68	4.55	4.36
Q7. I can use English/Japanese only after I remember English/Japanese words or rules.	4.54	4.65	4.36	4.41
Q8. It is important for me to practice English/Japanese through actual communication.	5.39	5.05	4.76	4.91
Q9. I often confirm whether my understanding is right or not.	4.68	4.35	3.95	4.23
Q10. I decide how to explain in advance when I need to use English/Japanese.	4.24	4.15	3.88	4.19
Q11. I like working in pairs in my English/Japanese class.	4.54	4.25	3.98	4.33
Q12. It is important for me to speak English/Japanese fluently.	4.66	4.33	4.00	4.06
Q13. I pay attention to my English/Japanese pronunciation.	4.88	4.70	4.33	4.27
Q14. I pay attention to other people's English/Japanese pronunciation.	3.85	3.85	3.00	3.19
Q15. I worry about my English/Japanese grades.	5.10	5.18	4.36	4.24
Q17/19. I hesitate to speak English/Japanese without requiring preparation in advance.	4.29	4.43	4.35	3.65
Q18/20. I am afraid of conveying information verbally about a given task as soon as possible.	4.24	4.20	4.54	4.14
Q24/29. Your English/Japanese Level: CEFR A0, A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2.	2.05	2.55	2.17	2.52
Q25/30. Your English/Japanese Level You want to acquire while you are in college: CEFR A0, A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2.	5.76	5.70	4.65	4.52

Note. Group comparisons (JP = Japan; TH = Thailand) were conducted.

Results indicated measurable increases in students' self-perceived language proficiency in both countries. When asked to self-assess their current proficiency level (Q24/29), Thai students showed a mean increase of +0.50 points, while Japanese students demonstrated a mean increase of +0.35 points. These findings suggest that students may have evaluated that they were becoming more fluent in a target language, and that the 3x3 TLT may have positively contributed to learners' confidence in using a foreign language.

To further explore item-level tendencies, the five questionnaire items with the largest pre-/post-score changes were identified separately for each group. Interestingly, the observed changes highlight divergent affective patterns between Thai and Japanese students.

Thai students negatively shifted on three interaction-oriented items: Q8 (-0.34), Q9 (-0.33), and Q12 (-0.33). In contrast, the scores increased on Q5 (+0.31) and Q11(+0.29).

These results suggest that while Thai students' self-assessed language proficiency improved, their valuation of interactional aspects such as fluency and confirmation behaviors diminished slightly after training. The increased score on resistance suggests a modest increase in negative affect, potentially reduced tolerance for language learning challenges; however, the mean remained below the scale midpoint (pre=1.49, post=1.80), indicating that overall resistance was still low.

Japanese students, on the other hand, showed strong positive gains across affective and interactional domains: Q16 (–0.83), Q11 (+0.64), Q3 (+0.64), Q9 (+0.61), and Q2 (+0.60). These results reflect a substantial improvement in learners' psychological readiness and attitude toward unplanned speech. The significant decrease in hesitation without preparation (Q16, –0.83) suggests that the 3x3 TLT effectively reduced anxiety related to impromptu communication. Furthermore, enhanced scores in confidence (Q3), enjoyment (Q2), and interaction (Q9, Q11) suggest a growing preference for collaborative learning and increased comfort in communicative tasks.

Overall, the 3x3 TLT method contributed to improved self-perception and readiness to speak, but the nature of change varied across cultural contexts. Thai students appeared to benefit more in terms of general proficiency and less concerned attitude, while Japanese students showed stronger gains in fluency-oriented behaviors and collaborative engagement. These findings could be interpreted as the need for culturally responsive adaptations of language training methods to align with learners' motivational profiles and communication styles.

3. Communication Skill Self-Assessment

Group comparisons were conducted using independent samples t-tests. The analysis focused on identifying items with statistically significant differences. Nine items showed significant group differences ($p < .05$) as shown in Table 3. The full list of item-level comparisons is available in the Appendix.

Table 3

Top Differences in Self-Assessed Business and Professional Communication Skills (BPCS)

Thai: N=30, Japan: N=158

Skill Description	M (JP)	M (TH)	M Difference	*t*-value	*p*-value
Incorporate feedback	4.09	5.10	-1.01	-5.10	0.00
Cross-cultural communication	3.38	4.30	-0.92	-4.03	0.00
Build rapport	3.79	4.57	-0.78	-3.13	0.00
Pronunciation	3.62	4.37	-0.75	-2.98	0.00
Facial expressions	3.56	4.27	-0.70	-3.09	0.00
Impromptu speaking	4.42	3.77	0.65	2.38	0.02
Give feedback (positive and negative)	3.91	4.53	-0.63	-2.61	0.01
Coherent messages	3.83	4.30	-0.47	-2.09	0.04
Explain	4.68	4.27	0.41	2.06	0.04

Note. Negative numbers indicate higher average ratings in the Thai group.

These results demonstrate several culturally-influenced tendencies in communication skill development. Thai students exceeded their Japanese peers in areas related to social and affective communication—such as incorporating feedback, engaging in intercultural communication, and expressing themselves nonverbally. These outcomes suggest that Thai learners, shaped by a communication culture that emphasizes relational harmony and awareness toward feedback, benefited notably in these interpersonal domains.

Conversely, Japanese students rated themselves higher in skills associated with structured delivery, particularly in improvised speaking and providing clear explanations. The higher score in impromptu speech indicates that Japanese learners developed greater confidence in spontaneous language use—an essential skill in fast-paced professional contexts.

Together, these results reveal that the 3x3 TLT method could foster skill development tailored to learners' cultural learning styles and educational expectations. Thai learners showed improvement in social-communicative and intercultural domains, while Japanese learners focused on message clarity and delivery efficiency. These findings reinforce the value of cross-cultural customization when applying the 3x3 TLT in business communication training across diverse educational settings.

DISCUSSION

The present study confirms that the 3x3 Table Language Training (3x3 TLT) method helps enhance immediate verbal output. Students across both cultural contexts produced a greater number of words per minute following the intervention. These quantitative gains are consistent with prior assertions that structured, task-based activities can automatize aspects of the formulation process, leading to measurable improvements in fluency. Importantly, the significant shift in learners' mental states—reflected in increased self-efficacy and reduced anxiety—marks the method's psychological benefits in mitigating negative affect and sustaining motivation.

The item-level analyses reveal distinct cultural patterns in how learners respond to the 3x3 TLT exercises. Thai students showed pronounced gains in social and affective communication skills, such as incorporating feedback and intercultural interaction, which may be associated with educational and cultural orientations that emphasize relational harmony and collectivist values. Conversely, Japanese students exhibited stronger development in skills related to impromptu speech and coherent explanation, suggesting a pedagogical alignment with logical structuring and efficiency. These differences may imply the importance of considering learners' cultural predispositions when designing and implementing language training interventions. However, further research is needed to establish the extent of such influences.

The observed divergence in communication styles—where some learners prioritize interactional engagement while others focus on rapid, logical delivery—offers valuable insights for applied linguistics and language pedagogy. Specifically, the 3x3 TLT's emphasis on rapid lexical retrieval aligns with cognitive load theory, whereby repetitive, structured practice reduces processing demands, freeing cognitive resources for more complex tasks. Additionally, the positive shifts in psychological readiness indicate that immediate response training can enhance learners' willingness to take communicative risks, a critical factor in language acquisition according to affective filter hypotheses.

From an instructional perspective, these findings suggest several practical recommendations. First, teachers should maintain learner motivation and minimize resistance by encouraging active use of pre-learned vocabulary, creatively varying task topics to sustain engagement, and providing consistent positive feedback. Second, task difficulty can be calibrated through adjustments in grid complexity or time constraints, allowing for differentiated instruction that meets learners at their proficiency levels. Finally, integrating intercultural components—such as comparing communication norms or role-plays—can further enhance learners' intercultural awareness and adaptability.

LIMITATIONS

This research, however, is subject to several limitations. First, the study employed a quasi-experimental design without a control group, limiting causal inferences. Future research should incorporate randomized controlled trials to isolate the effects of 3x3 TLT more rigorously. Second, the reliance on self-report measures for psychological and skill assessments may introduce response biases; triangulating with observational or physiological data could enhance validity. Third, the relatively short time frame of the intervention precludes conclusions about long-term retention; longitudinal follow-ups would clarify whether improvements persist over time. Lastly, although cross-cultural comparisons were valuable, expanding to additional linguistic contexts (e.g., learners of Chinese or Korean) would assess the generalizability of the TLT method across diverse language pairs.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the 3×3 TLT method enhances learners' immediate verbal output and psychological readiness for spontaneous communication, addressing RQ1. The structured, task-based intervention supports measurable gains in fluency and confidence while reducing anxiety. In response to RQ2, the training was shown to cultivate verbal communication skills across cultural contexts: Thai students demonstrated stronger abilities in incorporating feedback and intercultural communication, while Japanese students excelled in improvised speaking and delivering clear explanations. These findings indicate the importance of context-sensitive pedagogy. By aligning training strategies with learners' strengths—whether in social-interactional or logically structured domains—educators can adapt the 3x3 TLT framework to foster targeted communication growth. Ultimately, the 3×3 TLT offers a

practical, evidence-based approach to overcoming common barriers in language instruction and supporting diverse learner needs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This study was supported by JSPS KAKENHI Grant Number 23K00700.

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Appendix

Full results of Self-Assessed Business and Professional Communication Skills (BPCS)

No.	Skill Description	M (JP)	M (TH)	M Differenc	*t* -value	P -value
1	Accurate messages	4.38	4.20	0.18	0.82	0.41
2	Clarify information	4.52	4.23	0.29	1.13	0.26
3	Clarity: messages that are explicit, simple, and compact	4.80	4.43	0.36	1.59	0.12
4	Concrete messages	4.25	4.47	-0.22	-1.03	0.31
5	Correct messages	4.13	4.4	-0.27	-1.21	0.23
6	Paraphrase	4.42	4.17	0.25	0.98	0.33
7	Answer questions	4.06	4.37	-0.31	-1.48	0.14
8	Articulate ideas	4.20	4.30	-0.1	-0.48	0.63
9	Be flexible	4.53	4.77	-0.24	-1.1	0.28
10	Contextual awareness	4.22	4.27	-0.05	-0.18	0.86
11	Give examples	3.87	4.37	-0.5	-1.78	0.08
12	Oral communication skills	4.34	4.47	-0.13	-0.52	0.61
13	Interpersonal communication skills	4.58	4.53	0.04	0.18	0.86
14	Explain	4.68	4.27	0.41	2.06	0.04
15	Listening skills	4.74	4.70	0.04	0.19	0.85
16	Responsiveness	4.28	4.37	-0.09	-0.4	0.69
17	Tact	4.27	4.37	-0.10	-0.48	0.63

18	Build rapport	3.79	4.57	-0.78	-3.13	0.00
19	Concise messages	4.66	4.60	0.06	0.27	0.79
20	Enunciation	4.04	4.37	-0.33	-1.36	0.18
21	Facial expressions	3.56	4.27	-0.7	-3.09	0.00
22	Intonation	3.83	4.20	-0.37	-1.41	0.17
23	Face-to-face communication	4.49	4.40	0.09	0.43	0.67
24	Ask questions	4.23	4.27	-0.04	-0.19	0.85
25	Pronunciation	3.62	4.37	-0.75	-2.98	0.00
26	Adapt to the situation/audience	4.32	4.47	-0.15	-0.69	0.49
27	Coherent messages	3.83	4.3	-0.47	-2.09	0.04
28	Complete messages	4.62	4.33	0.29	1.50	0.14
29	Engage in conversation	4.47	4.5	-0.03	-0.10	0.92
30	Impromptu speaking	4.42	3.77	0.65	2.38	0.02
31	Nonverbal communication	3.90	3.93	-0.03	-0.11	0.91
32	Organized messages	3.83	4.10	-0.27	-1.21	0.23
33	Positivity	4.41	4.53	-0.12	-0.52	0.61
34	Precision	4.09	4.20	-0.11	-0.49	0.63
35	Conversation management	4.18	4.20	-0.02	-0.08	0.94
36	Cross-cultural/intercultural communication	3.38	4.30	-0.92	-4.03	0.00
37	Pace	4.08	4.30	-0.22	-1.09	0.28
38	Give feedback (positive and negative)	3.91	4.53	-0.63	-2.61	0.01
39	Incorporate feedback	4.09	5.10	-1.01	-5.10	0.00

Improving Speaking Fluency: Time Pressure and Transcription Tools to Help Students Speak Faster

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Abstract

Despite MEXT's policy on English education reform, Japanese students' English speaking fluency remains one of the skills they struggle to acquire (MEXT, 2016; OECD, 2018). This study employed a classroom-based action research design with a quasi-experimental structure. It explored (1) whether there is a measurable improvement in students' speaking fluency through a weekly fluency activity, and (2) whether students are motivated to improve their speaking fluency using available technology. The study implemented a weekly 3/2/1 Fluency activity, an adaptation of Nation's (1989) method, in a compulsory English discussion class at a Japanese university. Eleven classes of first-year university students (n=118) participated in weekly 3/2/1 Fluency activities over the course of a semester, while two additional classes served as control groups. Students used smartphones to record their 1-minute speech and document it via Google Docs in order to track their speaking rate. Data analysis indicated an overall improvement in fluency, measured in words per minute. Furthermore, it was found that the factor that motivated students to speak faster the most was time pressure (73.8%), followed by use of technology (60.7%), and then peer pressure (59.5%). These findings suggest that structured, timed speaking practice with technology to visualize real-time progress can be effective in improving fluency and engagement in an EFL context. Future research could examine fluency development by considering additional aspects of fluency beyond speaking speed, analyzing fluency gains within a contained setting, and collecting more in-depth qualitative data regarding learner motivation.

Keywords: speaking fluency, 4/3/2 fluency, motivation, technology, student self-assessment

INTRODUCTION

In Japanese secondary education, English learning has traditionally emphasized grammatical accuracy through translation-based methods, with limited attention to spoken communication (Falout et al., 2008). At the university level, however, students are typically expected to participate in communication courses that require exchanging ideas in English. Many struggle with this shift, often lacking the fluency needed to express themselves confidently.

At one university in Tokyo, first-year students take English Discussion Class (EDC), a course designed to help students develop the communication and discussion skills needed to "be able to exchange opinions with others in order to share their culture and beliefs with both native and non-native speakers in English" (Hurling, 2012, p. 1-2). A central component of this course is a fluency activity adapted from Nation's (1989) 4/3/2 task, in which students repeat the same speech under progressively shorter time limits. For classroom efficiency reasons, the EDC version shortens each stage by one minute, creating a 3/2/1 format. Although the authors observed apparent gains in spoken fluency over several

years of using the activity, these improvements were not empirically proven, leading to the following research questions:

1. Has there been a measurable improvement in speaking fluency after engaging in 3/2/1 Fluency?
2. Does the use of technology motivate students to improve their speaking fluency?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Background

In recent years, the development of speaking and listening skills has been pointed out as a challenge in Japanese English education. In response, Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has set enhancing listening and speaking skills (communication abilities) as a policy goal in its English education reforms since 2014 and has announced plans to expand opportunities for speaking in classroom instruction while advancing teacher training and the development of teaching materials (MEXT, 2016). This issue is also prominent on a global scale. The OECD report on Japan's education policy (OECD, 2018) points to the need for national-level educational reform, suggesting that imbalances in curriculum content (overemphasis on reading and writing) and the effectiveness of speaking instruction are key challenges. According to the EF English Proficiency Index (2024), Japan hit a record low of 92nd place in the English proficiency ranking of 116 countries and regions where English is not considered their mother tongue. Looking at Japan's results by age group, the rate of decline in scores for those aged 18 to 21 over the past decade significantly outpaced that of those aged 21 and above, with the 2024 scores also ranking lowest among all age groups. This suggests that the results of Japan's English education reforms have yet to materialize. When discussing the improvement of English speaking skills, both accuracy and fluency are involved, but this study will focus on fluency as it is an area that Japanese EFL speakers have traditionally found more challenging. Previous research on Japanese EFL learners has reported persistent difficulties in speaking fluency, particularly temporal indicators such as speech rate and clause-internal pauses, even when grammatical accuracy is not significantly impaired (Saito et al., 2018; Suzuki & Kormos, 2019; Tokunaga, 2021). These findings suggest that fluency may develop later than other areas and should be prioritized in classroom interventions.

Fluency

Fluency is commonly defined as the ability to produce language smoothly and in real time (Skehan, as cited in Thornbury, 2000; Lennon, 2000). In the field of second language acquisition (SLA), many studies define fluency not merely as the "ability to speak fluently," but based on measurable criteria such as speed, accuracy, hesitation and pauses. For example, Lennon (1990) identified two important areas of fluency: (1) speech-pause relationships in performance and (2) frequency of occurrence of dysfluency markers such as filled pauses and repetitions. Tavakoli & Skehan (2005), in their task studies, proposed a framework classifying fluency into "speed fluency (speech rate, articulation rate, amount of speech, time ratio and mean length of run)," "breakdown fluency (pauses and silence)," and "repair fluency (reformulation, replacement, false starts, and repetition)." Segalowitz (2010; 2016), from a psycholinguistic perspective, distinguished fluency into three layers: "utterance fluency (speech rate, hesitation and pausing phenomena)," "cognitive fluency (processing efficiently)," and "perceived fluency (listener-based judgements of fluency)." Nation (1989) identified three measurable aspects of fluency: "(1) the speed and flow of language production, (2) the degree of control of language items, and (3) the way language and content interact" (p. 377). The present study focuses on Nation (1989)'s first aspect, with an emphasis on speed in words per minute, and investigates whether technology-supported self-monitoring can motivate learners to improve their fluency.

Fluency Activity

One well-known fluency-enhancing activity is the 4/3/2 fluency activity. Maurice (1983) first devised this method. This is a pair-based speaking training exercise where one person speaks without interruption to a partner, then repeats the same content to a new partner at progressively shorter intervals. The speaker talks about the same topic for 4 minutes, then 3 minutes, and finally 2 minutes. The listener does not engage in dialogue with the speaker except for occasional reactions. Nation (1989) popularized this technique. He demonstrated that the 4/3/2 technique contributes to improving learners' speaking speed and reducing pauses and hesitations. Furthermore, he discovered that repetitive practice helps build learners' confidence in speaking. Based on Nation's notion, Hurling (2012) modified the standard 4/3/2 activity time allocation to 3/2/1 for incorporation into a new discussion course at a university in Tokyo. This activity aimed to cultivate students' ability to speak fluently and confidently in English as well as develop ideas and share information during a later discussion. Bertorelli (2018) overviewed various fluency activities in the literature including the 4/3/2 and 3/2/1 variations, concluding that "all studies have one common feature: repetitive speaking activities seem to improve speaking speeds of learners, providing valuable input and practice for proceduralization" (p. 153). Taking into account that the 3/2/1 Fluency activity has similar benefits as the 4/3/2 original, this study employs the 3/2/1 version (hereafter referred to as 3/2/1 Fluency).

METHODOLOGY

Research design

This study examined the effects of 3/2/1 Fluency on first-year university students' speaking fluency. The activity was implemented weekly from Lesson 2 through Lesson 13. Eleven classes participated in the activity each week, while two additional classes served as control groups. The control groups participated in 3/2/1 Fluency only in Lessons 2 and 13, conducting standard warm-up discussions during the other lessons. Data were collected from both experimental and control groups for comparison.

Research participants

The participants consisted of 13 classes of first-year university students enrolled in a required English Discussion course. Each class had approximately 10 students, with a total of 138 students. Nine classes were at the CEFR A2–B1 level (TOEIC 280–479), three classes were CEFR B1–B2 (TOEIC 480–679), and one class was CEFR A1–A2 (TOEIC under 280).

A total of 138 students gave informed consent to participate in the study, and all of them provided at least one valid data sample. Of these, 118 were in the experimental group and 20 were in the control group. In the final lesson, 84 students from the experimental group completed a survey using Google Forms.

Ethical considerations

This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of both the students' and the researchers' affiliated institution. The participants were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study and gave their written informed consent prior to participation. They were assured that their decision to participate or not would not affect their course grades. All data, including speech transcriptions, WPM records, and questionnaire responses, were anonymized before analysis to protect participants' privacy.

Research instruments

The main instruments and tools used in this study included:

- Students' smartphones with Google Docs and Google Drive applications installed.
- Google Drive folders (one per student), prepared in advance, containing 12 separate Google Doc files for those in the experimental groups and 2 files for those in the control groups.
- QR codes printed on students' name cards, linking directly to their individual folders.
- Name cards with space for students to record their Words Per Minute (WPM) and printed instructions (in Japanese) to guide them through the activity.
- University Wi-Fi, enabling access to the online tools.

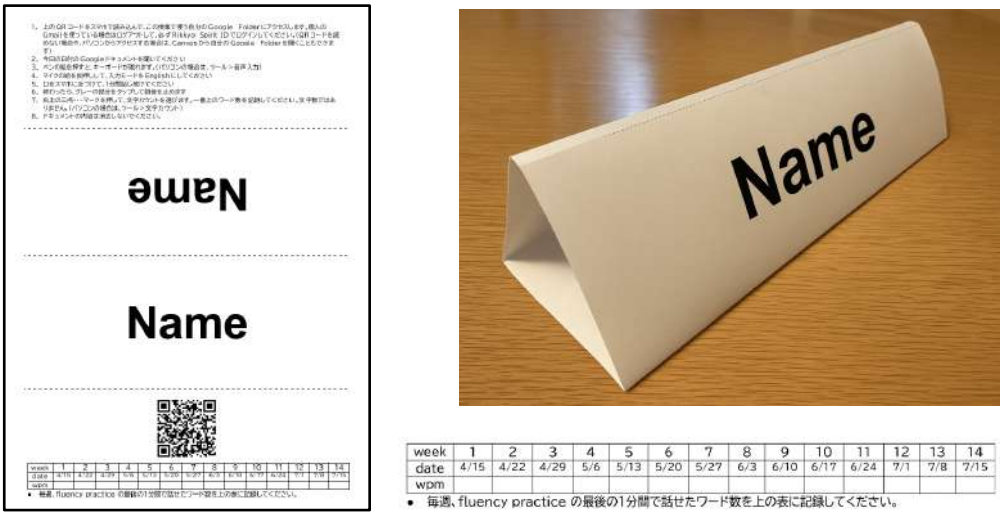


Figure 1. Student name card example

Data collection

Lesson 1:

- Students were introduced to 3/2/1 Fluency, installed the necessary apps, and practiced accessing their Google Drive folders via their QR codes. They also practiced setting their smartphone keyboards to English for transcription.

Lessons 2–13:

- 3/2/1 Fluency was conducted. Students first engaged in 3-minute and 2-minute speaking rounds with partners. In the 1-minute round, students spoke into their smartphones, which transcribed their speech via Google Docs' voice recognition. After finishing, they recorded their WPM by using the "Word Count" function in Google Docs and then writing the number onto their name cards.
- Students in the experimental group repeated this process across all 12 weeks (Lessons 2–13). Control groups participated only in Lessons 2 and 13.

End of Lesson 13:

- Name cards were collected from all students for WPM data.

- A questionnaire was administered in the experimental groups to investigate their perceptions and motivation regarding speaking fluency.

Data analysis

Students' WPM data from the name cards and Google Docs were collected and anonymized. Survey responses were also anonymized and used to investigate motivational effects through descriptive statistics.

FINDINGS

At the end of the semester, students' name cards were collected and their word counts were documented and organized into graphs using Google Sheets (see Figure 2). The average fluency in words per minute was calculated for both Lessons 2 and 13. Overall, there was an upward trend in all classes, including the control group (n=20). However, the participants that engaged in regular 3/2/1 Fluency practice (n=118) made slight gains over students that had not engaged in such activities (see Table 1).

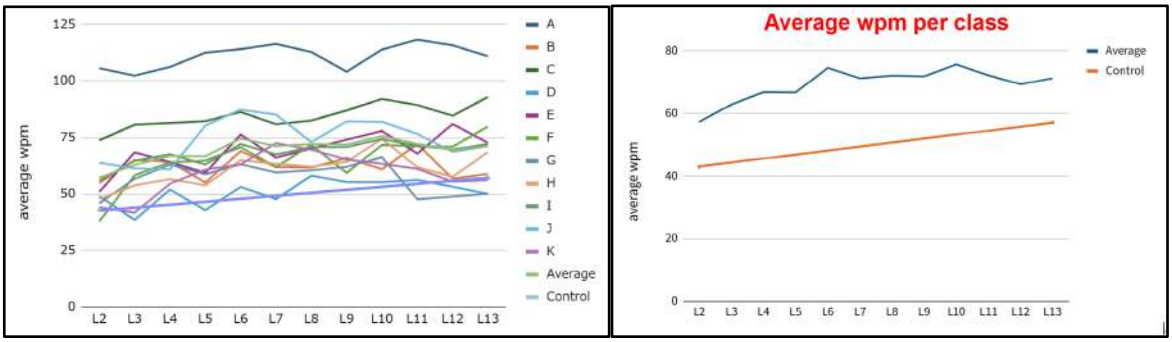


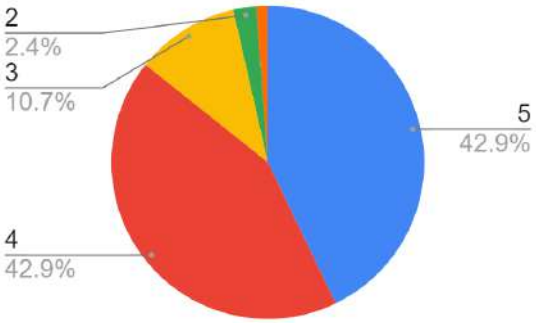
Figure 2. Average number of WPM per class, and collective average for all classes and control groups

Table 1.
The average increase in fluency in words per minute

Experimental Group (n= 118)	Control Group (n=20)
13.0	8.8

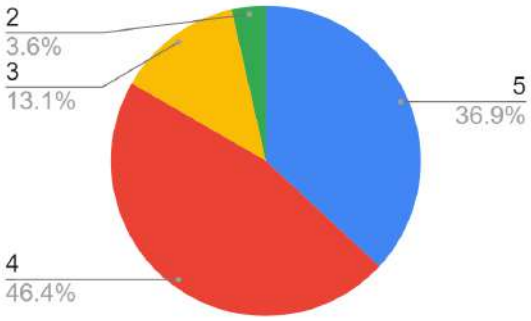
Additionally, students were surveyed at the end of the semester using Google Forms (*n*=84). The survey mainly consisted of 8 quantitative questions on a five-point Likert scale. However, questions 1, 2, 7, and 8 were followed by an open-ended follow-up question that allowed students to provide qualitative responses. To ensure clarity, the questions were in both English and Japanese. Students were allowed to respond to qualitative questions in either English or Japanese, with the latter responses being translated into English using DeepL Translator. The purpose was to see whether students found 3/2/1 Fluency motivating and, if so, what potential factors may have had a positive impact on motivation. After the survey data was collected, the results were organized into graphs (see Figure 3). For the purpose of this research, students reporting either a 4 or 5 on this Likert scale were considered to have endorsed the statement.

Q1A: Do you think the Fluency Practice was helpful in improving your speaking fluency?



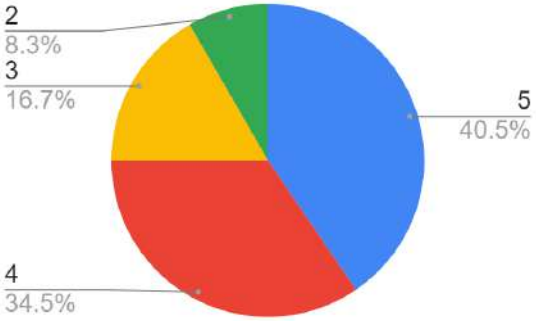
5 = It was very helpful
1 = It was not helpful at all

Q2A: Did you enjoy doing Fluency Practice?



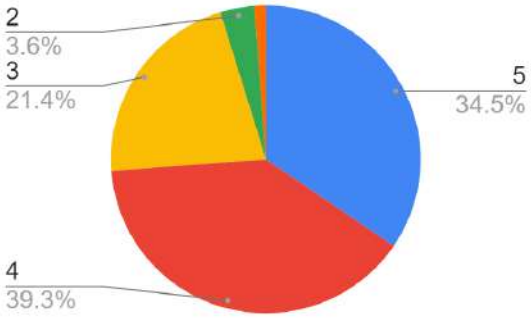
5 = I enjoyed it a lot
1 = I didn't enjoy it at all

Q3: Did you want to improve your speaking rate from week to week?



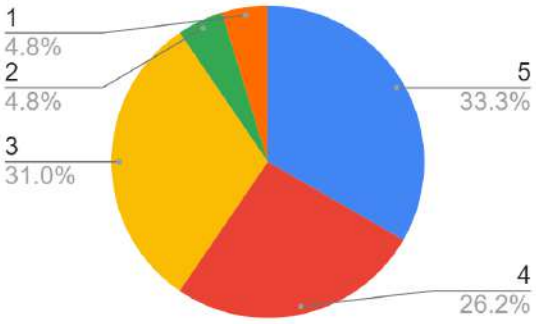
5 = Yes, very much
1 = No, not at all

Q4: Did using a timer help you speak faster?



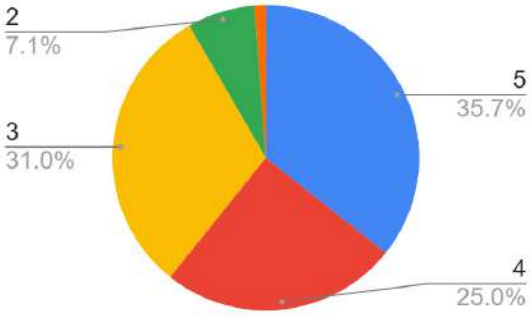
5 = It was very helpful
1 = It was not helpful at all

Q5: Did your classmates encourage you to speak faster?



5 = Yes, very much
1 = No, not at all

Q6: Did using Google Docs to record your voice encourage you to speak faster?



5 = Yes, very much
1 = No, not at all

Q7A: Did you practice speaking English fast outside classes?

Q8A: Will you continue practicing speaking fast in the future?

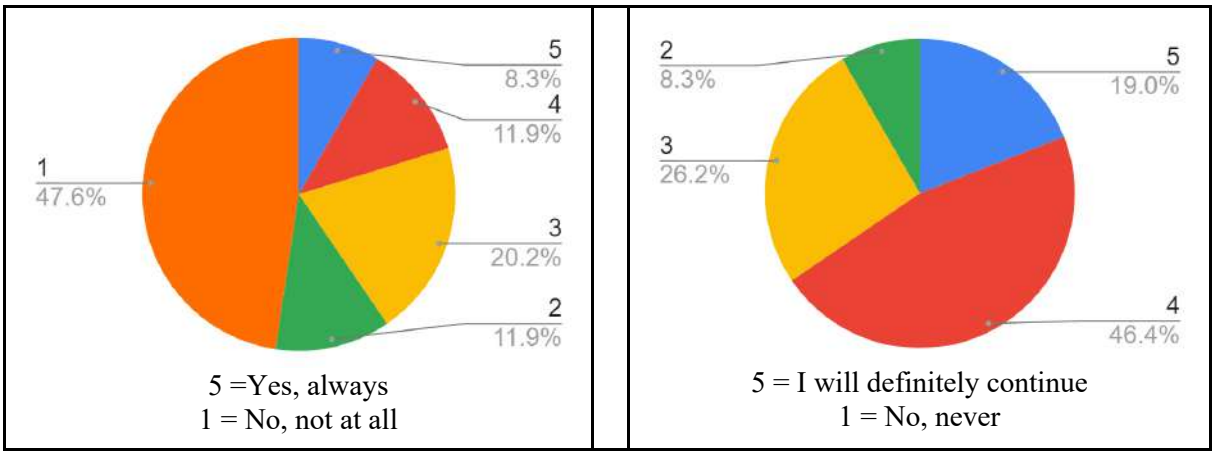


Figure 3. Fluency reflection survey results

In question 1A, students were asked whether they perceived 3/2/1 Fluency practice to be helpful in improving their speaking fluency. A strong majority endorsed this statement (85.8%).

In question 2A, students were asked about their enjoyment. Despite the structured and repetitive nature of the activity, most students reported having enjoyed the activity (83.3%).

Questions 3 to 6 looked at motivational factors that might impact students' desire to improve their speaking fluency. For question 3, students generally endorsed the statement that they wanted to improve their speaking rate from week to week (75%). However, this was surprising because it also indicates that one out of every four students was not actually interested in speaking smoother, faster, or more accurately. Despite this result, it would seem many of these students still found the activity helpful (85.8%) and enjoyable (83.3%), but conversely, a lack of motivation could also negatively affect enjoyment. Questions 4, 5, and 6 asked about specific factors that encouraged students to speak faster, focusing on the use of a timer, encouragement from classmates, and recording the rate of words per minute with Google Docs. In question 4, students generally felt time pressure to be motivating (73.8%), although not all students shared this sentiment. Question 5 would indicate that peer pressure had some influence (59.5%) but was less influential than time pressure. In question 6, students found the use of technology to record their voices somewhat motivating (60.7%), slightly more motivating than peer pressure but admittedly quite a bit less than the use of a timer.

Question 7A asked students whether they practiced speaking quickly outside of class. As expected, only a small minority of students engaged in such activities (20.2%) when not being forced to do so. In the cases where students endorsed the statement with a 1, indicating "not at all," they did not provide a follow-up example for question 7B asking how they practiced. However, all other students—even those endorsing the statement with a 2 or 3—provided practice methods, which were then placed into categories based on frequency (see Table 2). These examples would indicate that more than half (52.4%) made some degree of effort to improve their speaking fluency outside of class, although most (32.1%) could be said to have perceived those efforts to be minimal or ineffective.

Table 2.

Ways Students Tried to Speak Faster Outside of Class (n=37; multiple responses allowed)

Activity	Number of Students	Percentage
Speaking faster when talking with English speakers	8	25.0%

Speaking aloud to myself in English	6	18.8%
Translated what I am thinking in my head	4	12.5%
Reading sentences aloud from a book	4	12.5%
Practicing with an instructor or in another class	3	9.4%
Shadowing	2	6.3%
Singing along to English music	2	6.3%
Other	3	9.4%

Question 8A asked students whether they will continue practicing speaking quickly in the future. A large majority of students expressed an interest in continuing to practice fluency in the future (65.4%).

DISCUSSION

The above findings show an increase in the speaking rate for the experimental group in words per minute compared to that of the control group. In addition, students found the activity to be both helpful (85.8%) and enjoyable (83.3%), which not only made the majority want to improve their speech rate on a weekly basis (75%) but also onward into the future (65.4%).

Question 1A asked whether 3/2/1 Fluency was helpful, and it can be concluded that students generally appreciated the opportunity to engage in speaking activities, which may have been less common during their secondary education courses. Students' motivation for speaking practice is supported by findings from a Benesse (2024) survey, in which over half of the 771 university students who responded (56.5%) indicated that they most wanted to improve their speaking skills while learning English. This desire to speak may be attributed to the Japanese education system's emphasis on accuracy over fluency, leading a type of dysfluency that Long (2017) describes as "getting it right instead of getting it fluent so that students are unable to convince, debate, discuss, negotiate and interact in a wide variety of settings" (p. 20). For that reason, it is not surprising that students are aware of the problem and have a desire to engage in speaking activities in hopes of combatting it. With regard to the actual outcomes, Bertorelli (2018) compared fluency activities conducted in various contexts and concluded that repetition was the common feature that led to the improvement of speaking speeds. Therefore, by providing a method for students to monitor their progress technologically helps them perceive these gains in spoken fluency.

Question 1B asked students to explain their response to question 1A, with answers typically falling into three categories: (1) time pressure ("It's because we have to speak in limited times, so our ability of thinking as English is increased"), (2) speaking opportunities ("The chance to speak in English is little in Japan, so it helped me to improve my English skill"), or (3) the ability to view their own data ("Because the number of words I can say per minute has increased"). However, when students stated they did not find the activity helpful, the reason was either related to the viewing of their own data ("I didn't increase my word count") or difficulties with technology ("I couldn't get the correct word count because the Google Doc often stopped typing due to my poor grammar"). This is understandable, as students are more likely to engage in an activity if they feel successful (Kaboody, 2013, p. 50), but when such expectations don't lead to successful outcomes, it can lead to disappointment or a loss of interest

(Ng & Ng, 2015, p. 100). Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to carefully monitor students for possible frustration resulting from a lack of immediate progress or technological issues, providing motivational encouragement or troubleshooting tips as necessary.

In question 2A, students were asked about their enjoyment. The reason for this varied, with some describing it as "fun, like a game," while others found pleasure in the level of peer interaction ("I got to talk to a lot of different people" / "Because I was able to talk with my friends"), oftentimes emphasizing being able to hear a range of ideas ("I was able to hear the opinions of many different people" / "By listening to different opinions, I could make use of them in subsequent discussions"). When the activity itself is viewed as fun and stimulating, students become intrinsically motivated to engage in the task out of genuine interest, rather than in response to outside influence (Ng & Ng, 2015). However, there were quite a few who referred to the enjoyment of noticing their own improvement ("I realized I could speak quickly" / "I felt enjoyment in the way I could speak little by little" / "I like to know how my English skill is improve. If I can speak faster and the partner can understand, it is good way to know it"). When language learners, regardless of level, become aware of their own competence or ability to achieve goals, they develop self-confidence that enhances their desire to sustain self-directed goals (Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998). However, when participants cited a lack of enjoyment, the content and difficulty level were often key factors ("There were so many difficult topics" / "Because as the topic got more difficult, the words didn't come out well" / "The topics were social issues, but because they were in English, I couldn't communicate them well and it was difficult to express my opinions"). This activity was used in place of warm-up questions with the goal being to provide students with ideas for the discussions that would follow. As such, the topic questions were based on lesson themes from the preparatory reading. For some students, this contributed to their enjoyment, as they could hear their peers' ideas, but for others it would seem that if lessons regarding certain social issues were perceived as being more difficult to talk about, it may negatively impact their enjoyment of the activity. This would align with studies (Doe & Hurling, 2014l; Falout et al., 2009; Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009) describing the motivating effect of having to learn content and make use of materials that are beyond the learner's proficiency level. Ideally, 3/2/1 Fluency questions should be at a level where all students can express their ideas relatively comfortably and without requiring extensive knowledge of topics or vocabulary. Alternatively, students could be provided the freedom to choose their own topics, thus increasing learner autonomy and personal relevance, further enhancing intrinsic motivation.

The purpose of questions 3 through 6 was to see whether students found 3/2/1 Fluency motivating, and, if so, what potential factors may have had a positive impact on motivation. While research tends to emphasize the demotivating aspect of time pressure, 73.8% of the respondents found a timer to be most helpful at improving speaking rates. Maurice (1986) likens time pressure in fluency to that of a sporting event with time pressure becoming a "communicative capsule" that "serves to heighten the energy levels and willingness to speak" rather than causing tension (p. 80). Another thing that makes these fluency activities different from other timed activities is repetition. Studies (De Jong, 2012; Thai & Boers, 2016) suggest that time pressure was perceived as beneficial in 4/3/2 fluency practices due to the incorporation of pre-task planning, which may occur before the activity itself but is also naturally embedded in the stages of fluency, as the first speech serves as strategic planning for the remaining two rounds. Therefore, it could be argued that time pressure alone cannot be attributed to positive gains in both speech rate and perceived motivation, as both preparation and repetition may serve to neutralize the stressful aspects of time pressure. With regard to question 5, more than half of respondents (59.5%) felt encouraged to speak faster by their peers. As 3/2/1 Fluency relies heavily on pair interactions, such close collaboration provides more opportunities to practice using the language and is, in itself, a source of motivation (Ng & Ng, 2015). Overall, the features of 3/2/1 Fluency, namely time pressure, pre-task planning, and repetition, served as motivating factors to encourage students to speak faster.

In question 6, respondents found using Google Docs to transcribe their words encouraging (60.7%), as using Google Docs allowed them to monitor their real-time and weekly progress, thus activating their intrinsic desire to improve. Therefore, the technology acts as a tool, not a toy, enabling students to set and achieve personal goals. However, such technology was not always readily available. Arevart and Nation (1991, as cited in Bertorelli, 2018) emphasized the time-consuming nature of manually recording, transcribing, and analyzing speeches, with transcribing alone taking an average of 10 minutes for every minute of recorded speech. These days, technology can expedite this process, and the ease by which it can be done allows students to take charge of their learning and monitor their own progress in a way that hadn't been possible before. Therefore, it could be said that the activity in its purest form as described by Nation (1989) is motivating on its own without the addition of technology, but it seems that incorporating technology into such fluency activities may benefit students overall, and teachers might consider including it in their course design.

Question 7A asked students whether they practiced speaking quickly outside of class. While a majority of students expressed interest in improving their fluency in the future, only a small minority of students (20.2%) reported regularly practicing speaking quickly outside of class. This data aligns with previous observations that many Japanese university students struggle to initiate or sustain self-directed language learning on their own (Curry et al., 2017). These learners often lack guidance or an understanding of the strategies needed for independent speaking practice, largely due to being conditioned toward the teacher-centered instruction they received throughout high school, which emphasizes grammatical accuracy and rote memorization over communicative language ability. In spite of this, more than half of the students (52.4%) made at least some effort to practice outside of class, even if those efforts were minimal or perceived as ineffective. Some activities in Table 2, such as reading sentences aloud (12.5%), shadowing (6.3%), or singing along to music (6.3%), suggest that students were experimenting with ways to increase fluency but often relied on methods which required limited interaction with other people. It seems that some students are willing to continue the development of their spoken fluency on their own, but adequate support would be necessary to help them do so more effectively. As Ohashi et al. (2021) explain, teacher-provided tools which encourage structured reflection and goal-setting can help learners make self-guided practice more intentional and sustainable. The findings from our study suggest that our students may likewise benefit from such support, leading to more effective fluency development outside the classroom.

In question 8A, a majority of respondents (65.4%) said that they would like to continue practicing speaking quickly in the future, and their reasons can largely be organized into five categories: (1) a perceived weakness in ability ("I am still too slow to speak English"), (2) a general desire to improve communication ("I want to speak English well"), (3) peer pressure ("I saw people in my class who could speak English smoothly and I admired them" / "Because it's cool to look like you're good at English if you can speak it quickly"), (4) career opportunities ("If I were to work in a hotel in the future, I would need to be able to speak English fluently" / "It will be useful for my work if I can speak English, and I will be able to communicate with many different people"), and (5) a desire to connect with foreigners and travel abroad ("Because I want a lot of friends who don't live in Japan" / "I think it is easier to communicate with native speakers if I can speak quickly" / "I like to travel, so I have many opportunities to go abroad, and I think it would be easier if I could speak well then"). However, quite a few expressed a desire "to not waste the results so far," which is summed up nicely by the following comment: "I don't want to lose the English skills I have gained so far, and at the same time, I want to improve my English level and prepare for opportunities I haven't seen yet." Still, the reality of the situation is aptly expressed by one student: "I don't seem to have the opportunity. If I had time to do it with everyone, I would continue to do it, but not by myself alone." This final comment reminded us that many students have a strong desire to improve speaking fluency, but this kind of activity is not necessarily something that can be sustained outside of the classroom. Therefore, continuing to implement a guided activity such as 3/2/1 Fluency will

benefit students while they are in a structured classroom environment, but L2 educators may also choose to take the additional step of exploring ways to provide guidance, tools, or frameworks to these same students that may help them extend such fluency practices into their own independent studies beyond the classroom (e.g., Curry et al., 2017; Ohashi et al., 2021).

In summary, the survey helped shed light on the students' experience of 3/2/1 Fluency along with the effect of newly incorporated elements. While the quantitative fluency gains were modest, the qualitative feedback shows that students perceived the activity to be both helpful and enjoyable. In addition, time pressure in conjunction with technologically-aided self-monitoring had a positive impact on intrinsic motivation. However, the survey also uncovered a gap in students' desire to improve their fluency and their actual out-of-class practice, reminding us of the importance of structured fluency activities within classroom settings supported by both teacher and peers. While in-class time is a precious resource, allocating a fraction of that time to assist language learners in the development of their spoken fluency can be beneficial, motivational, and—most importantly—not easy to replicate on their own.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to determine whether students had made gains in their fluency over the course of a semester, namely by increasing their overall speaking rate within 3/2/1 Fluency activities and documenting their performance using technology that could be independently monitored by students. Quantitative data indicated that students steadily improved, and the incorporation of Google Docs as a tool for real-time transcription and self-assessment had an overall positive influence on students' motivation to increase their spoken words per minute. However, the most influential motivating factor was time pressure as prescribed by Nation's 4/3/2 format. Therefore, the use of 3/2/1 Fluency was deemed to be successful in helping students increase their fluency.

Although a traditional fluency practice would be sufficient for most classrooms, it could be enhanced through the use of technology. In addition, the questionnaire uncovered that students generally want to increase their fluency but may find it difficult to do so on their own. For this reason, L2 instructors can facilitate the needs of their students by providing frequent opportunities to engage in such beneficial activities.

While classroom research was helpful in uncovering our students' perceptions of this fluency activity, there were limitations that would be worth looking into in future iterations of this study. Firstly, this research emphasizes word count as a means of measuring spoken fluency. However, fluency also includes other aspects such as accuracy and the natural flow of speech. Therefore, instead of Google Docs, other forms of technology could be used to not only transcribe but perhaps record and analyze hesitations and inaccuracies. Secondly, there were a multitude of external factors that could likely have impacted students' fluency gains, as the general nature of this English Discussion Class, along with other concurrent English-based courses requiring frequent communication and active participation, may have also fostered improvement. This was reflected by progress within the control groups despite their having only engaged in an informal warm-up discussion. Perhaps a similar experiment in which students engage in isolated fluency activities would provide more accurate insight into the benefits of this activity. Lastly, our survey uncovered students' general feelings about the activity, mainly whether it was helpful and enjoyable, as well as whether they found the activity to have real-world applications that go beyond the classroom and onward into the future. However, this survey could be enhanced by collecting further qualitative data with regard to the motivational effects of time pressure, peer pressure, and transcription technology. Despite these limitations, this study demonstrates that the integration of advancing technology into well-established practices can allow students to better view their own language gains, thereby motivating them to become more fluent L2 speakers.

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Managing Expectations and Maximising Outcomes: Our Model for Study Abroad Preparation

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Abstract

This paper presents a research-backed model for preparing students to study abroad, consisting of four key strands: due diligence, language preparation, goal setting, and managing expectations. Due diligence covers all necessary paperwork and health and safety issues. Language preparation covers preparing students for real-world English and training for how to leverage their existing skills to communicate effectively during their life abroad. Goal setting ensures that students leave with a clear set of realistic and achievable goals, and how they plan to achieve them. Managing expectations gets students to interrogate and reflect upon their expectations of the programme, and various aspects of life in a foreign country. The paper provides tips for implementing these four strands in a variety of contexts and ends with some limitations of our model and our plans for further improvements and research.

Keywords: study abroad, preparation, goal setting, language preparation, managing expectations

INTRODUCTION

Despite the impact of COVID-19, the number of internationally mobile students has continued to increase in nearly all countries around the world since 2013 (OECD, 2024). In order for students to get the most out of their time abroad, it is essential that they are properly prepared, no matter how long their sojourn may be.

Current study abroad preparation programmes have been described as “woefully inadequate” with students being given a few hours of preparation predominantly “focussing on logistical” matters with students “typically positioned as passive vessels, with little or no input into their own preparation” (Jackson, 2008, p. 222). This description has been given in further studies in both Japan and abroad (Hockersmith & Newfields, 2016; Inoue, 2020), with recommendations including a focus on additional areas to help students with language training, goal setting, and managing their expectations (Lumley, 2020).

To address this gap, the authors of this paper have been developing their own model of study abroad preparation based upon their own research and practice at a private university in Nagoya, Japan. Though it was produced in a Japanese university, with Japanese learners, the four stands can be applied in a variety of contexts beyond Japan and beyond higher education. The model consists of four key strands: due diligence, language preparation, goal setting, and managing expectations. What follows is an overview of the programme’s creation, the four strands, and tips on how to implement these strands in other contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The field of study abroad remains relatively under-researched (Entwistle, 2024b), even though ESL and EFL instruction have been continuously developing for a long time. Interest in study abroad is particularly strong in Japan, where numerous high school study abroad programs, academic journals, and special interest groups exist (JALT Study Abroad Special Interest Group, n.d.), along with seven universities, including ours, dedicated to foreign studies and study abroad.

Based on research conducted in a Japanese university, Lumley (2020) found four areas which he considered key for preparing students to study abroad. Alongside the traditional focus on paperwork and logistical matters (Jackson, 2008), Lumley also identified the need for better language preparation, support in goal setting, and managing student expectations prior to departure. He proposed a model of four 'strands', with due diligence focusing on logistical matters and paperwork, alongside language preparation, goal setting, and managing expectations.

Studies have shown (Inoue, 2020) that language preparation is largely left to individual teachers and researchers, who conduct their own action research or run independent training sessions under their own initiative. The lack of more thorough language development is particularly problematic here in Japan, as learners often find it hard to cope with the differences between Japanese and English, which are greater than between other languages (Swan & Smith, 2001). This struggle with accuracy and being understood can often lead to significant issues, such as demotivation and fear of communicating (Entwistle, 2024b) when students are confronted with rapid colloquial speech in their target situation.

Furthermore, Japan is a non-English speaking environment (NESE) meaning that students here have less chance for meaningful English interactions and input outside the classroom (Entwistle, 2020), than students in English-speaking Environments (ESE), like the U.K. or Canada. Various studies show (Jackson, 2008, p.222; Hockersmith & Newfields, 2016; Inoue, 2020) that in terms of language preparation prior to study abroad sojourns, many institutions are falling way short of what is ideally needed.

What is needed in terms of language preparation for study abroad goes beyond the direct instruction of useful vocabulary and grammar. Students need training to help mitigate the negative motivational impact of moments where communication breaks down (Burden, 2024). This kind of training could involve awareness training on rapid colloquial speech related to their study abroad context (Field, 1998; Hancock, 2018), and the teaching of strategies to overcome issues of miscommunication or the full breakdown of communication (Long, 1983). In other words, helping students learn how to exploit the skills and language they currently have, rather than the explicit teaching of new forms and structures.

In terms of goal setting, research from contexts outside Japan has found that students often depart on their study abroad programmes either without any clear goals, or goals which are overly optimistic and achievable (Jackson, 2008; Salyers et al., 2015). These unclear, or overly optimistic goals can then have a negative effect on student motivation during the course of the study abroad experience, and also on feelings of goal attainment and success once they return back to their home country (Larsen & Howell, 2018).

These findings were also found in the Japanese context, with additional reports of students feeling pressure to be dishonest about their goals if it is discussed as part of the application process (Lumley, 2020). The same research also found examples of students suffering from mental health issues and a lack of motivation as a result of their goals being too unrealistic, with the students ultimately choosing to withdraw from social interaction and making effort for the remainder of their study abroad programme.

Therefore, it is key that students are departing for their study abroad programme with goals that are achievable and motivational. This is not something that can be handled lightly, and certainly not

handled in a context where students feel pressure to be dishonest. Rather, time should be spent with students, helping them craft goals which are honest and relevant to their interests and abilities.

Goal setting is not the only way in which students depart with certain expectations of the experience. A common expectation found in the literature is that students have anxiety over personal safety and potential health issues in the host country (Cavcic, 2017; Tobin, 2020) which may be down to the university 'due diligence' lectures that can sometimes be overly fear inducing (Lumley, 2020).

This is compounded by unrealistic expectations of classes and classmates (Lumley, 2020), such as imagining ESL classrooms full of native speakers or expecting international peers to match stereotypes of extroversion or openness. Study abroad advertising and social media further shapes student perceptions of destinations by portraying them as attractive, fun and cosmopolitan (Lumley, 2020; Miller-Idriss et al., 2019).

A tried and tested method of addressing student questions and expectations is with the use of near peer role models (NPRM) who are peers that might be close to the students in age, interests, and experiences (Murphey & Arao, 2001). These NPRM are in the eyes of the student, a few steps ahead of themselves which increases motivation, and listening and learning from near peers, rather than 'experts' or teachers, reduces anxiety (Murphey & Arao, 2001). Though not in the field of study abroad, the use of NPRM has also shown to be successful in the Japanese context (Walters, 2020). Through NPRMing, learners can have their motivation increased by imagining certain actions and strategies they can adopt, as possible for themselves (Murphey & Arao, 2001).

This literature review has identified a series of key principles for inclusion in Lumley's (2020) four-strand model of study abroad preparation. In creating the preparation course described in this paper, the authors followed the principles outlined above. The following sections will describe how they were implemented into a one-semester study abroad preparation programme.

CONTEXT AND PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

The preparation course presented in this paper is a department-level initiative aimed at complementing the existing, mandatory, preparation lectures delivered to students from across the university by the international office. It was created based on proposals by Lumley (2020) and was initially taught voluntarily by the authors of this paper, providing some limitations to both the length, eleven weeks, and the scope, limited to students within our department.

It has been posited by others (Salyers et al., 2015) that to fully prepare students, study abroad preparation courses should begin 12-18 months prior to departure. However, at our institution, students receive their notice of acceptance to study abroad less than 12 months before departure. As a result, our programme must be conducted within the fifteen-week semester following their notification of acceptance, rather than the recommended 12-18 months. The decision to make the course eleven weeks rather than the full fifteen weeks of the semester was dictated by the necessity of allowing students the time to finalise their class registration and timetables for credit-bearing classes, since they would have to take priority over participation in our course. This allows us the ability to ensure we plan the preparation course to run at a time when none of the teachers or students have another class.

Since the preparation course is a voluntary initiative, it has to run alongside our contractually mandated classes and responsibilities, meaning that decisions had to be made on how many students we could accept and how many times per week to hold a class. Due to the workload we already had, we found it difficult to run the course multiple times per week for other students from across the university. Instead, we opted to open it only for students from our own department, allowing us to develop the materials with a smaller group of students. Though we hope that in the future, we can open this course to more students from across the university.

The first group of students took part in the course in the second semester of 2020, and it has run twice a year since then, once per semester. In total, 117 students have taken part in the programme, departing on a variety of study abroad programmes and to a variety of countries. Since this is a department-level initiative, only students from within the department have had the opportunity to take part in the programme thus far, though it is hoped that the programme can be opened up for other students from across the university in the future, as discussed below in the section on limitations.

Table 1.
Overview of Course Participants to Date

Number of groups	9
Participants	117
Demographics	102 females, 15 males
Average per group	11.7
Average age	20
English proficiency level	B1+ (510 TOEFL)
Study abroad destinations	98 (ESE) 19 (NESE)
Study abroad length	26 (1 semester) 91 (1 year+)

Alongside our course, the university offers mandatory preparation lectures managed by the international office. These lectures align with the description of preparation programmes described in the literature (Jackson, 2008, p.222; Hockersmith & Newfields, 2016; Inoue, 2020). That is, it largely focuses on logistics and is delivered in three or four sessions to a large number of students in a large lecture theatre. Therefore, based on the four strands proposed by Lumley (2020), we consider the university-managed preparation programme to cover strand one (Due Diligence), and built our eleven-week programme to address the needs of strand two (Language Preparation), three (Goal Setting), and four (Managing Expectations). All three strands are addressed at various points in the programme, as can be seen in the table below.

Table 2.
Overview of Our Preparation Programme

Week	Strand	Content
1	3: Goal Setting	What is a good goal?
2	3: Goal Setting	How can goals be achieved?
3	2: Language	Managing breakdowns in communication
4	4: Expectations	Mythbusting study abroad

5	2: Language	Turning conflict into communication
6	2: Language	Navigating world English scenarios
7	4: Expectations	Talking about culture and stereotypes
8	4: Expectations	How to be active on study abroad
9	4: Expectations	Webquest
10	4: Expectations	Study abroad peer discussion
11	3: Goal Setting 4: Expectations	Surviving culture shock and final goal setting

The following sections will provide rationale for the classes included in each strand and will provide tips for implementation in other contexts.

Implementing Strand Two - Language Preparation

Strand two, the Language Preparation strand of the study abroad preparation course is perhaps, somewhat mistitled. The reason for this is that in theory, the students who meet the university standards to study abroad, two 510 scores on the TOEFL test (roughly B1 CEFR level) and an above average grade point average from their university classes, should already be proficient enough in English to live and study abroad. The Language Preparation strand has three clear aims: managing future breakdowns in communication, turning future conflicts and culture shocks into communication, and navigating World Englishes.

Lesson one, managing breakdowns in communication, is based around Long's (1983) communication strategies and tactics. It reminds students, through case studies from returnees, of what they will need to do when they inevitably run into communication issues abroad (Burden, 2024). Lesson two builds upon lesson one by focussing on how to turn potential conflicts and culture shocks into chances for meaningful communication, the importance of which has been highlighted in previous studies (Kato & Reeder, 2015). Lesson three aims to challenge students' views on native-speakerism (Takahashi, 2022; Entwistle, 2024a), raise students' awareness of World English (Hancock, 2018), and reduce future shock (Field, 1998) that they may feel when confronted with rapid colloquial authentic speech.

Exposing students to diverse world Englishes, such as Vietnamese and Turkish speakers of English, and utilising genuine regional accents at natural speed is not meant to intimidate them, as found in previous studies (Lumley, 2020). Rather, it is actually an exercise in awareness raising designed to reduce students' affective filter (Krashen, 1982) and ease anxiety. This is done through micro-listening exercises, where students listen to short authentic extracts, transcribe what they hear, share notes, and reflect on what makes the accent or variety of English easy or difficult to understand.

Finally, students are tasked with listening to our departmental podcast (the Collabo Podcast) which has published over twenty study abroad returnee recordings that aim to provide those about to study abroad with a warts and all account of what it's like to study abroad from their NPRM (Murphey & Arao, 2001).

Implementing Strand Three - Goal Setting

In our context, goal setting is discussed in the mandatory preparation programme managed by the international office, with students being encouraged to set goals prior to departing on their study abroad programme. It is also included in the application process, where students are asked to express their goals in either an oral interview or a short written paper.

However, Lumley (2020) found that this did not have the desired effect, with some students not taking the advice, while others have vague, overly ambitious goals. In addition, there was evidence that in some cases, when goal setting is made a part of the application process, students are less inclined to be honest and feel more pressure to express ideas they feel might help them be accepted onto the study abroad programme.

As a result, when implementing a goal setting strand in a study abroad preparation class, we recommend that students be provided with *time, support,* and *safety* to craft goals which are honest, clear, and achievable. For this reason, we included three classes on goal setting in our programme, to ensure that students are given enough *time* to write, review, and refine their goals before departing on their study abroad programme.

In order to *support* the students in their goal setting, we ask them to write down their goals prior to the start of the preparation programme. In the first class, we provide them with some structure for goal setting by looking at SMART goal setting - goals which are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound. Real world examples of study abroad goals written by previous students are also analysed, in order to provide a NPRM for goal setting. Finally, students share and analyse the goals they wrote prior to the class beginning and are asked to revise them for homework.

In the second session, further *support* is given by allowing students further time to analyse their goals and write an action plan of things they can do throughout the course of the programme to help them achieve their goals. The final session comes at the end of the programme, where students are offered a final opportunity to further refine their goals as their departure date nears.

Implementing Strand Four - Managing Expectations

Strand four aims to address a broader range of items and allows for students to have input into their preparation by giving them an opportunity to investigate various aspects of their expectations and concerns for their study abroad programme.

An integral part of Strand Four is a series of podcast interviews that were conducted with study abroad returnees from our institution (the Collabo Podcast, 2024). We have recorded over twenty episodes with students who have studied abroad for different lengths of time, from short two-month programmes to year-long or multi-year sojourns. Also, the returnees have studied in both ESE, like the U.K., and Canada, and NESE, for example South Korea, and Mexico.

Each interview follows a similar pattern. The interviewees are asked what the positives and main challenges were, how the experience changed them, and what advice they have for future students. Students on the course are tasked with listening to two podcast episodes for homework after each lesson, making notes on the positives, challenges, and advice, then sharing what they heard in the subsequent lesson.

The authentic near peer advice and warts and all realities of studying abroad that we use has been gathered via the podcasts, our own research (Lumley, 2020; Entwistle, 2024), through casual discussions with returnee students, and is used throughout the materials of Strand Two, Three, and Four. For instance, in week eight students discover varying ways of being active when abroad, whether that be solo activities like scrapbooking, journaling, and reflective activities, or by actively seeking out ways to meet people and create meaningful connections. This is done via listening to how other returnees got

the most out of their time abroad. The main aim being that by the end of the lesson, students will understand that they need to push themselves to be active as it likely won't just happen for them organically.

Towards the end of the preparation programme is a webquest activity, where students have the opportunity to research their host country, culture, or university and produce a poster about their destination, with freedom over the content and design. They are given a list of useful websites, some examples for things they might want to include, and finally some guidance on how to use Google Maps Street View to take a virtual tour of their host campus and surrounding areas. Through this activity, students are able to form a more concrete image of their study abroad destination and begin to find answers to any questions that they have.

The webquest activity is followed by another key element of Strand Four, the peer discussion session that takes place in the penultimate class of the programme. This session further aims to address questions or concerns that students might have prior to departure. This is in addition to issues of miscommunication and cultural faux pas which we have observed in our own research (Lumley, 2020; Entwistle, 2024).

To help address these questions and issues, NPRM returnees are invited to join the students to share their experiences, offer advice, and field any questions the students have prepared before the session. This class takes place online to allow students currently in their host country to join. The session takes place in Japanese to allow the students to go deeper and so that the returnees can provide the students with more meaningful advice and support.

Feedback

We launched our inaugural study abroad preparation course in the autumn semester of 2020, and at the time of writing, 117 students have successfully completed our programme and gone on to have rewarding study abroad sojourns.

Due to the lingering Covid-19 travel restrictions and the resulting delayed study abroad programmes, it took some time before we started seeing students back in Japan and in their regular classes. Since the second semester of 2023, returnees have had the opportunity to share their reflections on our programme through a voluntary post-return follow-up email. Returnees were asked the following questions:

- What from the preparation course helped you when you were studying abroad?
- What could we do to make the course better?

Providing feedback was not compulsory, however, from their responses, we have been able to gather a small amount of anecdotal feedback and a snapshot of the course as a whole. Here are some selected comments for strands two to four.

Strand 2: Language Preparation

- Practicing explaining Japanese things such as food, buildings and so on in English was really useful for me. Lots of people ask me questions about Japan, sometimes really niche questions.
- It (the course) helped me learn that there are many different "standards" and "values" from different cultural backgrounds.
- Learning accents all over the world was helpful. I mainly interacted with international students. Learning various accents helped me to understand them.

Strand 3: Goal Setting

- I had not set any specific goals before the prep class, but just some vague ones so it was a helpful activity to know my priorities.
- If [students] really want to go and study outside of the country, they have to have more clear goals or reasons. This helped me succeed.
- Students should make their goals before the programme starts and enjoy the process of achieving them.

Strand 4: Managing Expectations

- It was really useful to understand practical things like sim cards and credit cards from returnee students.
- Study abroad discussion with senior students helped me prepare for studying abroad. I would have actually liked it if the discussion was longer.
- I thought that the class when we searched each university where we were going to on the Google map and looked around using street view was very useful. I think most students who go to study abroad are worried about their daily life. Thanks to the street view app, we were able to imagine how our life would be in the area.

This anecdotal evidence suggests that our three strands are successfully preparing our students to study abroad. However, a more robust study containing a larger, richer data set is needed before we can form any stronger conclusions. We have already started collecting this data in the form of interviews at three points in the participants' journey: prior to taking the preparation course, after taking the preparation course, and once they have returned from their study abroad experiences. We plan to use this data for a more robust study of the effectiveness of this study abroad preparation course.

It is also worth noting what the selected quotes presented above do not show. We hear less frequently about how certain issues students experience when studying abroad significantly negatively impacted their experience, as found in our previous research (Entwistle, 2024; Lumley, 2020). This doesn't mean that students who complete our course don't face challenges and moments of culture shock, but it seems like they are in a better frame of mind to deal with such issues.

METHODOLOGY

Like any other course or programme, ours is not without its limitations. Here we will outline the main issues and limitations but also highlight the future of the programme.

As this course is a voluntary, department level initiative, it is not credit-bearing, meaning that attendance is not mandatory. This is different from most pre-sessional courses students must attend to join master's courses in the UK where attendance is mandatory. Although we emphasize the importance of full participation in the eleven-week course, there is always a small contingent of students whose attendance is, at best, inconsistent. As a result, those with poor attendance records miss out on key advice and guidance. That said, despite this limitation, attendance is generally excellent.

As described above, though a study abroad preparation course should begin 12-18 months prior to departure (Salyers et al., 2015), we are limited by the application process for study abroad students and are unable to begin the preparation course until the semester prior to departure. We are also limited in how many students we can accept onto the course since it is a voluntary programme running alongside our other duties. We hope that in future iterations of the course, we can open up to a larger number of students from across the university, and maybe even turn it into a credit-bearing course in due time.

Though the research and theory underpinning the syllabus design of our study abroad preparation course is sound, we recognise that the selected quotations presented above is a useful

starting point, though further evidence is needed to make stronger claims on the effectiveness of our programme. We are currently in the process of conducting further research by gathering a large amount of interview data, which we intend to thematically analyse and present the results in future conferences and papers. We hope this research will shed more light on specific aspects of the programme which prove to be the most beneficial, and which aspects need further improvement.

Though the preparation course presented in this paper was designed for Japanese university students, we feel that it is flexible enough for adaptation in a variety of contexts. As demonstrated in these limitations, it can be adjusted according to limitations on timing and the number of students. Existing processes within an institution can also be leveraged to supplement the course, for example our institution already has robust processes that cover the requirements for strand one (Due Diligence), so we were able to focus only on the remaining three strands. It is also feasible that existing language classes in a curriculum could be adjusted to cover some of the requirements of strand two (Language Preparation). Therefore, for anyone considering applying this model in their own context, we encourage them to first consider which strands may already be handled by existing infrastructure in their context.

CONCLUSION

Study abroad is a potentially life changing experience for students who have the opportunity to go. As educators, we should ensure that students are as prepared as possible to make the most of their sojourn. Though many preparation classes have been described as “woefully inadequate” (Jackson, 2008, p. 222), the model of study abroad preparation presented in this paper offers a way for institutions in a variety of contexts to address this issue.

By leveraging existing infrastructure in their own context and providing a course focusing on language preparation, goal setting, and managing students’ expectations of the programme (Lumley, 2020), our students can be better positioned to have a successful and rewarding study abroad experience.

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The Effect of Scaffolding on Explicit and Implicit Knowledge in News Discussion Tasks

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Abstract

The results of a quantitative study are discussed in this research paper. The purpose was to examine the effect of scaffolding on explicit and implicit knowledge based of the content of a series of news discussion tasks. Sixty students at a private university in Japan participated in a year-long set of news discussion tasks. The participants were members of two intact classes: Group A received guided scaffolding throughout the tasks, while Group B received no explicit scaffolding. At the end of the year, a 20-item multiple-choice quiz was administered to students in both groups, based on the content covered in the news discussions. In addition, students were also given a two-minute spoken task, based on the news discussions throughout the year. The spoken tasks were rated by two independent raters, who were English teachers. The results of the quiz indicated that students in the group with scaffolding demonstrated significantly higher comprehension scores than those in the group without scaffolding. However, in terms of the spoken tasks, students in the non-scaffolded group were rated significantly higher than students in the scaffolded group. A Pearson correlation showed a moderate to strong correlation between the quiz and the spoken task, indicating that students who performed well on the quiz also tended to do well on the spoken tasks.

Keywords: scaffolding, implicit knowledge, explicit knowledge, spoken tasks, discussion tasks

INTRODUCTION

In language learning education, learners often struggle with balancing classroom knowledge and real-world communication. One common method used to bridge this gap is scaffolding. Scaffolding can be defined as instructional support that assists learners in completing tasks that might otherwise be too overwhelming. It can include breaking down a task into manageable steps, or modeling strategies to more effectively understand a task's language elements, or providing regular feedback on completed tasks. Scaffolding can also include asking questions, explaining instructions, providing vocabulary and grammar instruction. As learners become more competent in their language proficiency, scaffolding can be gradually withdrawn, in line with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (1978). While scaffolding is considered a key component of a number of language learning approaches, some believe that it can lead to learner dependency, and can hinder the development of learner autonomy. While scaffolding has been shown to aid in the acquisition of explicit knowledge, its impact on implicit knowledge remains unclear (Roehr-Brackin, 2022). This study seeks to address that gap.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Scaffolding in language learning has been debated at great length (Anderson, 2017; Gibbons, 2015). Scaffolding in language learning is generally planned and focuses more on accuracy in controlled language

activities, in line with explicit learning (Ellis, 2003; Roehr-Brackin, 2022). In contrast, scaffolding can happen while tasks are being completed. In these cases, it is usually focused on meaning and fluency, and is more aligned with implicit learning (Long, 2015; Kim & Godfroid, 2023). Including various perspectives of scaffolding allow for a broader understanding of the topic.

Zarandi and Rahbar (2014) investigated the effect of scaffolding on the speaking ability of 60 intermediate Iranian EFL students. Participants were divided into a treatment group that received scaffolding activities as part of their speaking lessons. These strategies included pedagogical, cognitive, and visual supports. A control group followed routine instruction with no scaffolding. Pre- and posttests based on a speaking task showed significant gains for the treatment group, which appeared to confirm that scaffolding can enhance learners' speaking performance. The study concluded that scaffolding could increase comprehension and provide a more effective alternative to traditional teaching approaches. The findings support the effectiveness of interactive scaffolding in improving second language speaking ability. However, the study was constrained by a number of limitations. First, the duration of the study was not addressed, however the researchers noted that the number of sessions may not have been sufficient to capture the potential advantages of scaffolding on speaking development. Secondly, while the treatment group was receiving scaffolding, the researchers did not discuss what the control did at this time. Finally, there was no mention of whether or not other factors in the speaking classes may have contributed to the students' improved spoken abilities.

A 2018 study by Buitrago investigated how visual vocabulary scaffolding would benefit students completing a foreign language task. Two groups of university students received different types of vocabulary scaffolding. A discussion task followed, where some of the target vocabulary terms could be used. Responses were noted for frequency and accuracy. Follow-up surveys and interviews confirmed that the group that received more scaffolding contributed more frequently to the discussion. In addition, they were more accurate in their utterances and reported being more confident in completing the discussion task. Assessing the retention of task information was suggested as a potential area for future study. The researcher also noted that the type of scaffolding activities in the study was limited, and that a set or more diverse approach to scaffolding may have altered the results.

Li et al. (2018) studied the impact of pre-task explicit grammar instruction on various L2 outcomes. 78 Chinese EFL learners were assigned into two groups. While the first group received explicit grammar instruction before completing two language tasks, the second group completed the two tasks without receiving any scaffolding. After the tasks, students completed a grammaticality judgement test, and an elicited imitation test. Results showed that pre-task instruction may facilitate the learning of explicit knowledge, but not necessarily implicit knowledge. As grammar instruction was the only scaffolding technique utilized in this study, further research was called for on whether other types of pre-task form-focused instruction would influence explicit and implicit L2 outcomes. Such instruction could include modeling, guided planning, and immediate feedback. In addition, while grammar ability was the focus of this study, other forms of explicit knowledge, such as comprehension, were not assessed. Finally, the elicited imitation assessment was not able to show whether there was any effect on implicit knowledge, including oral proficiency.

A study by Abdelshaheed in 2019 looked at the effectiveness of scaffolding in improving the oral production skills of 62 university English majors. The students were divided into two groups. The treatment group received scaffolding that included warm-up prompts, visual scaffolders (graphic organizers and charts), sequenced instructions, task modeling, summarizing, comprehension questions, while the control group received no scaffolding. Using a pre-post test design, the researcher found that the oral skills of the students in the treatment group were significantly higher than those in the control group. This suggested that scaffolding can be an effective strategy in oral productive skills in a university setting. The author called for more research into whether scaffolding might lead to improvements in oral

production. The author also recommended that the experiment could be repeated with a larger group of students who were not necessarily English majors.

In terms of the research gap, no studies to date have addressed both the effect of a wide range of scaffolding on explicit knowledge (the comprehension of material presented), as well as implicit knowledge (spoken ability). In addition, while most of the existing studies had relatively short durations, a gap existed in examining the effect of a treatment with an extended duration. Finally, existing studies in scaffolding tend to focus on the effects of a limited number of scaffolding strategies. A gap existed in examining the effects of a much wider range of scaffolding techniques.

With these research gaps in mind, the purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of various types of scaffolding on not only the comprehension of content, and improved oral production, based on news discussion tasks. The study addresses the calls for an examination into the effectiveness of a wide range of scaffolding strategies and additionally, whether these scaffolding strategies are effective in improving explicit and implicit knowledge. Three research questions were derived from the gaps in the literature:

RQ1. Will a scaffolded group perform better than a non-scaffolded group on a proficiency assessment, based on the content of news discussion tasks?

RQ2. Will a scaffolded group perform better than a non-scaffolded group on a spoken production task, based on the content of news discussion tasks?

RQ3. Is there a significant relationship between learners' proficiency assessment scores and their spoken task performance after completing a series of news discussion tasks?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study used a quasi-experimental research design with a control group and a treatment group to examine the effects of explicit scaffolding on student performance in news discussion tasks. Two intact classes at a private university in Japan were the subjects. One class was randomly designated as a treatment group that received scaffolding before completing a set of discussion tasks, while a control group completed the same tasks without scaffolding. Quantitative data included the results of a multiple-choice quiz that assessed comprehension of the news topics and a speaking task that evaluated the students' ability to discuss a news story.

Participants

The participants were 60 first-year students enrolled in intermediate-level Listening and Speaking classes (CEFR A2 level). The students came from a variety of academic majors and were placed into two EFL classes, based on the results of an in-house listening and reading proficiency test. Initial testing showed no significnat differences in listening or reading proficiency between the two classes.

One class was randomly assigned as the treatment group (*n*=30), and the other as the control group (*n*=30). The treatment group received explicit scaffolding before completing news discussion tasks. The control group received no explicit scaffolding for the same tasks over the same time period.

Procedure

At the beginning of the year, examples of news discussion tasks were modeled to the class. Each student was assigned to present a news story and moderate a news discussion task, for one class throughout the year. Before their assigned class, each student (called the *anchor* of the day) found a news story from any

source for homework. They prepared a three-sentence summary of the story and chose a relevant interactive discussion task related to the story, which could include role plays, giving advice, ranking, justifying an opinion, information gap tasks, or ordering tasks. For example, one story that was covered during the year was the scandal involving the translator of baseball player Shohei Otani. That story was ideal for a role play where one person would be Otani and the other, his translator.

At the beginning of each class, the anchor wrote the headline and the discussion task up on the board. In addition, anchors in the treatment group chose an appropriate scaffolding strategy for the task. This could include either warm-up questions, a grammar or vocabulary preview, a topic familiarity preview, showing the story in one or both languages, or modeling the task, among others. For both groups, the anchor then presented a summary of the news story and introduced the discussion task to the class. They gave partners/groups time to work on the discussion tasks. The anchor then elicited responses from partners/groups and summarized the class ideas. The steps and timing of the tasks for the control group and the treatment group are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1.
Summary of Steps and Timing of the News Discussion Tasks

Steps	Details of Steps	Control Group	Treatment Group
Scaffolding	Anchor chooses an appropriate scaffolding strategy for the task.	–	5
News summary	Anchor writes the headline and presents a summary of the news story	1	1
Discussion task explanation	Anchor describes the discussion task explanation	1	1
News discussion task	Partners and/or groups work on the news discussion task	10	5
Elicit responses	Anchor elicits responses from the class after the discussion task is completed.	3	3
Total time on task	Anchor manages total time on task	15	15

Note. (Number) = denotes number of minutes.

In short, the only difference between the procedure for the groups was that the control group had ten minutes for the discussion task, while the treatment group had only five minutes for the task, but also five minutes devoted to a scaffolding strategy.

Materials

Quiz

A 20-item multiple-choice quiz with a 20-minute time limit was then administered to both groups. Each quiz paper was numbered to allow students to keep their identities anonymous. Students instead were

instructed to remember an "identity number". The quiz was based on content covered in the news articles common to both groups, for quiz comparability purposes. As students chose the news stories, not all of them were covered in both classes. For example, The *protests in France* story was covered only by the treatment group. *Osaka Naomi's pregnancy* was covered only by the control group. As a result, these stories were not covered in the quiz. The *missing Titanic submersible* story was covered in both classes, so was included in the quiz. A list of the news stories covered by both classes follows:

1. Noto earthquake aftermath
2. Abe assassination and the Unification Church
3. Shohei Otani move to LA Dodgers
4. Pipe bomb attack on Kishida
5. G7 Summit held in Hiroshima
6. China bans Japanese seafood
7. Ichikawa Ennosuke arrested after parents' death
8. Johnny Kitagawa's abusive past
9. Kishida's son forced to resign
10. Ginza luxury watch heist
11. Plane crash at Haneda
12. Behavior at conveyor belt restaurants
13. Japan slips to 125 on the Gender Gap Index
14. Trump denies hiding classified documents
15. Titanic-bound submersible missing
16. Wildfires around the world
17. Chinese spy balloon worries
18. Number of shark attacks increasing
19. Russian invasion of Ukraine
20. The impact of the AR-15's force on the US
21. Alaska Airlines aircraft loses a door
22. Report shows worldwide coral bleaching
23. 700 migrants drown in boat crossing
24. Climate change conference held in Dubai

The prompt of each item on the quiz was a quotation from one of the news stories covered during the year. The distractors were headlines from five of the news stories that were covered. Students were instructed to choose the correct headline that that matched the quotation. A typical item in the quiz follows:

1) "The removal of buildings has not progressed, hindering the recovery efforts of residents."
    a. Plane crash at Haneda
    b. Russian invasion of Ukraine
    c. Wildfires around the world
    d. Noto earthquake aftermath
    e. The Impact of the AR-15 in the US

Spoken Task

Immediately following the submission of the quiz, a two-minute spoken task was administered to the students in both groups, based on the "Ginza luxury watch heist" news story that was covered in class during the year. Students were instructed to review the summary of the news story and read the discussion question:

News summary:
"Four teenagers from Yokohama were arrested for robbing a luxury watch store in Tokyo's Ginza district on May 8, stealing items worth over $2.2 million. Although they claimed they didn't know each other, police uncovered connections among them. The group threatened a clerk with knives, smashed display cases, and fled in a van."

Discussion question: What could be done to prevent further robberies like this in the future?
Students were then instructed to record a two-minute response to the discussion question on their smartphones. Students submitted their recordings to the teacher, using an anonymous file name "Discussion_(identity number)". Using the identity number allowed the researcher to match the quiz and spoken task of each student, anonymously.

Ethical Considerations
The purpose of the study was explained to the students at the beginning of the academic year. An informed consent form in English and Japanese was attached to the quiz and spoken task information, which participants signed, detached, and submitted separately. It also specified that the quiz and spoken task were: anonymous, optional, and did not affect the students' grades. Permission for conducting this study was granted by the university.

Data Analysis

This section outlines the analyses conducted to assess the effectiveness of scaffolding on implicit and explicit knowledge based on the news discussion tasks. First, the quiz data were subjected to a Rasch analysis to confirm item validity and reliability. An independent samples t-test was used to determine any differences between the two groups. Second, the spoken task recordings were assessed for inter-rater reliability using the intraclass correlation coefficient. A second independent samples t-test was conducted to assess any differeces between the groups. Finally, a Pearson correlation was used to examine the relationship between students' performance on both tasks.

Quiz
The Rasch rating scale model (Andrich, 1978) was used to confirm the quiz items measuring the students' comprehension of the content of the news stories. It was also used to confirm the validity and reliability of the questionnaire items. In addition, it was used to measure whether the items are functioning consistently at different levels of student abilities.

The infit MNSQ and outfit MNSQ statistics were inspected. Infit MNSQ is an inlier-sensitive statistic that can detect unexpected responses of persons whose ability is closer to the item's difficulty level. In contrast, outfit MNSQ is outlier-sensitive and can overfit for responses that are more orderly than expected, or underfit for correct guesses on difficult items or mistakes on easy items. As MNSQ statistics are context-dependent, a formula developed by Pollitt and Hutchinson (1987) specified a range of plus or minus two standard deviations of the infit and outfit MNSQ statistics. This formula was considered most appropriate for this study.

Two misfitting student responses were identified. Person A08 and Person B30 both fell outside the acceptable fit statistics (Infit MNSQ = 1.74; Outfit MNSQ = 3.04 and Infit MNSQ = 1.63; Outfit MNSQ = 2.70, respectively). Both persons were subsequently deleted, and the analysis was repeated with 29 persons in each of the two groups. All quiz items were found to be within acceptable fit statistics. Both the Rasch item reliability and separation statistics were very good at .91 and 3.19, respectively. The Rasch person reliability and separation estimates were acceptable at .80 and 1.99, respectively.

A Wright map was generated and indicated a normal person distribution. It was slightly skewed, as many students found the quiz rather easy. It was clear that the items were divided into three bands of difficulty. Items that were difficult to endorse, meaning difficult quiz items, included Q8 (Uvalde school shooting), Q3 (China bans Japanese seafood), and Q19 (Number of shark attacks increasing). Items that were easy to endorse included Q16 (Behavior problems at conveyor belt restaurants), Q12 (Wildfires around the world), and Q7 (Plane crash at Haneda airport).

Spoken Task

The sixty spoken task recordings were each graded by two independent raters. The raters were native speakers of English who taught at the same university. The recordings were graded using a speaking task rubric, adapted from the university's English program (see Appendix 1). The rubric had a total possible score of 40, with equal weightings for pronunciation, vocabulary, structure, and fluency.

Inter-rater reliability was evaluated using the intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC), which measures the agreement between more than two or more raters observing the same cases. An ICC of 0 indicates no agreement at all, whereas an ICC of 1 means that there is complete agreement. The ICC used was based on a two-way random effects model with absolute agreement. The resulting ICC(2,2) value indicated the reliability between raters (ICC = 0.82), which Cicchetti's (1994) suggested guidelines consider excellent, meaning that there was a strong agreement between the two raters on their scoring of the 60 recordings.

Relationship Between the Perceived Need for Scaffolding and Performance

The relationship between the results of the quiz and the spoken tasks, scores was investigated. A Pearson correlation was used to assess the relationship. The results will be discussed in the next section.

RESULTS

Research Question 1

Research question 1 investigated whether or not the group that received scaffolding in their news discussion tasks would perform better than the non-scaffolded group on a proficiency assessment based on the content of news discussion tasks. To determine if any differences in performance existed between the control and treatment groups, an independent samples t-test was used to compare the quiz results of the two groups. A statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups was found ($t(58) = -2.398$, $p = 0.020$), with the scaffolded group ($M = 17.05$, $SD = 3.21$) scoring higher on average than the non-scaffolded group ($M = 14.64$, $SD = 3.46$). This indicates that the group that had scaffolding strategies before each of the news discussion tasks had a better understanding of the content of the news stories, compared to the non-scaffolded group.

Research Question 2

Research question 2 investigated whether or not the scaffolded group would perform better than a non-scaffolded group on a spoken task based on the news discussion tasks. To determine if any differences in performance existed between the two groups, an independent samples t-test was conducted. Results indicated a significant difference between the groups, $t(58) = 2.76$, $p = .008$, $d = 0.71$, with the non-scaffolded group ($M = 32.15$, $SD = 4.23$) scoring higher than the scaffolded ($M = 28.47$, $SD = 5.10$). These

findings demonstrate that the non-scaffolded group had significantly higher scores on their spoken tasks than the scaffolded group.

Research Question 3

The final research question assessed the relationship between students' performance on the quiz and the spoken task. A Pearson correlation showed that there was a weak positive correlation ($r(56) = 0.35$, $p < 0.04$). This suggests that students who performed better on the quiz also tended to perform better on the spoken task. Conversely, a student who had a low score on the quiz also tended to do poorly on the spoken task.

DISCUSSION

The objective of the study was to research the effectiveness of scaffolding on explicit (accuracy) and implicit (fluency) knowledge based on a series of news discussion tasks. The study addresses a number of concerns and opportunities related to the role of scaffolding in news discussion tasks.

First, it is important to point out that explicit and implicit knowledge are two different types of linguistic proficiency. Explicit knowledge focuses on accuracy, and includes elements like grammar, vocabulary, and planned language interactions. It is often a result of formal instruction (Roehr-Brackin, 2022). The results of RQ1 showed that the scaffolded group outperformed the non-scaffolded group on the proficiency assessment, it should be clarified that the items on the quiz focused on students explicit, rather than implicit knowledge of the content. Expanding on the findings by Kim and Nam (2017), some argument could be made that the 20-minute time limit also assessed implicit knowledge, in that under a time constraint, students are more likely to rely on automatic, intuitive, or implicit knowledge to complete such a task. The results of RQ1 are consistent with Zarandi and Rahbar's (2014) study, which suggested that a scaffolded could improve comprehension and oral production in a more effective way, compared with a non-scaffolded group. Similarly, Buitrago (2018) found that vocabulary scaffolding had a positive effect on learners' accuracy during discussion tasks, echoing the positive effect that scaffolding had on comprehension in this study. These outcomes suggest that scaffolding can result in explicit knowledge gains in a discussion task context.

Secondly, implicit knowledge is more connected to fluency and spontaneous language use (Kim & Godfroid, 2023). In this study, implicit knowledge was assessed by the spoken task. As the results of RQ2 demonstrated, the non-scaffolded group had significantly higher scores than the scaffolded group in their spoken tasks. Although the non-scaffolded group had no previews, warm-ups or other scaffolding strategies, they had twice the amount of time allowed in the news discussion tasks throughout the year to practice responding to prompts that were similar in nature to the assessed spoken task. It appears that this extended speaking time gave this group an advantage when it came to the spoken task. This finding contrasts with Abdelshaheed's (2019) results, which showed that scaffolding directly improved oral production skills. The difference may be explained by the fact that in Abdelshaheed's study, scaffolding provided more opportunities for oral practice. However, in the present study, the extra five minutes the control group spent on the discussion tasks seems to have had a more positive effect on fluency, compared to the treatment group. This contrast suggests that scaffolding on its own may not be sufficient for developing implicit knowledge, if the opportunities for extended practice on the discusion tasks are reduced.

Finally, the results of RQ3 demonstrate that while it seems that scaffolding may have played a role in students' implicit knowledge of the news discussion tasks as shown by the quiz results, the increased discussion time may have benefitted the explicit knowledge of students in the non-scaffolded group, in terms of the assessed spoken task, seemingly contradicting the findings of Abdelshaheed

(2019). The weak, but significant correlation between the quiz and the spoken task suggests that students who did well in one of the assessements tended to do somewhat better in the other. This may indicate that both treatments contributed partly to general language ability, not just the specific skill they targeted. The weakness of the correlation (r = .35) suggests that each of the groups did not benefit in both skills at once. A stronger correlation might be expected if general language ability had been improved equally in both groups. Overall, it appears that the low strength of the relationship implied that the treatments of both groups fostered skill-specific outcomes. This pattern aligns with the findings of Li, Ellis, and Kim (2018), who demonstrated that pre-task scaffolding appeared to support explicit, but not necessarily implicit, learning. Their findings also suggested a skill-specific impact, simlar to this study. The results of RQ3 are also consistent with Buitrago's (2018) findings that a wider range of scaffolding strategies might influence the results differently, since utilizing only limited scaffolding techniques may target fewer areas of knowledge. The current study reinforces the notion that scaffolding is not uniformly effective across all areas of language learning, but is highly dependent on task design and practice conditions.

In short, scaffolding can provide students with meaningful strategies to develop competence and allows students to develop confidence and autonomy. It can also help students to develop their cognitive skills, as they can manage tasks with increasing complexity. As a result, scaffolding can encourage more participation in class discussion tasks. However, this study hints that excessive scaffolding can have less than optimal effects. It can lead to a dependence on using scaffolding strategies, or reduce spontaneous and creative language production. Moreover, despite the need for personalized, tailored scaffolding, a one-size-fits-all approach in the classroom remains the best option in large, mixed-ability classes.

Limitations

Three important limitations to the study should be mentioned. First, self-reported data risks the chance of over- or under-reporting, due to a number of external factors. Secondly, the statistical results should be viewed with caution due to the relatively low number of students (n = 60) in the study. Additionally, the students in this study were at an intermediate level. The study should be repeated on a larger scale and include students with various levels of language proficiency to determine whether scaffolding would have a stronger effect on students with higher and lower language abilities. Finally, the news discussion tasks in this study were limited to 15 minutes per class, due to standardized syllabi constraints. It is felt that the linguistic benefits of the task, as well as the results of the study, would have been more robust if the duration of the discussion tasks had been longer.

Pedagogical Implications

The results of this study have highlighted a number of pedagogical implications. First, while noting that scaffolding has a positive effect on explicit knowledge, echoing the ideas put forth in Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (1978), educators can be mindful that as students develop confidence and competence in language proficiency, scaffolding strategies can be slowly removed. The timing of when and which strategies should be removed is an issue that educators should manage carefully. In addition, as shown by the non-scaffolded group's strong spoken task scores, assigning news discussion tasks can give educators a way to improve proficiency and fluency, hence implicit knowledge.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of scaffolding on explicit and implicit knowledge based on a series of news discussion tasks. The results of the quiz showed that scaffolding had a positive effect on explicit knowledge. The scores of the spoken task showed that the increased time for discussion practice had a positive effect on implicit knowledge, compared to scaffolding. The low strength of the correlation indicates that the scaffolded group and the non-scaffolded group treatments resulted in skill-specific outcomes, that is, explicit and implicit knowledge. Scaffolding may be a highly effective tool used to support language learners, but it should be used carefully, with the goal of being eventually removed to avoid dependence and foster autonomy. The eventual removal of scaffolding may encourage proficiency and fluency. Balancing scaffolding with opportunities for independent language proficiency is key.

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Using memes in communication: Thai EFL learners' perception

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Abstract

This study investigates the perceptions of Thai EFL learners regarding the use of internet memes as a tool for communication. As memes have become a popular medium in digital interactions, it is crucial to understand how language learners perceive their use, especially in terms of engagement, clarity, and potential challenges. This research examines their usage and attitudes toward memes in online communication using quantitative data collected from a questionnaire completed by 93 Thai EFL learners. The results revealed that the majority of the respondents perceived memes as an engaging and effective communication tool. Most respondents reported they used memes primarily to share jokes and humor, as well as to express personal feelings or experiences. Many regarded memes as a successful tool for communication by simplifying complex ideas, making communication easier. Additionally, learners strongly agree that memes help convey both messages and emotions effectively. Despite these positive perceptions, some respondents expressed concerns about potential misunderstandings and cultural sensitivity particularly in cross-cultural contexts. These findings suggest that while memes are widely appreciated for their humor and effectiveness in communication, learners are mindful of the potential challenges, particularly in diverse cultural settings.

Keywords: pragmatics, comprehension, internet memes, meanings

INTRODUCTION

The rise of internet memes has significantly transformed communication in the digital age. Memes, which often combine text and images to convey messages, have become a popular medium for sharing humor, commentary, and cultural insights (Shifman, 2014). They are widely used in digital spaces to convey ideas, emotions, and messages in visually engaging ways. These multimodal forms of communication depend on linguistic and visual elements, often requiring the audience to infer meaning through shared knowledge and context. For language learners, interpreting memes can present both opportunities and challenges, as they offer exposure to authentic language use while demanding advanced pragmatic skills.

Pragmatics, the study of how context contributes to meaning (Yus, 2021), provides a useful framework for understanding how memes function as communication tools. Internet memes often rely on inferential comprehension, a process described in Yus's (2019) application of relevance theory. This theory, developed by Sperber and Wilson (1986), emphasizes that communication involves both explicit and implicit information, with audiences relying on contextual clues to interpret meaning. Memes exemplify this, as their humor or message often depends on cultural references, idiomatic expressions, or subtle visual cues. As Yus (2011) points out, memes engage users cognitively, requiring them to navigate layers of meaning to arrive at the intended interpretation.

For English as a foreign language (EFL) learners, memes present a unique challenge. While they can enhance language engagement by exposing learners to colloquial expressions and cultural nuances (Hafner & Pun, 2020; Romero & Bobkina, 2021; Shifman, 2014), they also demand advanced comprehension skills to decode implicit messages (Attardo, 2008; Dynel, 2016; Yus, 2019). Thai EFL learners, like many others, may struggle with understanding the cultural and contextual underpinnings of memes (Al Rashdi, 2020), which can result in misinterpretation or a lack of comprehension. Studies consistently show that Thai learners face difficulties with pragmatic competence. For example, Thijittang and Lê (2010) revealed that Thai students' apology strategies were heavily influenced by Thai sociocultural norms, leading to pragmatic errors in English. Similarly, Prakaiborisuth and Trakulkasemsuk (2016) found that Thai undergraduates often misinterpreted or failed to respond to basic pragmatic expressions such as "What's new?" or "How do you do?", illustrating gaps between linguistic knowledge and pragmatic ability. In academic and professional contexts, Zhang et al. (2019) reported that Thai EFL learners performed at only a low-to-intermediate level in producing speech acts such as refusals, complaints, and advice, even after years of study. Collectively, these findings indicate that pragmatic competence remains a major challenge for Thai learners, possibly making multimodal and culturally saturated texts like memes particularly difficult to interpret.

Despite the growing prevalence of memes, their role in language education remains underexplored. Existing studies have largely focused on the general public or native speakers, with limited attention paid to EFL learners (Shifman, 2014; Yus, 2019). This gap in research is significant, as understanding how learners engage with memes can offer valuable insights into the integration of digital media in language teaching. Furthermore, while studies acknowledge the potential of memes to enhance digital literacy (Dynel, 2016; Hafner, 2020; Shifman,2013), few have addressed their application in developing pragmatic competence among non-native speakers. In the Thai context, Taecharungroj and Nueangjamnong (2014) highlighted how cultural preferences influence meme engagement. Thai audiences were more drawn to self-enhancing humor, in contrast to the self-defeating humor often shared on English meme platforms. This cultural divergence underscores the importance of studying Thai learners' perceptions, as their interpretation of memes may not align with the communicative intentions embedded in global meme culture.

Dealing with cross-cultural communication can be potential challenges of using memes in communication. Studies show that Thai learners often experience pragmatic difficulties when interpreting implicit or culturally bound expressions, leading to misunderstanding or pragmatic failure (Prakaiborisuth & Trakulkasemsuk, 2016; Thijittang & Lê, 2010). Misinterpretations may also occur in multimodal texts such as memes, where meaning relies on the interplay of visual and textual cues and may differ across cultural audiences (Shifman, 2013; Yus, 2019). Furthermore, repeated exposure or overreliance on memes can reduce their communicative effectiveness, leading to what has been described as communication fatigue (Dynel, 2016). Thus, understanding how learners perceive memes and their practical implications is essential for designing effective teaching strategies that leverage their benefits while mitigating potential drawbacks.

This study aims to investigate the perceptions of Thai EFL learners regarding the use of memes in communication. Specifically, it explores their ability to comprehend the pragmatic meanings embedded in memes, the challenges they encounter, and their attitudes toward using memes as a communication tool. By addressing these aspects, this research contributes to the growing body of literature on digital literacy and multimodal communication in language learning. It also offers insights into how digital tools like memes can be used to bridge the gap between traditional language education and real-world communication practices.

This study adopts Yus's (2011, 2018, 2019) theoretical framework on pragmatics and multimodal communication to investigate how Thai EFL learners perceive internet memes as tools for communication. Yus's work emphasizes the interplay between textual and visual elements in creating pragmatic meaning,

highlighting how socio-cultural factors influence interpretation. This framework is particularly relevant to understanding internet memes, which rely on multimodal elements to convey complex ideas, emotions, and humor. By applying this framework, the study explores how learners decode and engage with these elements in communication, considering their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. By examining their comprehension of pragmatic meanings, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of memes in language learning. It highlights the opportunities and challenges associated with their use, offering practical implications for integrating digital media into English language education.

Research Objectives and Research Questions

This research aims to investigate Thai EFL learners' perceptions of using internet memes as a tool for communication. Understanding learners' perspectives on this medium provides insights into how digital communication tools can contribute to language learning and communication strategies.

This study contributes to discussions on integrating digital literacy and multimodal communication into language education. It specifically addresses the gap in English language education by exploring how Thai EFL learners view memes' utility in communication. This focus supports broader efforts to align language education with contemporary communication practices in the digital age.

This study is part of a bigger project aiming to investigate how Thai EFL learners understand English memes. In particular, this study is guided by the research question: *What are Thai EFL learners' perceptions of using memes as a tool for communication?*

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design to explore Thai EFL learners' perceptions of using memes as a tool for communication. The approach aimed to systematically gather and analyze data from a sample of undergraduate students to uncover insights into how they view and use internet memes in communication.

Participants

The respondents were 93 undergraduate Thai EFL learners enrolled in a fundamental English course that incorporates memes as instructional materials. This course was purposively selected to ensure the learners were exposed to internet memes and actively engaged in social media, ensuring relevance to the study's objectives. The research was conducted during the second semester of the academic year 2023 at a university in southern Thailand. The study design followed ethical guidelines to ensure the confidentiality and voluntary participation of respondents. The respondents provided informed consent before engaging in the survey, and all data were anonymized to maintain privacy.

Instruments

To investigate Thai EFL learners' perceptions of using memes as a tool for communication, this study employed a close-ended questionnaire to collect quantitative data. The questionnaire was structured into three main sections including:

1. Respondent demographic information such as age, gender, academic background, and language proficiency to provide context for analyzing the responses.

2. Respondents' experiences on social media and memes to explore their frequency and nature of social media use, their exposure to internet memes, and how they interact with memes as senders and receivers.
3. Respondents' perceptions on using internet memes as a tool for communication to examine their views on the effectiveness, clarity, and emotional impact of memes. It also addressed potential drawbacks, such as cultural misunderstandings and communication fatigue. This section includes 12 items with 5-level Likert scales, focusing on specific benefits (e.g., humor, visual attractiveness, creativity), clarity of communication, and potential drawbacks (e.g., cultural misunderstandings, communication fatigue). These perception items were adapted from previous research on humor and pragmatic awareness (Attardo, 2008; Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998), meme communication (Shifman, 2014; Yus, 2019), and pragmatic competence in Thai EFL contexts (Prakaiborisuth & Trakulkasemsuk, 2016; Thijittang & Lê, 2010).

The questionnaire was validated through expert reviews from 3 academics specializing in linguistics and language education. A pilot study was also conducted with a small group of similar respondents to refine the questions for clarity.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection process was conducted over a four-week period. To recruit respondents, brochures containing a QR code linked to the questionnaire were distributed. Information about the study, including its purpose, objectives, and ethical considerations, was disseminated through multiple communication channels associated with the course. Posters were also displayed on advertisement boards within the faculty building to increase visibility. The recruitment materials emphasized the study's purpose and ethical protocols, including voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality. The respondents were required to review and provide informed consent before proceeding with the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

Responses collected from the questionnaire were reviewed for any inconsistencies or missing data. The responses with incomplete answers were excluded from the data set. In total, 93 responses were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. Frequencies, percentages, and means were calculated to provide an overview of the respondents' perceptions. The questionnaire responses were numerically coded and organized according to the sections addressing respondents' experiences with memes and their perceptions of memes as a communication tool.

RESULTS

The results of the study reveal important insights into experiences and perceptions of Thai EFL learners regarding the use of internet memes as a communication tool. The data collected from 93 respondents provides an overview of their engagement with memes, perceptions on using internet memes, and concerns.

Engagement with memes

The respondents were asked about their experiences using memes in communication. As senders, a significant majority (86%) reported using memes primarily for sharing jokes or humor. In addition, 75.3% indicated using memes to express personal feelings or experiences, and 49.5% used them to react to current events (see Table 2).

Table 2.
Purpose of using memes in communication as a sender

Purpose of meme usage	Responses	Percentage (%)
Sharing jokes or humor	80	86%
Expressing personal feelings or experiences	70	75.3%
Reacting to current events	46	49.5%
Responding to someone else's post	39	41.9%
Others	5	5.4%

When asked about their understanding of memes as receivers, 98.2% reported analyzing the images and text together to understand meanings. Additionally, 59.1% identified cultural references or symbols, 54.8% relied on wording and tone, and 54.8% looked for context clues from comments or discussions. Meanwhile, 51.6% considered the broader context (platform, audience, environment), and 30.1% reported searching for background information on the internet (see Table 3).

Table 3.
Strategies used in understanding memes as a receiver

Strategy used in understanding memes	Responses	Percentage (%)
Analyze the images and text together	83	98.2%
Try to identify any cultural references or symbols	55	59.1%
Pay attention to the wording and tone	51	54.8%
Look for context clues from comments or discussions	51	54.8%
Consider the context in which they appear, e.g., look at where the meme is shared, who the audience is, and the platform it's on	48	51.6%
Search for background information or references on the internet	23	30.1%
Others	2	2.2%

Perceptions on using internet memes in communication

More than half of the respondents (51.6%) agreed that memes were effective as a tool for communication, while nearly half of them (45.2%) expressed their uncertainty. When further asked

about their perceptions on the benefits of using memes, and the challenges and concerns they have, the data revealed their level of agreement as shown in Table 4.

Table 4.
Benefits as well as challenges and concerns on using memes

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Average agreement level (out of 5)
Benefits						
1. Memes add humor, making communication more enjoyable	68.8%	30.1%	0%	0%	0%	**4.64**
2. Memes use pictures, making them attractive	98.9%	40.9%	1.1%	0%	0%	**4.57**
3. Memes enable creative expression and express a range of emotions	55.9%	43.0%	1.1%	0%	0%	**4.54**
4. Memes use short text to describe complex ideas	62.4%	29.0%	7.5%	1.1%	0%	**4.52**
5. Memes use images to enhance comprehension	94.6%	38.7%	4.3%	1.1%	0%	**4.49**
6. Memes use simple language structures	53.8%	32.3%	10.8%	3.2%	0%	**4.36**
7. Memes help with learning English	53.8%	28.0%	17.2%	1.1%	0%	**4.34**
8. Memes deliver messages clearly and directly	39.8%	37.6%	18.3%	3.2%	1.1%	**4.12**
Challenges and concerns						
9. Memes may be interpreted differently by different people	57.0%	35.5%	7.5%	0%	0%	**4.49**
10. Memes may not always convey messages clearly	48.4%	39.8%	10.8%	1.1%	0%	**4.35**

11. Memes can unintentionally cause misunderstandings between people from different cultures	39.8%	39.8%	17.2%	3.2%	0%	**4.16**
12. Excessive use of memes may lead to communication fatigue	37.6%	30.1%	20.4%	9.7%	1.1%	**3.90**

Regarding the benefits, the results indicate that Thai EFL learners widely appreciate memes for their humor and visual engagement. The respondents viewed that memes could add humor, making communication more enjoyable the most ($\bar{x}$ = 4.64), followed by the attractiveness due to their visual elements ($\bar{x}$ = 4.57), and their ability to enable a variety of expressions and feelings ($\bar{x}$ = 4.54). Interestingly, despite quite high agreement levels, the respondents appeared to perceive the use of simple language in memes ($\bar{x}$ = 4.36) and their contribution to English learning ($\bar{x}$ = 4.34) at a lower level than that of their humor appreciation. Also, the respondents viewed memes as a tool to deliver messages clearly and directly the least ($\bar{x}$ = 4.12).

In terms of challenges and concerns, the respondents tended to view memes as having the potential for misinterpretation. They viewed that memes could cause different interpretations by different groups of people ($\bar{x}$ = 4.49) the most, followed by unclear messages ($\bar{x}$ = 4.35) and cross-cultural misunderstandings ($\bar{x}$ = 4.16), respectively. In addition, they seemed to perceive communication fatigue due to excessive use of memes as the least concerned issue ($\bar{x}$ = 3.90).

DISCUSSION

The findings suggest that Thai EFL learners greatly perceive memes as an effective and engaging tool for communication. Their success can be influenced by factors such as cultural sensitivity, the clarity of messages, and audience familiarity. As a sender, their use of memes suggest they see memes as a means of lighthearted interaction and self-expression rather than for academic or instructional purposes. Their choices in sending memes to share jokes or humor or to express their feelings or experiences indicate that they primarily associate memes with informal, socially oriented communication, positioning them more as tools for personal connection and amusement than for serious or instructional purposes. Their perception of memes as a medium for entertainment and joy resonates with Taecharungroj and Nueangjamnong's (2014) findings that Thai audiences favored positive, self-enhancing humor in memes, reflecting a preference for lighthearted engagement rather than critical or academic functions.

When they play the role of receivers, the findings reveal they mainly focus on the visual aspect of memes rather than examining other aspects of them. This suggests the learners are attracted to the meme surface they can see, possibly emphasizing their use of memes for personal connection and amusement. Taecharungroj and Nueangjamnong (2014) also observed that Thai audiences engaged with memes in ways that emphasized quick, visually accessible humor. This tendency aligns with broader research showing that the visual component of memes is often the first clue processed, guiding interpretation before textual or contextual elements are considered (Dynel, 2016; Zenner & Geeraerts, 2018; Yus, 2019).

The learners' perceptions on benefits of memes suggest their emphasis on the ability of memes to create amusement in communication rather than their potential of being educational intents. This could be explained by the fact that the learners in this study generally encountered memes in their

everyday life. Even though memes were introduced to them in class, they only appeared in the introduction part of the lesson, as a warm-up activity, to attract the learners' attention. Undoubtedly, the learners possibly perceived them as symbols of joy rather than instructional content. The focus of memes as a tool to make communication enjoyable and relatable aligns with Debbab's (2021) and Yus's (2018) arguments about the use of memes as a tool to foster emotional connection in digital discourse. This also reflects Attardo's (2008) claim that humor is central in communication. In addition, the use of images in memes to attract others' attention can partly indicate the role of memes as multimodal constructions where meaning is co-created through text and image (Zenner & Geeraerts, 2018), which helps develop visual literacy by connecting linguistic form with cultural meaning (Romero & Bobkina, 2017).

Despite the aforementioned benefits, the findings also highlight significant challenges of memes. As viewed by the questionnaire respondents, their concerns lie in the potential of memes to create misunderstandings, especially among people with different backgrounds or cultures. This finding, to some extent, reveals learners' awareness of cross-cultural communication. They seem to understand that successful communication can occur in the situation where there is shared culture or norms. This finding suggests the tendency that the learners with this awareness can adjust their language use to suit the context. As found by Pin-ngern (2015), Thai EFL learners with higher proficiency and greater experience demonstrated stronger metapragmatic awareness and were better able to adjust their language use to context. However, communication between people from different cultures or without shared understanding may lead to pragmatic failure and cultural variability (Prakaiborisuth & Trakulkasemsuk, 2016; Thijittang & Lê, 2010), which can result in communication breakdowns (Thomas, 1983).

In addition, the finding about the learners' concern over different interpretations of the messages may be linked to their limited pragmatic knowledge rather than purely linguistic competence. As Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) observed, pragmatic competence is more difficult to acquire than grammatical accuracy. In the Thai context, this concern is supported by empirical evidence showing that learners frequently struggle with pragmatic interpretation. Prakaiborisuth and Trakulkasemsuk (2016) found that Thai undergraduates often misinterpreted even simple expressions such as "What's new?" and were unable to provide appropriate responses in face-to-face situations. Similarly, Zhang, Wang, and Wannaruk (2019) reported low levels of pragmatic competence among Thai students in producing speech acts such as refusals and complaints. Taken together, these findings suggest that memes, which depend heavily on implicit cultural knowledge, humor, and pragmatic awareness, present a particularly demanding interpretive task for Thai EFL learners.

Interestingly, the learners in this study perceived communication fatigue as the least concerned factor. They generally did not view excessive use of memes as a threat to reduce their communicative impact, likely because memes are still perceived as novel and entertaining in their daily interactions. Nevertheless, the issue should not be overlooked. As Dynel (2016) observed that repetitive meme formats risk losing their humor and novelty, which can diminish their effectiveness over time. For educators, this implies that while most learners currently perceive memes positively, overuse could lead to reduced engagement in the long run, underscoring the need to balance memes with other communicative practices in order to sustain motivation.

Implications for Language Education

Even though memes were mainly perceived as fulfilling emotions roles in communication, the overall findings suggest their potential as a tool for developing pragmatic competence and sociocultural awareness in EFL contexts. By engaging with memes, learners are exposed to implicit meanings, humor, and cultural references which are core elements of pragmatic competence (Bardovi-Harlig, 2013). At the same time, the focus on the use of images to attract attention highlights the role of memes as multimodal constructions, where meaning is co-created through text and image (Zenner & Geeraerts, 2018). This

multimodality can support the development of visual literacy by connecting linguistic form with cultural meaning (Romero & Bobkina, 2017).

However, learners' challenges indicate the importance of guided instruction. Explicit teaching of pragmatic and cultural dimensions of memes may help learners navigate cultural references more effectively (Yus, 2019; Al Rashdi, 2020). In Thailand, where classrooms often emphasize grammar and examinations (Forman, 2011), incorporating memes into instruction can make English learning more relevant to students' digital lives. At the same time, teachers should raise learners' awareness of cultural differences in humor styles (Taecharungroj & Nueangjamnong, 2014) and pragmatic expressions (Prakaiborisuth & Trakulkasemsuk, 2016). Doing so may help mitigate misinterpretations and foster a more nuanced understanding of multimodal communication.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings of this study underscore the dual nature of memes as both a valuable communication tool and a potential source of challenges. Learners perceived memes as effective and engaging, especially for humor, self-expression, and entertainment. As senders, they primarily used memes for sharing jokes and personal feelings, while as receivers, they tended to focus on visual elements more than on deeper contextual or cultural meanings. This reliance on surface-level cues helps explain their concerns about misinterpretation, unclear messages, and cross-cultural misunderstandings, although communication fatigue was the least strongly endorsed challenge. These results highlight the importance of integrating memes into language education in ways that not only engage students but also foster pragmatic competence, cultural awareness, and visual literacy. In doing so, educators can make English learning more relevant to learners' digital lives while addressing the risks of misunderstanding.

This study contributes to a growing body of research on digital media in EFL education, with a specific focus on Thai learners. However, its scope was limited to undergraduate students enrolled in a single English course at one university in southern Thailand, and therefore cannot be generalized to all Thai EFL learners. In addition, the study relied solely on quantitative data, which provides an overview of learners' perceptions but not the depth of their interpretive processes. Future research could incorporate qualitative methods, such as interviews or think-aloud protocols, to provide richer insights into how learners decode and negotiate the meanings of memes in intercultural communication.

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Expectations and Challenges in Learning English: Perspectives from Japanese University Students

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Abstract

English is a mandatory subject in Japanese universities for nearly all undergraduate students, regardless of their academic major. However, the content, instructional approach, and classroom environment vary depending on instructors. Since taking English courses is required for all students, students' motivation and engagement levels differ significantly, particularly among non-English majors. This study examines the attitudes of first-year Japanese university students toward learning English, their perceptions of challenges across the four skills, and their preferences regarding English class activities and topics. A questionnaire was distributed to two proficiency groups enrolled in required English courses at the University of Nagasaki. Students' self-evaluations of English skills, learning goals, and classroom preferences were collected, and the data were analyzed descriptively and thematically using MAXQDA. Findings revealed differences in confidence levels and skill priorities between the two groups, with lower-level students emphasizing the importance of engaging and supportive activities. Notably, a discrepancy was observed between students' self-assessed vocabulary proficiency and the vocabulary-related difficulties they reported across proficiency levels. Although vocabulary was not perceived as a significant weakness in self-assessments, it emerged as a common challenge across all four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This highlights the often underrecognized role vocabulary plays in language performance. The results suggest that English instruction should integrate explicit vocabulary development across all four skills while increasing students' awareness of their linguistic needs. This study contributes to the development of more effective, student-centered English teaching practices in higher education.

Keywords: learner needs, course design, classroom expectations, activities, topics

INTRODUCTION

In many universities in Japan, general English courses are part of the core curriculum for first-year students regardless of their major. These courses aim to provide students with foundational English skills and cultivate positive attitudes toward language learning. However, instructors often face challenges due to the wide range of students' proficiency levels, motivations, and prior learning experiences. Sakui and Cowie (2012) reported that Japanese EFL teachers often struggle to motivate students with diverse levels of interest, ability, and engagement, highlighting how such diversity complicates classroom management and instructional planning.

The perceptions of English among non-English major students are diverse. In fact, English courses are part of the graduation requirements, and non-English major students struggle to stay motivated as they rarely perceive an urgent necessity to acquire English skills (Fujita, 2020). Therefore, it is important to understand what students expect from English education, how they perceive their skills, and what kind

of class content or activities they find more beneficial and engaging. One framework for identifying learners' needs is needs analysis. As Graves (2000) mentions, "needs assessment is a systematic and ongoing process of gathering information about learners' needs and preferences, interpreting the information, and then making course decisions based on the interpretation" (p. 98). Without this understanding, it is challenging to create learning environments that are both inclusive and motivating.

This study investigates first-year students' attitudes toward English, their self-assessments of language skills, and their preferences regarding class content. By comparing students from upper- and lower-proficiency groups in a required English course, the study aims to reveal key differences and similarities that can inform more student-centered teaching practices in general English education at the university level.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies on the English learning of Japanese university students have extensively examined learners' needs, attitudes toward English, and expectations for classroom instruction. To situate the present study, this review outlines four key areas: learning goals, attitudes toward English and proficiency, self-evaluations, and lesson preferences.

Goals for Learning English

The purpose of learning English may vary depending on learners' backgrounds, motivations, and future goals. Several studies suggest that many Japanese university students primarily aim to use English for practical communication in real-life situations, rather than for academic or professional purposes. For example, Oomi (2011) found that students' learning goals are driven by the desire to communicate with non-Japanese people, especially in casual and travel-related contexts. Furuya and Sakurai (2014) also mentioned that practical English is often prioritized over academic or business English, with students focusing on conversations that can be used during overseas travel, daily interactions, and social exchanges. These findings suggest that for many students, English is viewed as a tool for personal enrichment and intercultural communication, rather than a tool for achieving career goals.

Attitude Toward English and Proficiency

The attitude toward English and students' proficiency levels considerably differ since English is a required subject in most Japanese universities. Many researchers have examined how these factors interact. Furuya and Sakurai (2014) found a clear correlation between English proficiency and students' attitudes toward learning English: students with higher proficiency levels generally report more positive attitudes, while those with lower proficiency levels are more likely to feel negative or indifferent toward English. Ishida (2021) also reported that attitudes toward English vary across faculties, with students in departments related to the English language or international studies showing greater motivation and more favorable perceptions of English. Interestingly, Ishida (2021) also found that even among students with modest self-assessments of English proficiency, those engaged in English-related subjects tended to maintain more positive attitudes.

Self-evaluation of English Skills in the Japanese Context

Several researchers have investigated Japanese university students' self-evaluation of their English proficiency and preferences for skill development. Kanagawa et al. (2005) showed that Japanese university students rate reading and listening as their strongest skills. In contrast, speaking is often

identified as the most challenging skill due to limited opportunities for speaking practice. Students also consistently express a strong desire to improve their speaking and listening abilities, which they view as essential for real-world communication. Additionally, Ishida (2021) emphasizes the importance of grammar mastery in enhancing overall proficiency, particularly for lower-level students who often struggle with the fundamentals of English sentence structure. These findings underscore the importance of addressing specific skill gaps and providing balanced instruction across all four language skills to meet the diverse needs of students.

Lesson Preferences

In addition to skill development, previous research has widely discussed students' preferences regarding lesson types and classroom activities. According to Uchida et al. (2019) and Kanagawa et al. (2005), many Japanese university students express dissatisfaction with one-sided, lecture-style classes, where teacher-centered instruction dominates, and students have limited opportunities for active participation. Instead, they prefer communication-focused lessons that emphasize practical language use, encourage peer interaction, and provide explicit and supportive instruction. Interactive activities such as pair work, group discussions, and task-based learning are generally preferred because they create more opportunities for authentic communication. However, lesson preferences often vary depending on students' English proficiency levels. Ishida (2021) found that proficient students prefer activities that challenge their communication skills, such as debates or discussions on complex topics, while less proficient students need more foundational support, including structured role-plays or scaffolded conversation practice, to build confidence. These findings suggest that designing lessons with differentiated instruction based on proficiency levels is critical for maintaining motivation and enhancing language development in diverse classrooms.

Previous studies have provided valuable insights into the learning goals, attitudes toward English and proficiency, self-evaluations, and preferences of Japanese EFL learners regarding classroom activities (e.g., Kanagawa et al., 2005; Furuya & Sakurai, 2014; Uchida et al., 2019). However, relatively little research has focused on the specific difficulties students themselves perceive in each of the four language skills. Previous research has explored motivation, overall proficiency, and general preferences, but few studies have examined learners' own awareness of the challenges they face in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This gap suggests the need for studies that capture both attitudes and perceived difficulties to provide a more comprehensive picture of learner needs in the Japanese university context.

Thus, this study explored students' attitudes and perceptions toward learning English in the Japanese context at the University of Nagasaki. It also investigated learners' challenges in learning English and their preferences regarding topics and activities used in English classes. To address these aims, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What are students' attitudes and perceptions toward English, and what do they hope to achieve through learning English?
2. How do students evaluate their English proficiency, and what skills do they wish to improve?
3. What challenges do students perceive in the four skills?
4. What characteristics of English classes do students consider beneficial, and what activities and topics are preferred in English classes?

METHODOLOGY

Instruments

The questionnaire was developed by adapting items from previous studies on the English learning goals, attitudes, and classroom preferences of Japanese university students (e.g., Kanagawa et al., 2005; Uchida et al., 2019; Ishida, 2021). In addition, the researcher included open-ended items that asked students to describe the specific challenges they encountered in each of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing).

The questionnaire investigated four main areas: (1) students' attitudes toward learning English and their learning goals, (2) their self-assessment of English skills, including reading, writing, listening, and speaking as well as the skills they hoped to improve by graduation, (3) the specific challenges they experience in each skill, and (4) their preferences regarding English class content, activities, and topics.

Sample items included: "How would you evaluate your speaking ability? (1 = very weak, 5 = very strong)," "What is your main goal in learning English? (e.g., communication, hobbies, qualifications)," and "What difficulties do you experience in listening?" (open-ended). In this way, the instrument combined Likert-scale, multiple-choice, and open-ended items to capture both students' self-perceptions and their skill-specific challenges. The questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms to collect both quantitative and qualitative data, exploring the research questions.

Participants

The researcher gathered responses from 119 first-year students enrolled in required General English courses at the University of Nagasaki. These students represented a portion of the first-year cohorts from two academic departments: the Department of Business Administration and the Department of Regional Development. Based on the placement test results held at the university, students were divided into different proficiency levels. Among the respondents, 56 students were from the upper-level class and 63 from the lower-level class.

Data Analysis

This research used various methods to analyze quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively to compare responses across the two proficiency levels. Additionally, the open-ended responses were analyzed using thematic analysis, supported by MAXQDA, a software program designed for qualitative data analysis. Responses were coded and categorized into major themes to identify tendencies based on students' attitudes and classroom preferences.

RESULTS

Attitudes Toward English and Learning Goals

Firstly, the researcher asked the participants about their attitudes toward English. Overall, the responses showed a relatively balanced distribution between positive and negative attitudes toward English, with a smaller proportion selecting a neutral stance (see Figure 1).

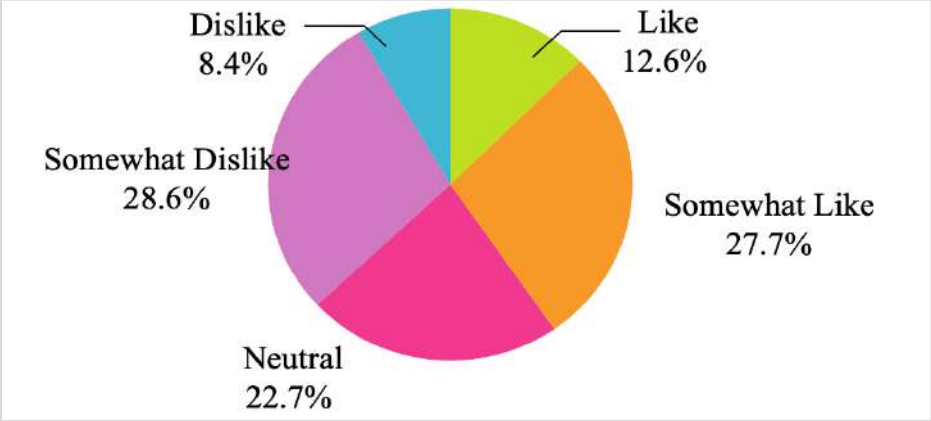

Figure 1. Overall Student Attitude toward English

Specifically, 40.3% of students expressed positive attitudes ("like" or "somewhat like"), while 37.0% expressed negative attitudes ("dislike" or "somewhat dislike"). In addition, 22.7% of students selected "neutral," indicating neither strong preference nor aversion. This distribution reflects the varied attitudes and perceptions toward English.

However, when comparing responses by proficiency level, apparent differences emerged. Figure 2 shows the differences in students' attitudes toward English between the two proficiency levels. Approximately 65% of upper-level students selected "like" or "somewhat like," indicating a generally positive attitude. In contrast, approximately 58% of lower-level students chose "dislike" or "somewhat dislike," indicating a higher level of discomfort or disengagement with English learning among this group.

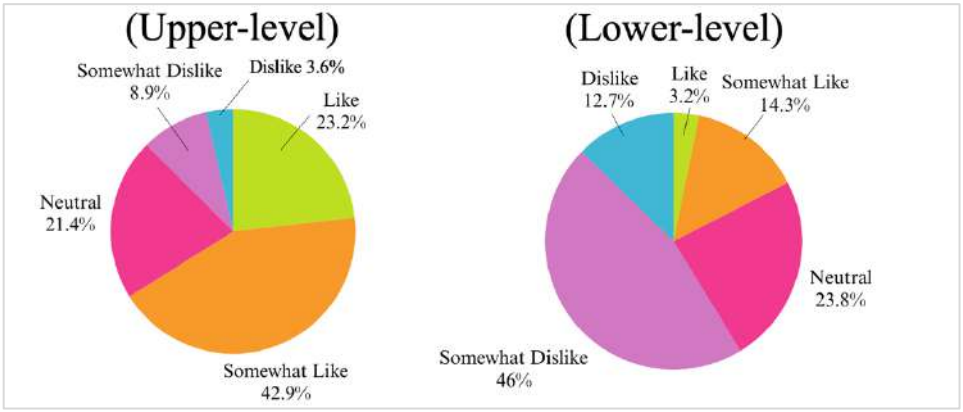

Figure 2. Comparison of Attitudes toward English in Two Proficiency Levels

Next, the participants were also asked about their perceptions of the necessity of English in their daily lives and for achieving their future goals. Figure 3 illustrates students' perceptions of the necessity of English. It shows that about 85% of upper-level and nearly 82% of lower-level students considered English "necessary" or "somewhat necessary." Despite differences in attitudes toward English shown in Figure 1, this finding indicates that students at both levels recognize the importance of English.

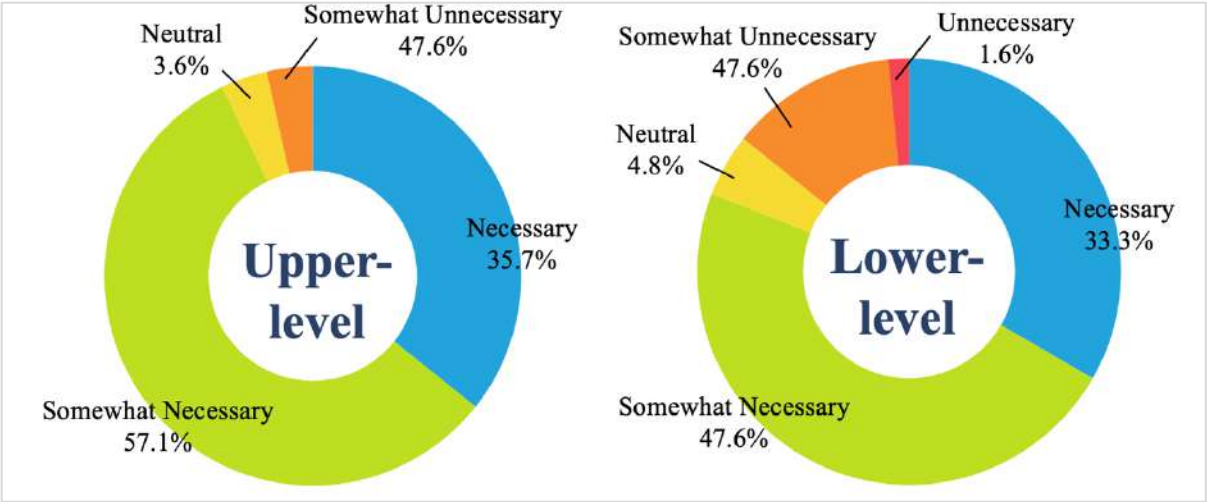

Figure 3. Necessity of English by Proficiency Level

Regarding learning goals, "communication" was the most frequently selected learning goal for both proficiency groups, with 55 upper- and 56 lower-level students choosing this option (see Figure 4).

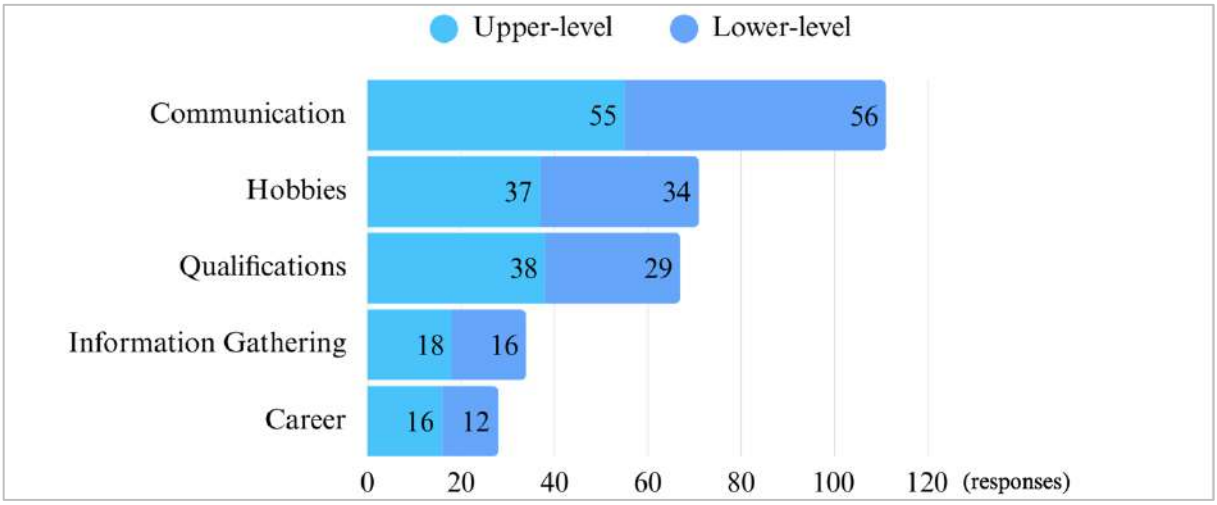

Figure 4. Learning Goals through English across Two Groups

"Hobbies," such as enjoying movies or music in English, and "qualifications," such as improving TOEIC or Eiken scores, were also commonly selected. Notably, upper-level students selected "qualification" (38 responses) slightly more than "hobbies" (37 responses), whereas lower-level students showed a slightly higher preference for "hobbies" (34 responses) over "qualification" (29 responses). Fewer students selected "information gathering" and "career" as primary goals.

Self-assessment of English Skills

Students evaluated their English proficiency in six areas — listening, reading, speaking, writing, grammar, and vocabulary — using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = "very weak," 5 = "very strong"). Table 1 presents the mean scores and standard deviations of students' self-assessed English proficiency across the six skills.

Regarding self-evaluation, students rated their reading skills highest and their speaking skills lowest. This trend was consistent across both proficiency levels. Overall, upper-level students reported higher self-assessed proficiency across all six areas than lower-level students, consistent with their placement based on proficiency testing.

Table 1

Self-assessed English Proficiency

Skills	Overall	Upper-level	Lower-level
Listening	2.59 (0.82)	2.84 (0.78)	2.17 (0.79)
Reading	2.76 (0.78)	3.04 (0.71)	2.52 (0.76)
Speaking	2.17 (0.78)	2.43 (0.81)	1.94 (0.69)
Writing	2.51 (0.87)	2.88 (0.79)	2.19 (0.82)
Grammar	2.60 (0.76)	2.88 (0.69)	2.43 (0.73)
Vocabulary	2.66 (0.76)	2.93 (0.71)	2.27 (0.76)

Note. Values are presented as Mean (SD).

Figure 5 shows which skills they most wished to improve by graduation, and speaking was the most commonly selected, followed by listening.

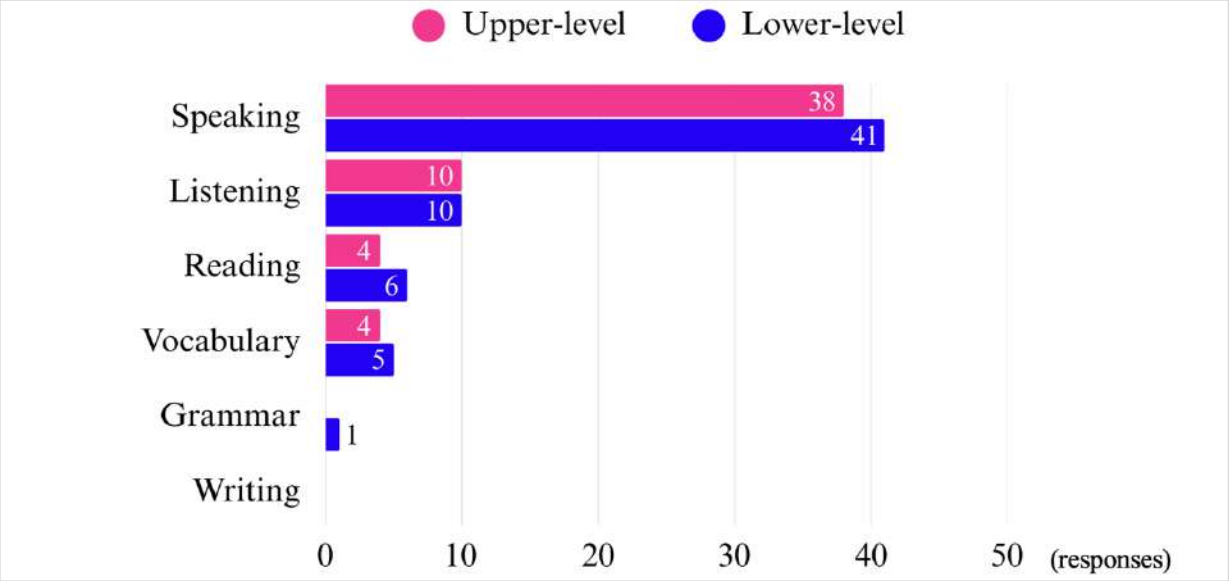

Figure 5. Desired English Skills by Graduation

Despite differences in their proficiency level, both groups demonstrated a shared desire to enhance oral communication skills. Students' motivations for improving their speaking skills can be broadly categorized into three areas:

- Communication and cultural exchange
- Work and career opportunities
- Traveling abroad

Some students expressed a desire to improve their speaking skills to understand the values and cultures of people from different countries. Others indicated that enhanced communicative skills would be beneficial for part-time jobs or traveling abroad.

Challenges in the Four Skills

The participants were asked open-ended questions about the challenges they experienced in each of the four English skills: listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Their responses revealed recurring issues, some of which were common across all levels, while others varied depending on proficiency. Listening and reading challenges were often shared across proficiency levels, whereas speaking and writing challenges showed more apparent differences depending on the students' proficiency levels.

Students reported several challenges in listening comprehension. One common difficulty was recognizing differences in pronunciation, particularly aspects such as word connections and linking. Several students commented, *"I cannot catch the words when they are linked together,"* and *"It is difficult to hear when multiple words are connected and the sounds change."* Others emphasized the fast pace of spoken English, writing, *"It is too fast to understand," "When people speak too fast, I cannot follow,"* and *"English spoken too fast is hard to catch."*

Vocabulary limitations were also highlighted. Some students mentioned, *"If there are unknown words, I cannot understand at all,"* and *"Even if I know the word, the pronunciation of native speakers sometimes makes familiar words sound unfamiliar."* Moreover, issues of concentration and persistence emerged, such as *"My concentration declines while listening,"* and *"When the passage is long, I lose track of which question I am answering."* These quotes illustrate that listening difficulties were often multifaceted, involving the interaction of processing speed, vocabulary knowledge, pronunciation features, and cognitive factors such as attention.

The participants also identified several difficulties in reading. Vocabulary and grammar limitations were frequently mentioned as obstacles to comprehension. Several students explained, *"When I encounter unknown words, I stop reading,"* and *"When the vocabulary becomes difficult, I cannot understand at all."* Furthermore, attention and comprehension problems were reported. Some students indicated that they often missed important information. For instance, they mentioned, *"Even if I read, the content does not stay in my mind,"* and *"It takes me time to find and focus on the important parts."* Finally, many students emphasized the difficulty of balancing speed and accuracy. Typical comments included, *"If I try to read quickly, I cannot remember the content, but if I try to understand, I cannot read fast,"* and *"Even if I read fast, I sometimes make mistakes."*

Challenges related to speaking varied depending on students' proficiency levels. In the lower-level class, many students reported that they tended to translate from Japanese into English when speaking, which they found challenging and time-consuming. Some students commented, *"It takes me too long to translate from Japanese into English,"* and *"I cannot quickly change what I want to say into English."* This difficulty was often attributed to a lack of vocabulary and insufficient knowledge of grammar. For example, one student noted, *"Because I do not know enough words, I cannot express what I want to say in English,"* while another explained, *"When I do not know which grammar to use, I end up speaking in single words."* Some also mentioned pronunciation issues, such as *"I do not have confidence in my pronunciation."*

In contrast, upper-level students, while generally possessing a more substantial knowledge of vocabulary and grammar, reported difficulties speaking fluently due to overthinking sentence structures and expressions to avoid mistakes. Some students commented, *"I cannot create sentences instantly," "I have to construct sentences in my head before speaking, so words do not come out quickly,"* and *"I overthink and my idea does not come across smoothly."* Others expressed anxiety about accuracy; for example, *"I hesitate because I am not sure if my sentences are correct,"* and *"I am afraid of making*

mistakes, so I do not speak." In addition, some students emphasized expression-related issues, such as *"I cannot come up with the right expressions."* As a result, they struggled to speak fluently and lacked confidence in their spoken English.

Similar to speaking, writing challenges also differed by proficiency level. In the lower-level class, many students reported difficulties, including a lack of vocabulary to express their ideas appropriately and an insufficient understanding of basic grammar. Several students commented, *"Because I do not know enough words, I cannot write what I want to say,"* and *"I am not sure if my grammar is correct, so I cannot write with confidence."* Spelling was also another common issue, as reflected in remarks such as *"Sometimes I know the word but cannot spell it correctly."* These limitations made it difficult for them to construct sentences accurately and confidently.

On the other hand, upper-level students reported uncertainty about using familiar words and expressions appropriately in context. Some explained, *"I can only write using fixed patterns and simple expressions,"* and *"I cannot come up with appropriate expressions."* Others emphasized concerns about accuracy, noting, *"I am not sure if my grammar and spelling are correct,"* and *"I sometimes make unexpected spelling mistakes."* Moreover, students at both levels often struggled to develop ideas beyond linguistic difficulties. One student stated, *"I cannot come up with ideas, and I cannot quickly translate my thoughts into English."*

Student Preferences for Class Characteristics, Activities, and Topics

The study examined students' perceptions of effective English class characteristics, as reported through their prior learning experiences. Across both proficiency groups, students highlighted three key features of effective English classes: engaging activities, opportunities for practical communication, and supportive teacher involvement. Regarding engaging activities, one student commented, *"Classes with a lot of group work and pair work were good because I could enjoy speaking English.".* Students also noted that mini-presentations with changing partners allowed them to interact with many classmates in English. In terms of practical communication, one reported, *"Practicing short conversations with classmates helped me understand how expressions are actually used in real situations."* Another commented, *"Using English news articles exposed me to authentic language and showed me the fun of reading in English."* Finally, supportive teacher involvement was frequently mentioned as a crucial factor. Some students stated, *"One-on-one feedback on my writing was helpful because the teacher pointed out specific weaknesses."* Another student mentioned, *"I could ask questions during class, and the teacher explained them clearly so I understood."*

While these characteristics were broadly shared, some distinctions emerged between the two proficiency groups. Upper-level students preferred more advanced activities, such as group discussions and presentations, to enhance their language skills. In contrast, lower-level students emphasized lessons that prioritized foundational skill development through peer-supported, interactive activities that contributed to increased confidence in language use.

Some students also noted aspects of classes they had found less beneficial. These included lessons that moved too quickly, focused heavily on memorization, or lacked clear explanations. Although not the primary focus of this study, such comments offer additional insight into what learners perceive as supportive or unsupportive learning environments.

In addition to class characteristics, the study also examined students' preferences for classroom activities and topics. Responses showed both shared preferences and some variation depending on proficiency level. As shown in Figure 6, students' preferences for class activities included interactive classroom activities, such as pair work, group tasks, and small-group presentations. Full-class presentations were the least preferred.

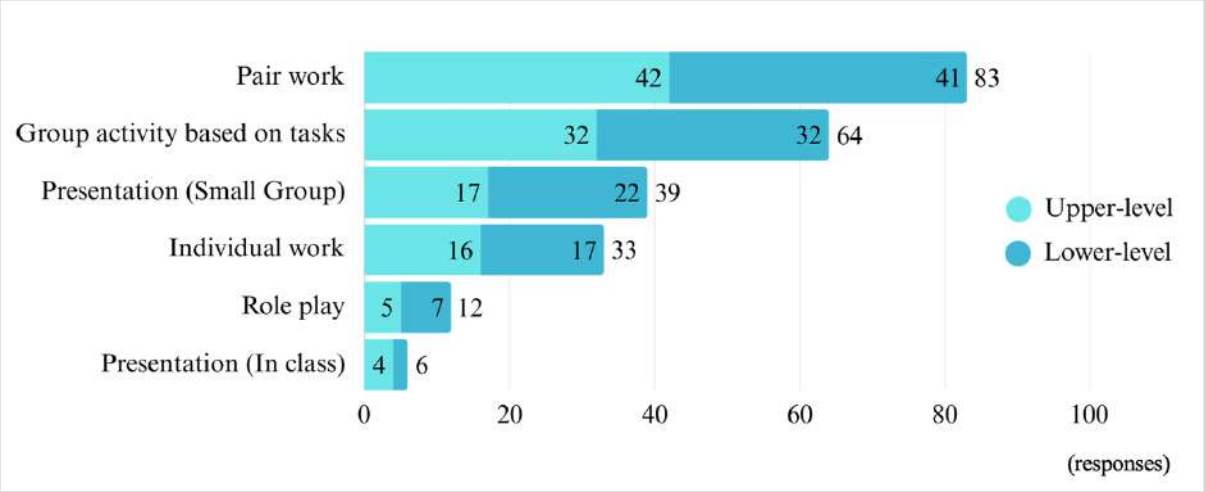

Figure 6. Activity Preferences Based on Proficiency Level

Furthermore, the researcher explored students' preferences regarding class topics based on the topics used in textbooks for general English courses in Japan. Students' preferences regarding classroom topics were examined using a reference list drawn from a previous study by Takeuchi and Nakatsuka (2019), which analyzed topics commonly included in textbooks for general English courses at Japanese universities. Table 2 presents the top ten preferred topics for English classes across all participants and within the upper- and lower-level proficiency groups. "Travel" ranked first overall and was also the most preferred topic among upper-level students, while it ranked second among lower-level students. Other topics commonly selected across groups include "Places/Countries" and "Sports."

Table 2

Overall Comparison of Students' Preferences about Topics based on Proficiency Level

Rank	Overall	Upper-level	Lower-level
1	Travel	Travel	Places/Countries
2	Places/Countries	Food	Travel
3	Sports	Sports	Daily Routines/Life
4	Food	Places/Countries	Sports
5	Daily Routines/Life	Animal	Business
6	Animal	Daily Routines/Life	Animal
7	History	University Life	History
8	Business	Festival/Tradition	Food
9	University Life	History	Numbers/Money
10	Festival/Tradition	Clothing	University Life

Several differences were also observed between the two proficiency levels. Overall, lower-level students showed a preference for more familiar and everyday topics, such as "Daily Routines/Life," "Numbers/Money," and "Business," whereas upper-level students more frequently selected topics related to culture, tradition, and academic life, such as "Festival/Tradition," "University Life," and "Clothing."

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This section presents the key findings related to the four research questions. Students' attitudes toward English varied depending on their proficiency levels. The upper-level learners expressed more positive views, while the lower-level learners showed more negative attitudes. This tendency is consistent with earlier findings that proficiency and attitudes are closely linked (Furuya & Sakurai, 2014). However, across both groups, most students recognized English as necessary for their lives and highlighted communication as their main learning goal. Previous research has similarly found that Japanese university students often prioritize English for practical, interpersonal purposes rather than strictly academic or professional goals (Oomi, 2011). The present findings confirm these patterns and suggest a common recognition of their importance across proficiency levels.

Regarding the skills, students in both groups rated reading as their strongest skill and speaking as their weakest, a tendency also observed in Kanagawa et al. (2005) and other studies of Japanese learners. This can be further explained by classroom practices in the Japanese context, which prioritize written accuracy over spoken fluency. As Chino (2018) observed, many learners prefer to prepare before speaking and feel anxious when asked to respond spontaneously, reflecting the focus on correctness and the limited opportunities for speaking practice. In addition to the limited vocabulary and grammar knowledge, these factors might be part of the reasons why many students perceive speaking as their weakest skill and the one they most want to improve.

In terms of difficulties, students mentioned challenges in balancing speed and accuracy in reading, coping with fast speech in listening, and struggling with translation or confidence in speaking and writing. Similar issues have been reported in previous research (e.g., Ishida, 2021), particularly for lower-level students who lack sufficient grammatical and lexical resources. Some responses also suggested that vocabulary limitations may cause these difficulties, even though students did not explicitly identify vocabulary as a weakness in their self-assessments.

Students' perspectives on classroom practices also offer insight into what they perceive as effective learning environments. Students believe that effective classes include promoted interactions, opportunities for practical communication, explicit instruction, and a supportive environment. In addition, there are differences in classroom content based on proficiency level. Upper-level students preferred classes that allowed them to apply their existing knowledge. In contrast, lower-level students expect to develop foundational skills, enjoy peer interaction, and receive teacher support to build confidence in their language use. Therefore, teachers may need to differentiate content and tasks to match learners' proficiency levels to sustain motivation and foster effective language development.

In terms of lesson preferences, previous studies have suggested that Japanese university students generally prefer interactive, student-centered lessons over teacher-centered instruction (e.g., Uchida et al., 2019; Kanagawa et al., 2005). This study supports this tendency but also adds new insights. In particular, students in both groups favored familiar themes such as travel, food, and daily life, indicating the importance of relatable content in sustaining engagement. At the same time, proficiency clearly shaped their preferences: lower-level learners viewed such activities and topics as confidence-building opportunities, while upper-level learners preferred academically oriented tasks that enabled them to apply and extend their existing knowledge. These findings highlight the need for differentiated instruction that balances foundational support with advanced challenges across proficiency levels.

Overall, while the findings revealed important features across students' attitudes, self-assessments, skill-specific challenges, and preferences for classroom activities and topics, one critical issue warrants particular attention: a significant gap between students' perceptions of their vocabulary proficiency and the actual challenges they experience across skills. Although relatively few students selected vocabulary as a priority for improvement, vocabulary-related difficulties consistently appeared

in their open-ended responses across all four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This suggests that students may not fully recognize the crucial role of vocabulary in language proficiency.

As Nation (2008) points out, the scope of vocabulary that can be explicitly taught in the classroom is inevitably limited, making it essential for learners to develop lexical knowledge beyond formal instruction. Moreover, Nation (2024) emphasizes that vocabulary learning is a gradual process, as learners build knowledge through repeated encounters in different contexts. In line with the developmental stages of vocabulary knowledge (Schmitt & Zimmerman, 2002, as cited in Schmitt & Schmitt, 2020), lower-level learners in this study appear to remain in the early phases of recognition and limited receptive knowledge, while upper-level learners are beginning to move into the later phases involving productive use and deeper lexical knowledge. This pattern reflects the distinction between breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge. While both groups may have some breadth, differences in depth and the balance between receptive and productive knowledge may strongly influence their communicative ability.

These findings highlight an important area for instructional improvement. Vocabulary development should not be treated as an isolated component but should be explicitly integrated into skill-based activities across the four skills in the classroom. Moreover, raising students' awareness that vocabulary learning is a gradual and multi-faceted process can help them expand and deepen their vocabulary knowledge and improve their four skills. To achieve this, teachers should not only foster such awareness but also support students in continuing the learning process beyond the classroom.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the attitudes of Japanese university students toward English, their self-assessments of English skills, perceived challenges across the four language skills, and their preferences regarding classroom activities and topics. The findings revealed several consistent patterns: students recognized the necessity of English regardless of their proficiency level, prioritized communicative skills for improvement, and favored interactive, practically oriented classes focused on familiar topics.

A significant finding was the gap between students' self-perceived vocabulary proficiency and their reported vocabulary-related challenges. While vocabulary was not self-assessed as a weakness, students' comments revealed that lexical limitations frequently constrained their listening, speaking, reading, and writing abilities. These findings might suggest that vocabulary knowledge plays a crucial yet often underrecognized role in students' performance across all four English skills. Students may underestimate the fundamental impact of vocabulary competence on their overall language ability.

However, this study has certain limitations. The self-assessment of English proficiency and the reports of perceived challenges relied on subjective measures rather than objective assessments. Although the inclusion of open-ended items provided richer insights, self-reports do not necessarily reflect learners' actual proficiency or classroom behaviors. Therefore, the observed discrepancy between perceived vocabulary proficiency and reported difficulties should be interpreted as a gap within students' self-perceptions, not necessarily an objectively measured proficiency gap. Moreover, while the questionnaire was adapted from previous studies, it did not include standardized proficiency measures. A valuable direction for future research would be to combine survey data with more objective approaches, such as CEFR-aligned proficiency tests, as well as performance-based tasks or reflective journals, to build a more comprehensive understanding of learners' needs.

Despite these limitations, the study provides meaningful insights into learners' awareness. The results highlighted the importance of promoting greater learner awareness of the role of vocabulary in effective language use. In future research, it would be worthwhile to investigate how vocabulary development can be effectively integrated into classroom activities, promoting all four skills. Exploring

instructional strategies that raise learners' awareness of vocabulary use and its cross-skill impact may lead to more targeted and effective language support.

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L2 English Metaphonological Awareness of Multilingual Students in a Trilingual School in Thailand

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Abstract

In the context of Thailand being a multilingual country, this research is set to investigate L2 English Metaphonological Awareness of multilingual secondary students in Bangkok by adopting Wrembel's (2013, 2014) research design to retrospective stimulated recall verbal reports for eliciting qualitative data. Having 9 multilingual participants of grade 11 perform the read-aloud task, stimulated-recall task and stimulated-recall interview, findings are emerging: first, segmental phonological features are significantly more noticed and self-corrected than suprasegmental features; second, in spite of the averaged younger age of the 9 participants than those in previous similar research, their reflective comments attest to the possibility of enhanced MLA existing in multilinguals; third, the participants mainly identify L1 as the main sources of CLI, in the meanwhile, some participants also point to L3 influence; fourth, the analysis of the background information of participants reveals that the CEFR phonology proficiency levels and more multilingual acquisition experiences are surfaced as contributive factors for these participants' extraordinariness in Metaphonological Awareness.

Keywords: Metaphonological awareness, multilingual students, trilingual school

INTRODUCTION

Multilingual Context in Thailand

Multilingual education has gained increasing momentum in Thailand in recent years (Baker, 2017; Taladngoen, 2019). This trend is driven by both intrinsic motivations, ethnic groups' inherent need to preserve their linguistic heritage and extrinsic factors including employment demands and supportive government policies. While multiple foreign languages are taught across various levels of education (Kanoksilapatham, 2011), English has assumed a dominant role, in response to government policies, employment demands and joining in ASEAN where English functions as the official language of communication and international trade activities among ASEAN members (Kanoksilapatham, 2011; Kirkpatrick, 2012). To address these demands, schools have introduced the English Program (EP), which prioritizes English, and the Multilingual Language Program (MLP), which provide opportunities of multilingual education, such as Chinese, Malay and Khmer (Tanielian, 2014). The above-mentioned initiatives reflect education policy, economic integration, and cultural identity intersect in shaping Thailand's multilingual landscape.

Metalinguistic Awareness

In a general sense, Metalinguistic Awareness (MLA) is a cognitive psychological term, referring to "mental awareness and autonomy enabling to recognize and organize cognitive processes and the ability to think about thinking" (Al-Ahdal & Almarshedi, 2021, p. 2274). Bialystok's (1991) seminal study on MLA in Bilinguals, developed from information-processing models, discerns the two constructs of MLA, namely, "*analyzed representations of linguistic knowledge and control of linguistic process*". The researchers on MLA gave credit to and fell back on these two components either as the fundamental notions or as the framework in their studies (Renou, 2001; Jessner, 2006; Hsu, 2013; Wrembel, 2014; Kopečková's, 2018). Jessner (2006) described the properties of MLA by interpreting these two constructs that "*The analysis of linguistic knowledge is … for making explicit those representations that had previously been implicit or intuitive and control of linguistic processing is the ability to selectively attend to specific aspects of a representation, particularly in misleading situations"* (Jessner, 2006, p. 177). These two constructs are also the current study's theoretical foundation.

It has been extensively acknowledged that multilingual learners have enhanced Metalinguistic Awareness (MLA) (Jessner, 1999; Kuile et al, 2010). The present study distinguishes "multilinguals" from "bilinguals" by defining the former as language learners learning three or more languages while the latter as language learners learning two languages simultaneously (Wright et al, 2015). There have been even findings indicating that multilinguals who learned English as L3 or L4 learned faster than bilinguals who learned English as L2 (Klei, 1995; Greisller 2001, as cited in Kuile et al, 2010). Jessner (2013) justified this MLA advantage by pointing out that proficiency in several languages enhanced multilinguals' MLA which in turn facilitated language acquisition. Hofer (2016) elaborated that this enhanced MLA in multilinguals takes two forms: first, increased knowledge and understanding of the L1 and L2; second, facilitating or accelerating the acquisition of additional languages (Jessner 1999, 2006, ÒLaoire 2005, as cited in Hofer, 2016) which happens after acquiring three or more than three languages with certain proficiency. These findings are the prerequisite for the current study since they proved the possibility that 3-language multilinguals' enhanced MLA can be exhibited in L2 learning during the multilingual acquisition process. The present research focuses on one facet of MLA, namely, Metaphonological Awareness.

Metaphonological awareness has been conceptualized as a subcategory of MLA**,** alongside with metasyntactic, metalexical, metasemantic, metapragmatic, and metatextual, each focusing on a specific unit of linguistic structures that are reflected upon or manipulated (Nagy, 2007). Wrembel (2014) briefly but to the point defined it as the metalinguistic awareness in acquisition of phonology. In the present study, Metaphonological Awareness is defined as a branch of MLA, referring to the conscious manipulation of and reflection upon phonological forms, structures and segments (Wrembel, 2014). It is worth noting that some researchers just use the term "phonological awareness" interchangeably with "Metaphonological Awareness" (Saiegh-Haddad, 2018). When they use the expression "phonological awareness", they are essentially examining Metaphonological Awareness (Duncan, 2000; Bialystok, 2003; Laurent & Martinot, 2009; Stan, 2021). The current study consistently adopts the term Metaphonological Awareness to avoid potential confusion.

The research interests in Metaphonological Awareness extend from bilingual learners' L2 acquisition to both of L2 and L3 acquisition for multilinguals. Stan (2021) carried out a thorough study on bilingual bi-literate students who are Romanian native speaker attending multilingual programs at school and measured their (Meta)phonological Awareness in L2 and L3 phonology acquisition. The results suggest that Bilingual bi-literate group's scores are significantly higher than bilingual mono-literacy and monolingual mono-literacy groups. The significance of this study lies in that bi-literate bilinguals who learned L2 and L3 reading systematically at school will manifest more advantageous Metaphonological Awareness in both L2 and L3 acquisition. Thus, this finding verified multilingual enhanced Metaphonological Awareness in L2 phonology through a quantitative methodology.

In the research devoted to multilinguals' enhanced MLA, Metaphonological Awareness is among the closely examined. Evidence continually emerged to identify various factors affecting Metaphonological Awareness, such as L2, L3 proficiency (Laurent & Martinot, 2009; Wrembel, 2014, 2015a; Atar, 2018; Kopečková, 2018). It is pertinent to observe that the language proficiency level utilized in these previous studies is overall language proficiency, some of which specified that the studies used CEFR scale (Wrembel, 2014, 2015a) but some of which didn't even mention what proficiency scales were utilized. It is even more intriguing that none of the existent research applied CEFR phonology scale (Council of Europe, 2001, 2020) to measuring participants' pronunciation proficiency despite research interests in L2 or L3 phonology acquisition. This phenomenon might be justified by the criticism on the initial CEFR phonology descriptors (Council of Europe, 2001) for including the ambiguous and negative concept of "accent" and leaps in progression in proficiency levels (Piccardo & North, 2016), as well as the availability of the developed CEFR Phonology descriptors(Council of Europe, 2020), prior to which, most previous relevant studies on Metaphonological Awareness had been published.

Among new research highlights in multilinguals' Metaphonological Awareness, CLI is one of the most discussed aspects. The origin of the term cross-linguistic influence (CLI) is accepted as being "coined by Sharwood-Smith (1983) and Kellerman (1984) as a cover term to refer to transfer-related phenomena in a more theory-neutral manner" (Wrembel, 2015, p. 46). In multlilingual studies, CLI is considered as integral to MLA. Wrembel (2013, p. 121) gave the credit of including CLI into MLA to Jessner, by stating "*Jessner proposed the extension definitions of metalinguistic awareness to include a component of cross-linguistic awareness that interacts with metalinguistic consciousness in multilingual processing*".

Cross-linguistic influence (CLI) becomes the overlapped area of multilingual, phonology acquisition and MLA, since three or more languages are active simultaneously and the effects across languages become more evident. Wrembel's (2014) studies examining CLI as part of Metaphonological Awareness found that most multilingual participants expressed that L1 German was the main CLI source in L3 Polish phonology acquisition instead of L2 English. The underlying reasons verbally reported by students were that language distance between L2 English and L3 Polish was far and L2 English was not in active use in their daily life. Another finding respecting CLI in the same research was that Czech, another Slavic language, was identified as a source of phonological transfer because of closer language distance between Czech and Polish but the directionality matters since the CLI only was reported when Czech was acquired before Polish not after Polish. It means only forward transfer manifested instead of reverse transfer. Kopečková (2018) carried out similar research on secondary multilinguals of L1 German speakers acquiring L2 English and L3 Spanish at school, multilingual learners mainly identified CLI from L2 English. However, the reason is not provided for the source of CLI.

Having reviewed the main strands of research on MLA and Metaphonological Awareness, the research cavity has surfaced in four folds: first, although there is a strand of research on multlilinguals' Metaphonological Awareness focusing on the L3 acquisition (Wrembel, 2014, 2015; Kopečková, 2018), it barely mentions the multilinguals' advantageous metalinguistic effects on L2 as well as tracing multlinguals' CLI on L2. Second, there is an age cavity among the existent studies on Metaphonological Awareness of multilinguals, whose participants are either aged from 8 to 14 (Kopečková, 2018; Stan, 2021) or from19 to 40 (Wrembel, 2013, 2014, 2015a), leaving age group of 15-18 unstudied. Third, methodologically, compared with the overwhelming quantitative analysis and statistics, qualitative analysis and data are underestimated and scarce. Only a handful of studies employed verbal reports (Wrembel, 2013, 2014; Kopečková, 2018). Fourth, the common practice in previous studies on Metaphonological Awareness is utilizing overall language proficiency levels rather than the phonology proficiency levels when discussing affecting factors for Metaphonological Awareness.

The Present Study

This research delves into L2 English Metaphonological Awareness of multilinguals in a Bangkok trilingual school by adapting Wrembel (2013, 2014) research design to retrospective stimulated recall verbal reports for eliciting qualitative data. This study aimed to address the following questions:

1. What Metaphonological Awareness in English learning is exhibited by multilinguals in Thailand?
2. What Cross-linguistic influences (CLI) are manifested by multilinguals in Thailand? What other factors, such as multilinguals' learning experience, English phonology proficiency level and reading-aloud performance, might influence Metaphonological Awareness in English learning manifested by multilinguals in Thailand?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The current qualitative research consists of a 3-step research design which is inspired and adapted from Wrembel's (2013, 2014) ingenious research design mapping out the core segments in studying Metaphonological Awareness incorporating Noticing, Self-correction, Complexity levels, CLI, Self-report and Self-observation, all of which are the crystallization of previous research on MLA, additional language phonological, as well as the methodology concerning verbal reports and the set of the terminology.

Step 1: Text reading and recording

To gather the data for next steps retrospective verbal reports, each participant is required to read aloud the 10 warm-up words and then read aloud the English text covering segmental features and suprasegmental features of tones and word stress. Each participant's reading is recorded in a quiet and relaxing environment which participants find comfortable with. This recording is later served as the stimulus for the stimulated recall interview.

Step 2: Self-editing recording

In this stage, while participants are listening to their recordings, the researcher stops the playing of the recording by chunk or at the signals given by participants who intend to point out some pronunciation mistakes. This self-editing recording is also reviewed by the researcher and used as the basis for eliciting the richer data in the subsequent stimulated recall interview.

Step 3: stimulated recall interview

The semi-structured interview is based on the data from self-editing recording to tap reflection on factors influencing their Metaphonological Awareness while performing the reading-aloud task such as reasons underlying their dissatisfaction or modification of certain pronunciation, and rules governing their self-correction, or language learning experience as well as cross-linguistic influences (CLI).

Participants

The participants meet the following criteria:

1. Participants are secondary students from the same school, who voluntarily participate in this study.
2. Participants are multilinguals who are learning three languages at the same time at school.

3. All participants identified English as their L2 and Chinese (Mandarin) as their L3
4. Participants are clearly aware that this research is independent from their daily classes and has nothing to do with their ICA (in-class assessment) and exam scores and is merely to the end of helping researchers to comprehend MLA in English phonology acquisition.

Table 1.
Participants' profile

Participant	Age	L1	Years of Learning L1	L2	Years of Learning L2	Proficiency Level of English Phonology	L3	Years of Learning L3	Ln	Years of Ln
WYJ	19	Thai	19	English	17	A2	Chinese	2		
SY	17	Thai	17	English	11	A2	Chinese	5		
DY	16	Thai	16	English	9	B2	Chinese	6		
CLL	16	Chinese (Chaochew)/Thai	16	English	13	B1	Chinese (Mandarin)	11		
MM	16	Thai	16	English	13	B2	Chinese	12		
DZM	16	Thai	16	English	13	B1	Chinese	10		
WY	16	Thai	16	English	13	B1	Chinese	10		
PP	16	Thai	14	English	9	A1	Chinese	7		
SK	14	Khmer	14	English	9	C1	Chinese	9	Thai	2
	M= 16.2 SD=1.3		M= 16 SD=2.8		M=11.9 SD=2.7			M=8.5 SD=3.4		

Nine participants (4 females and 5 males) are secondary students aged from 14 to 19 (Mean=16.2) from a trilingual school in Bangkok, all of whom are learning Thai, English and Chinese in school simultaneously, with English being their L2(L2 Mean=11.9 years). Except 2 of the participants are 4-language multilinguals, the rest are all 3-language multilingual students. Another singularity of the 2 4-language participants is that 1 participant's L1 is Khmer, who is an immigrant from Cambodia and another participant was born in a bilingual family speaking both Thai and Chaochew dialect of Chinese. The remaining 7 participants identified that Thai as their L1. The trilingual private school that all participants attend runs English Program from Grade1 to Grade12 and all the participants are from English Program.

The participants' proficiency level of English Phonology (Council of Europe, 2020) ranges from A1 to C1. Against the yardstick of descriptor for Phonology Control in CEFR Companion Volume (2020), each participant is assigned with a phonology proficiency level based on their production of reading-aloud tasks. 1 participant is assigned to A1 (Basic User-Breakthrough), 2 participants to A2 (Basic User-Waystage), 3 participants to B1 (Independent User-Threshold), 2 participants to B2 (Independent User-Vantage), 1 participant to C1 (Proficient User-Effective Operational Proficiency) (Council of Europe, 2020)

Since 8 out of 9 participants were under 17 years old, consent forms were sent to the participants and their parents to make them fully informed of the purpose, the procedure of the research and the rights for participants including withdrawing from the research at any point when they feel uncomfortable during the research. If parents permit their children to participate and the participants themselves also agree to participate in the current study, they sign on the consent forms. All 9 participants and their parents signed the consent forms and none of the participants withdraw from the research.

Instruments

Reading-aloud task(recording1)

The recording1 is applied to each participant to collect students' English pronunciation production. This reading consists of 2 parts: part1:10 preparatory vocabulary with phonetic transcription and English meaning given as a warm-up; part 2: the reading-aloud the text of 106 words. The 106-word English paragraph entails words selected to examine participants' reading-aloud performance over phonological segmental and suprasegmental features. Participants are informed that they are allowed to correct themselves during the recording process.

Retrospective stimulated recall protocol (recording 2)

The terminology "retrospective stimulated recall protocol" is adopted from Wremble's (2013, 2014) research. The retrospective stimulated recall protocol is a sub-type of verbal report which is learners' verbalization, "*either while completing a task (concurrent reports or think-alouds) or sometime thereafter (retrospective reports) ...one particular retrospective verbal report (is) known as stimulated recall....*" (Bowles, 2018, p. 339). "Retrospective" means the inspection of specific language learning behavior which happens 20 seconds after the mental event as defined in Cohen's verbal report methodology (1996) and Gass & Mackey's (2000) stimulated recall methodology. The Retrospective stimulated recall protocol covers following categories:

Category 1: Noticing: Noticing one's own problems with English pronunciation includes specific instances of pronunciation problems that are paid selective attention to.
Category2: Self-correction: Participants' correction of pronunciation of the (vowels/consonants/word stress/speech rate/fluency) when they are stimulated by listening to their own recording from the reading- aloud task.

The "Noticing" category is rooted in Bialystok's information-process model of "analysis of representations" and "control of the attention" as well as Schmidt's noticing hypothesis (1995) which defines noticing, a form of conscious awareness. The term "self-correction" in the current study is adapted from the terms "self-repair" and "self-correction" employed in Wrembel's (2013, 2014) articles, which is also based on presumption that "MLA could be reflected in instances of self-repair and analysis of language properties" (Angelovska, 2018).

Retrospective stimulated recall interview protocol (recording 3)

Stimulated recall interview is employed for gathering data by asking individuals to vocalize what is going through their minds as they are performing a task while being presented with some tangible (perhaps visual or aural) reminder of an event, namely, the "stimulus" (Cohen, 1996).

The current stimulated recall interview elicits rich data of participants' retrospective comments on their reading-aloud production such as explanation for the pronunciation mistakes, justification of self-correction and resorting to learning experience, covering following categories and the terminology for categories and sub-categories are adapted from Wrembel (2013, 2014) and Kopečková(2018):

Category 1 Levels of Complexity of Metaphonological Awareness.
Low Level: participants report noticed instances of problematic instances of pronunciation and making self-correction, describing certain superficial audio forms of the phonological aspects.
Medium Level: participants contribute description or explanation and analyze certain targeted features, but it does not involve meta-language.

High Level: participants contribute metalinguistic description or explanation, or the analysis is articulated employing metalinguistic categories

Category 2 Cross-linguistic Influence
It covers students' report on cross-linguistic influences and identification of the sources and roles of the CLI sources.

Category 3 Self-report and Self-observation
Self-report: it covers participants' reflective statements about their general English phonological learning behavior they observed.
Self-observation: it covers participants' reflective verbal report on their specific phonological production instances

Coding Scheme
The coding scheme is inspired and adapted from the research of Wrembel (2013, 2014) and Kopečková (2018). To address intra-rater reliability, 20% of the data was re-coded by the researcher after a three-week interval. Agreement between the two rounds of coding reached 91%, suggesting a high level of coding stability. In addition, coding categories were piloted on a sample of data and refined prior to full analysis, which further supported the reliability of the coding process.

Table 2.
Coding Scheme

Category	Description
Stimulated Recall Protocol	
[NOTICING]	instances/number of noticing problematic pronunciation
[SELF-CORRECTION]	instances/number of successful/self-correction
Stimulated Recall Verbal Interview	
[COMPLEXITY LEVEL]:	
	[C1] Low Level-- noticing and attentional focus on relevant auditory forms
	[C2] Medium Level--description or explanation, i.e. the participant performs analysis of the targeted feature; phonological explanation is more explicitly verbalized
	[C3] High Level--metalinguistic description or explanation and meta-language, i.e.the analysis is articulated employing metalinguistic categories
[COMMENTS]:	
[CROSSLINGUISTIC INFLUENCES]	Cross-linguistic influences related to phonetic performance
[SELF-REPORT]	general statements on English phonological learning process
[SELF-OBSERVATION]	specific English phonological problems and explanation

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings are presented and discussed by instrument employed. The findings are discussed in comparison with the relevant previous studies concerning the Metaphonological Awareness in multilinguals.

Reading-aloud task

Table 3.
Grades of reading-aloud pronunciation

Participant	Age	L1	L2	L3	Ln	English Phonology Prificency	Total Mistakes	Pronunciation Prodction Grade
WYJ	19	Thai	English	Chinese		A2	51	F
SY	17	Thai	English	Chinese		A2	60	F
DY	16	Thai	English	Chinese		B2	8	A
CLL	16	Thai/Chinese (Chaochew)	Engish	Chinese		B1	44	E
MM	16	Thai	English	Chinese		B2	28	C
DZM	16	Thai	English	Chinese		B1	36	D
WY	16	Thai	English	Chinese		B1	40	D
PP	16	Thai	English	Chinese		A1	62	G
SK	14	Kmer	English	Chinese	Thai	C1	17	B

Based on 9 participants' performance in reading-aloud task, they are assigned to 7 grades from Grade A (least mistakes) to Grade G (most mistakes) by an English phonology expert with enriched experience teaching multilingual students in Thailand. Grade A is for participants with 0 to 10 pronunciation mistakes, Grade B for 11 to 20 pronunciation mistakes, Grade C for 21 to 30 pronunciation mistakes, Grade D for 31 to 40 pronunciation mistakes, Grade E for 41 to 50 mistakes: Grade F for 51 to 60 mistakes and Grade G for 61 to 70 pronunciation mistakes. Participants' pronunciation performance roughly corresponds with the phonology proficiency level: the participant of C1 (Proficient User) achieved Grade B, the participant of B2 (Independent User) achieved Grade A and the A1 (Basic User) participant attained Grade G.

The phonological mistakes consist of 239 consonants (69%), 72 word stress (21%) and 35 vowel (10%). The most striking mistake categories are consonants and word stress, accounting for 90% of all the mistakes. The ranking of the pronunciation performance Grade is consistent with raw frequency of the consonant mistakes, which means participants' accuracy with uttering consonants decides their pronunciation performance. The only Grade A participant made the least mistake with consonants (4), Grade B participant made the second least consonant mistakes (15), and number of mistakes made by participants of Grade C to G increased accordingly from 24 to 44 consonant mistakes.

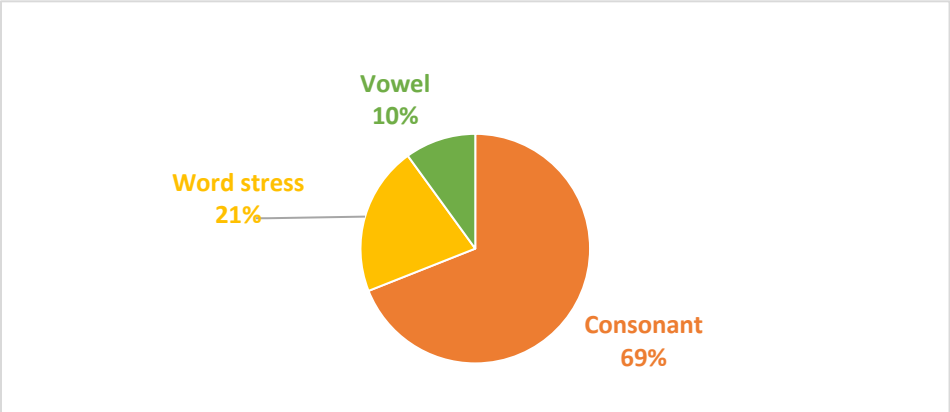

Figure 1. Distribution of pronunciation mistakes

Retrospective stimulated recall protocol

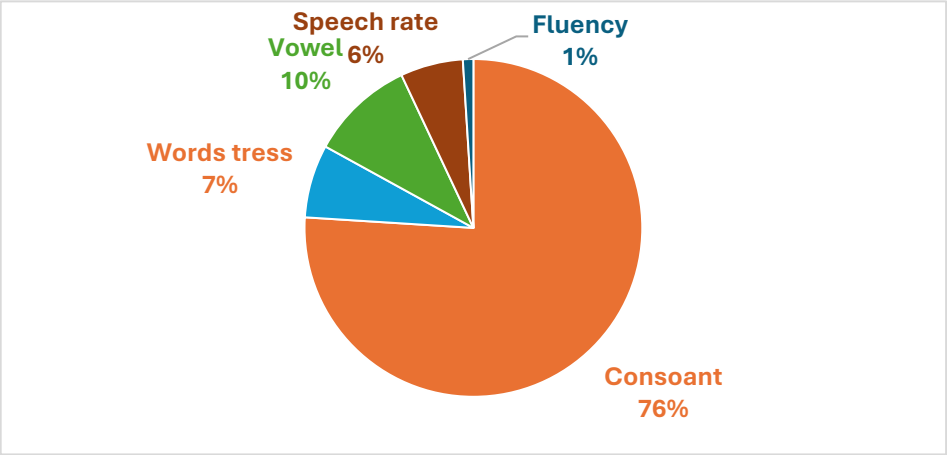

Figure 2. Distribution of noticed pronunciation mistakes

Noticing of mistakes:

All 9 participants noticed 70 mistakes in total, distributing into five phonological features including 53 instances of consonants (76%), 7 of vowels(10%), 5 of word stress (7%) , 4 of speech rate (6%) and 1 of fluency(1%). The most noticed phonological mistake is consonant, which means participants' attention were mostly directed to the segmental features of consonants and vowels in contrast with suprasegmental features of word stress, speech rate and fluency. This distribution pattern is in common with several similar previous studies using retrospective verbal reports from multilingual learners (Wrembel 2013, 2014; Kopečková, 2018). This phenomenon could be explained by multilinguals' selective attention to certain phonetic aspects.

Self-correction of mistakes:

Among 239 pronunciation mistakes, all participants made 53 successful self-corrections in total, the correction-mistake rate is 15.3%. The consonant category has the highest correction-mistake rate of 17.6% compared with 14.3% of vowel correction rate and only 1% of word stress correction rate. It demonstrates that word stress is the most problematic for multilinguals to fix compared with other pronunciation problems.

Table 4.
Percentage of noticing and self-correction

Age	L1	Years of Learning L1	L2	Years of Learning L2	Proficieny Level of English Phonology	L3	Years of Learni-ng L3	Ln	Yea-rs of Learn ing Ln	Total Mist-akes	Pronu-nciation Grade	Notice/ Mistake rate	Correction/ Mistake Rate
19	Thai	19	English	17	A2	Chinese	2			51	F	3.92%	0
17	Thai	17	English	11	A2	Chinese	5			60	F	3.33%	1%
16	Thai	16	English	9	B2	Chinese				8	A	0.00%	0
16	Chinese (Chaochew)& Thai	16	English	13	B1	Chinese	13			44	E	40.91%	31%
16	Thai	16	English	13	B2	Chinese	12			28	C	3.57%	0
16	Thai	16	English	13	B1	Chinese	10			36	D	19.44%	8%
16	Thai	16	English	13	B1	Chinese	10			40	D	67.50%	45%
16	Thai	14	English	9	A1	Chinese	7			62	G	6.45%	6%
14	Khmer	14	English	9	C1	Chinese	9	Th-ai	2	17	B	52.94%	47%
M=16.2 SD=1.3		M=16 SD=2.8		M=11.9 SD=2.7			M=8.5 SD=3.4						

With the review and analysis of instances, raw frequency and percentage of noticing and self-correction, it is found that participants who perform extraordinarily in reading-aloud task did not necessarily performed better in reflecting upon their own phonological production which is exemplified by the participant with Grade A and participant with Grade C who ranked the first highest and third highest in reading-aloud performance barely noticed and self-corrected anything during the self-editing session.

Nevertheless, in the meanwhile it should not be ignored that the participant who achieved the highest correction-mistake rate is the one at the highest level of phonology proficiency among all the participants. The other two participants who achieved second and third highest correction-mistake rates are both at B1 level of phonology proficiency. In contrast, those who are at A1 and A2 (Basic User) levels made minimal successful self-correction. This result suggests certain consistency between English phonology proficiency and successful self-correction, which begs further study to decide the correlation between them, since previous relevant studies utilized overall English proficiency instead of phonology proficiency.

Stimulated-recall interview protocols

Complexity Levels:
9 participants contributed 37 reflective comments on their reading-aloud performance and responses regarding tracing the underlying factors accounting for their phonological performance, among which the majority totaled at 62% fall into Low-level of complexity (C1), 30% are Medium-level of complexity (C2) and the remaining 8% constitutes the high-level of complexity (C3).

Low-level Complexity (C1):
The 24 reflective comments reported by 6 participants of Grade A to Grade F and their phonology proficiency level ranges from A2 (Basic User) to C1 (Proficient User) which suggests that participants of various levels of English pronunciation performance and phonology proficiency all contributed to the lowest level of complexity comments.

Qualitative data from C1 reveals participants' attempts at justifying their self-correction by resorting to superficial audio formal aspects such as adding /s/ sound to the words ended with *s* or deleting /s/ sound from some words without *s* in the stimulated recall verbal report, for instance, one participant (Chinese (Chaochew)-Thai-English-Chinese (Mandarin))stated: *Motorbikes, carries, they have -s and fusion, with no -s* .Another participant(Kmer-English-Chinese-Thai) stated *snippet should be snippets. I forgot -s again*

in chopsticks. Not only can participants focus on small segments but also can realize the missing of larger phonological segment: *Multicultural, I said multiculture,* which manifests their Metaphonological Awareness of suprasegmental features, reflecting upon a syllable' articulation, not reflecting on meaning or formation of the word. It differentiates from the lexical perception which pertains to the recognition of whole words and their meanings (Anthony & Francis, 2005). A participant explained the difference between pronouncing last syllable in *cultural* and *spiritual*: *in cultural, it's -tural, but in spiritual, is -tual.*

Medium-level Complexity (C2):

The 10 collected explanatory comments of C2 differ from C1 in that explanation for their pronunciation performance is more explicitly verbalized or demonstrates participants' endeavor to induce certain pronunciation principles in their own expressions. 1 participant attributed the difficulty in uttering the sound /l/ to its position in the word: */l/ sound in Float is difficult because it's in the middle.* Another participant demonstrated his explicit Metaphonological Awareness by offering a reason for each of his self-correction: *I said engulf not engulfs, because I didn't say the s. It's not /ðə/ air, it's /ði:/ air.* Participants also were more confidently and explicitly expressed why they made corrections of word stress: *It (The stress) should be at the beginning. It (The stress) should be at the first syllable.* This displays their explicit awareness about what is right in positioning the stress.

High-level Complexity (C3):

As the coding scheme specifies, category C3 involves employing metalinguistic language or categories to analyze their pronunciation performance. C3 as a higher degree is differentiated from C2 in explicitness of metaphonological knowledge, but the researcher concurs with Woll (2018) that metalinguistic awareness does not mean that participants must use the terminology. Taking a participant's justification and summary of his correction for instance, he said *Typically like every word that is ended with s, usually need to.... end with /s/.* Despite that no terminology like "plural form" or "third-person" was used, the participant used the words *typically, every word, usually* to show that cognitively he induced a rule from observed individual instances. Another participant's explicit consciousness of comparing English and Chinese pronunciation systems: *Chinese has four tones, this, that (writing tone marks of Chinese in the air). It(tone) makes the sound stretchy, longer,* although the term "tone marks" was not used.

For the C3 level of complexity, only 2 participants of Grade B and Grade D contributed their 4 comments. Their pronunciation proficiency belongs to B1(Independent User) and C1(Proficient User) which lives up to the expectation that higher phonology proficiency and better read-aloud performance in pronunciation leads to the possibility of more advantageous MLA with respect to the complexity level of Metaphonological Awareness. But so far, there has been no established consistent correlation between phonology proficiency and complexity level of Metaphonological Awareness, which begs further research.

There is also another finding that the 2 participants who contributed the most affluent reflective comments covering all 3 complexity levels are 4-language multilinguals, which gives rise to speculation that multilinguals who are more experienced with acquisition of more languages may be more advantageous in self-reflection on their L2 phonological performance, corroborating Holfer's (2016) study displaying that enhanced L2 English MLA was observed among multilinguals who had acquired L3 and L4.

Cross-linguistic Influences

5 out of 9 participants contributed 11 statements on the CLI, among which 7 statements point to Thai as the source of CLI and 4 mentioned both L1 Thai and L3 Chinese influences on their L2 English pronunciation task and phonology learning process. These results substantiate the previous supposition that CLI can be forward and backward (Atar, 2018; Freudlich, 2016; Jessner, 2008), which also

corroborates previous research findings that multilingualism is more complex than bilingualism (Jessner, 2006) while contradicting the previous similar research reporting only forward transfer (Wrembel, 2013, 2014).

With respect to whether CLI is conceived as a facilitatory or inhibitory role, there emerges contradictory evidence. Five participants all reported L1 Thai as an inhibitory factor because they all ascribed pronunciation inaccuracy to Thai influence such as r/l confusion, misplacement of word stress and 1 also mentioned Chinese Pinyin influences:

> *Thai also have this one /l/.*
> *I adapt and I speak like them. "Can you please pass me the waDER"* (The participant exemplified how he adapted to Thai accent)
> *It's hard to separate ch- and sh.- Sometimes, it's hard to separate. Sometimes I get confused about ch- and sh just like ch and sh, like xi (Pinyin)*

Nonetheless, 1 participant's comments revealed his recognition of the similarity between Romanized Pin Yin system and English facilitated his learning experience:

> *I compared English and Chinese, Like the Pinyin is the same, similar, I know how to sound, without Pinyin, I cannot read.*

The mixed reported roles of CLI are contradicted with the study only claiming only facilitative role of CLI and in consistent with the studies displaying data of both facilitative and inhibitory roles manifested by the verbal reported statements.

Self-report & Self-observation

The last finding segments evolve around metacognitive comments of Self -report and Self-observation. Self-report is a category of general statements on their L2 learning process. To lay out multilinguals' Metaphonological Awareness in Self-report more detailed and explicitly, current study applied and adapted certain sub-categories (1. Awareness & Control 2. Metalinguistic Awareness 3. Evaluation) defined and developed by Wrembel (2014).

Self-report

Table 5.

Self-report statements

Awareness & Control	Metalinguistic Awareness	Evaluation
A1. *When (reading) Chinese, I compared to(with) English.*(WY) A2. *I compared English and Chinese, Like the Pin Yin is the same, similar, I know how to sound, like Chinese because of Pin Yin.*(SK) A3. *I think I always mix Thai, English and Chinese together.*(CLL) A4. *You have American and the British and Australian. I listen to that on social media, and the accents are the mixed accents.*(DY) A5. *I always add -s in it.It's always in my hobby.*(CLL) A6. *When I say some word, I always add -s in my mind.* (CLL)	M1. *I tried to watch a movie. I want to have some British accent. And watch something.*(DY) M2. *I leaned from song of alphabet Ah, Ah Ah. I started to learn(English) in primary but it wasn't like international school. So I started focusing on it(English pronunciation) when I studied in international school.* (SK) M3. *I feel like when you are a bilingual speaker, the tones of the voice differ. For example, in Thai language, you have tones like in Chinese, right, but in English it's more like you need to remember it. For me if I don't recognize the word, the pronunciation differs with sentences.* (DY)	E1. *Some words are easier to pronounce with some accent.* (DY) E2. *You know (compared with) say(ing) passersby, passerbys is easier.*(DY) E3. *The words aren't so clear.*(DY) E4. *It's Thai accent.* (CLL) E5. *I think it(my accent)'s more Thai.* (WY) E6. *I'm not sure about other people. But for me it's from Thai accent.* (MM) E7. *I think in the audio, it's Thai accent.It's the Thai accent.*(WYJ)

1. Awareness & Control

Under this sub-category, the data reflect that multilingual learners direct their awareness and attention to their English pronunciation in their general description of L3 phonology acquisition process. One salient conscious effort they reported is comparing, separating several language systems between English and other languages or among variations of English (statements A1-A4). Another attentional focus they reported is that they noticed their habitual way of sounding out (statements A5-A6).

2. Metalinguistic Awareness

This subcategory manifests "their heightened sensitivity to languages and conscious efforts to acquire English" (Wrembel, 2014, p. 18). Participants reported utilizing strategy during acquiring L2 English pronunciation (Statements M1-M2). Statement M3 involves using both metalanguage ("*bilingual speaker"*) and strategy ("*need to remember it"*). These statements of Metalinguistic Awareness are quite similar to those in Wrembel's (2014) study, but his participants' mean age is 24.8 years contrasting the current participants whose mean age is 16. This comparison and contrast lead to the supposition that teenager multilinguals are also capable of having enhanced Metaphonological Awareness comparable to adult counterparts.

3. Evaluation

Evaluation means evaluative statements concerning such aspects as difficulty, significance and overall judgment of English phonology (Wrembel, 2014). There are 2 explicit statements(E1-E2) concerning the participant's judgment on the degree of difficulty of pronouncing, 4 statements(E4-E7) evaluating their accents as Thai and 1 evaluative remark(E3) on her pronunciation outcome. Compared with previous studies (Wrembel, 2014), there lack evaluative remarks on the significance of L3 acquisition and satisfaction with their pronunciation.

Self-observation

Table 6.
Self-observation Statements

Consoant	Vowel	Wordstress
C1. *(To read aloud /s/ at the end word), I know, but I forgot. I never focus on/s/. When the word is short, I may focus. I never focus on the last one(sound).*(WYJ) C2. *I forgot /s/ again in chopstick; snippet should be snippets; One more word. carry, carries. Because the first time, I wasn't concentrating on the word. And then after, I will correct.*(SK) C3. *When there is ch, sh, I always mixed it together. It's hard to separate ch- and sh.- Sometimes, it's hard to separate. Sometimes I confused about ch- and sh just like ch and sh, like xi(Pinyin)* (CLL)	V1. *I said b/ɛ/ll but like I said it in throat. The words aren't so clear.*(DY) V2. *Because the a sound is like /a:/ but the /ai/ sound is in fried.*(WY)	W1. *It(The stress) should be at the beginning.*(DZM) W2. *The tone, it should be at first.*(DZM) W3. *For many ly, I will go up.*(CLL)

In contrast with self-report, verbal reports from Self-observation focus on specific cases of phonological production. The phonological features they reflect upon entail final/s/ deletion or adding, confusion of consonants mistakes, vowel substitution and word stress.

For Final/s/ problems, 2 Statements(C1-C2) revealed their forgetfulness of the ending sound. 1 participant also explained her difficulty in uttering the sound liquids /r/ (Statement C3). She also attributed her confusion of consonants /tʃ/& /ʃ/, to the CLI of Thai, English and Chinese(C4). For vowel mistakes, 2 participants reported their reflective analysis on their pronunciation(V1-V2). For word stress, 2 participants reported their comments(W1-W3) on the misplacement of word stress which means they are aware that the word stress is mistakenly moved to other syllables, usually to the last one.

CONCLUSION

From this research, a spectrum of multilingual Metaphonological Awareness, CLI and affecting factors are mapped out and the emerging enriched qualitative data substantiates the existent theoretical models for MLA such as Bialystok's "Analysis and Control" and the previously underestimated Wrembel's research framework for Metaphonological Awareness. More importantly, the present research not only supplies evidence filling the age gap of participants in previous studies, who manifest MLA through noticing, self-correction, levels of complexity and self-report and self-observation, but also displays both forward and reverse CLI experienced multilingual learners. Besides, this research initiates in employing CEFR Phonology Control proficiency levels and proposes it as a potential affecting factor for Metaphonological

Awareness. The pedagogical implication dwells in shedding light on pronunciation teaching secondary students in Thailand, such as guiding students' attention to suprasegmental aspects and imparting more explicit phonological knowledge such as terms of phonology. The limitation lies in that the limited size of participants is not representative and utilization of phonology proficiency level limits comparison with other similar research, which proposes further study in utilization of phonology proficiency level.

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Exploring Students' Perceptions and Anxiety:

Insights from Integrating Global Englishes-Informed Materials in a Classroom

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Abstract

The global spread of English has made it become more diverse due to the different linguistic features from heterogenous cultures. However, regardless of the shifting paradigm in English varieties, students still lack awareness of diverse varieties of the language. This pilot study investigated the integration of Global Englishes-informed materials in a classroom and examined the perceptions and anxiety levels before and after the treatment of 14 secondary students in an Islamic school in Southern Thailand. This context has received little attention from previous research. This study specifically examined the impact of the intervention in the English classroom by integrating GE–informed materials into the students' textbooks. Their experiences with GE–informed materials were explored through two questionnaires and focus group interviews. Data were quantitatively and qualitatively analyzed. The preliminary results from the perception questionnaire indicate that most students had positive perceptions of GE–informed materials. Furthermore, through the focus group interviews, the students reported experiencing improved confidence and comfort post–intervention. Although the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale showed a non–significant increase in the students' anxiety, with the overall feedback suggests a positive impact on their anxiety level. These findings highlight the potential of GE–informed materials to foster more inclusive learning environments. Moreover, to enrich the depth of analysis, future data on a bigger sample size will provide deeper insights by combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to fully capture the impact of integrating GE–informed materials in the classroom on student perceptions and anxiety levels.

Keywords: Global Englishes-informed materials, English varieties, perceptions, foreign language classroom anxiety

INTRODUCTION

The expansion of global communication has made the world increasingly interconnected. Meanwhile, English as a language with a vast number of non–native speakers (NNS) has developed into a dynamic lingua franca. This dynamism then gave rise to the concept of Global Englishes (GE). GE legitimizes the diversity of its every user and no longer tightly tied to the native English speaker (NES) norms (Jenkins, 2014). As a result of this shift, effective communication should be prioritized overachieving NES–like accuracy (Jenkins, 2007; Seidlhofer, 2004). Regardless of the appreciation for the varieties of English, the use of grammar is still considered crucial to facilitate meaningful and effective communication in global communication.

Thorough and careful evaluation needs to be carried out considering the large role of textbooks in conveying language and cultural ideology to students in the language learning process (Nguyen & Cao, 2019). However, despite the importance of rich resources in multicultural settings, Syrbe and Rose (2018)

found that some textbooks still focus on the natives' norms. Therefore, reviewing students' learning resources is needed to make sure textbooks as pivotal instruments in learning equip them with the skills necessary to face cross–cultural communication.

The materials in the textbook are not the only challenges faced by students in learning English. Students' emotions play a crucial part in facilitating the learning process. One form of emotion that can be experienced by students is anxiety and, in this context, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA). According to Horwitz et al. (1986), one of the triggers of FLCA is the fear of getting negative comments from peers or teachers on the language they produce. Sometimes, students feel anxious about their local accent when communicating in English. It is important for educators to find ways to educate them that it is not a disadvantage that must be eliminated.

Previous studies have reviewed various factors that cause FLCA and its impact on students (Amengual–Pizarro, 2018; Coppinger & Sheridan, 2022). However, there is still a gap in exploring specific teaching materials such as GE–informed materials that can help overcome FLCA. Most existing research in this area focused primarily on university students (Boonsuk & Ambele, 2020; Boonsuk et al., 2023; Chou, 2018). Furthermore, there is a dearth of research addressing students in Islamic schools and less dense urban settings. Thus, this study addresses these gaps by exploring how GE–informed materials integrated into students' textbooks can affect secondary Islamic school students' perceptions and examining whether these materials have a direct impact on their FLCA.

The GE–informed materials integration aims to provide insight into students' perceptions of the materials as well as the impact of the materials on reducing their FLCA. Aiming to explore the feasibility of the implementation of the intervention and the instruments for further larger–scale research implementation, the pilot study addresses the following research questions.

1. What are the students' perceptions of GE–informed materials?
2. Does integrating GE–informed materials into the textbook have an impact on students' Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Global Englishes Language Teaching (GELT)

In line with the development of global communication, the ways we learn and teach English have significantly shifted away from the traditional English language teaching framework. Current ELT frameworks including world Englishes (WE), English as an international language (EIL), and English as a lingua franca (ELF) which are all under the umbrella term called Global Englishes (GE) are increasingly being implemented (da Costa & Rose, 2024). Thus, this study builds upon the existing literature to create and implement GE–informed materials in the classroom. This investigation contributes to the broader discussion on the role of materials in English language teaching. It particularly focuses on raising students' awareness of English varieties and its impact on their FLCA.

The GELT concept can be promoted through materials presented in the classroom. Previous research by Kiczkowiak (2020) offered seven practical principles for developing ELF materials. These principles emphasize the importance of clarity over similarity to native speakers, successful ELF users as models, authentic ELF use, intercultural communication skills rather than fixed cultural models, communicative skills over native–like correctness, multilingual use rather than monolingual, and raising students' awareness of an ELF mindset. In this study, these principles serve as a reference for creating materials that are not centered on native speakers and better meet the communication needs of students in the global era.

Therefore, this study integrates GE–informed materials and creates an inclusive learning space for every student. The GELT concept applied in this study views mistakes and linguistic uniqueness as

communicative resources, which positively impact the reduction of students' fear of evaluation (Rose & Galloway, 2019). With this approach, students are guided to become more confident in using English in their own ways and reduce their fear of making mistakes.

Students' Perceptions of Global Englishes

Research related to students' perceptions and attitudes has attracted a lot of interest from previous researchers. However, many students are not aware of multicultural communication and are still fixated on native–speakerism due to the traditional pedagogical practice in a classroom. Therefore, interventions to introduce the concept of GE to students are still needed. As mentioned in the study by Lu and Buripakdi (2020) who conducted a 12–week intervention pre–experimental design study with 82 undergraduate students in China, they found that the concept of native–speakerism was still attached to students' minds. Some participants still think that English belongs to the British and American English users only. Furthermore, some of them even stated that they do not like foreign accents such as Indian English and Malaysian English.

Another study has proven that some varieties of English have not gained acceptance even in their own countries. The example was portrayed in a study by Liu et al. (2023) who conducted focus interviews with nine students at an elite senior high school in the capital city of a province in North–Eastern China. This study focuses on learners' attitudes towards Chinese English (CE). Through the results of the qualitative content analysis (QCA), it was found that students and even teachers have negative perceptions of CE. The results of this study indicate that expanding understanding of English variations needs to be encouraged. Moreover, it is important for students to possess this understanding in real life through communication with English speakers from other cultures.

The application of Global Englishes pedagogy itself has been carried out in previous studies, one of which is a study of da Costa and Rose (2024). They conducted a classroom–based quasi–experiment with 25 teenagers (13–17 years old) enrolled in a private English language learning institution. All participants were L1 Portuguese. This study conducted an intervention with five lessons focusing on raising learners' awareness of English varieties. The findings revealed that students showed positive perceptions of non–standard English varieties. This further echoes the findings of previous studies that GE–related activities have a big potential to raise students' awareness of English diversity.

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA)

FLCA is an uneasy feeling during the process of learning a foreign language. As stated by Horwitz et al. (1986), complex feelings, beliefs, behaviors, and self–perceptions that arise when learning a language can be FLCA. It is considered a type of specific anxiety that is often triggered in classroom settings only. Previous studies have consistently shown that higher levels of FLCA play a negative role in students' language achievement (Dewaele et al., 2023; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016; MacIntyre, 2017). This impact implies that there is a better chance for improvement in language learning outcomes if students' FLCA is reduced.

Initially, Kalra and Siribud (2020) conducted research to investigate public speaking anxiety in the Thai EFL context. They gathered data from Thai students through classroom observations, focus interviews, and questionnaires. This research focused on finding out students' perception towards the English public speaking class and the challenges experienced by the students while learning in the class. The finding showed that the students tend to prefer achieving native–like fluency and accent in speaking English. This ambition could lead to the increased anxiety when they failed to achieve native–like level of fluency. Integration of GE–informed materials encourage learners to appreciate English varieties instead

of glorifying the native variety. This paradigm shift has been proven to increase students' self–confidence, which is one of the factors in reducing anxiety.

Global Englishes Language Teaching and Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety

GE brings significant changes to language teaching as stated in the GELT framework by Rose and Galloway (2019). Additionally, GELT is not bound by NES–oriented norms and it is argued that English is a diverse, fluid, flexible language (Rose & Galloway, 2019). In other words, the GELT framework offers fresh insight into English teaching by acknowledging all its users as the target interlocutor as well as the owner of the language. Thus, this study introduced diverse varieties of English under the GE scope by integrating the GELT framework into the materials.

In the context of this research, the first language (L1) of students is not considered an obstacle in learning English. Students are given space to maintain the linguistics uniqueness of their L1 including their accent in speaking English. Some previous studies (Algazo, 2024; Al–Shahwan & Ahmad, 2024) have proven that teachers who allow students to use their L1 in the foreign language class can make students feel more comfortable.

The integration of GE–informed materials have an impact in strengthening students' self–confidence and acceptance of their English variations (Da Costa & Rose, 2024). The positive perception that arises from the integration of the material can increase the comfort of students in learning in class, so they feel more relaxed, and anxiety will be reduced. Thus, this is the basis for exploring deeper about the integration of GE–informed material and its impact on reducing student anxiety in this study.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This pilot study employed a mixed-methods design, specifically a one-group framework due to the limited number of participants within 4-week intervention in the classroom. This study integrated triangulation with both quantitative and qualitative data to produce a deep understanding of research problems. The quantitative data from the questionnaires were supported by the qualitative data from the interviews to enrich the data and confirm results. By combining both methods, this research explores the complexity of research questions thoroughly.

Setting and Participants

This pilot study was conducted in one of the Islamic Schools in Southern Thailand with 14 students from grade 12 participating in this study. All participants were native Thai speakers and had experience learning with foreign teachers from Indonesia, Pakistan, and Egypt. In this school, the students use a textbook titled UPBEAT 6 written by Evans and Dooley (2023). This textbook was then analyzed and modified to suit the objectives of this study.

Instruments

There were four instruments used in this study. The first instrument is the short–form foreign language classroom anxiety scale (S–FLCAS) consisting of eight items to determine students' anxiety before and after the intervention. The S–FLCAS is a shortened version of the 33–item FLCAS scale by Horwitz et al. (1986). The eight–item S–FLCAS was chosen for its proven psychometric validity. This shortened version of the 33–item FLCAS provides convenience for respondents without compromising reliability and validity

(Botes et al., 2022). Furthermore, the S–FLCAS provides efficiency in the study, with results comparable to those of the full scale.

In addition, some items from the English as an International Language Perception Scale (EILPS) by Nakamura et al. (2018) were also adopted and modified to explore students' perceptions of GE after the intervention. Through this process, the questionnaire resulted in 12 items that focused on participants' perceptions of GE including current English status, English variations, strategies for multicultural communication, English speaker identity, students' anxiety, the usefulness of the materials, students' enjoyment, students' self–confidence, and overall evaluation.

All items in both questionnaires were rated on a 5–point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Higher scores indicate a high level of FLCA and positive perceptions, and vice versa. Moreover, both questionnaires were translated into Thai to facilitate students with limited English comprehension skills.

GE–informed materials as the main instrument were also used in the classroom for a four–week period with the aim of introducing English diversity and diverse cultural contexts. An illustration of how GE–informed materials were integrated into the textbook is shown in the appendix.

To triangulate data, a qualitative instrument in the form of a focus group interview with four participants divided into two groups was also conducted after the intervention. There were five main questions that focused on participants' experiences with the materials, their understanding and awareness of English diversity, the usefulness of the materials, and the overall evaluation in this interview.

Research Procedure

The data collection procedure in this research involved several stages as shown in Figure 1: preparation, administration of the initial S–FLCAS questionnaire, a 4–week intervention, administration of the final S–FLCAS questionnaire, completion of a perception questionnaire, and conduction of focus group interviews:

Figure 1. Visual representation of the research procedure

In the preparation stage, the textbook used by the students was analyzed using Syrbe and Rose's (2018) framework to review four main aspects in GE–informed materials, namely, ownership of English, the target interlocutor, the norms, and the cultures depicted in the textbook. After that, the materials in the textbook were modified following Kiczkowiak's (2020) seven principles to introduce English varieties and preparing students in global communication. These principles emphasize creating realistic English teaching materials by prioritizing communication over native speaker norms, showcasing non–native speaker voices, and fostering intercultural competence.

Before the intervention, the students completed the pre–S–FLCAS in the classroom. The questionnaire took them about five to seven minutes to complete. The classroom intervention consisted of four meetings focusing on introducing English varieties (American English, British English, Thai English, Singaporean English, and Indian English) to the students with materials adapted in the textbook. Each lesson lasted 40 minutes and involved a series of activities of listening, watching videos, and doing worksheets related to the theme of the lesson (Appendix).

At the end of the 4–week intervention, the students completed the post–S–FLCAS scale and perception questionnaire. Then, four students categorized into two groups (high perception and low perception) were selected for focus group interviews lasting approximately 15 minutes per session.

The selection of four students for qualitative interviews was based on their scores on the perception questionnaire. This questionnaire focused on a comprehensive assessment of their learning experiences with GE–informed materials, including the FLCAS. The students were divided into two groups: "high perception" and "low perception." The two students with the highest perception scores received a score of 60 out of a maximum of 60. These high scores indicate a very positive experience with the integration of the materials. On the other hand, students in the "low perception" group scored 36 and 43 out of 60, indicating that they may face unique challenges in the learning process. Involving two groups in interviews allows the study to tap into diverse and comprehensive views on the intervention outcomes.

Data Analysis

Mixed–methods analysis was employed in this study with quantitative data from the S–FLCAS questionnaire analyzed using descriptive statistics, and *t*-tests to identify significant patterns before and after the intervention. Then, to ensure that the *t*-test was feasible with the small sample size of this study, a one–sample Kolmogorov–Smirnov test was run. Through this test, it was found that the sample data was normally distributed. Furthermore, the perception questionnaire was analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Qualitative data from the focus group interviews were analyzed using qualitative content analysis (QCA). QCA in this study was used to organize and interpret textual data to identify the themes emerging from the interview results (Schreier, 2012). The interview process involved audio recording which was then transcribed into Thai before being translated into English. After the interview, the script was shown to every student to ensure the appropriateness of the transcript. As mentioned by McKim (2023), participant participation in verifying the transcript is important to ensure that the transcript accurately reflects their statements.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses all the emerging themes derived from the quantitative and qualitative data. The findings address both research questions concerning the students' perceptions of GE–informed materials and their FLCA before and after the intervention.

Students' Perceptions of Global Englishes–Informed Materials

In addressing the first research question, both quantitative and qualitative data revealed generally positive perceptions among the students towards GE–informed materials. This finding is consistent with those of previous studies that highlight GE–informed materials could influence students' attitude toward non–standard varieties (Lu & Buripakdi, 2020; Sangpetch et al., 2023; Yunhua & Budiman, 2024). The following sections present the findings in detail.

Quantitative results

The results of the quantitative analysis are presented in Table 1. Overall, the students in the study agreed with the statements related to the GE–informed materials in the questionnaire (*M* = 4.11, *SD* = 0.56). This indicates that they had a positive impression of the materials in the study.

Table 1.
Students' Perceptions

No.	Questionnaire items	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Current status of English				
1.	English is used today as an international language to communicate effectively with people from around the world.	4.64	0.75	Strongly agree
Varieties of English				
2.	Different varieties of English, such as Indonesian English, Taiwanese English, and Japanese English, are acceptable today.	4.07	0.92	Agree
Strategies for multilingual/multicultural communication				
3.	I am open–minded about the accents that are different from my own accent.	4.36	0.84	Strongly agree
English speakers' identity				
4.	I don't mind if people laugh at my English accent when I speak because it is my own English.	4.14	0.86	Agree
5.	It is unnecessary to speak like American or British English speakers as long as my English is understandable to others.	4.29	1.20	Strongly agree
Students' speaking anxiety				
6.	I feel less nervous to speak English after taking this class.	3.79	0.89	Agree
7.	I feel more relaxed to speak English with my Thai accent after taking this class.	4.07	0.73	Agree
Usefulness of the materials				
8.	I have noticed significant improvements in my English–speaking ability.	3.64	0.75	Agree
Students' enjoyment				
9.	I enjoy learning about different varieties of English in this class.	4.29	0.82	Strongly agree
Students' confidence				
10.	Studying in this class has boosted my confidence to speak English in my own way.	4.00	0.68	Agree
11.	I can speak English confidently after knowing that English belongs to everyone.	4.07	0.92	Agree
Overall evaluation				
12.	I would recommend studying the materials in this class to other English learners.	4.29	0.83	Strongly agree
Overall		**4.14**	**0.56**	**Agree**

Note: The interpretations for the means are as follows: 4.21–5.00 = strongly agree, 3.41–4.20 = agree, 2.61–3.40 = neutral, 1.81–2.60 = disagree, 1.00–1.80 = strongly disagree.

The data in the Table 1 show observable patterns. The highest level of agreement falls into the item about the current status of English which said, 'English is used today as an international language to communicate effectively with people from around the world' (*M* = 4.64, *SD* = 0.75). This finding shows the students' understanding of the current position of English in global communication. In contrast, the lowest level of agreement was obtained from the item addressing usefulness of the materials which said, 'I have noticed significant improvements in my English–speaking ability' (*M* = 3.64 *SD* = 0.75). While still indicating agreement with the statement, the lowest mean score could imply that some students may experience challenges in noticing the significant improvement in speaking English.

Qualitative Results

To explore the students' perceptions of GE–informed materials deeply, data from the interviews were analyzed. The analysis provided valuable context and seek for the common themes reflecting their subjective experiences. The first theme that emerged from this analysis is related to students' self–confidence. They reported increased confidence and comfort in speaking English without worrying too much about mistakes and their accents.

Students also mentioned that GE–informed materials helped them learn new accents. For example, one student stated, "The materials [GE–informed materials] made it easier for students to understand accents from different languages". This indicates that the materials successfully improved their acceptance of the NNES accents.

After the intervention, they felt comfortable using their own accent and understood that effective communication was more important than the ability to imitate the NES accent. This was conveyed by one student, "Local accent is not a problem. Just being able to communicate and understand will make us understand each other. We don't have to speak like native speakers either".

Students' anxiety was the last theme that emerged from the interview transcription results. Some students reported feeling less worried about their local accents, as mentioned by one of them "Students can use the language without worrying about speaking incorrectly or correctly. Students can also communicate with any accent they have". This finding indicates that the students' sense of accent acceptance could reduce their worry and anxiety in English communication.

These themes addressed how GE–informed materials brought positive impacts on students' learning and unmasking their emotional barrier. Therefore, it can be said that introducing a range of English varieties around the world to the students could help support their emotional well–being and raise their confidence in speaking English.

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) Before and After the Intervention

Despite the students' positive perceptions of GE–informed materials, the questionnaire results reveal that their FLCA increased following the intervention. To better illustrate this trend, the following statistical data highlight the shift in FLCA scores before and after the intervention.

Table 2.
Students' Pre– and Post– FLCA

	Mean	SD	t–test
Pre	3.50	0.85	t = –0.75
Post	3.93	1.07	p = 0.47

The statistical data in Table 2 show that the mean value of the students' post–FLCA increased from 3.50 to 3.93. However, the paired t–test results (t–value = –0.75 and p–value = 0.47) indicate that

the increase in this anxiety level did not meet the typical standards for being considered statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). This implies that the intervention was not strong enough to attribute the increase in the students' anxiety level. Thus, the finding calls for further exploration especially through the students' insight in the interview.

The triangulation approach employed in this study proved effective in unveiling the causes of increased anxiety levels among the students' post–intervention. During the focus group interview sessions, the students expressed concerns about language usage. For example, one student stated, "I have anxiety about using language and I'm afraid of using incorrect vocabulary". Another student expressed feelings of shyness when speaking English, stating, "I still feel shy to speak English". This statement highlights how the fear of making mistakes and students' confidence levels play a major role in elevating anxiety levels.

However, there was also a positive impact on their learning experience mentioned by other students. For example, one student stated, "The use of teaching materials has made the content easier to understand, grammar easier to remember, and communication in teaching and learning easier". This means that relevant content is easier to understand and can facilitate easier communication.

In addition, other students felt less anxious about vocabulary errors and accent differences. As one student noted, "The materials help students use vocabulary to communicate better without worrying about using the wrong words". Another added that the materials supported them to express themselves freely: "The materials make students dare to express themselves, dare to speak, dare to use vocabulary even though their accent is not the same as that of a native speaker".

The interview results generally identified a positive impact of the GE–informed materials intervention on students' learning experiences. The materials make the students feel more comfortable using English in their unique ways. The students also expressed satisfaction with the materials used in class. In addition, the anxiety that emerged was found to be related to the students' internal factors related to their fear of making mistakes.

On the whole, this study found a contradiction between quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data show an increase in the students' anxiety after the intervention, while qualitative data reveal the opposite results. Probably, a few methodological shortcomings can account for the mentioned contradiction. All items in the S-FLCAS referred to English classes in general. An emphasis on students only focusing on classes with GE-informed materials was missing. However, in the focus group interview session, the interviewer emphasized that the interview would only focus on classes with GE-informed materials. In addition, the S-FLCAS may not be able to capture emotional changes in a short intervention period. Lastly, a small sample size and a short duration of intervention also limit the ability to detect significant quantitative changes.

Nonetheless, drawing all the threads together it can be concluded that the findings of this study indicate the potential of GE–informed materials to help the students improve their self–confidence and communication skills. To facilitate students' emotional aspects, it is highly recommended for teachers to create a safe and emotionally supportive classroom environment. Furthermore, teachers also need to introduce the GE concept through audio or video with successful English speakers from various countries. This approach is a crucial step in preparing students to engage in global communication with English speakers from diverse cultural backgrounds.

CONCLUSION

Reflecting on the initial questions posed about students' perceptions of GE–informed materials and their impact on students' FLCA, this study confirms that the intervention materials were positively received by the students and had a positive impact on increasing their confidence in speaking English. This pilot study

provides initial evidence that GE–informed materials can be feasibly integrated into secondary EFL classrooms in Southern Thailand. This integration does not turn away from the curriculum that applies in Thailand but has successfully added the essence of GELT into the materials. This approach also adjusts to the reality of the use of English in Thailand preparing students to communicate effectively on a global scale. Moreover, students are no longer bound to the native norms, allowing them to use English more authentically.

This study highlights the importance of a comprehensive approach tailored to the needs of students in the global era to facilitating student learning and their emotional well–being. In this case, the findings suggest that the process of learning a foreign language is a gateway that opens opportunities for exploration and cross–cultural communication. Thus, this learning opportunity needs to be carried out in an engaging and supportive manner with minimal anxiety. This study presents one way that educators can use to foster mutual respect for cultural differences in global communication and increase students' self–confidence.

As pointed out earlier, one interesting thing about this study is that there is a contradiction in the quantitative and qualitative results on students' FLCA levels after the intervention. The quantitative results obtained through the S–FLCAS show an increase in anxiety, while the qualitative data reveal the opposite. These conflicting findings require further exploration confirm the impact of GE–informed materials on students' FLCA levels.

This pilot study is not without limitations. The primary limitation is the small sample size, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, the absence of a control group results limits the understanding of the intervention and its effects. The duration of the study also hinders in–depth exploration of changes in students' perceptions and FLCA. It is, therefore, strongly recommended that larger-scale studies be conducted with the inclusion of control groups. The control group would add valuable insight to strengthen causal inferences. Longitudinal studies are also suggested to assess the long–term impact of the GE integration.

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Appendix: Global Englishes–Informed Materials

We are going to:

- **read** an article about my home is my castle
- **learn** the differences between houses in different parts of the world
- **draw and describe** your ideal home

MODULE 1: PEOPLE AND HOMES

Unit 1: My home is my castle

My Home is My Castle

Across the globe, homes serve as the heart of family life, yet the design and customs surrounding them vary widely. Let's delve into the differences between homes in Southeast Asia and those in the Western world.

Southeast Asian Homes:

In Southeast Asia, homes often reflect a blend of traditional and modern influences. Traditional houses in countries like Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines are characterized by their connection to nature and communal living.

Traditional Thai houses, for example, feature elevated structures with open-air spaces underneath, allowing for ventilation and protection from floods. Meanwhile, in Indonesia, traditional houses such as the "rumah adat" are built on stilts with intricately carved wooden beams, reflecting the cultural heritage of each region.

Moreover, Southeast Asian homes often incorporate outdoor spaces such as courtyards or verandas, where families gather for meals or socializing. These homes prioritize harmony with nature and community bonds.

Western Homes:

In contrast, Western homes, particularly in Europe and North America, tend to prioritize individuality and privacy. Houses are typically built with solid foundations and distinct rooms for specific purposes. Each room serves a particular function, from living spaces to bedrooms and kitchens.

Western homes also often feature personalized decor and furnishings, reflecting the unique tastes and preferences of the inhabitants. While family remains important, there's a greater emphasis on personal space and independence.

1. True or False

Determine if the statements are true or false based on the reading.

Traditional Southeast Asian homes are often built with solid foundations. ____

Western homes prioritize communal living over individuality. ____

Southeast Asian homes prioritize harmony with nature. ____

2. Discussion

- How do the design and layout of homes in Southeast Asia differ from those in Western countries?
- How do homes in your country look like?

3. My Ideal Home

Design Your Ideal Home

Imagine your dream home. Draw a floor plan and describe how it incorporates elements from Southeast Asian or Western homes, or a blend of both.

Intermezzo

Russia | Thailand

After watching the videos,

- What are the things in Russian homes that you don't have in your home?
- Does the Thai home in the video look like your home?
- What do you think of both homes?
- Which one do you like better?

Source: Adapted from Evans and Dooley (2023)

Integrating Genre-Based and Task-Based Learning into Writing Materials

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Abstract

In this paper, I argue for the integration of genre-based pedagogy and task-based language teaching (TBLT) and provide a blueprint for material design to support writing development in low-proficiency English language learners (A1–A2 CEFR). Drawing from recent research in second language acquisition and pedagogical design, I argue that combining genre awareness with task-driven learning enables learners to develop both rhetorical flexibility and linguistic confidence. The paper begins by examining the shortcomings of traditional academic writing instruction, particularly the limitations of formulaic models in diverse communicative contexts. It then presents theoretical and empirical foundations for genre-based pedagogy and TBLT, followed by a synthesis of their integration. A new approach to writing materials is introduced using a flexible model for material design tailored to low-proficiency learners, which emphasizes discovery, scaffolding, and reflection. This framework is supported with examples from classroom practice and an analysis of pedagogical implications in the age of AI-mediated communication. The study concludes with a discussion on how the integration of genre and TBLT approaches supports learner agency, motivation, and real-world writing competence.

Keywords: L2 writing, material design, genre writing, TBLT, low-proficiency learners

INTRODUCTION

In today's interconnected, multilingual world, writing has become more than a school subject or academic requirement; it is a tool for global communication, professional expression, and personal voice. Yet, in many educational contexts, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, writing instruction remains overly prescriptive, rooted in formulaic templates and rigid assessments. These models may be well-intentioned, aiming to simplify a complex skill for learners, but they often ignore the situational, purposeful, and audience-driven nature of real-world writing. As Caplan (2019) reminds us, "We don't just write. We write something for someone for some purpose" (p. 11). This perspective highlights the need to reframe writing instruction around authentic communicative goals rather than fixed formats.

For low-proficiency L2 learners, particularly at the A1–A2 CEFR level, formulaic academic models can be especially alienating. They are often expected to master abstract argumentative essay structures without sufficient scaffolding or contextual understanding. The result is writing that feels both cognitively overwhelming and disconnected from learners' actual communicative needs. These learners struggle not just with grammar or vocabulary, but with the broader rhetorical task of creating meaning for a real audience in a meaningful context.

In this paper I explore a pedagogical alternative—one that combines genre-based writing instruction with task-based language teaching (TBLT) to create writing materials that are flexible, purposeful, and accessible to low-proficiency learners. Grounded in research and shaped by classroom experience, this approach promotes reflection, genre awareness, and real-world writing ability.

Specifically, a new and innovative approach to writing is introduced that provides a flexible model for designing writing materials that uses tasks to guide learners through genre structures in a supported and motivating way. The goal is not simply to help learners produce "correct" writing, but to help them become what Tardy (2019) described as "rhetorically flexible writers" (p. 17), capable of navigating diverse contexts.

The paper first reviews the theoretical foundations of genre pedagogy, followed by an introduction to task-based learning. It then explains how the two approaches can be integrated and presents the proposed framework with its pedagogical implications. Finally, it concludes with a discussion of limitations and directions for future research.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

While genre-based pedagogy helps learners understand *what* to write, task-based language teaching (TBLT) focuses on *how* to use language meaningfully to achieve specific outcomes. Rooted in communicative language teaching, TBLT organizes instruction around real-world tasks that require learners to use the target language to accomplish goals—such as solving a problem, writing a message, or planning an event. In this approach, communication and meaning-making are central, with grammar and vocabulary development emerging organically from the task context.

Ellis (2009) defines a pedagogical task as one that involves a primary focus on meaning, has a communicative goal, requires learners to use their own linguistic resources, and reflects how language is used outside the classroom. While TBLT has traditionally been applied to oral communication, there is a growing recognition that its principles can also enhance writing instruction, especially for lower proficiency learners who benefit from structured, meaningful practice.

In writing-focused TBLT, learners engage in tasks such as composing an email, summarizing a news article, or creating a simple flyer. These tasks provide a concrete, communicative goal that helps learners focus not just on language accuracy but on rhetorical choices, content development, and audience awareness. Importantly, writing tasks allow for more time and reflection than oral tasks, giving learners a chance to plan, draft, revise, and edit—a process that mirrors authentic writing in the real world. Task-based writing is especially effective for A1–A2 learners because it provides concrete, goal-oriented activities that reduce cognitive overload and emphasize communicative purpose. Rather than facing the intimidating demand of producing full essays, learners engage in scaffolded micro-tasks (e.g., greetings, closings, short requests) that build toward a complete product. Research in TBLT (Ellis, 2009; Nunan, 2004; Willis & Willis, 2002) and genre-task integration (Yasuda, 2011) shows that even low-proficiency learners can develop confidence and genre awareness when writing tasks are sequenced, purposeful, and communicatively meaningful. Nunan (2004) and Willis and Willis (2002) emphasize that effective tasks are not isolated exercises but parts of a pedagogical cycle. A writing task can include pre-task planning, a main writing phase, peer review, and reflection—all of which contribute to language development and metacognitive awareness. Russell and Spada (2006) highlight the importance of feedback and opportunities for noticing in language development, principles that also underpin task-based writing activities. TBLT's emphasis on authenticity, learner engagement, and meaning-making makes it particularly useful for low-proficiency learners who may struggle with abstract grammar instruction or decontextualized drills. By focusing on purpose and process, writing tasks help students build confidence and communicative competence in manageable, meaningful ways.

Integrating Genre and TBLT

Although genre-based pedagogy and TBLT are distinct in focus, their integration offers a powerful synergy: genre provides the rhetorical roadmap, and tasks provide the vehicle for experiential learning.

Together, they support learners not only in understanding the structure of writing but also in practicing it purposefully and contextually. As Tardy (2019) argues, it is through tasks that students explore genres, build awareness, and develop the capacity to adapt to new communicative situations.

This integrated approach has been supported by several classroom-based studies. Notably, Yasuda (2011) conducted a study with 70 lower-intermediate (A2-B1 CEFR) Japanese university students focusing on email writing within a genre-task framework. Students were first introduced to different types of email (e.g., formal, informal, request, thank-you), analyzed model texts, and then completed a series of writing tasks. Results showed significant gains in genre awareness, lexical diversity, and fluency—demonstrating that students not only learned *what* to write, but *how* to write it effectively for different audiences.

In a follow-up study, Yasuda (2017) explored summary writing tasks linked to genre analysis and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), essentially establishing TBLT as a framework for genre-based writing pedgagoy. Students were encouraged to reflect on how purpose, audience, and register shape the way summaries are written. This approach led to improved rhetorical sensitivity, better language choices, and a clearer understanding of genre expectations. Importantly, students reported increased confidence and awareness of writing as a communicative act, not just a grammatical exercise.

What makes this integration especially effective is that it aligns form with function. Instead of simply teaching "how to write a paragraph" or "how to use the past tense," instructors can guide students through tasks that mirror authentic communication—writing a job application, responding to a customer inquiry, summarizing a lecture—while highlighting the genre-specific features that make each task successful. These tasks naturally embed grammar, vocabulary, and organization within meaningful contexts.

The genre + TBLT synthesis combination introduced here draws inspiration from Yasuda (2011, 2017) but adapts and extends it for A1–A2 learners with scaffolding and micro-tasks. It allows teachers to sequence tasks in a way that gradually builds complexity: starting with noticing and analysis, moving through practice tasks focused on specific genre components, and culminating in a final writing product. This process supports scaffolding, noticing, and reflection, while maintaining learner engagement through tangible outcomes. For low-proficiency learners, this is especially valuable: they are not overwhelmed with abstract rules but guided step-by-step through a process of discovery, practice, and production.

A Task-based Approach to Genre Writing

To operationalize the integration of genre-based pedagogy and task-based learning, I have been working with a team in developing materials based on this new framework—a flexible, task-sequenced model specifically designed to support low-proficiency learners. This framework emphasizes *awareness-raising*, *scaffolding*, and *learner reflection*, offering a clear pathway from observing writing to producing it in meaningful, achievable steps. Rather than overwhelming students with abstract rules or lengthy assignments, the framework breaks writing down into small, focused tasks that build toward a complete product.

The framework consists of three broad stages:

1. Noticing / Discovery

The first stage engages students in exploring real examples of a target genre. Learners read or examine model texts—such as a thank-you email, a summary, or a recommendation letter—and are guided to notice how these texts function in context. To support this analysis, they respond to discovery questions that draw attention to the text's context, purpose, language, and structure, including:

- *Context*: Who is the writer? Who is the audience?

- *Purpose*: What is the purpose of the text?
- *Language*: What kind of language is used? How formal or informal is the tone?
- *Structure*: What is the structure of the text?

By answering these questions, students begin to notice genre features such as openings, transitions, tone, and vocabulary. They become aware of how the writer adjusts language for audience and purpose, which is crucial for rhetorical flexibility.

2. Genre Awareness and Practice

Once students have analyzed model texts, the focus shifts to practicing genre-specific components through scaffolded tasks. For example, if students are learning to write a formal email, they may complete separate short tasks to practice:

- Writing appropriate subject lines
- Choosing the right greeting and closing
- Requesting information politely
- Using transitional phrases

Each task is targeted, allowing learners to master small pieces of the genre puzzle without cognitive overload. The activities are often collaborative, encouraging discussion about form, function, and variation.

3. Building Toward a Final Product

In the final phase, students put the pieces together. They brainstorm a real-world situation where the genre might be used (e.g., thanking a professor, summarizing an article), then draft a complete text using the skills developed in earlier tasks. This phase can be broken down into clear steps that guide learners from initial ideas to a polished product:

- Brainstorm a real-world context for the genre
- Draft a complete text using earlier skills
- Share drafts for peer review and feedback
- Revise and edit for clarity, appropriateness, and rhetorical effectiveness
- Produce a polished draft that demonstrates purpose and audience awareness

This stage highlights that accuracy is valued, but the greater emphasis is on appropriateness, clarity, and rhetorical intent. By moving step by step from micro-tasks to a full product, learners gain confidence while building practical writing skills.

Learner-Centered Design for Low Proficiency

Low-proficiency learners—those operating around CEFR A1 to A2—face unique challenges in writing. These learners are often still developing basic vocabulary, sentence structure, and reading fluency. Asking them to produce long-form academic essays without scaffolding can lead to anxiety, disengagement, and minimal learning. The new task-based approach to genre writing is designed specifically with these learners in mind, incorporating pedagogical features that reduce cognitive load, build confidence, and promote authentic engagement with writing.

Cognitive Load Management

Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 1988; 2010) reminds us that working memory is limited, and tasks that overload learners with vocabulary, grammar, and organization at once often cause frustration—especially

for A1–A2 writers. To reduce this burden, the framework breaks writing into scaffolded micro-tasks (e.g., greetings, subject lines, closings). This design lowers extraneous load while controlling intrinsic load, allowing learners to focus on germane processing that builds transferable schemas for genre writing (Kalyuga, 2011; De Jong, 2010). In this way, task-sequenced writing supports beginners by making complex genres manageable and meaningful. This reduces the demand on working memory and allows students to focus on one skill at a time. Over time, these parts are connected and integrated into a complete, coherent text.

Scaffolding and Repetition

Tasks are sequenced to build on one another, with increasing complexity. Early exercises might include sentence completion or rearranging a model text, while later tasks involve original production. The framework encourages repetition with variation—students encounter the same genre multiple times but with slightly different content or goals, allowing for deeper learning and transfer without boredom.

Offline Preparation and Reflection

Because lower-level students often need more time to process language, much of the work in this approach can be done offline—through worksheets, collaborative tasks, or guided discovery before moving to open-ended production. Reflection is also built into each stage. Students are encouraged to compare their drafts with model texts, ask questions like "What tone am I using?" or "Is this appropriate for my reader?" and revise accordingly.

Low-Stakes Environment

Another benefit of the framework is that it fosters a low-risk environment for learners. Since tasks focus on building specific components before asking students to write full texts, there is less pressure to "get it right" from the start. Learners are supported through discovery, feedback, and peer collaboration before submitting a polished product.

Purposeful, Real-World Relevance

Finally, all writing tasks are goal-directed and framed around communicative purpose. Students learn not only *how* to write but *why* a particular text matters: to thank someone, to explain a problem, to summarize something they've read. This gives meaning to the writing process and enhances motivation—two essential ingredients for success at the beginner level. This learner-centered design philosophy ensures that even students with basic English skills can participate in meaningful writing experiences and make progress toward communicative competence.

DISCUSSION

The integration of genre-based pedagogy and task-based language teaching offers a timely response to the evolving demands of 21st-century writing instruction, especially in an era shaped by rapid technological change and increasing linguistic diversity. This synergy represents an effort to reconcile two complementary approaches—genre and TBLT—into a unified model that promotes learner agency, real-world relevance, and pedagogical flexibility.

Perhaps the most important takeaway from this integration is the shift in focus from accuracy-driven writing to meaningful communication. In traditional writing instruction, particularly at low levels,

there's often a disproportionate emphasis on grammatical correctness. While accuracy remains important, genre and TBLT prioritize purpose, audience, and intent—factors that are far more central to successful communication in real-world contexts. Learners begin to see writing as something they can *use*, not just something they have to *get right*.

This shift is especially significant in the age of AI-generated text. Tools like ChatGPT and Google's Gemini can now produce grammatically accurate texts on demand. This raises important pedagogical questions: If a machine can generate a five-paragraph essay in seconds, what is the value of teaching students to write them? The answer lies in the process—not just the product. Genre + TBLT approaches teach students how to make rhetorical decisions, how to reflect on language use, and how to communicate purposefully in a variety of genres and contexts. These are skills that remain essential, even when AI tools are widely available.

The reflective dimension of this approach is also worth highlighting. As learners engage in genre analysis, task sequencing, and collaborative review, they are encouraged to think critically about their writing choices. They develop metacognitive awareness—the ability to plan, monitor, and evaluate their own language use. This kind of awareness supports long-term growth and adaptability, empowering learners to transfer their writing skills to new contexts, genres, and audiences.

Another benefit of the integrated approach is its flexibility across proficiency levels and institutional settings. While this paper has focused on low-proficiency learners, the same framework can be adapted for higher-level students by modifying task complexity, increasing genre sophistication, and encouraging greater independence. Similarly, teachers in different institutional settings—high schools, universities, private language programs—can implement the framework using whatever materials, class time, or technological tools they have available.

In short, this new approach to writing is not a fixed curriculum but a pedagogical lens—a way of designing materials and activities that foster genre awareness, task engagement, and real-world writing competence.

Limitations

At the same time, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, this paper presents a conceptual/material-design framework rather than empirical classroom data. While supported by existing research (e.g., Yasuda, 2011, 2017), further empirical validation is needed to test its effectiveness across diverse learner populations and instructional contexts. Second, the framework has been developed primarily with A1–A2 learners in mind, which raises questions about scalability to higher proficiency levels without significant adaptation. Third, as with many genre-based approaches, there is the risk of over-prescription if teachers rely too heavily on models rather than promoting rhetorical flexibility. These limitations suggest the need for future studies that explore implementation in different settings, gather learner feedback, and examine how digital tools (including AI) might support or complicate task-based genre instruction.

CONCLUSION

This paper has argued that a combination of genre-based pedagogy and task-based language teaching offers a compelling approach to writing instruction for low-proficiency learners. In contrast to traditional, one-size-fits-all models that rely heavily on abstract essay formats, formulaic writing and isolated grammar drills, this integrated approach emphasizes purposeful, scaffolded, and context-sensitive writing instruction.

Through a task-based approach to genre writing, learners are not merely taught how to produce grammatically correct sentences, but how to understand and navigate genres, respond to audience

needs, and complete writing tasks that mirror real-life communication. The process of *noticing*, *analyzing*, *practicing*, and *producing* writing through tasks allows students to develop rhetorical awareness and linguistic competence simultaneously.

For low-proficiency learners in particular, this approach offers a path to engagement, motivation, and confidence. It removes the intimidation of long-form academic writing and replaces it with achievable, meaningful tasks that build toward real-world communicative competence. By focusing on authentic goals and providing structured support, students are encouraged to take risks, revise their work, and ultimately, see themselves as capable and purposeful writers.

At the same time, this framework is conceptual and designed for A1–A2 learners, so further classroom-based validation is needed, and care must be taken to avoid over-prescription. Still, its practical implications are clear: teachers can make the model accessible by using short, authentic texts, sequencing tasks from controlled to free writing, and allowing extra time for reflection and peer support. As we move deeper into the 21st century—where multilingualism, technology, and cross-cultural communication are central to both personal and professional success—writing instruction must evolve. The genre + TBLT approach not only meets learners where they are, but helps them get where they want to go. Future research might explore how this framework functions across different age groups, institutional settings, and proficiency levels. There is also space to investigate how digital tools, including AI writing assistants, can be integrated into this model ethically and effectively. Regardless of how technology changes, one constant remains: writing is a human act of expression and connection. Our pedagogies must honor and empower that.

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Enhancing Vocabulary Learning Motivation among Thai Lower-Secondary EFL Students through Game-Based Learning Strategies

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Abstract

Game-based learning has emerged as a promising pedagogical approach for enhancing student engagement and motivation in language classrooms. This classroom-based action research investigated the impact of digital games on vocabulary learning motivation among 42 Thai lower-secondary EFL students with mixed abilities (A1–B1 CEFR) enrolled in a Fundamental English course at a demonstration school in Bangkok. An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was employed. Quantitative data were collected via pre- and post-intervention Vocabulary Motivation Scale (VMS) questionnaires to assess changes in students' motivation levels. To enrich these findings, qualitative data were gathered through classroom observations and focus group interviews to explore students' perceptions and experiences in depth. The results indicated a positive correlation between the use of digital games and enhanced vocabulary learning motivation. Students reported increased enjoyment, a stronger sense of challenge, and a heightened feeling of accomplishment during game-based activities. Games such as "Who Is Your Partner?" and "Passing Ball" were especially effective in fostering engagement, communication, and vocabulary recall. Moreover, the approach fostered a collaborative and supportive classroom environment, encouraging active engagement with the language and peers. These findings contribute to the growing body of evidence advocating for the integration of game-based learning strategies in EFL contexts, particularly to foster intrinsic motivation in young language learners.

Keywords: game-based learning, vocabulary motivation, Thai EFL students, young learners, classroom action research

INTRODUCTION

The advancement of educational technology has significantly transformed traditional models of English language teaching in the 21st century, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. Among these innovations, game-based learning (GBL) has emerged as a promising pedagogical strategy that supports language acquisition by promoting learner interaction and enhancing motivation through interactive and engaging learning experiences (Ahmed et al., 2022; Czerkawski & Berti, 2020; Erhel & Jamet, 2013). In particular, GBL has been shown to foster greater vocabulary retention, especially among young EFL learners who often face difficulties in maintaining focus and applying new vocabulary in authentic contexts (Waewchimplee & Oyibochia, 2022; Rakangthong & Yimwilai, 2020). In Thailand, traditional teaching methods such as rote memorization and translation continue to dominate instruction, often leading to student disengagement, low motivation, and lack of confidence in language learning (Tongsom & Tangkiengsirisin, 2022; Meeprom, 2020).

Recent studies in Thai educational settings have demonstrated that integrating digital games can significantly improve vocabulary learning outcomes and student satisfaction (Horphet & Yimwilai, 2020;

Saraiwanga & Worawonga, 2023; Waewchimplee & Oyibochia, 2022). GBL approaches also provide opportunities for collaborative and autonomous learning, allowing students to actively participate in their own language development (Wiriyakarun & Khrongsakun, 2020). To address these ongoing challenges, the present study investigates the potential of digital game-based learning in enhancing vocabulary acquisition and motivation among lower-secondary Thai EFL students. Conducted in a demonstration school in Bangkok, this classroom-based action research explores how integrating game-based activities into a Fundamental English course can foster a more dynamic and supportive learning environment for vocabulary development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Importance of vocabulary learning

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (1995), vocabulary refers to the total number of words in a language, and it is a core component of language proficiency, alongside listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. It also serves as a critical element of linguistic systems, in parallel with grammar, phonology, and cultural knowledge (Nation, 2011). Mastering vocabulary is thus essential for acquiring a target language such as English, as it enables learners to understand and produce language more effectively. Through both direct instruction and exposure, vocabulary learning strategies, therefore, play a very important role in helping learners acquire, retain, and apply new lexical items (Cameron, 2001; Nagy & Townsend, 2012). Schmitt (2010) reinforces the viewpoint that vocabulary and lexical units are foundational to language learning and communication. He further contends that grammar and other linguistic knowledge cannot be constructed effectively in the absence of sufficient vocabulary. Even with limited grammar, learners can still communicate using lexical items. Conversely, inadequate vocabulary significantly impedes effective communication and limits learners' overall language proficiency. Furthermore, lexical knowledge supports not only receptive skills (listening and reading) but also productive ones (speaking and writing). A rich vocabulary enables learners to articulate ideas clearly, precisely, and persuasively, thereby forming the basis for effective reading, writing and advanced language use (Nation, 2011; Nagy & Townsend, 2012).

Approaches of vocabulary acquisition

Nation (2011) and Schmitt (2010) posit that vocabulary teaching is a continuous process where learners repeatedly encounter words to deepen their understanding and usage. Cameron (2001) also emphasizes that meaningful activities are more effective for vocabulary practice than rote memorization or flashcard drills, as they provide opportunities for learners to engage with words in context, which helps enhance retention and understanding. Several theories emphasize effective vocabulary acquisition, each offering valuable insights into how learners process and internalize new words. The sociocultural theory, as proposed by Unrau et al. (2018), highlights the role of social interactions in learning. Through engagement with more knowledgeable individuals, learners gain insights into culture, language, and societal norms, forming their own understanding of the world. This perspective indicates the importance of collaborative and interactive learning environments in vocabulary acquisition. Schema theory, also discussed by Unrau et al. (2018), explains how individuals use mental structures or "schemas" to organize, store, and retrieve information. These schemas function as mental filing systems that enable learners to connect new vocabulary to their existing knowledge. This makes the learning process more efficient and meaningful. Cognitive theory, another approach explored by Unrau et al. (2018), emphasizes the value of meaningful learning and active engagement. Techniques such as contextual learning, word association, and semantic mapping are rooted in cognitive principles and support learners in internalizing vocabulary through

structured, purposeful activities. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive framework for understanding and enhancing vocabulary acquisition in language learning.

Importance of motivation

Motivation plays a vital role in the learning process, shaping how learners approach and sustain their efforts in education. Sinclair (2008) defines motivation in terms of attraction, retention, and concentration, highlighting its role in drawing individuals to a task, keeping them committed, and deepening their engagement. Motivated learners are more likely to put in consistent effort and persevere through challenges, demonstrating resilience in the face of setbacks. Motivation also enhances engagement, making tasks more enjoyable and fostering richer learning experiences. Furthermore, it drives goal setting and achievement, encouraging learners to establish ambitious objectives and work diligently to accomplish them. Closely tied to self-efficacy, motivation instills confidence in learners, enabling them to believe in their abilities to master new skills, such as acquiring vocabulary, and overcome obstacles. Additionally, motivation contributes to a positive learning environment, as motivated individuals create a supportive and collaborative classroom atmosphere that benefits all learners. (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021; Erhel & Jamet, 2013; Fachraini, 2017). All in all, these factors underscore the role motivation plays in promoting effective and meaningful learning

Advantages of Game-Based Learning

Prensky (2001) maintains that games facilitate meaningful learning by connecting new knowledge to prior understanding, making concepts more memorable. They also provide immediate feedback, enabling learners to learn from their mistakes and refine their understanding in real time. Likewise, Whitton (2009) highlights the versatility of games in engaging learners through various mechanics, including compelling challenges, rewards, puzzle-solving, artifact creation, competition, storytelling, collaboration, and satisfying the human desire for achievement. Games provide a fun and engaging learning experience, tapping into students' intrinsic motivation. By tailoring activities to individual interests and learning styles, games make vocabulary acquisition more relevant and enjoyable for learners. Furthermore, games transform students from passive recipients of information to active participants, fostering essential skills such as problem-solving and critical thinking. Group-based gameplay also promotes collaboration and communication and enhances interpersonal skills (Erhel & Jamet, 2013). Additionally, games offer realistic simulations of real-world scenarios, allowing students to practice skills in a safe and controlled environment. This contextualized approach to learning helps bridge the gap between classroom activities and real-world applications (Meeprom, 2020). Overall, game-based learning enhances student engagement and motivation as well as creating a dynamic and effective learning environment that supports deeper understanding and retention.

Research Objectives

This study investigates the impact of game-based learning on vocabulary learning motivation among Thai lower-secondary EFL students. Specifically, it aims to:

1. Evaluate the effectiveness of digital games in enhancing vocabulary learning motivation among students with mixed language abilities
2. Identify key motivational elements within game-based learning that influence learner engagement.

Research Questions

1. How does game-based learning affect the vocabulary learning motivation of Thai EFL lower-secondary students?
2. What are the specific factors within game-based learning that contribute to increased vocabulary learning motivation among Thai EFL lower-secondary students?

METHODOLOGY

Research design

This classroom-based action study utilized a mixed-methods explanatory sequential design to investigate the impact of game-based learning on vocabulary acquisition and motivation among Thai EFL lower-secondary students. Quantitative data were collected first, using pre- and post-Vocabulary Motivational Scale (VMS) and Likert Scale questionnaires, to measure changes in students' motivation levels and other related variables such as attitudes, beliefs, and self-efficacy. Subsequently, qualitative data were gathered through focus group interviews and classroom observations to provide deeper insights into students' perspectives and experiences. This sequential approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the quantitative results by integrating qualitative findings, offering a holistic view of the effectiveness of game-based learning in enhancing vocabulary learning motivation.

Participants

The participants were 42 Grade 8 students enrolled in a Fundamental English course at a demonstration school in Bangkok, Thailand, during the first semester of the 2024 academic year. The students, aged between 13 and 15, represented a range of English proficiency levels from A1 to B1 on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). Their abilities varied, including low, fair, and good levels of English, making the group diverse and representative of typical EFL classrooms in Thailand.

Instruction

The intervention consisted of five lesson plans designed to teach English vocabulary through various game-based activities. These lessons were conducted over five weeks, with each session lasting 90 minutes. The vocabulary was selected from the coursebook the participants used and was then integrated into games including *Bingo, Jigsaw puzzle, Mystery box, Passing ball*, and *Who Is Your Partner*? These games engaged students in interactive and collaborative activities, making their vocabulary learning more dynamic and enjoyable. For example, *Bingo* involved matching words with their definitions, while *Passing ball* required students to recall vocabulary words quickly. These activities were designed to cater to diverse learning styles and promote active participation in the classroom.

Data Collection

Data were collected through both quantitative and qualitative methods to ensure a comprehensive analysis. For the quantitative component, pre- and post-Vocabulary Motivational Scale (VMS) and Likert Scale questionnaires, translated into Thai to ensure participants' understanding, were administered before and after the instruction to measure changes in students' motivation levels, attitudes, and beliefs toward vocabulary learning. The qualitative data were collected through classroom observations, where student engagement, participation, and interactions during the lessons were noted. Additionally, focused

group interviews were conducted with five students at the end of the intervention to gather detailed insights into their experiences and perceptions of game-based learning. These methods provided complementary perspectives, with the quantitative data capturing measurable outcomes and the qualitative data offering more profound explanations.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process combined both quantitative and qualitative approaches to draw meaningful conclusions about the effectiveness of game-based learning. Quantitative data from the pre-/post-VMS and Likert Scale questionnaires were analyzed using mean and standard deviation (S.D.) to determine changes in motivation levels. Statistical significance was assessed by comparing pre- and post-test scores to identify any significant differences in motivation. For the qualitative data, thematic analysis was employed to identify common themes and patterns in students' responses during interviews. These themes provided insights into specific aspects of game-based learning that influenced motivation, such as enjoyment, collaboration, and self-efficacy. To ensure coding credibility, inter-rater reliability was established by having an independent coder review the data. Discrepancies were discussed and resolved, resulting in a high level of agreement. By integrating the quantitative and qualitative findings, the study was able to explain how and why game-based learning impacted students' vocabulary motivation.

RESULTS

Results from quantitative data

Before the vocabulary games were introduced, students completed a pre-test using the Vocabulary Motivational Scale (VMS) questionnaire. This pre-test measured their initial motivation levels for learning vocabulary. The results, including the mean and standard deviation (S.D.) for each statement, are summarized in Table 1, providing a baseline for assessing changes in motivation following the game-based learning intervention.

Table 1.
Pre-test Vocabulary Motivational Scale (VMS) Results

Statement	Mean	S.D.
1. I enjoy learning new English vocabulary.	3.79	1.05
2. I feel confident when I learn new English words.	3.69	0.98
3. I often use new vocabulary words that I learn in class.	3.45	0.97
4. I find it easy to remember new English words.	2.60	1.43
5. I am motivated to learn English vocabulary to improve my language skills.	3.55	1.06
6. I enjoy using different strategies to learn vocabulary (e.g., flashcards, apps).	3.60	1.11
7. I believe learning new vocabulary is important for my future goals.	3.81	1.66
8. I actively participate in vocabulary learning activities in class.	3.74	0.86
9. I feel bored when learning new vocabulary.	2.62	1.06
10. I feel motivated when my teacher introduces new vocabulary activities.	3.52	1.09
11. I like competing with my classmates in vocabulary games or activities.	3.10	1.39
12. I often review new words on my own after class.	2.79	1.22
13. I find learning vocabulary challenging but enjoyable.	3.38	0.99
14. I am eager to learn more English words outside of class.	3.29	1.24

15. I find it difficult to stay focused during vocabulary lessons.	3.52	1.13
Summary of Learning attitudes	3.36	1.15

The results from the pre-test Vocabulary Motivational Scale (VMS) questionnaire highlight key aspects of students' motivation toward vocabulary learning. The highest mean score (3.81) was for the statement, "*I believe learning new vocabulary is important for my future goals*," indicating that students strongly value vocabulary acquisition for personal and academic development. However, the lowest mean score (2.60), associated with the statement "*I find it easy to remember new English words*," suggests that many students face challenges in retaining new vocabulary. Statements related to enjoyment and participation, such as "*I enjoy learning new English vocabulary*" (3.79) and "*I actively participate in vocabulary learning activities in class*" (3.74), received moderately high scores, reflecting students' generally positive attitudes toward classroom activities. On the other hand, lower scores on statements like "*I often review new words on my own after class*" (2.79) and "*I find it difficult to stay focused during vocabulary lessons*" (3.52) reveal difficulties with self-directed study and maintaining focus. The overall summary of learning attitudes yielded a mean score of 3.36 (S.D. 1.15), indicating a moderately positive baseline but with noticeable variability. These findings suggest that while students appreciate the value of vocabulary learning, there is a need for strategies to enhance retention, focus, and independent practice, such as incorporating engaging and interactive methods like game-based learning.

The post-test Vocabulary Motivational Scale (VMS) questionnaire was administered to students after completing the vocabulary games to measure any changes in motivation and to evaluate the impact of game-based learning on fostering a collaborative and supportive learning environment. To provide insights into how game-based learning influenced students' motivation levels, the data, including the mean and standard deviation (S.D.) for each statement, are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2.
Post-test Vocabulary Motivational Scale (VMS) Results

Statement	Mean	S.D.
1. I enjoyed learning new English vocabulary through the games we played in class.	4.21	0.72
2. The vocabulary games made me more confident in using new words.	4.02	0.72
3. I often used the new vocabulary words I learned during the games in other.	4.02	0.95
4. I found it easier to remember new English words after playing the games.	4.14	0.95
5. The games motivated me to learn more English vocabulary.	4.19	0.86
6. I enjoyed using different strategies to learn vocabulary during the games (e.g., Bingo, Jigsaw puzzle).	4.21	0.81
7. I believe the vocabulary games are important for improving my English skills.	4.12	0.92
8. I actively participated in the vocabulary games in class.	4.02	0.84
9. I felt bored during the vocabulary games.	2.95	1.21
10. I felt motivated when my teacher introduced a new vocabulary game.	4.14	0.95
11. I liked competing with my classmates during the vocabulary games.	4.02	1.09
12. I reviewed the new words I learned during the games on my own after class.	4.07	0.92
13. I found learning vocabulary through games challenging but enjoyable.	4.07	0.87

14. I am eager to continue learning new English words through similar games.	4.02	0.87
15. The vocabulary games helped me stay focused during lessons.	4.08	0.88
Summary of Learning attitudes	4.09	0.90

The table illustrates the results of the post-test Vocabulary Motivational Scale (VMS) questionnaire. It highlights students' motivation and attitudes toward learning vocabulary through game-based activities. The highest mean score (4.21) was observed for the statements "*I enjoyed learning new English vocabulary through the games we played in class*" and "*I enjoyed using different strategies to learn vocabulary during the games* (e.g., *Bingo, Jigsaw puzzle*)," indicating that students found the game-based activities highly enjoyable and engaging. Similarly, statements such as "*The games motivated me to learn more English vocabulary*" (4.19) and "*The vocabulary games made me more confident in using new words*" (4.02) suggest that the games significantly boosted students' confidence and motivation. The statement "I found it easier to remember new English words after playing the games" (4.14) underscores the positive impact of the games on vocabulary retention, while "*I actively participated in the vocabulary games in class*" (4.02) and "*I liked competing with my classmates during the vocabulary games*" (4.02) highlight the role of the activities in fostering active participation and collaboration. Notably, the lowest mean score (2.95) was for the statement "*I felt bored during the vocabulary games*," indicating that most students found the games engaging and enjoyable. This item was intentionally reverse-coded to assess attentiveness and response consistency. Additionally, "*The vocabulary games helped me stay focused during lessons*" (4.08) reinforces the role of games in maintaining students' attention and focus. Lastly, the statement "*I am eager to continue learning new English words through similar games*" (4.02) indicates students' positive attitudes toward using game-based learning for future vocabulary acquisition. Overall, the results demonstrate that game-based learning effectively enhanced students' motivation, engagement, and retention, thereby creating a supportive and interactive learning environment.

Results from qualitative data

The qualitative data obtained from focus group interviews offered valuable insights into students' experiences with game-based learning and its influence on vocabulary acquisition and motivation. Overall, students expressed a strong preference for learning vocabulary through games rather than traditional methods such as rote memorization or textbook-based exercises. They described the game-based approach as more engaging, enjoyable, and effective, particularly in helping them connect new vocabulary to prior knowledge and improving long-term retention and recall. Their opinions were such as:

> *"Learning vocabulary through games turned out to be far more engaging and effective than traditional methods like rote memorization or textbook exercises."* (Student 1)

> *"Using games to learn vocabulary was really enjoyable. It helped me connect new words with what I already knew, which made it easier to remember and recall them."* (Student 2)

Among the activities implemented, *Who Is Your Partner?* emerged as a student favorite due to its communicative and collaborative nature, which not only supported vocabulary recall but also enhanced interpersonal interaction. Similarly, *Passing Ball* was praised for its fast-paced, interactive format, which encouraged spontaneous vocabulary use and sharpened recall skills in a playful environment. Nonetheless, through thematic analysis, the key themes were identified from the qualitative data as follows:

1. Engagement and Motivation

Game-based activities significantly enhanced students' motivation to learn new vocabulary. The sense of fun and competition made students more eager to participate and stay focused throughout lessons.

> *"The games were really fun. I actually looked forward to English class for the first time."* (Student 2)

> *"Getting a high score in the game made me proud. It felt like I was achieving something, not just memorizing words."* (Student 4)

Students also appreciated the interactive nature of the games, which required them to engage actively rather than passively listen.

> *"I had to stay alert because I didn't want to miss my turn. It helped me concentrate more."* (Student 5)

> *"Playing with friends made the class feel less boring. We were learning, but also laughing together."* (Student 4)

2. Learning Experience

Students reported that games helped them remember new vocabulary more effectively. Presenting words in meaningful and contextualized ways improved their understanding and retention.

> *"I remembered words better because I saw them in different situations, not just a list to study."* (Student 1)

> *"The games helped me learn how to use new words, not just what they mean."* (Student 3)

The enjoyable nature of the activities also contributed to deeper learning.

> *"It was more fun than writing words over and over. That made them stick in my head."* (Student 2)

> *"Because we were having fun, I didn't realize how much I was learning until later."* (Student 3)

3. Social Interaction and Collaboration

Game-based learning fostered peer interaction and reduced anxiety about using English in class. Students noted that games encouraged teamwork and made speaking less intimidating.

> *"We had to work together and talk in English. It made me less nervous."* (Student 2)

> *"I usually don't speak in class, but in the games I did, because it felt more relaxed."* (Student 3)

The collaborative environment helped build classroom rapport and supported language use in a non-threatening setting.

> *"Talking during games was easier. I didn't feel judged if I made a mistake."* (Student 4)

> *"We laughed together and helped each other. It felt more like a team than just classmates."* (Student 5)

4. Suggestions for Improvement

While students responded positively to game-based learning, they also provided thoughtful feedback on how to make the game-based learning more effective.

> *"It would be better to use the words in conversations, like in real life. That would help more."* (Student 1)

> *"I want to know how well I did—like if I need to improve or not. Maybe we can get feedback after each game."* (Student 3)

Students expressed a desire for more meaningful integration of vocabulary beyond the game context.

> *"Sometimes the games were fast, and I didn't know if I learned the word right."* (Student 2)

> *"If the teacher tells us which words we need to work on, I think we can improve faster."* (Student 4)

For the classroom observation during the initial stage before the implementation of game-based learning, students exhibited limited engagement in vocabulary lessons. Many appeared passive, with minimal participation in activities such as rote memorization or textbook-based exercises. Some students struggled to maintain focus, frequently losing interest in the lesson. Collaborative interactions among students were scarce, and the classroom atmosphere often felt rigid and uninteresting. It was evident that traditional instructional methods failed to capture students' attention or motivate them to actively engage with vocabulary learning tasks.

Following the implementation of game-based learning, significant improvements were observed in student engagement and classroom dynamics. Students demonstrated heightened enthusiasm and active participation during vocabulary games such as *Bingo*, *Passing ball*, and *Who is your partner?*. They appeared more focused and motivated, eagerly competing and collaborating with peers to complete tasks. The classroom atmosphere became lively and interactive, with students frequently communicating in English as part of the game activities. Collaboration increased substantially, as many games required students to work together or interact with one another. Students who previously seemed disengaged began contributing more actively. This suggests that the games successfully encouraged participation across various proficiency levels. Overall, the post-instruction observations highlighted a positive transformation in students' engagement, focus, and willingness to interact, demonstrating the effectiveness of game-based learning in creating an engaging and supportive learning environment.

DISCUSSION

This study highlights the positive impact of game-based learning (GBL) on the vocabulary learning motivation of Thai lower-secondary EFL students. Data from pre- and post-intervention *Vocabulary*

Motivational Scale (VMS) questionnaires, classroom observations, and focus group interviews collectively suggest that integrating games into vocabulary instruction significantly enhanced students' motivation, engagement, and vocabulary retention.

After participating in game-based activities, students reported increased enjoyment, confidence, and willingness to use newly learned vocabulary. This outcome supports previous research demonstrating that interactive and enjoyable activities can positively influence language learners' motivation and engagement (Whitton, 2009; Aydın & Çakır, 2022; Ahmed et al., 2022). The notable increase in post-test scores also indicates that game-based learning effectively addressed motivational barriers identified in the pre-test, such as difficulty in recalling vocabulary and maintaining focus.

Classroom observations further revealed a transition from passive to active learning behaviors. Students who were previously disengaged became noticeably more participative and attentive during game-based sessions. These findings align with constructivist learning theory (Piaget, 1970), which emphasizes that learners build knowledge through interactive and contextual experiences. Vocabulary games created opportunities for students to connect new words to prior knowledge in meaningful contexts, reinforcing deeper retention and application.

Moreover, the motivational gains observed are consistent with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which identifies autonomy, competence, and relatedness as core drivers of intrinsic motivation. The use of vocabulary games allowed students to exercise choice, receive immediate feedback, and collaborate with peers—all contributing to a supportive and motivating classroom environment (Waewchimplee & Oyibochia, 2022; Meeprom, 2020). These elements helped reduce classroom anxiety and improve students' confidence in using English, as also observed by Rakangthong and Yimwilai (2020).

Beside this, the key factors within game-based learning were identified as contributors to increased vocabulary learning motivation. That is, games introduced elements of intrinsic motivation through challenges such as point-scoring, time limits, or winning conditions. Students expressed that successfully completing a game or achieving a high score provided a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment. This aligns with findings by Saraiwanga and Worawonga (2023), who noted that game mechanics support persistence and resilience in vocabulary learning tasks. Additionally, the immediate feedback presented after the games allowed learners to recognize progress and adjust strategies, thereby fostering a growth mindset and encouraging further effort.

Games such as *Who Is Your Partner?* helped students practice vocabulary in authentic, communicative contexts, which deepened their understanding and memory of new words. As observed in the classroom, students engaged in meaningful interactions that reinforced vocabulary use. This is consistent with Cameron (2001) and Horphet and Yimwilai (2020), who argue that contextualized language exposure is more effective than isolated drills or memorization. It also echoes Ahmed et al. (2022), who found that digital games help bridge vocabulary input and practical usage in meaningful tasks.

Game-based learning also facilitated collaboration and peer communication, creating a socially rich learning environment. Students expressed that working in teams helped reduce language anxiety and promoted greater confidence in speaking English. This supports Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, as cited in Unrau et al., 2018), which highlights the role of social interaction in language development. Peer engagement provided scaffolding that supported learners at varying proficiency levels (Wiriyakarun & Khrongsakun, 2020).

Last but not least, reduced boredom and increased engagement go hand in hand. Many students who were previously disengaged during vocabulary lessons showed increased focus and enjoyment when participating in games. The shift in classroom dynamics from teacher-led instruction to active learner participation promoted a more stimulating environment. These results align with Whitton (2009), who emphasized that games can transform learning into an engaging and immersive experience. This was also

reflected in the findings of Waewchimplee and Oyibochia (2022), who reported that young learners found vocabulary games highly motivating and memorable.

Although students responded positively to game-based learning, several offered insightful suggestions to improve its effectiveness. For instance, Student 1 recommended integrating vocabulary into real-life conversations to enhance its practical value. Student 3 proposed adding more personalized feedback and self-assessment opportunities to help track individual progress. These suggestions align with learner-centered pedagogical models, which emphasize the importance of reflection, feedback, and personalization in supporting sustained motivation and development (Harmer, 2001; Meeprom, 2020).

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this classroom action research provide compelling evidence that game-based learning can significantly enhance vocabulary learning motivation among Thai EFL lower-secondary students. By fostering enjoyment, engagement, and collaboration, games address key challenges in traditional vocabulary instruction and create a supportive learning environment. This study contributes to the growing body of evidence supporting the integration of game-based learning in language education. However, further research is needed to explore the long-term effects of this approach and to identify optimal strategies for incorporating games into classroom instruction. Additionally, future studies could examine how personalized feedback and real-world applications can enhance the impact of game-based learning. These findings also underscore the potential of game-based learning as an innovative and effective tool for improving vocabulary acquisition, promoting motivation, and creating meaningful learning experiences for young EFL learners.

This classroom-based action research provides strong evidence that game-based learning (GBL) can significantly enhance vocabulary learning motivation among Thai EFL lower-secondary students. The integration of games into vocabulary instruction increased students' enjoyment, participation, and peer collaboration, while also improving vocabulary retention. These outcomes address challenges often associated with traditional methods, such as limited engagement and difficulty retaining new words. However, several limitations should be acknowledged. The study was conducted in a single school with a relatively small sample size, limiting the generalizability of the findings. The intervention was short-term, so long-term effects on vocabulary acquisition and motivation remain unclear. Additionally, the lack of a control group makes it difficult to isolate the impact of GBL from other influencing factors, such as teacher style or classroom environment. Despite these limitations, the study offers valuable implications for practice and future research. Educators are encouraged to incorporate GBL into vocabulary instruction to foster engagement, support collaboration, and make learning more meaningful. Future research could explore the long-term impact of GBL, examine its integration with real-world language tasks, consider pairing competitive games with reflective vocabulary journals, or investigate the role of personalized feedback in maximizing learning outcomes. These directions can help optimize the use of game-based strategies in language classrooms and better support diverse learner needs and circumstances.

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Appendix I: Focus Group Interview Questions

1. How did you feel about learning vocabulary through games compared to traditional methods (e.g., rote memorization, textbook exercises)?
2. Which game(s) did you enjoy the most? Why?
3. Did the games make you feel more motivated to learn new vocabulary? Can you explain why or why not?
4. How did the games affect your participation in class?
5. Did the games help you remember new words better?
6. Can you give an example of a word or words that you learned through the games?
7. How did the games help you use new vocabulary in other activities, both inside and outside of the classroom?
8. Did the games encourage you to communicate more in English?
9. How did the games affect your confidence in using the language?
10. How do you think learning through games could be improved to help you learn even more effectively?

Appendix 2: Classroom Atmosphere with Game-Based Learning

Students' Happiness: Joyful Active Learning in Authentic Contexts

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Abstract

Teaching preparatory Intensive English courses is widely recognized as challenging, as many students perceive them as monotonous and disengaging. This study investigated whether Activity-Based Learning (ABL) could enhance students' learning experiences and happiness. Participants were 63 first-year students enrolled in two sections of an Intensive English course taught by the researcher. Over a three-week, 45-hour program, six ABL strategies were implemented: experiential learning, role-playing, problem-based learning, collaborative learning, game-based learning, and project-based learning. Data were collected using the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ) and focus group interviews. The OHQ results indicated that students' happiness was at the "Happy" level, with a mean score of 3.05 on a four-point scale. Qualitative findings further revealed that students enjoyed the course, actively engaged in activities, and developed a positive attitude toward teamwork. These findings suggest that ABL can foster not only language development but also greater student well-being in Intensive English contexts.

Keywords: active learning, authentic contexts, activity-based learning, Oxford Happiness Questionnaire

INTRODUCTION

Teaching Intensive English courses to first-year students poses well-documented challenges, particularly in sustaining learner motivation and engagement (Brown, 2014). A baseline survey conducted in 2025 revealed that many students entered the course with low motivation, passive learning habits, and frequent boredom. Students often reported feeling sleepy or disengaged, as they were expected primarily to listen and memorize rather than participate actively. Before adopting more interactive approaches, learners struggled to maintain concentration during long lessons, experienced vocabulary overload, and felt anxious when asked to speak. Limited practice opportunities and repetitive grammar-focused instruction further prevented them from applying knowledge in meaningful contexts. Traditional lecture-based methods have been widely criticized for intensifying these difficulties, leading to disengagement and poor knowledge retention (Hattie, 2009). In response, recent research has emphasized interactive, student-centered approaches such as Activity-Based Learning (ABL) to promote active participation and improve outcomes.

Activity-Based Learning (ABL) is grounded in educational theories that emphasize active participation and experiential learning. Dewey (1938) contended that real-life experiences should form the foundation of education, stating that students learn most effectively when they actively participate in the process. Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory similarly views learning as a cycle where the transformation of experience creates knowledge. Drawing on these foundations, ABL encourages learners to engage in tasks that promote critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration.

Beyond its theoretical underpinnings, a growing body of research highlights the effectiveness of ABL across diverse educational contexts, particularly in STEM fields. Evidence indicates that ABL encompasses methodologies such as project-based, problem-based, and case-based learning, as well as

innovative practices like photovoice activities, typically implemented over extended periods of 9 to 24 weeks to foster sustained engagement (Gyasi et al., 2021). Empirical findings consistently demonstrate moderately large positive effects on student performance, with effect sizes reaching 0.65 in studies involving Asian STEM students (Ting et al., 2022). ABL has also been shown to enhance engagement, motivation, and satisfaction levels (Blázquez et al., 2023). It is particularly effective in complex problem-solving contexts for instance, in IoT projects or graphic engineering courses where structured, hands-on approaches enable students to identify and resolve challenges while improving academic outcomes (Jaramillo et al., 2023; Olmedo-Torre et al., 2020). Importantly, research suggests that ABL is most powerful when used not to replace traditional methods entirely but to complement them, creating a balanced framework that combines experiential learning with foundational knowledge acquisition.

In language education, ABL has shown similar promise. Studies in English as Foreign Language (EFL) contexts demonstrate that incorporating collaborative, activity-based strategies enhances both learner motivation and language proficiency (Cheng & Walters, 2009; Li et al., 2024). Prince (2004) also found that active learning methods significantly improve student engagement and academic performance compared to lecture-based instruction, while Freeman et al. (2014) confirmed through meta-analysis that such approaches yield higher test scores and greater knowledge retention. Within Intensive English courses, ABL has been particularly effective in addressing challenges of student passivity, boredom, and disengagement. Research by Kember and Gow (1994), Halpern (2016), and Sager et al. (2022) revealed that the use of active learning activities increases student satisfaction and motivation, while Cheng and Walters (2009) showed that ABL fosters more positive attitudes toward language learning and measurable gains in proficiency. Collectively, these findings underscore ABL's potential to transform Intensive English instruction by creating more engaging, student-centered learning environments that directly address the shortcomings of traditional lecture-based approaches.

Constructivist Learning Theory

Constructivist learning theory serves as a foundational framework for understanding how students construct knowledge through active engagement. This theory emphasizes the cognitive, metacognitive, evolving, and effective dimensions of learning, where knowledge construction is heavily reliant on the learner's existing knowledge base (Li et al., 2024). According to David Ausubel (1968), prior knowledge plays a crucial role in meaningful reception learning, which aligns with Jerome Bruner's (1961) concept of learning through discovery. This method encourages guided exploration that facilitates student involvement, allowing them to analyze and experiment within a structured framework.

Second Language Learning Theories

Understanding second language learning theories is crucial for designing effective instructional strategies, including Activity-Based Learning (ABL), in English language education. Several prominent theories offer ideas about how learners acquire a second language and how different instructional approaches can support this process.

Krashen's Input Hypothesis

Krashen (1985) proposed that language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to comprehensible input that is slightly beyond their current level of proficiency (i+1). This aligns with ABL strategies, where students engage in interactive and contextualized learning experiences that provide meaningful input. For instance, role-playing and project-based activities immerse students in authentic communication, facilitating natural language acquisition.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

Vygotsky (1978) emphasized the role of social interaction and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) in learning. His theory suggests that learners acquire language through meaningful interaction with more knowledgeable peers or instructors. In an ABL context, collaborative learning activities, such as group work and problem-solving tasks, provide opportunities for learners to co-construct knowledge and develop linguistic skills in a supportive environment.

Interaction Hypothesis

Long (1996) extended Krashen's work by emphasizing the importance of interaction in language development. He argued that modified interaction, such as clarification requests and negotiation of meaning, helps learners process input more effectively. In an ABL setting, activities like collaborative discussions and game-based learning promote meaningful interactions that enhance comprehension and fluency.

Cognitive Theories of Second Language Acquisition

Cognitive theories, such as those proposed by Ellis (2005), highlight the importance of noticing and processing language structures. Learners benefit from tasks that encourage metacognitive awareness, such as self-assessment and reflection activities. ABL supports such awareness through interactive exercises that encourage learners to consciously engage with language patterns while developing communicative competence.

Integrating second language learning theories into ABL-based instruction ensures that pedagogical practices are grounded in research. By providing comprehensible input, fostering meaningful interaction, encouraging language output, and promoting cognitive engagement, ABL strategies effectively support second language acquisition and enhance student engagement. Future research should explore the long-term impact of ABL on language proficiency and its adaptation to various cultural and institutional contexts.

Active Learning Strategies

Active learning strategies are integral to enhancing information retention and student engagement. Techniques such as discussions, debates, and practical applications promote active participation and allow students to process content more effectively. This personalized approach to learning fosters positive emotions that contribute to memorable educational experiences (Kevin, 2023). This notion is further supported by Nielsen (1999) by emphasizing the value of independent exploration, where engaging learners in a manner suitable to their developmental stages cultivates a space for self-reliant learning (Bhakti et al., 2019; Kevin, 2023). The Information Processing Theory corroborates the idea that active engagement aids retention by moving information through sensory memory, short-term memory, and ultimately into long-term memory, thereby enriching the educational journey over time (Kevin, 2023).

The Role of Emotions in Learning

Emotional aspects of learning also play a pivotal role in student outcomes. Research indicates that students' happiness positively influences their academic engagement and resilience in the face of challenges. When students approach difficulties from a place of overall happiness, they are more likely to maintain a positive outlook, fostering resilience that benefits their learning experiences both inside and outside the classroom. Joyful learning environments not only enhance student engagement but also deepen connections among peers and educators, creating a balanced educational approach where learning is perceived as enjoyable, even when faced with challenges.

Integration of Happiness in Education

Happiness in educational contexts is increasingly recognized as a critical component influencing learning efficacy. Studies suggest that when students feel content and engaged, they are more motivated to seek learning opportunities and are better equipped to navigate challenges. The interplay between cognitive, affective, and psychosocial dimensions of happiness underscores its significance in promoting optimal productivity, performance, and future satisfaction in students' educational journeys. As such, the incorporation of happiness into learning models is vital for creating a holistic educational experience that supports both academic success and personal growth.

Components of ABL

Several studies have explored the application of ABL in language education, highlighting its effectiveness in enhancing student engagement and language acquisition. This study implements six core components of ABL: (1) experiential learning, (2) role-playing, (3) problem-based learning, (4) collaborative learning, (5) game-based learning, and (6) project-based learning. Each is purposefully integrated into the curriculum to address student engagement and happiness. Research has shown that collaborative learning, involving group work and peer interaction, enhances language skills and social competencies (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). Researchers have also found that game-based learning, which integrates educational games into the curriculum, boosts motivation and engagement (Gee, 2003). Lastly, project-based learning allows students to work on extended projects that integrate various language skills, providing a comprehensive and immersive learning experience (Thomas, 2000).

Authentic Contexts in Education

Definition and Importance

Authentic contexts in education refer to learning environments and activities that closely mirror real-world situations, allowing students to engage with material that is relevant and applicable outside of the classroom. This approach emphasizes the necessity of connecting educational content to students' personal experiences and cultural backgrounds, enhancing both engagement and comprehension (Cronin, 2022; Leming, 2024). The integration of authentic contexts fosters a more profound understanding of the subject matter, encouraging students to apply theoretical concepts in practical scenarios.

Characteristics of Authentic Contexts

Authentic learning is characterized by several key features that enhance its effectiveness (Fig. 1).

1. Real-World Applicability: Creating tasks and projects that mirror real-life scenarios boosts student motivation and imparts valuable knowledge that extends beyond the classroom environment.
2. Interdisciplinary Learning: Authentic contexts often span multiple subjects, promoting a holistic understanding and enabling students to see the connections between different fields of study.
3. Student-Directed Learning: Encouraging students to take control of their learning process fosters autonomy and responsibility, crucial traits for lifelong learning.
4. Open-Ended Inquiry: Authentic contexts allow for exploration and inquiry, pushing students to ask questions and seek solutions in an unstructured manner, reflecting the complexities of real-world problem-solving.
5. Collaboration and Community Engagement: Many authentic learning experiences involve teamwork and community interaction, which help students develop essential communication and negotiation skills.

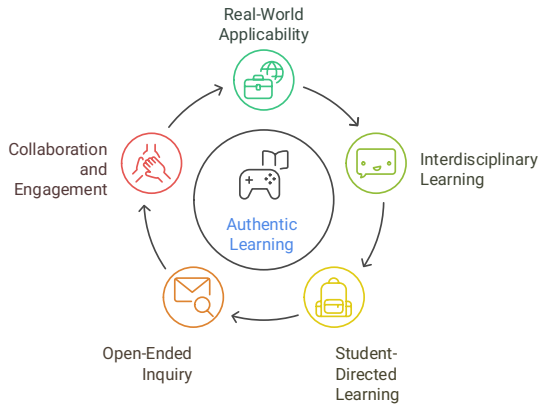

Figure 1. Characteristics of Authentic Contexts

Examples of Authentic Learning

Examples of authentic learning activities include project-based learning assignments, internships, field trips, and classroom simulations. These experiences engage students and provide them with the opportunity to tackle real-world problems, thereby enhancing their critical thinking and creativity. For instance, classroom mock trials can simulate legal processes, allowing students to understand the intricacies of the law while developing skills in argumentation and reasoning.

The Impact of Authentic Contexts on Learning

Authentic contexts significantly enhance student engagement and well-being. By participating in meaningful activities, students often reach a state of flow, where they are fully immersed in their learning tasks. This immersion is associated with higher academic success and personal satisfaction. Moreover, authentic learning experiences help students connect their academic knowledge with future career paths, preparing them for the complexities of the 21st-century workforce.

Effective Strategies to Enhance Students' Happiness

Creating a joyful and engaging learning environment is crucial for enhancing students' happiness and overall well-being. Research shows that students who enjoy class are more resilient and motivated to learn.

Instruments

Measuring student happiness and satisfaction is crucial in evaluating the effectiveness of educational interventions. The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ) is a widely used instrument for assessing subjective well-being and happiness (Hills & Argyle, 2002). Research indicates that higher levels of happiness are associated with better academic performance and greater engagement in learning activities (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). Focus group interviews provide qualitative details about student experiences, allowing researchers to capture nuanced perspectives and attitudes (Kitzinger, 1995). This study therefore employed focus group interviews with 14 students (seven from each section) to gain more evidence to support it.

The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire

The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ) consists of 29 items aimed at estimating happiness based on the assumption of equal effectiveness for each item. Numerous studies have utilized the OHQ, but there

has been limited investigation into the role of individual items in explaining personal happiness. Recent research employs Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to analyze how specific OHQ items correlate with personal happiness as a latent variable, ultimately aiming to create a new measurement score that weighs these items based on their significance. Various fields utilize the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ) to assess and enhance well-being, serving both academic and practical purposes. In research, the OHQ is a critical tool in happiness studies, which have seen considerable growth in the last few decades, particularly in economics and psychology. Despite the limited involvement of sociologists in happiness research, there is a growing call for sociological perspectives that consider social contexts and unintended consequences of policies affecting happiness. Research utilizing the OHQ spans disciplines and often informs policy-making aimed at improving societal well-being. For instance, comprehensive literature reviews and studies highlight the need to integrate happiness into sociological inquiries, positing that such studies could facilitate connections between well-being and academic research. For educational purposes, the OHQ is also employed in educational settings to teach students about happiness and well-being. Its structured format, which includes initial overviews and summaries, supports learners in understanding complex concepts in a digestible manner. It helps students who are just starting to learn about happiness, making it easier for them to understand the topic and how it connects to different fields, like positive psychology and other areas of study.

THE STUDY

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to investigate the impact of Activity-Based Learning (ABL) on student engagement and happiness in an Intensive English course. The methodology integrated both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effects of ABL on the participants. The study was conducted over a three-week period, involving a purposive convenience sample of 63 first-year university students enrolled in two sections of an Intensive English course. One section was offered in the morning and the other in the afternoon. Both sections were conducted by the researcher. The course comprised a total of 45 hours over three weeks. ABL strategies were systematically incorporated into the curriculum. The major components of ABL were implemented as briefly described in Table 1.

Table 1.
Major ABL strategies

Components		**Examples of activities**
Experiential Learning	Activities that require students to engage in real-life scenarios.	Organize a “university tour” where students role-play as tour guides for an international audience. They must research university landmarks, prepare a script, and deliver the tour in English, providing explanations and answering questions.
Role Playing	Simulated interactions to practice language skills.	Set up a shopping simulation where students play the roles of both seller and customer. Each student is required to create a shopping script, such as cashier, fitting room, price, and discount, and prepare a list of questions to ask and answer.

Components		Examples of activities
Problem-Based Learning	Tasks that involve solving real-world problems.	Present students with excuses for different daily life situations, such as absent for class, or making appointment to teacher. Students work in groups to write a formal email to a teacher.
Collaborative Learning	Group work to foster teamwork and communication.	Assign students to do group work. ClassDojo is used to assign group members. Teams are tasked with collaboratively working to complete various assignments.
Game-Based Learning	Educational games to increase motivation and engagement.	Use digital tools like Kahoot or Quizlet for a fun quiz-based language review.
Project-Based Learning	Extended projects integrating various language skills.	This activity integrates writing, speaking, and technological skills, with a final presentation.

Examples of ABL class environments can be depicted in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2. illustrates the ABL class environments.

Procedure

1. Classes in the two sections were carried out by the researcher following the details in the lesson plan based on the ABL approach all through the three-week, 45-hour course.
2. The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ) was administered to all participants at the end of the course. The mean score was calculated to determine the overall level of happiness among the students.
3. Focus group interviews were conducted with a representative subset of the participants from both the morning and afternoon sections. These interviews aimed to gather in-depth insights

into the students' experiences, attitudes, and perceptions of the ABL activities. The focus groups were facilitated by the researcher and were structured to encourage open and honest discussion. We used the results from the focus group interviews as evidence to support the OHQ results.

FINDINGS

The findings of this study demonstrate that the implementation of Activity-Based Learning (ABL) significantly enhanced student engagement and happiness in the Intensive English course. The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ) results indicated that students' happiness was at the "Happy" level, with a mean score of 3.05 on a four-point scale. The focus group interviews revealed three major themes: (1) increased confidence in using English, (2) enjoyment and motivation derived from interactive activities, and (3) stronger teamwork skills. For instance, one student shared, "I used to feel nervous speaking English, but the role-play made it fun, and I learned a lot from my friends." These qualitative insights provide evidence that students not only enjoyed the course but also developed confidence and collaboration skills through ABL. The findings indicate that students developed stronger collaboration and teamwork skills, suggesting that ABL fosters not only linguistic progress but also positive interpersonal dynamics. This is consistent with studies that emphasize ABL's ability to promote social learning and cooperative engagement. The emphasis on interactive, experiential tasks appeared to increase both intrinsic motivation and sustained engagement, aligning with prior studies on the benefits of learner-centered approaches. Collectively, these results underscore the importance of instructional strategies that move beyond traditional lecture formats and instead cultivate active, collaborative learning environments.

Additionally, students highlighted the relevance and applicability of ABL to real-world contexts, reinforcing the argument that authentic learning experiences lead to higher engagement and long-term retention of language skills. The incorporation of practical, hands-on activities facilitated more profound understanding and meaningful learning, making the learning experience not only enjoyable but also more effective in preparing students for real-life communication scenarios. This observation is particularly relevant in second language acquisition, as research has demonstrated that meaningful input and interaction accelerate language proficiency development.

CONCLUSION

This study found that activity-based learning (ABL) enhanced students' happiness, engagement, and collaborative skills in an Intensive English course. Quantitative results showed happiness at the "Happy" level, while qualitative data indicated greater confidence in using English, enjoyment of interactive tasks, and stronger teamwork. These outcomes suggest that learner-centered, experiential strategies can address persistent challenges in intensive language programs, including boredom, passivity, and low motivation. By fostering dynamic interaction and collaboration, ABL supports both language development and student well-being. The findings align with major second language acquisition theories, demonstrating how ABL facilitates comprehensible input, meaningful interaction, and cognitive processing (Krashen, 1985; Vygotsky, 1978; Long, 1996). The emphasis on collaboration also reflects constructivist approaches, in which learners co-construct knowledge through peer interaction and experiential tasks (Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1984). Overall, the study underscores the need to reevaluate traditional lecture-based methods in favor of experiential and collaborative learning, offering compelling evidence for the wider adoption of ABL in language education.

Implications

This study highlights the value of Activity-Based Learning (ABL) in Intensive English education. Teachers should adopt strategies such as role-playing, project work, and problem-solving to boost engagement and enjoyment (Gee, 2003; Pedaste et al., 2015), supported by targeted training in ABL methods. Curriculum designers are encouraged to incorporate experiential and game-based activities, which enhance retention and communicative competence (Swain, 1985; Hmelo-Silver, 2004), while technology can further diversify learning opportunities (Freeman et al., 2014). Policymakers and institutional leaders should promote student-centered approaches, linking well-being to academic achievement (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005) through professional development and curriculum support. Future research should examine the long-term impact of ABL on language proficiency, motivation, and overall student well-being.

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The Dictowatch Method with Mr. Bean Videos: Considerations in a Three-phase Task Activity

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Abstract

Dictowatch can be described as a communicative based, meaning focused classroom activity, which uses students' language to direct their attention to a range of forms (FoF) not usually salient in CLT activities (Sullivan & Caplan 2003). Working in pairs facing each other, in Stage 1 one partner watches and narrates a portion of a video scene, while the other partner takes notes on their dictation. Halfway through the video, the partners change roles. In Stage 2 the partners discuss the video with a goal of writing an individual, complete narrative of the entire scene, relying on their spoken input, their dictation notes, and their memory of watching half the scene. Students discuss and compare their written texts orally in Stage 3 to spot and notice any differences. The dictowatch activity will be applied to a useful and practical TBL classroom lesson, consisting of a series of activities following a task sequence model (Willis & Willis 2007). The multiple activities in the pre-task, tasks, and post-task procedure will be explained for purpose and relevance in following TBL methodology. As illustration, the popular comedy Mr. Bean will be used as the dictowatch video example applied to the lesson, while relevant examples of learners' output will be provided for practicality. By the end of this article, readers will have been shown a practical TBL lesson incorporating the dictowatch activity, with guidelines towards understanding and implementing the three-phase task procedure.

Keywords: dictowatch, task-based learning, Mr. Bean videos, multimodal learning

INTRODUCTION

In the evolving field of English as a Second Language (ESL) education, communicative classroom activities that effectively integrate form-focused instruction and student engagement are continually sought after. Dictowatch, a three-stage collaborative activity originally proposed by Sullivan and Caplan (2003), represents one such innovative approach. As an extension of the well-established dictogloss technique, dictowatch is designed to foster learner-generated attention to form while maintaining a meaningful communicative context. According to Sullivan and Caplan, this activity engages students in real-time observation, collaborative reconstruction, and reflective editing of language input, providing multiple points of entry for language noticing and metalinguistic discussion.

The stages of dictowatch typically include (1) Watch, where students view a short video and take notes; (2) Dictate, where learners listen again and collaboratively reconstruct the spoken content; and (3) Compare & Reflect, where the reconstructions are evaluated and refined through group and class-wide discussions. The activity not only promotes listening and writing skills, but also encourages peer negotiation of meaning, language awareness, and increased learner autonomy.

Building on its communicative foundation, dictowatch can also be restructured as a task-based learning (TBL) activity, aligning well with the three-phase TBL model described by Willis and Willis (2007): Pre-task, Task cycle, and Post-task language focus. This framework enhances the pedagogical robustness of dictowatch by embedding it within a theoretically grounded, learner-centered instructional model.

Finally, the use of Mr. Bean videos in the dictowatch framework adds a highly effective multimodal element. Their non-verbal humor, predictable structure, and universal appeal make them ideal for mixed-level classrooms, where visual context supports comprehension and stimulates discussion. This integration of technology with TBLT in recent years has played a significant role in enhancing students' motivation and in providing greater opportunities for practicing oral language skills (Chen, 2019).

This article explores the use of dictowatch as an engaging and adaptable classroom activity for ESL learners. By incorporating curated video content, such as Mr. Bean clips, the procedure becomes more accessible, enjoyable, and effective across proficiency levels. Examples of students' output during the reconstruction stages of the dictowatch will help to illustrate this procedure. The discussion will highlight how this blend of visual media and structured collaboration supports language development in a communicative and task-based framework.

THE DICTOWATCH METHOD AND ITS THEORETICAL BENEFITS

Originally introduced by Sullivan and Caplan (2003), dictowatch is a three-stage communicative activity designed to foster learner-generated attention to linguistic form within meaning-centered language use. Distinct from traditional dictogloss tasks, dictowatch emphasizes real-time oral interaction, peer collaboration, and spontaneous language reconstruction. It is especially well suited for intermediate and advanced ESL learners seeking to enhance both fluency and grammatical awareness through contextualized communication.

The procedure consists of three interrelated stages. In Stage 1, students are placed in pairs and presented with a silent video segment. One student views the first half of the clip and provides an immediate oral narration of the events while the partner listens and takes notes, acting as a scribe. Halfway through, roles are reversed: the second student watches the remaining portion and narrates it while the first takes notes. This format ensures reciprocal engagement, encourages active listening, and balances speaking and note-taking responsibilities between both learners. Stage 2 involves collaborative text construction. After completing the narration segment, the pair jointly reconstructs a written version of the entire video scene. Drawing on their notes, memory, and prior oral input, students co-create a cohesive narrative. This phase facilitates negotiation of meaning and mutual scaffolding, allowing students to pool their linguistic resources in the service of accurate and fluent expression. Stage 3 focuses on comparison and correction. Pairs orally compare their written narratives with those of another group, identifying discrepancies, clarifying misunderstandings, and making necessary corrections. This reflective phase promotes peer feedback and facilitates deeper engagement with language form, as learners are prompted to justify and adjust their choices through meaningful dialogue. Sharing their versions of the video scene can be an additional storytelling activity.

The theoretical benefits of dictowatch are closely aligned with the principles of Focus on Form (FonF). FonF is defined as the incidental and extensive attention to linguistic form that occurs during otherwise meaning-driven communication. dictowatch meets this criterion by embedding form-focused learning opportunities within an activity that prioritizes message conveyance. Unlike explicit grammar instruction or decontextualized drilling, learners' attention is naturally drawn to specific forms during interaction and reconstruction, when accuracy becomes communicatively relevant. Importantly, the activity promotes the use of learners' own language rather than reliance on input models. It encourages learners to take ownership of the language they produce and notice gaps in their output through peer negotiation. Moreover, the process directs attention to a broad range of linguistic features, including syntax, cohesion, verb tense, and discourse markers, rather than concentrating solely on vocabulary acquisition. Research by Ellis, Basturkmen, and Loewen (2001), for example, highlights the value of such interactive tasks in generating learner uptake, defined as the observable incorporation of feedback into revised and modified output. Through collaborative narration, note-taking, reconstruction, and

comparison, dictowatch provides repeated opportunities for learners to receive feedback and refine their language use in real time.

Video-based tasks, such as those incorporating Mr. Bean videos, can increase student interest and motivation by providing authentic, humorous, and visually engaging content that transcends linguistic barriers. Bell and Pomerantz (2015) offer clear arguments in favor of humor for pedagogical ends (including adding enjoyment, building student-teacher rapport, and for classroom management), and serving students' needs (including giving an outlet to temporarily escape institutionally mandated identities and save face). Such tasks also accommodate diverse learning styles, particularly for visual and auditory learners, while offering meaningful opportunities to practice comprehension and oral expression. In this way, video-based activities expand the range of learning opportunities beyond traditional text-based approaches, fostering greater engagement and communicative development. Mulyadi et al (2021), found that learners' speaking performance, as evidenced by role-play assessment results, was significantly influenced by technology-enhanced TBLT. This improvement appears to have been facilitated by engaging pre-task activities, such as watching videos related to the target topics. Such tasks promoted greater learner involvement and encouraged more active use of English in communicative contexts. Additionally, Chen (2019), in a Taiwanese technology-mediated TBLT course created to develop English speaking abilities, reported that the participants perceived technology-mediated tasks within a collaborative learning environment as beneficial for enhancing their English-speaking abilities, thereby underscoring the importance of shifting from teacher-centered to learner-centered approaches in such contexts.

Dictowatch offers a dynamic, learner-centered approach to second language instruction that integrates form and meaning through structured yet communicative interaction. Its three-stage format supports fluency, accuracy, and metalinguistic awareness, making it a valuable addition to the repertoire of classroom-based ESL activities.

THE THREE-PHASE TASK SEQUENCE

The three-phase task sequence, a central framework in TBL, can effectively scaffold learner engagement and language use in communicative classroom activities such as dictowatch. This section outlines the Pre-task, Task, and Post-task stages, focusing primarily on pedagogical objectives and considerations for each phase.

Pre-task Stage

The Pre-task phase plays a vital role in preparing students for successful task completion by activating schema, setting expectations, and reducing cognitive load. One key function is "framing" the task (Lee, 2000), which clearly communicates the requirements and intended outcomes to students. Another essential element is "priming," which equips learners with the topical and linguistic tools necessary to engage meaningfully during the task. This includes both a topic focus and selected vocabulary, thereby allowing for smoother task execution. Additional techniques such as brainstorming, idea generation, and "mining", in which learners extract potentially useful linguistic forms from input materials, support students in preparing for output. These methods encourage learners to concentrate on meaning and to begin forming hypotheses about appropriate language use. Pedagogically, the pre-task phase addresses core considerations such as preparation, planning, and priming. Modeling of the target task by the teacher and/or students is encouraged to lower cognitive demands and build learner confidence and motivation (Van den Branden, 2016).

Task Stage

During the Task stage, learners engage in meaningful communication with a clear purpose. This stage should prioritize meaning over form. Learners are active language users with peripheral attention to accuracy and structure (Ellis, 2003). The communicative task should result in a tangible outcome, and task completion is emphasized as a central goal (Willis, 1996). Collectively, the Pre-task and Task phases prepare learners to engage actively with the dictowatch procedure, enabling a communicative experience rooted in preparation, authentic language use, and structured learner interaction.

Post-task stage

In the post-task stage, there are several critical considerations to ensure language development and enhance learners' proficiency. One key aspect is the follow-up tasks, which provide further opportunities to notice and engage with linguistic features that may not have been fully understood during the task itself. These tasks encourage learners to pay closer attention to form and structure in language use. The report stage is another essential element, where learners present their findings to the group. This stage creates additional pressure, pushing students to use richer vocabulary, more complex structures, and improved organization, as they aim for accuracy and clarity in their presentations.

Task repetition is also crucial, as it allows learners to change partners, thus gaining exposure to different linguistic inputs and using a broader range of vocabulary and structures in a more accurate and complex manner (Bygate, 2001). Finally, the evaluation and reflection phase provides students with feedback from both peers and instructors, encouraging self-assessment and awareness of their progress. Overall, the post-task stage should emphasize review and report, focusing on language use, followed by task repetition, to maximize language learning outcomes.

BENEFITS OF *MR BEAN* VIDEOS FOR THE DICTOWATCH METHOD

Selecting appropriate media input is essential in optimizing the benefits of communicative classroom tasks such as dictowatch. Among various audiovisual materials available, *Mr. Bean* video clips have proven to be particularly effective for ESL learners. These short, largely non-verbal comedic sketches, originally aired in the 1980s, offer a unique combination of linguistic flexibility, narrative clarity, and intercultural content, making them ideally suited for meaning-focused tasks that promote language output and learner engagement.

One of the primary advantages of *Mr. Bean* clips is their minimal use of spoken dialogue, which shifts the narrative burden to the learners themselves. This absence of language in the video encourages students to generate original oral and written descriptions based on their interpretation of visual cues, thereby promoting spontaneous and creative language production. The videos' universal humor, often derived from misunderstandings, daily routines, and exaggerated physical reactions, transcends cultural and linguistic barriers, ensuring that learners from diverse backgrounds can access and engage with the content. In addition, the brief duration of most *Mr. Bean* clips (typically 5–10 minutes) aligns well with classroom time constraints and supports focused, scaffolded tasks. The clear plotlines and action-based sequences lend themselves to detailed narration and note-taking, both of which are integral to the dictowatch stages. Additionally, the videos offer opportunities for intercultural and generational comparisons, as learners can examine depictions of British life in the 1980s and contrast them with present-day norms and their own cultural experiences.

Altogether, *Mr. Bean* videos represent an ideal audiovisual input for dictowatch, providing learners with accessible, entertaining, and narratively rich content that enhances both communicative competence and intercultural awareness.

APPLICATION OF *MR. BEAN* VIDEOS TO THE DICTOWATCH METHOD

Pre-task Stage

The pre-task phase plays a crucial preparatory role in the dictowatch cycle. Drawing from Lee's (2000) concept of "framing," in Stage 1 learners are first oriented to the communicative purpose of the task. For example, students are told they will watch a seven-minute video of *Mr. Bean* entering a park and making a sandwich, with one student narrating the actions and the other taking notes. This framing helps clarify both the procedural and linguistic expectations of the activity.

Next, in Stage 2, the "priming" function introduces relevant themes and language structures to activate learners' schemata and reduce cognitive load (Willis & Willis, 2007). A warm-up discussion, such as recalling personal experiences with making sandwiches or eating outdoors, encourages students to draw on personal knowledge and engage with the topic meaningfully. These low-stakes conversational prompts also serve as a motivational scaffold (Ji, 2017).

In conjunction with topic priming, in Stage 3 lexical preparation is introduced through "mining" (Willis & Willis, 2007). This involves learners reviewing a curated list of vocabulary items, e.g., "lettuce, thermos, blanket, napkin, anchovy, sprinkle, explode, etc.." that may appear in the video or be useful in their narrations. The purpose is not rote memorization but anticipatory activation, giving learners tools for output later in the task.

Figure 1. Clips from a Mr. Bean video, for real time narration in the dictowatch method.

In Stage 4, a core task phase, learners engage in paired viewing of a *Mr. Bean* video, as seen in Figure 1 above, with each student responsible for narrating half of the clip while the other takes detailed notes. This real-time narration encourages active language production focused on meaning and supports collaborative meaning-making. The note-taking scribe practices receptive skills while preparing to reconstruct the sequence later. An example of a student's output in this note-taking stage is seen in Figure 2 below. This dual-role setup facilitates balanced participation, promotes noticing of key actions and vocabulary (Ellis, 2003), and simulates authentic communication, fulfilling the communicative purpose of the task (Willis, 1996). The pedagogical focus in this phase is on meaning over form, as recommended in task-based language teaching, while also setting up the conditions for eventual fluency and complexity in output.

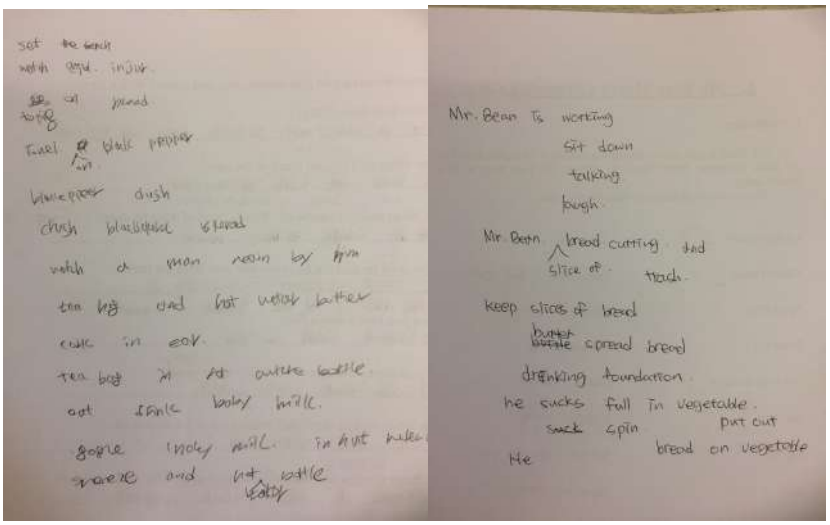
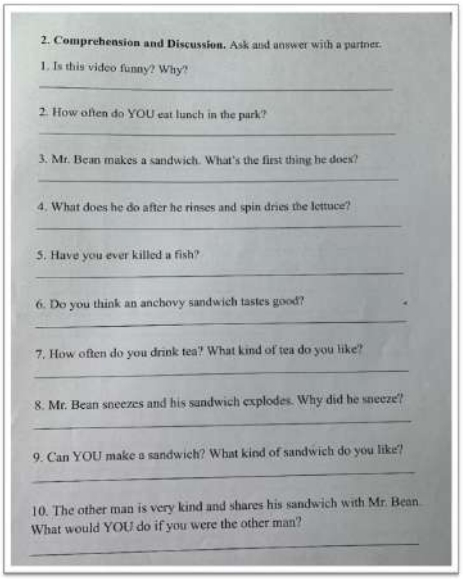


Figure 2. An example of a student's note-taking during the dictowatch method.

The final pre-task stage, Stage 5, engages learners in semi-structured interaction through a guided list of questions related to the video content (See Image 3 below). In pairs, students ask and answer these prompts orally or in writing, facilitating rehearsal of target vocabulary and narrative structures. Questions are in tune to the sequential activities of the video, such as "What does he do after he rinses the lettuce?" and "Mr Bean sneezes and his sandwich explodes. Why did he sneeze?". But also, questions are designed to draw our personal information from the conversation partners, such as "How often do YOU eat lunch in the park?" and "Can YOU make a sandwich?". This can strengthen relevance and personal interest in the task interaction and completion. Although communicative in nature, this stage still functions as priming for the upcoming main task by reinforcing comprehension and encouraging linguistic output in a low-pressure context. If time allows, teachers may invite students to report their responses to the class, thereby extending the interaction and reinforcing motivation.


2. **Comprehension and Discussion.** Ask and answer with a partner.

1. Is this video funny? Why?

2. How often do YOU eat lunch in the park?

3. Mr. Bean makes a sandwich. What's the first thing he does?

4. What does he do after he rinses and spin dries the lettuce?

5. Have you ever killed a fish?

6. Do you think an anchovy sandwich tastes good?

7. How often do you drink tea? What kind of tea do you like?

8. Mr. Bean sneezes and his sandwich explodes. Why did he sneeze?

9. Can YOU make a sandwich? What kind of sandwich do you like?

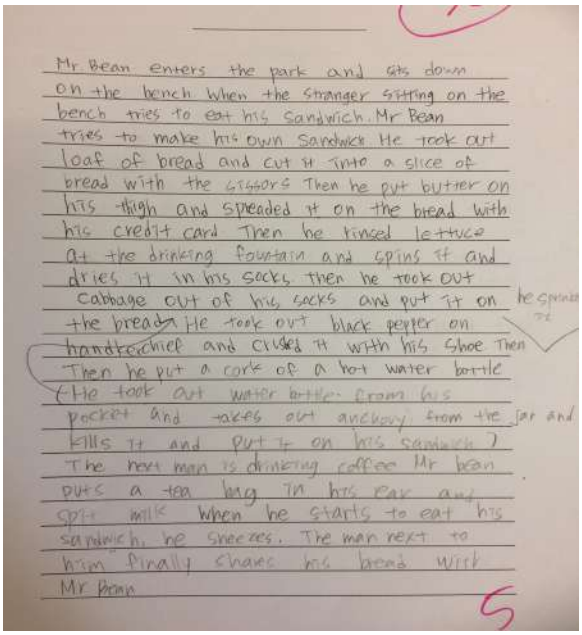
10. The other man is very kind and shares his sandwich with Mr. Bean. What would YOU do if you were the other man?

Figure 3. A list of questions for conversation, to facilitate context, vocabulary and narrative structures found in the video.

In conclusion, the pre-task stage ensures that students are cognitively and linguistically equipped for the main task. Through structured framing, targeted priming, and strategic mining, learners enter the viewing stage with purpose, readiness, and a scaffolded repertoire of language tools.

Task Stage

In the main task stage, learners transition from preparatory interaction to meaningful language production through dictowatch Stage 2. This phase tasks each student with composing a complete written narrative of the *Mr. Bean Makes a Sandwich* video, relying on memory, personal notes, and input exchanged during prior question-answer interactions. The focus now shifts to achieving a communicative outcome, defined by the successful and coherent reconstruction of the video sequence in a written story. An example of a student's completed written narrative of the *Makes a Sandwich* video.



Mr Bean enters the park and sits down on the bench When the stranger sitting on the bench tries to eat his sandwich. Mr Bean tries to make his own sandwich He took out loaf of bread and cut it into a slice of bread with the scissors Then he put butter on his thigh and spreaded it on the bread with his credit card Then he rinsed lettuce at the drinking fountain and spins it and dries it in his socks then he took out cabbage out of his socks and put it on the bread He took out black pepper on handkerchief and crushed it with his shoe Then Then he put a cork of a hot water bottle (He took out water bottle from his pocket and takes out anchovy from the jar and kills it and put it on his sandwich) The next man is drinking coffee Mr bean puts a tea bag in his ear and spit milk When he starts to eat his sandwich, he sneezes. The man next to him finally shares his bread with Mr Bean

Figure 4. An example of a student's completed written narrative of the Makes a Sandwich video.

As students write, they engage in two-way information flow and information-gap communication by consulting peers to confirm or clarify the sequence of Mr. Bean's actions and events. For example, in *Mr. Bean Makes a Sandwich*, students might write about how he arrives at the park, lays out a napkin, and begins assembling a sandwich using humorous and unorthodox items like scissors, socks, or a hot water bottle. Reconstructing these scenes requires learners to describe complex actions using sequence markers, verb phrases, and descriptive language. Examples of such features can be seen in the above Figure 4. The humor and physicality of the video support learners in visualizing events clearly, which enhances output fluency. The writing component also provides opportunities for "mining" language; students may draw from vocabulary lists introduced earlier or phrases shared by their peers. Through this integrated process, learners refine meaning and improve cohesion while also experimenting with language forms.

Overall, the dictowatch task stage embodies the principles of meaningful communication, learner autonomy, and purposeful output, consolidating both linguistic input and interaction into a coherent and authentic task outcome.

Post-task Stage

The post-task stage in the dictowatch sequence emphasizes consolidation, reflection, and linguistic refinement. In dictowatch Stage 3, learners revisit the task with a focus on accuracy, comparison, and deeper language awareness. This stage typically begins with the report stage, in which partners compare their written narratives of *Mr. Bean Makes a Sandwich*. They collaboratively check for accuracy, coherence, and appropriate vocabulary use. Noticing discrepancies, such as whether Mr. Bean used scissors before or after pulling out the butter, encourages discussion about sequence and detail. If time allows, students may present their narratives to the class, promoting fluency and audience awareness while reinforcing language through peer comparison.

Following the reporting activity, the class transitions to a focus-on-forms phase, where they watch the full video together for the first time. As learners had each only seen half of the video during dictowatch Stage 1, viewing it in its entirety offers both novelty and narrative closure. During this viewing, the teacher can narrate the actions in real-time, modeling rich vocabulary, verb structures (e.g., "*He opens the lunchbox carefully*" "*He spreads the butter onto the bread with a credit card"*), and sequential markers (e.g., *first*, *next*, *then*). This teacher-led input helps reinforce grammatical accuracy and story grammar in an enjoyable, low-pressure context. Finally, the evaluation and reflection phase allows learners to receive targeted feedback from peers and instructors. The dictowatch method, an adaptation of dictogloss using video instead of audio, lends itself particularly well to silent visual comedies like *Mr. Bean*. These videos are rich in non-verbal cues, structured scenes, and repetitive sequences that support visual processing and collaborative language reconstruction. Several key pedagogical considerations enhance the effectiveness of this method, as discussed below.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR USING *MR. BEAN* VIDEOS FOR THE DICTOWATCH METHOD

While the dictowatch method combined with Mr. Bean videos can be highly engaging and effective for promoting listening and speaking, several potential challenges require careful consideration to ensure the activity leads to meaningful language learning.

First, the choice of video clip is critical. *Mr. Bean* offers ideal content due to its silent narrative genre, short clip length (7–10 minutes), and potential for focusing on descriptive language, sequencing, and inferencing. While the absence of dialogue removes direct listening input, it allows for targeted vocabulary and grammar production tasks. Teachers should consider the dated cultural context (1980's Britain) and age of the learners (*Mr Bean* borders on adult level humor possibly not appropriate for young ages). While the slapstick style may seem universally funny, some learners might not connect with the humor or find it outdated, which can reduce engagement. Additionally, humor does not always translate cross-culturally. Teachers can address this by carefully selecting clips that are less culturally specific and by incorporating pre-viewing and post-viewing discussions to activate relevant background knowledge (Bell, 2009). For example, one video scenario involves Mr Bean checking into a hotel. The 1980's hotel interior and other facilities can be highlighted, and provide excellent points of departure for classroom discussion. The language levels of learners (dictowatch requires many steps and time requirements, both which require a certain degree of communicative ability) should also be considered. Mixed-level groups can also create frustration if weaker students feel left behind. A possible solution is scaffolding, providing sentence frames, vocabulary banks, or role assignments (e.g., narrator, vocabulary collector), so that all students can contribute meaningfully (Newton & Nation, 2020).

Second, teachers may consider highlighting sequential and other discourse marker usage during pre and post-test activities to increase storytelling effectiveness and accuracy in students' task production. As *Mr. Bean* videos and dialogues lack such verbal cues, learners can incorporate them into their spoken or written reconstructions. Tasks may prompt learners to use markers such as *then*, *after that*, *actually*, or *you see* to structure narratives and dialogue, reinforcing cohesion and spoken fluency.

Third, assigning group roles (e.g., timekeeper, narrator, recorder) and strategic planning enhances accountability and improves the flow of information. Scaffolding with graphic organizers or time-sequenced screenshots can guide reconstruction and promote equitable contribution.

Fourth, reverting to L1 is a natural occurrence during cognitively demanding tasks. While L1 use can support task completion and clarify concepts (Suantara, 2023), teachers should encourage L2 output during reporting and final presentations to maximize language exposure. Teachers can consider if L1 usage is proper in the explanation of task demands and other stages of the task process, and whether its usage will expedite the task interactions.

Additional considerations include learner motivation, and the risk of passive engagement. Because Mr. Bean videos are highly visual and require little verbal decoding, students may enjoy watching without actively processing language. If learners remain at a surface level, the linguistic benefits diminish. The humor and relatability of *Mr. Bean* fosters high engagement, and assessment methods where peer and teacher feedback on accuracy, coherence, and fluency can reinforce learning outcomes. Tasks that require specific language output, such as the dictowatch, ensure that students stay active in both comprehension and production. Also, visual literacy skills, such as interpreting body language, facial expressions, and setting, are developed in tandem with linguistic output, supporting holistic communicative competence. These may be factors that may or may not be beneficial to teachers' pedagogical preferences and goals, so considerations must be made.

CONCLUSION

This article has demonstrated how the dictowatch method can be effectively implemented within a task-based learning framework to support the development of both fluency and form-focused awareness. Dictowatch, as outlined by Sullivan and Caplan (2003), is a meaning-focused, communicative classroom activity that leverages learners' own language production as a vehicle for directing attention to linguistic forms that may otherwise go unnoticed in traditional communicative language teaching. By integrating speaking, listening, reading, and writing, the activity ensures balanced skill development through an engaging and interactive structure.

Working in pairs and alternating between the roles of narrator and scribe, students engage in real-time meaning negotiation while narrating and reconstructing video content. This collaborative dynamic encourages not only productive and receptive language use but also cognitive processes such as recall, inference, and hypothesis testing. In Stage 2, the shared reconstruction of the full narrative fosters deep processing of form and meaning, while the final stage, oral comparison of written texts, provides further opportunities for noticing discrepancies and refining accuracy.

The application of *Mr. Bean* video clips within dictowatch offers distinct pedagogical advantages. The absence of spoken dialogue promotes attention to visual cues, sequencing, and descriptive language, making it accessible yet cognitively stimulating for learners. Moreover, the universal humor and visual storytelling support learner motivation and engagement. Additional classroom considerations, such as mid-task teacher intervention, the strategic use of discourse markers in written output, role assignments, and managing L1 use, further strengthen the activity's effectiveness.

Finally, this article has illustrated how dictowatch can be seamlessly integrated into a TBL lesson sequence aligned with Willis and Willis' (2007) three-phase task model. By mapping out a series of pre-task, task, and post-task activities, this article has illustrated how teachers can be equipped with a practical guide for implementing dictowatch in their own classrooms. Through structured interaction, strategic planning, and reflective output, dictowatch encourages not only communicative fluency but also meaningful engagement with linguistic form. As demonstrated with the *Mr. Bean* example, dictowatch is a versatile and pedagogically sound approach that enhances learner autonomy, interaction, and language awareness within a communicative, task-based paradigm.

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